

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA

ORIGINS, EXPERIENCES, AND CULTURE



M. AVRUM EIRLICH, EDITOR

# **Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora**



# Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora

## Origins, Experiences, and Culture

---

Themes and Phenomena  
of the Jewish Diaspora

M. AVRUM EHRLICH

*Editor*

A B C  C L I O

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA    DENVER, COLORADO    OXFORD, ENGLAND

Copyright 2009 by ABC-CLIO, LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Encyclopedia of the Jewish diaspora : origins, experiences, and culture  
/ M. Avrum Ehrlich, editor.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-85109-873-6 (hard copy : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-1-85109-874-3 (ebook)

1. Jews--History--Encyclopedias. 2. Jewish diaspora--Encyclopedias.
3. Jews--Asia--History--Encyclopedias. 4. Jews--Europe--History--Encyclopedias.
5. Jews--America--History--Encyclopedias. 6. Jews--Africa--History--Encyclopedias.

I. Ehrlich, M. Avrum

DS115.E47 2009

909'.04924003-dc22

2008032565

12 11 10 09 1 2 3 4 5

This book is also available on the World Wide Web as an ebook. Visit [abc-clio.com](http://abc-clio.com) for details.

ABC-CLIO, LLC

130 Cremona Drive, P.O. Box 1911

Santa Barbara, California 93116-1911

*Production Editor: Anna A. Moore*

*Production Manager: Don Schmidt*

*Media Manager: Caroline Price*

*Media Editor: Ellen Rasmussen*

*File Management Coordinator: Paula Gerard*

This book is printed on acid-free paper. ∞

Manufactured in the United States of America

# Contents in Brief

## **Themes and Phenomena of the Jewish Diaspora**

- Diaspora Themes
- History of the Diaspora
- Persecution of Diaspora Jews
- Religious Fusion and Interaction in the Diaspora
- Languages of the Diaspora
- Music and Culture of the Diaspora
- Women in the Diaspora
- Genetics, Medicine, and Genealogy
- Sephardi, Oriental, and Ashkenazi Ethnicities and Culture
- Israel and the Diaspora
- Migration and Wanderings of Diaspora Jews
- Contemporary Diaspora

## **Countries, Regions, and Communities**

- Africa
- Australasia
- North America
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Middle East
- Western Europe
- Central and Eastern Europe and Russia
- Baltic States
- Scandinavia
- Caucasus and Central Asia
- East Asia
- India and Pakistan
- Southeast Asia



# Contents

*Editorial Board and Staff* xvii

*Contributors* xix

*Preface* xxi

*Maps* xxiii

## **Introduction**

xxv The Need and Usefulness of  
Diaspora Studies Gabriel  
(Gabi) Sheffer

## **Diaspora Themes**

- 1 The Concept of Diaspora in  
Biblical Literature  
Carl D. Evans
- 4 The Concept of Diaspora in  
Talmudic Thought  
Eliezer Segal
- 8 Diaspora in the Hellenistic Period  
Edrel Arie
- 17 Symbols of the Diaspora  
Ellen Frankel
- 23 Liturgy in the Diaspora  
Raymond Apple
- 31 The Concept of Exile and Diaspora  
in Sephardi Thought  
Marc D. Angel
- 34 Lurianic Kabbalah and the Idea  
of the Diaspora  
Shaul Magid
- 38 Communication in the Premodern  
Jewish Diaspora Sophia Menache

42 The Concept of Diaspora and Exile  
in German-Jewish Literature  
and Art

Mark H. Gelber

48 The Concept of Sephardi and the  
Ashkenazi in German-Jewish and  
German Anti-Semitic Thought

Mark H. Gelber

52 The Concept of Diaspora  
in the Thought of  
Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Marc D. Angel

54 Jewry as an Archetypical Diaspora  
Gabriel Sheffer

57 Jewish Self-Hatred  
Ritchie Robertson

61 Diaspora, Exile, and Jewish  
Identity

Howard K. Wettstein

## **History of the Diaspora**

64 Jews and Judaism in Ancient  
World Literature

Timothy Andrew McCaffrey

72 History of Jews as a Minority  
Robert M. Seltzer

78 The Lost Tribes of Israel  
Amotz Asa-El

87 The Samaritan Diaspora  
Alan D. Crown

90 History of the Karaite Diaspora  
Fred Astren

- Persecution of Diaspora Jews**
- 95 **History of Jewish Persecution and Expulsion**  
Frederick Schweitzer
- 103 **Varieties of Anti-Semitism**  
Ritchie Robertson
- 107 **Literary Anti-Semitism**  
Mark H. Gelber
- 112 **Western Democracies and the Holocaust**  
William D. Rubinstein
- 115 **Euro-Arab Anti-Semitism**  
Bat Ye'or
- 118 **The New Anti-Semitism**  
Danny Ben-Moshe
- 123 **The Dissemination of Early Christianity beyond the Jewish Diaspora**  
Marianne Dacy
- Religious Fusion and Interaction in the Diaspora**
- 126 **Jewish Diaspora and the Spreading of Christianity**  
Edward Kessler
- 132 **Jewish Influence on the Formation of the Christian Scriptures**  
Alison Salvesen
- 136 **History of Judeo-Christian Communities in the Jewish Diaspora**  
David J. Rudolph
- 139 **Islamization and Jews in the Medieval Middle East**  
Fred Astren
- 141 **Christian–Jewish Dialogue: 18th Century**  
Klaus L. Berghahn
- 146 **Contemporary Judeo-Christian Communities in the Jewish Diaspora**  
David J. Rudolph
- 150 **Jewish–Islamic Mutual Influences**  
Esperanza Alfonso
- 156 **The Widespread Phenomena of Marranism and Hidden Jews**  
Gloria Mound
- 160 **Brazilian Marranism**  
Anita Waingort Novinsky  
Translation by Mike Boyington
- Languages of the Diaspora**
- 167 **Characteristics of Jewish Languages**  
David M. Bunis
- 171 **Varieties of Diaspora Languages**  
John Myhill
- 180 **Judeo-Spanish in the Turkish Social Context**  
Mary Altabev
- 184 **Two-Tiered Relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars, and the Kiev-Polesian Dialect**  
Paul Wexler
- 187 **A Perspective on Judeo-Ibero-Romance, Yiddish, and Rotwelsch**  
Paul Wexler
- 191 **The Yiddish-German Irony**  
Frank Heynick
- 193 **Yiddish as a Diaspora Language and Its Future**  
Dovid Katz
- 197 **The Integration of Yiddish into English**  
Arnie Keogh
- 200 **Diaspora Influences on Modern Hebrew (“Israeli”)**  
Ghilad Zuckermann
- Music and Culture of the Diaspora**
- 206 **Overview of Diaspora Jewish Music**  
Marsha Bryan Edelman

- 214 **Liturgical Music of Sephardi Jews**  
Mark Kligman
- 218 **Liturgy and Music of Syrian Jews**  
Mark Kligman
- 220 **Humor and Satire in  
Judeo-Spanish Song**  
Judith R. Cohen
- 222 **Music and the Reconstruction of  
Iberian Crypto-Jewish Identity**  
Judith R. Cohen
- 225 **Contemporary Jewish Music  
in America**  
Mark Kligman
- 229 **Rescue and Virtual Preservation  
of Diaspora Cultural Heritage by  
the Center for Jewish Art**  
Aliza Cohen-Mushlin
- 233 **Jewish Contributions to the Arts**  
Sylvia Barack Fishman
- Women in the Diaspora**
- 251 **The Jewish Diaspora and the  
Role of Women**  
Judith R. Baskin
- 255 **Sephardi Women, Marriage, and  
Family: 16th–17th Centuries**  
Ruth Lamdan
- 260 **Jewish Women in Central Europe:  
19th–20th Centuries**  
Dieter J. Hecht
- 264 **Women, Family, and Identity in  
Imperial Germany (1871–1918)**  
Marion Kaplan
- 267 **Jewish Women in Yemen**  
Yael Katzir
- 271 **Women and Egalitarianism in  
American Judaism**  
Shaul Magid
- Genetics, Medicine, and  
Genealogy**
- 275 **Jewish Genetic Diseases**  
Edwin H. Kolodny
- 287 **Genetic Diseases and  
the Diaspora**  
Joel Zlotogora
- 292 **Evolution of Jewish  
Genealogic Studies**  
Sallyann Sack
- 294 **Jews, Diaspora, and Medicine**  
Frank Heynick
- 301 **Freud, Judaism, and the  
Emergence of Psychoanalysis**  
Frank Heynick
- Sephardi, Oriental, and  
Ashkenazi Ethnicities  
and Culture**
- 305 **Jews under Muslim Rule**  
Frederick Schweitzer
- 309 **History of the Religious  
Leadership of Oriental Jewry**  
Menachem Ben-Sasson
- 315 **Insights into Sephardic  
Intellectual History**  
Marc D. Angel
- 320 **Jewish Enlightenment and  
Its Impact on the Diaspora**  
Shmuel Feiner
- 325 **Beginning of Hasidism in  
Eastern Europe**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- Israel and the Diaspora**
- 328 **Jewish Immigration to Pre-State  
and Modern Israel**  
Danny Ben-Moshe
- 333 **Diaspora Anti-Zionism**  
Thomas A. Kolsky
- 340 **Jewish Diaspora Engagement  
with Israel**  
Danny Ben-Moshe
- 345 **Education in Israel about  
the Diaspora**  
Matt Silver and Aliza Shenhar

- Migration and Wanderings of Diaspora Jews**
- 351 **A Chronology of Jewish Travelers and Explorers**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich and Steve Hall
- 354 **Migration Patterns of Iraqi Jews**  
Myer Samra
- 361 **Westward Migration Routes of Sephardi Jews**  
Julia R. Lieberman
- 364 **Population Transfer of the Jews of Thessaloniki**  
Yitzchak Kerem
- 369 **Migration Routes of Rhodian Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean Basin**  
Yitzchak Kerem
- 375 **Migration Routes of Egyptian Jews**  
Racheline Barda
- 378 **Why the Majority of the Jews of Iraq Emigrated to Israel in Operation Ezra and Nehemya, as Viewed by Jewish Memoirs**  
Daphne Tsimhoni
- 382 **Modern Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries**  
David G. Littman
- 386 **Contemporary Migration Patterns of Russian Jews to Germany**  
Barbara Dietz
- Contemporary Diaspora**
- 392 **The Demography of Modern Diaspora Jewry**  
Sergio Della-Pergola
- 402 **Self-Revitalization of Diaspora Life**  
Martina Urban
- 407 **Jewish Values and Diaspora Philanthropy**  
Gary A. Tobin
- 412 **Contemporary Responses to Inter marriage**  
Gerald Cromer
- 416 **A Rabbi's Reflections on the Modern Rabbinate and the Jewish Community**  
Marc D. Angel
- 419 **Insight into the Workings of a Diaspora Beth Din**  
Raymond Apple
- 421 **Contemporary Conversion Patterns into Orthodox Judaism**  
Marc D. Angel
- 424 **Jewish Day School Education in French-Speaking Europe**  
Zehavit Gross
- 427 **The International Network of Religious Zionist Kollels**  
Yael Ehrenpreis Meyer
- 430 **The Habad Movement, Its Organizations, and Its Influence in the Diaspora**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- Africa**
- 449 **Jews in Africa**  
Saul Issroff with the assistance of Moshe Silberhaft
- 453 **Migrations of Jews into West Africa**  
Ehav Eliyahu
- 455 **Jews in Algeria**  
Saul Issroff
- 459 **Jews in Cape Verde**  
Carol S. Castiel
- 461 **Jewish Community of the Democratic Republic of Congo**  
Moïse Rahmani  
Translated by R. George Anticoni
- 463 **Jewish Community in Egypt**  
Jeffrey S. Malka
- 467 **Jews in Ethiopia**  
Shalva Weil
- 475 **Jews in Kenya**  
Saul Issroff
- 477 **Jews in Libya**  
Vivienne Roumani-Denn

- 481 **Jewish Community in Morocco**  
Richard Gold
- 487 **The Sephardi Jewish Community in North Morocco**  
Tito Benady
- 490 **Jewish Community of Namibia**  
Richard Newman
- 492 **Jews in Nigeria**  
Remy Ilona
- 493 **Jews in South Africa**  
Saul Issroff
- 503 **Jewish Community in Sudan**  
Jeffrey S. Malka
- 505 **The Sudan Jewish Community According to the Community Register**  
Nahem Ilan
- 509 **Jews in Tunisia**  
Judith Roumani
- 515 **Jews in Uganda**  
Saul Issroff
- 516 **Jews in Zambia**  
Saul Issroff
- 518 **Jews in Zimbabwe**  
Saul Issroff with the assistance of Dave Bloom
- Australasia**
- 521 **Jews in Australia**  
Suzanne D. Rutland and Gary Eckstein
- 526 **Sephardi Jews in Australia**  
Myer Samra
- 531 **Conversion to Judaism in the Sydney Jewish Community**  
Raymond Apple
- 532 **Jews in Fiji**  
Steve Hall
- 533 **Jews in French Polynesia**  
Stephen Levine
- 534 **Jews in New Zealand**  
Stephen Levine
- 542 **Contributions of Jewish Individuals in New Zealand: 1840s to the Present**  
Leonard Bell
- North America**
- 546 **Jews in North America**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 548 **Jews in Canada**  
Avi Goldberg, Randal F. Schnoor, and Morton Weinfeld
- 553 **Judeo-Portuguese in the Anglo-American Colonies**  
Joseph Abraham Levi
- 560 **Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jews in the United States**  
Marc D. Angel
- 563 **Jewish Women of the Early American West**  
Jeanee Abrams
- 566 **Great American Jewish Thinkers and Their Attitudes toward Diaspora**  
S. Daniel Breslauer
- 571 **The Jewish Diaspora in America: Social Integration, Political Liberalism, and Attachment to Homeland**  
Uzi Rebhun
- 592 **American Jews and Radicalism**  
Gerald Sorin
- 597 **American Jewry's Response to the Holocaust**  
Rafael Medoff
- 602 **History of the Habad Movement in the United States**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 608 **Modern Jewish Orthodoxy in America**  
Chaim I. Waxman
- 613 **Denomination and Jewish Identity in America**  
Chaim I. Waxman
- 615 **Syrian Jews in New York**  
Sarina Roffé

- 620 **Jewish Women's Contributions to Contemporary American and Jewish Life**  
Sylvia Barack Fishman
- 624 **Jewish Renewal in America**  
Shaul Magid
- 629 **Jewish Studies in American Universities**  
Judith R. Baskin
- 632 **American Christian Attitudes to the Jewish Diaspora**  
Yaakov Ariel
- 635 **American Zionist Activities and Organizations**  
Matt Silver
- 642 **American Jews and the State of Israel**  
Chaim I. Waxman
- 645 **The Portrayal of American Jews in Israeli Literature**  
Matt Silver
- Latin America and the Caribbean**
- 650 **Jews in the Caribbean and the Guianas**  
Mordechai Arbell
- 667 **Jews in Central America**  
Mordechai Arbell
- 673 **Jews in Mexico**  
Mauricio Lulka Pipco and Reneé Dayán-Shabot
- 682 **History of Jewish Migration to Mexico**  
Adina Cimet
- 685 **Contemporary Jewish Identity in Mexico**  
Adina Cimet
- 688 **Jews in Latin America**  
Gilbert W. Merkx
- 695 **Jewish Identity in Latin American Fiction**  
Lois Barr
- 700 **Jewish Identity in Latin American Jewish Cinema**  
Darrell B. Lockhart
- 703 **Jewish Studies as a Subject of Latin American Studies**  
Gilbert W. Merkx
- 705 **Latin American Jewish Literature**  
Stephen A. Sadow
- 710 **Jews in Argentina**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 716 **Jews in Brazil**  
Jeffrey Lesser
- 723 **Brazil, Jews, and Transatlantic Trade**  
Joseph Abraham Levi
- 728 **Jews in Peru**  
Carolyn Wolfenzon
- 735 **Concept of the Jew in Peruvian Literature**  
Carolyn Wolfenzon
- 738 **Jews in Suriname**  
Wieke Vink
- 741 **Jews in Uruguay**  
Avram Hein
- 745 **Jews in Venezuela**  
Carlos Colina
- Middle East**
- 751 **Jews in the Middle East**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich and David Straub
- 754 **Israelites and Judeans in Assyria in Ancient Times**  
Ran Zadok
- 757 **Judeans in Babylonia in Ancient Times**  
Ran Zadok
- 762 **Jewish Leadership in the Babylonian Diaspora: Second–Sixth Centuries**  
Geoffrey Herman

- 767 **Jews in Iran**  
Irena Vladimírsky
- 771 **Jews in Iraq and Zionism**  
Esther Meir-Glitzenstein
- 776 **Jews in the Ottoman Empire**  
Marc D. Angel
- 779 **The Sabbatean Movement in the Ottoman Empire**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 786 **History of Jews in Syria**  
Sarina Roffé
- 793 **Jews in Yemen**  
Barak Barfi and Yael Katzir
- Western Europe**
- 801 **Jews in Europe**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 805 **Jews in Austria**  
Shoshannah Zirkin
- 809 **Overrepresentation of Jews in Vienna's Gymnasien**  
Steven Beller
- 812 **Jews in Belgium**  
Shoshannah Zirkin
- 815 **Holocaust Art in Belgium**  
Daniel Potteau
- 820 **Jews in France**  
Ronald Schechter and Shoshannah Zirkin
- 832 **Jewish Day School Education in French-Speaking Europe**  
Zehavit Gross
- 835 **Jewish Identity in French Literature and Society in the Twentieth Century**  
Alan Astro
- 840 **Jews in Germany**  
Frederick Ehrlich
- 844 **Jews in Germany: 1848–1933**  
Peter Pulzer
- 848 **Jews in Gibraltar**  
Tito Benady
- 851 **The Jews of Gibraltar and the Development of Medical Practices**  
Lawrence Sawchuk
- 855 **Jews in Greece**  
Frederick Ehrlich
- 857 **History of the Jews of the Island of Rhodes**  
Marc D. Angel
- 860 **Jewish Commerce in Salonica: 1881–1912**  
Orly C. Meron
- 865 **Jews in Italy**  
Steve Hall and Shoshannah Zirkin
- 870 **Jews in Milan: 1535–1597**  
Orly C. Meron
- 875 **Portuguese Jews of the Diaspora: Italy and Beyond**  
Joseph Abraham Levi
- 883 **Jews in Luxembourg**  
Shoshannah Zirkin
- 886 **Jews in Malta**  
Tito Benady
- 887 **Jews in the Netherlands**  
Shoshannah Zirkin
- 892 **Jews in Portugal**  
Shoshannah Zirkin
- 895 **Jews in Scotland**  
Nathan Abrams
- 900 **Jews in Spain**  
Shoshannah Zirkin
- 905 **Jews and Jewish Communities in Medieval Spain**  
Norman Roth
- 913 **Relations between Jews and Muslims in Medieval Spain**  
Norman Roth
- 916 **Jews in Minorca: 18th Century**  
Tito Benady

- 918 **Jews in Switzerland**  
Avram Hein
- 922 **Jews in the United Kingdom**  
William D. Rubinstein and  
Avram Hein
- 930 **History of Jewish Wealth  
in Britain**  
William D. Rubinstein
- 933 **The British Chief Rabbinate**  
Raymond Apple
- 936 **Influence of British Jewry on  
World Jewry** Raymond Apple
- Central and Eastern Europe  
and Russia**
- 938 **Jews in Central Europe,  
Eastern Europe, and Russia**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 942 **Jews in Albania**  
David Straub
- 946 **Jews in Belarus**  
Alexander Friedman
- 953 **Jews in Bulgaria**  
Frederick B. Chary, Emil Kalo,  
Julina Dadova, and Robert Levi
- 968 **Jews in the Czech Republic**  
Cooper Childers
- 971 **Jews in Hungary**  
Jordan Auslander and  
Frederick Ehrlich
- 979 **Jews in the Republic  
of Macedonia**  
Scott Meadows
- 982 **Jews in Poland**  
Vladimir Levin and  
Piotr Goldstein
- 988 **Jews in Romania and Moldova**  
Frederick Ehrlich
- 992 **Jews in Russia**  
Avram Hein
- 998 **The Unique Relationship  
between Habad Hasidism  
and Russia**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 1001 **Jews in Slovakia**  
Norris Thigpen
- 1004 **Jews in Slovenia**  
David Straub
- 1007 **Jews in the Ukraine**  
Samuel Barnai
- Baltic States**
- 1017 **Jews in the Baltic States**  
David Straub
- 1019 **Jews and Anti-Semitism in  
the Baltic States**  
Dov Levin
- 1025 **Jews in Estonia**  
David Straub
- 1028 **Jews in Latvia**  
David Straub
- 1034 **Jews in Lithuania**  
Saul Issroff and Aubrey Newman
- 1040 **History of Lithuanian  
Jewish Culture**  
Dovid Katz
- 1046 **Vilnius as a Jewish City**  
Mordechai Zalkin
- Scandinavia**
- 1050 **Jews in Scandinavia**  
Mikael Tossavainen
- 1057 **Intermarriage in Scandinavia**  
Lars Dencik
- 1062 **Jews in Denmark**  
Bent Blüdnikow
- 1071 **Jews in Finland**  
Svante Lundgren
- 1077 **Jews in Iceland**  
Snorri G. Bergsson
- 1082 **Jews in Norway**  
Irene Levin
- 1087 **Jews in Sweden**  
Mikael Tossavainen
- Caucasus and Central Asia**
- 1093 **Jews in the Caucasus**  
Irena Vladimírsky

- 1097 **Jews in Khazaria**  
Dan D. Y. Shapira
- 1104 **Jews in Armenia**  
Irena Vladimirsky
- 1108 **Jews in Ancient Armenia:**  
**First Century BCE to**  
**Fifth Century CE**  
Aram Topchyan
- 1113 **Jews in Medieval Armenia**  
Kevin A. Brook
- 1114 **Jews in Azerbaijan**  
David Straub
- 1119 **Jews in Georgia**  
Alex Mikaberidze
- 1122 **Jews in Central Asia**  
David Straub
- 1129 **Jews in Afghanistan**  
Irena Vladimirsky
- 1132 **Jews in Kazakhstan**  
Irena Vladimirsky
- 1136 **Jews in Kyrgyzstan**  
Irena Vladimirsky
- 1142 **Jews in Tajikistan**  
David Straub
- 1146 **Jews in Turkmenistan**  
Irena Vladimirsky
- 1149 **Jews in Uzbekistan**  
David Straub and  
Irena Vladimirsky
- East Asia**
- 1155 **Jews in China**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 1160 **Jews of Kaifeng, China**  
Noam Urbach
- 1167 **Survey of Historical Jewish**  
**Personalities in China**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 1172 **Jews in Shanghai**  
Carl Hoffman and  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 1176 **Jews in Major Chinese Cities;**  
**Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen,**  
**Macau, Jinan, Qingdao**  
M. Avrum Ehrlich
- 1182 **Jews in Harbin**  
Jonathan Goldstein
- 1186 **Jews in Hong Kong**  
Judy Green and Judy Diestal
- 1193 **Jews in Taiwan**  
Don Shapiro
- 1196 **Jews in Japan**  
Marvin Tokayer and Steve Hall
- India and Pakistan**
- 1204 **Jews in India**  
Shalva Weil
- 1213 **Jewish–Indian Contacts over**  
**the Ages**  
Nathan Katz
- 1216 **Bene-Israel and Baghdadi Jews**  
**in India: Early 20th Century**  
Yulia Egorova
- 1218 **The Benei Menashe of India**  
Myer Samra
- 1223 **Jewish Parsis Relations in India**  
**and Pakistan**  
Rashna Singh
- 1225 **Jews in Indian Public Life**  
Rashna Singh
- 1228 **Jews in Pakistan**  
Shalva Weil
- 1230 **The Pathans of Pakistan and**  
**Afghanistan and Their**  
**Israelite Status**  
Shalva Weil
- Southeast Asia**
- 1232 **Jews in Southeast Asia**  
Jonathan Goldstein
- 1235 **Jews in Indonesia**  
Jonathan Goldstein
- 1240 **Jews in Malaysia**  
Jonathan Goldstein
- 1240 **Jews in Myanmar**  
Jonathan Goldstein
- 1243 **Jews in the Philippines**  
Jonathan Goldstein
- 1247 **Jews in Singapore**  
Jonathan Goldstein

1250 **Jews in Thailand**  
Jonathan Goldstein

*Glossary*

*Index*

*About the Editor*

# Editorial Board and Staff

## Editor

Professor M. Avrum Ehrlich  
*Centre for Judaic and Inter-Religious Studies*  
*School of Philosophy and Sociology*  
*Shandong University, Jinan, China*

## Editorial Advisory Board

Mr. Amotz Asa-El  
Professor Alan Crown, AM  
Professor Sergio Della-Pergola  
Professor Frederick Ehrlich, OAM  
Sir Martin Gilbert  
Mr. Isi Leibler  
Dr. Uzi Rebhun  
Professor Jehuda Reinharz  
Professor Jonathan Sarna  
Mr. Nathan Sharansky  
Professor Gabriel Sheffer  
Professor Fu Youde

## Regional Coordinators

Professor Jonathan Goldstein  
(Southeast Asia)  
Dr. Saul Issroff (Africa)  
Professor Suzanne Rutland  
(Australia)  
David Straub (Central Asia,  
the Caucasus, and the Baltic States)

## Editorial Staff

Liora Zhangcan  
David Straub  
Steve Hall

## Research Assistants

Steve Hall  
Benjamin Libin  
Sarah Liyating  
Sun Chaoying



# Contributors

Jeanee Abrams	Aliza Cohen-Mushlin	Saul Issroff
Nathan Abrams	Carlos Colina	Emil Kalo
Esperanza Alfonso	Gerald Cromer	Marion Kaplan
Mary Altabev	Alan D. Crown	Dovid Katz
Marc D. Angel	Marianne Dacy	Nathan Katz
R. George Anticoni	Julina Dadova	Yael Katzir
Raymond Apple	Reneé Dayán-Shabot	Arnie Keogh
Mordechai Arbell	Sergio Della-Pergola	Yitzchak Kerem
Edrel Arie	Lars Dencik	Edward Kessler
Yaakov Ariel	Judy Diestal	Mark Kligman
Amotz Asa-El	Barbara Dietz	Edwin H. Kolodny
Fred Astren	Gary Eckstein	Thomas A. Kolsky
Alan Astro	Marsha Bryan Edelman	Ruth Lamdan
Jordan Auslander	Yulia Egorova	Jeffrey Lesser
Racheline Barda	Frederick Ehrlich	Joseph Abraham Levi
Barak Barfi	M. Avrum Ehrlich	Robert Levi
Samuel Barnai	Ehav Eliyahu	Dov Levin
Lois Barr	Carl D. Evans	Irene Levin
Judith R. Baskin	Shmuel Feiner	Vladimir Levin
Leonard Bell	Sylvia Barack Fishman	Stephen Levine
Steven Beller	Ellen Frankel	Julia R. Lieberman
Tito Benady	Alexander Friedman	David G. Littman
Danny Ben-Moshe	Mark H. Gelber	Darrell B. Lockhart
Menachem Ben-Sasson	Richard Gold	Svante Lundgren
Klaus L. Berghahn	Avi Goldberg	Shaul Magid
Snorri G. Bergsson	Jonathan Goldstein	Jeffrey S. Malka
Dave Bloom	Piotr Goldstein	Timothy Andrew McCaffrey
Bent Blüdnikow	Judy Green	Scott Meadows
Mike Boyington	Zehavit Gross	Rafael Medoff
S. Daniel Breslauer	Steve Hall	Esther Meir-Glitzenstein
Kevin A. Brook	Dieter J. Hecht	Sophia Menache
David M. Bunis	Avram Hein	Gilbert W. Merx
Carol S. Castiel	Geoffrey Herman	Orly C. Meron
Frederick B. Chary	Frank Heynick	Yael Ehrenpreis Meyer
Cooper Childers	Carl Hoffman	Alex Mikaberidze
Adina Cimet	Nahem Ilan	Gloria Mound
Judith R. Cohen	Remy Ilona	John Myhill

Aubrey Newman	Myer Samra	Aram Topchyan
Richard Newman	Lawrence Sawchuk	Mikael Tossavainen
Anita Waingort Novinsky	Ronald Schechter	Daphne Tsimhoni
Mauricio Lulka Pipco	Randal F. Schnoor	Noam Urbach
Daniel Potteau	Frederick Schweitzer	Martina Urban
Peter Pulzer	Eliezer Segal	Wieke Vink
Moïse Rahmani	Robert M. Seltzer	Irena Vladimirsky
Uzi Rebhun	Dan D. Y. Shapira	Chaim I. Waxman
Ritchie Robertson	Don Shapiro	Shalva Weil
Sarina Roffé	Gabriel Sheffer	Morton Weinfeld
Norman Roth	Aliza Shenhar	Howard K. Wettstein
Judith Roumani	Moshe Silberhaft	Paul Wexler
Vivienne Roumani-Denn	Matt Silver	Carolyn Wolfenzon
William D. Rubinstein	Rashna Singh	Bat Ye'or
David J. Rudolph	Gerald Sorin	Ran Zadok
Suzanne D. Rutland	David Straub	Mordechai Zalkin
Sallyann Sack	Norris Thigpen	Shoshannah Zirkin
Stephen A. Sadow	Gary A. Tobin	Joel Zlotogora
Alison Salvesen	Marvin Tokayer	Ghilad Zuckermann

# Preface

Accounting for the remarkable sojourning of the Jews far and wide to distant countries and islands and through countless transformations, incarnations, and ordeals over 2,500 years is not simple. It constitutes an awesome responsibility, invariably leading any editor to fall short of his duties. This *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora* brings together a broad range of material from many disciplines that should be highly informative to students and scholars alike.

The encyclopedia is structured in a twofold way. On the one hand, it provides general overviews of regions and communities of Jews around the world, with historical chronologies, major events, community organizations, and statistics; but it also provides a second layer of in-depth analysis and focused articles on interesting themes and phenomena related to specific regions and interesting themes ranging from music to language, fused religious identities, sociology, science, humanities, history, theology, politics, and so on.

The first volume brings together basic themes and phenomena in Jewish life as well as some of the foremost scholars in their fields to address them. This invaluable collection of essays provides enough diversity and depth to endow student and scholar alike with enough material to grasp the complexity of the Jewish Diaspora.

The second and third volumes contain surveys of many of the Jewish communities that have existed or that do exist in the world today. Many of the authors are the leading scholars on these regions and communities, and although some of the entries provide only superficial overviews, they present an important basic picture of a region's Jewry. Yet some of the lesser-known regions are covered more thoroughly, and in some cases this work brings together original and otherwise unpublished material. The bibliographies refer interested readers to more sources.

The editorial policy was to avoid duplication with other encyclopedias and avoid rehashing the mass of existing literature on well-researched and readily available subjects relating to Diaspora regions and communities. Hence, Western and Eastern European Jewish communities were given fewer words than regions in the Caucasus or Southeast Asia. Our policy was to provide briefer overviews and references where the literature was easily available, while covering subjects in more detail where the literature was harder to access and more esoteric. Scattered communities in East, Southeast, and Central Asia; India; Caucasus; Africa; Scandinavia; and Latin America, as well as obscure phenomena relating to the Jewish Diaspora, mixed Jewish identities, and enigmatic themes, have been more enthusiastically covered to illuminate the rare and eclectic elements of exilic existence. However,

the more mainstay Jewish communities have also been covered to ensure uniformity and consistency.

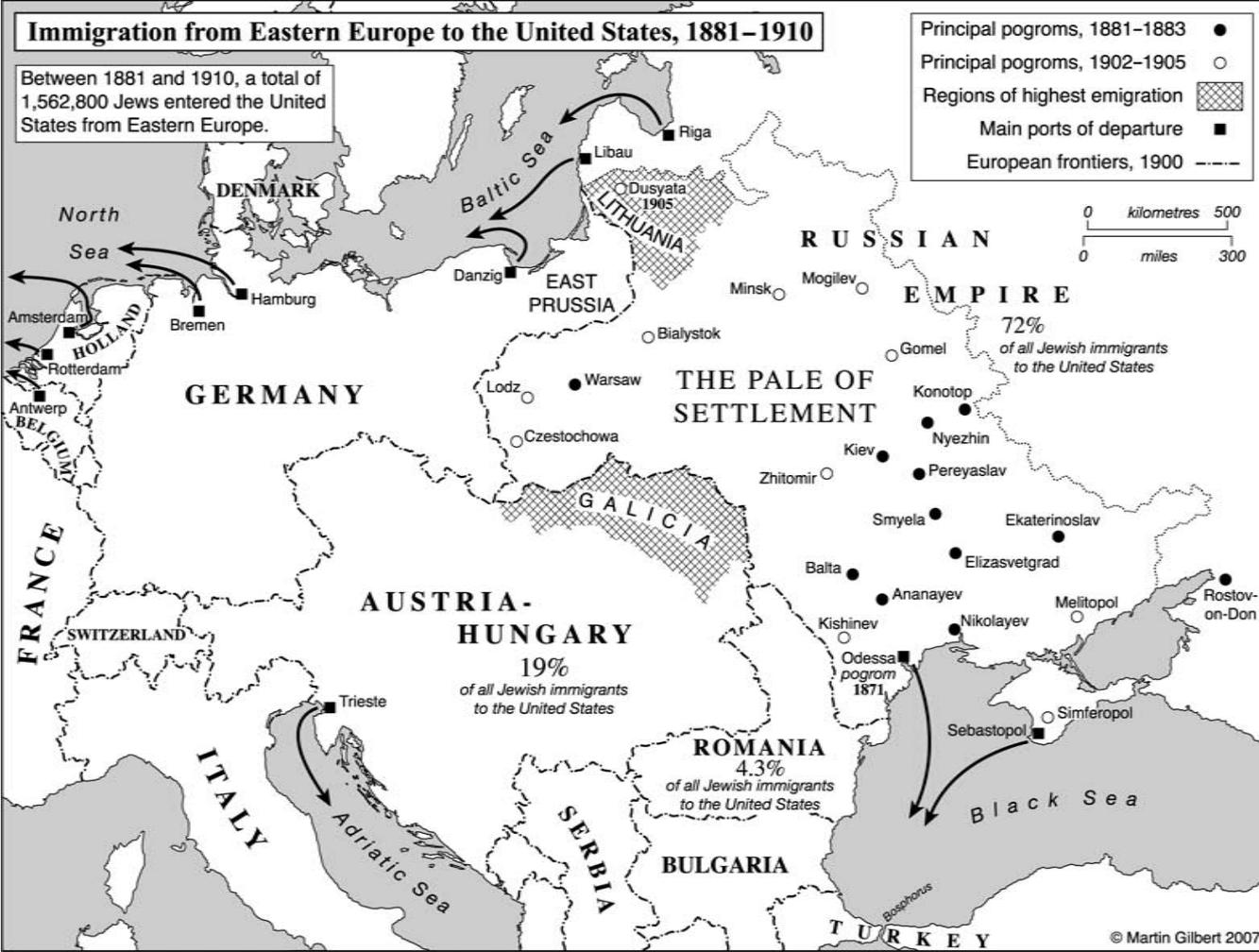
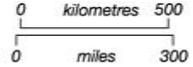
It is my wish through this work to relay the almost surreal and fantastic journeys of the Jewish people winding through time and over distances and how, without their understanding, they became a beacon for so many experiences and a microcosm of so much to be understood. It is my hope that these articles and ideas serve as a core collection for those seeking insight into the dynamics of the Diaspora. It is my wish for this collection to serve as a yavneaic foundation for the future of Jewish studies and thought. I apologize to the reader and to the memory of such places for the many regions and communities in the past and present that were not mentioned in this work. I eagerly invite readers to share with me their insights and knowledge of Diaspora regions and events, ideas, and insights in preparation for future editions.

M. AVRUM EHRLICH, Editor  
Professor of Jewish Thought, Texts, and Culture  
Centre for Judaic and Inter-Religious Studies  
School of Philosophy and Sociology  
Shandong University, Jinan, China

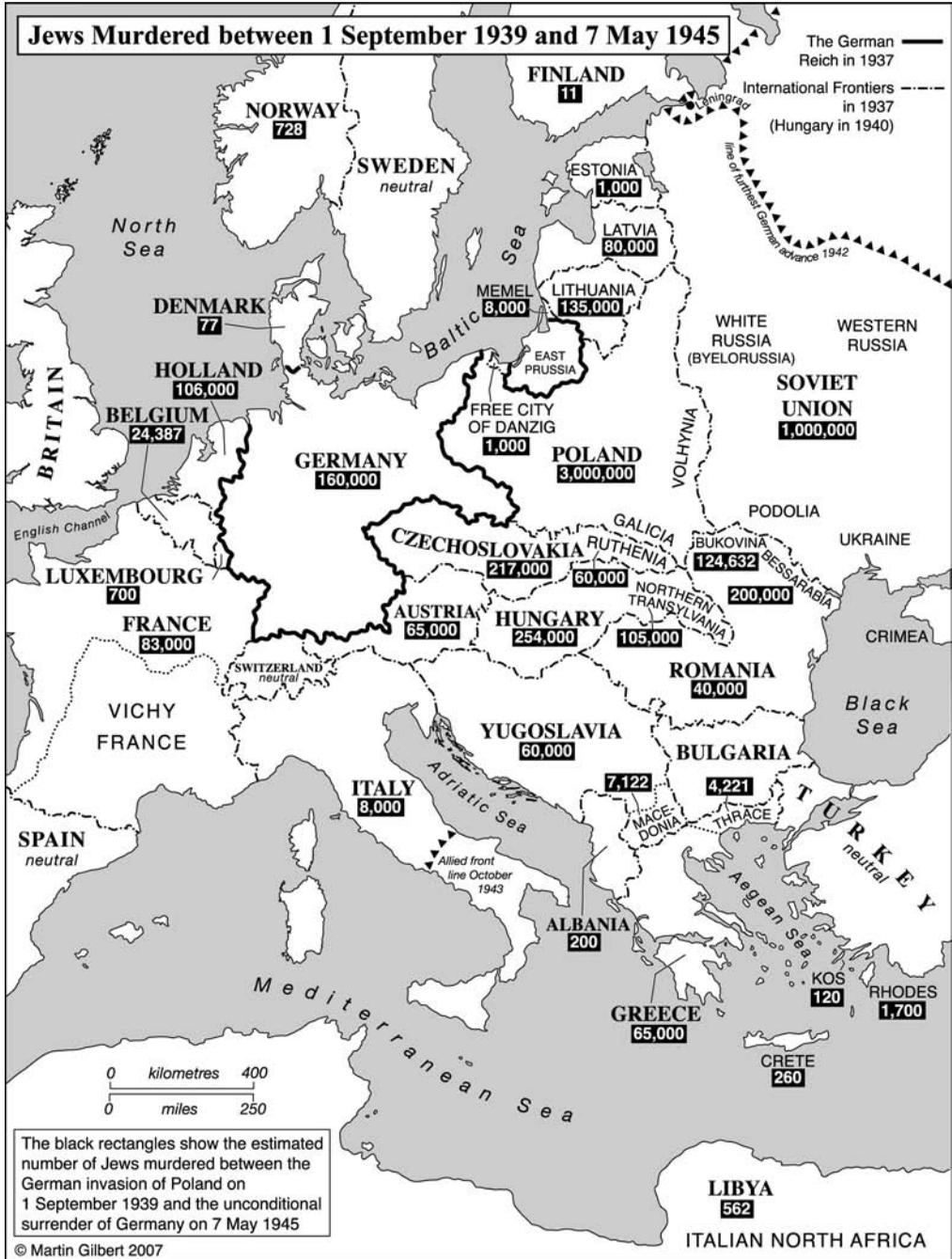
# Immigration from Eastern Europe to the United States, 1881–1910

Between 1881 and 1910, a total of 1,562,800 Jews entered the United States from Eastern Europe.

- Principal pogroms, 1881–1883 ●
- Principal pogroms, 1902–1905 ○
- Regions of highest emigration ▨
- Main ports of departure ■
- European frontiers, 1900 - - -



# Jews Murdered between 1 September 1939 and 7 May 1945



# Introduction

## The Need and Usefulness of Diaspora Studies

*Gabriel (Gabi) Sheffer*

---

The study of the diaspora phenomenon in general, and of specific diasporas, including the Jewish Diaspora, in particular, is needed and useful for a number of closely intertwined reasons. (For a comprehensive discussion of this and other related issues, see Sheffer 2006.) Among the more pertinent reasons for studying the phenomenon and its usefulness are the following: first, the ongoing growth of the number and size of such entities; second, the almost mind-boggling capability of these inherently endangered entities to overcome tremendous hardships; third, the historical and current impressive cultural, social, political, and economic significance and contributions of these entities to homelands, host lands, and the international system; fourth, the great complexity of this human phenomenon, the comprehension of which can contribute to a better understanding of past and current intricate experiences of large groups of “others”; fifth, the growing impact of diasporas on both peaceful and turbulent processes, including terrorism, all over the world; and sixth, the contribution a better understanding of the diasporic phenomenon might make to the prevention of holocausts and disasters that again may be inflicted on such entities, on the one hand, and to the greater appreciation of these entities, on the other hand.

Until the late 20th century, wherever possible, and particularly whenever their physical appearance, mores, habits, and linguistic proficiency permitted, many members of such entities did not identify as belonging to diasporas. They tried hard to minimize the importance of their contacts with their countries of origin/homelands, and they did not publicize their membership in organizations serving these entities and homelands. Such patterns of behavior were related to a widespread prevalent desire among members of these groups to assimilate, acculturate, or fully integrate into their host societies.

At the same time, whether deliberately or not, both democratic and non-democratic host societies and governments largely ignored most of these diasporas. In certain cases, such host societies and governments doubted the endurance capability of diasporas in general and of the diasporic entities that resided within their boundaries in particular. These societies and governments minimized the cultural, social, political, and economic vitality, endurance, and significance of the diasporas. Similarly, they ignored the various roles these diasporas played in host societies and their contributions to the host societies. The host societies, again either consciously or unconsciously, also overlooked the wider domestic, regional, and global political implications of the existence of such diasporas in their midst. Yet, although various host societies and governments viewed ethnonational diasporas

as a marginal and temporary phenomenon, they regarded them as actually and potentially menacing and therefore undesirable. Consequently, host societies and governments applied social, political, and economic pressures on immigrants who were allowed to permanently settle in these countries. The purposes of those pressures were to drive immigrants to assimilate; to fully accept all prevailing social, political, and economic norms; to completely integrate into these host societies; or to leave.

Not only did host societies and governments hold such diminutive views about the endurance of diasporas and demonstrate such rancorous attitudes toward them, but homeland societies and governments also demonstrated either indifferent or ambiguous attitudes toward “their” diasporas. Because social and political research usually follows “real world” developments, it was not entirely surprising that until the 1970s many academics also ignored the diasporic phenomenon, with the exception of a few focused studies, mainly on the identity of specific diasporas, lobbying on behalf of their homelands and on their successful or failed attempts at assimilation and integration in host countries .

Most observers were inclined to equate ethnic diasporism only with the Jewish dispersal and, in line with Jewish tradition, saw it as a state of exile. In this vein, they regarded the Jewish Diaspora either as *sui generis*, that is, a marginal and a disappearing social phenomenon, or as a model for all other diasporas. These views were so common that they were reflected in the diaspora entries in most important dictionaries, encyclopedias, and scholarly works in this field. Consequently, until the late 1980s, only scant attention was given to the fact that dispersed ethnonational communities constitute an indubitable reality. In fact, like other issues pertaining to ethnicity and ethnic groups, ethnonational diasporism was regarded unworthy of serious consideration and in-depth study (Armstrong 1976). Moreover, certain analyses of the phenomenon were predicated on normative assumptions based on nationalist, liberal, socialist, and Marxist ideologies. The result was that some observers not only predicted the unavoidable gradual disappearance of such groups but also went as far as prescribing either the assimilation of their members or the return to their homelands. Basing themselves on the results of purportedly sound theoretical, analytical, and empirical grounds, other scholars considered the issue of ethnonational diasporism as uninteresting.

These analyses, predictions, and prescriptions notwithstanding, as already noted, over the past two decades the total number of established diasporas and their members have increased conspicuously. Moreover, individuals and families belonging to these ethnonational entities have altered their previous assimilationist, full integrationist, or acculturationist proclivities. Increasingly, Palestinians, Kurds, Turks, Moroccans, Croats, Poles, and many others who permanently reside outside their homelands do not conceal their ethnonational origins and affiliations. And because of their growing self-confidence and assertiveness, many diasporans, not only first, second, and third generations, proudly maintain their ethnonational identity, uphold their homeland citizenship, openly identify as members of diasporic organizations, and are far from being reluctant to publicly act on behalf of their homelands and dispersed kinsmen.

Again, not entirely surprisingly in view of these developments, more intellectuals, writers, journalists, and politicians have also become aware of the phenomenon and acknowledge the permanency of diasporic phenomenon. Some observers even admit the positive cultural and economic contributions diasporas make to host societies. In any case, these new dispositions further enhance processes whereby analysts of such developments are becoming more aware of the enormous ethnic pluralism and of the existence of diasporas. In short, diasporas are increasingly included in the pluralist or multicultural conceptual analytical frameworks intended to deal with this phenomenon and its various implications. It is important to note that to an extent diaspora members contribute to these new trends.

The newly found confidence and assertiveness among members of diasporas, on the one hand, and greater recognition of the phenomenon and tolerance toward diaspora members on the part of host governments and society, on the other, have generated animated discussions among politicians, laypeople, and, particularly, academics. These debates have been conducted in the context of the general deliberations about transnationalism, nationalism, and ethnicity, or in the context of specific diasporism and diasporas.

Thus, as previously mentioned, although until the mid-1980s only a few analytical and theoretical publications focused on the diasporic phenomenon, since then, the study of ethnic diasporism and diasporas has spectacularly proliferated. Now books, articles, and studies on this and related issues are abundant. The numerous references to “diasporism” and “diasporas” in recent publications on ethnography, anthropology, ethnicity, sociology, political theory, comparative politics, international relations, globalization, and transnationalism, as well as the numerous seminars, conferences, study groups, and grants offered by governments, municipalities, universities, and research institutes, all attest to the fact that the interest in these groups is growing.

Nevertheless, despite the current increased attention given to ethnonational diasporas, the study of these groups is still in its early stages. In this vein, the dramatic growth of diasporas and the intensity of their activities within the context of the current chaotic world order—which has been partly attributed to ethnic and diasporic unrest (Brown 1996; Gurr 2000)—warrants additional theoretical and comparative investigation as well as explication, clarification, and explanation.

The need for further in-depth studies of diasporism and diasporas is also underlined by the attitudinal and practical change toward diaspora politics. This is coupled by new perspectives on certain interrelated issues that substantially affect diasporas. Among these are the simultaneous processes of globalization, regionalization, localization, dissipation of nationalism, the weakening of both the “nation-state” and the “state,” increasing international migration, migration cycles, and the role of religion and religious fundamentalism in the survival and revival of ethnic minorities and diasporas (Smith 1999).

These new trends have resulted in the recognized need for a strong emphasis on the study of the anthropological, cultural, social, and economic aspects of ethnicity in general and diasporas in particular. However, as noted, there is a noticeable

deficit of in-depth and comprehensive theoretical and comparative studies and discussion of various dimensions of the diasporic phenomenon.

The fact that ethnonational diasporas exist and function in highly intricate environments raises multiple questions, some of which are discussed in the relevant literature: Is the ethnonational diasporic phenomenon perennial or modern? Has the nature of ethnonational diasporas changed over the last two centuries? Is the identity of diaspora members of an essentialist, instrumental, or constructed nature? What are the roles of collectives, individuals, and environmental factors in the formation, persistence, and behavior of diasporas? What are the main characteristics of contemporary ethnonational diasporas? Are all diasporas of the same type? Are these stable and homogenous or unsteady and hybrid formations? What are the organizational structures of diasporas, and what strategies and tactics do they use? What are the functions of these organizations and their contributions to homelands, host countries, and the emerging global society? Can diasporas inflict substantial damages on their hosts and homelands? And finally, are these groups precursors of postmodern, postnational, and transstate social and political systems?

Some authors have argued that short definitions are not sufficient (Cohen 1997; Vertovec 1997; Safran 1999; Braziel and Mannur 2003) and some writers agree about the need for profiles of diasporas. The main elements of such a profile, which would provide some answers to the aforementioned questions, are specified here. Ethnonational diasporism and diasporas do not constitute a recent modern phenomenon. Rather, as the Jewish, Indian, Chinese, and Armenian diasporas demonstrate, diasporism is a perennial phenomenon. An essential aspect of this phenomenon is the endless cultural, social, economic, and especially political struggles of these dispersed ethnic groups and connections with their homelands and other dispersed groups of the same nation. Though there is an ongoing debate about the nature of these entities, partly because of recent developments in the study of the sociobiological origins of ethnic groups, there is a renewed awareness and understanding that these are neither purely imagined nor utterly constructed communities. This is due to the fact that their identities are intricate combinations of primordial, psychological/mythical, and instrumental elements. It is a fact that over time the cultural and social identities of these entities undergo certain adaptations to changing circumstances in both their host lands and homelands, but basic elements in their ethnonational identity remain intact. Diasporas struggle to survive while they do their utmost to feel at home in their host countries, which in many instances demonstrate hostility toward them. And in fact, they survive despite an inherent ambiguity shown toward them by their homelands, also. To survive, diasporas must organize and conduct activities on a number of levels. Such organization raises questions about their loyalties, especially vis-à-vis their homeland.

Taking all these characteristics together, it seems that ethnonational diasporas, including the Jewish Diaspora, which fits the profile, are indeed the precursors of postmodern transstate and transnational social and political entities. In this respect, though they use advanced modes of communications, they are far from being virtual transnational communities. Any attempt to portray them as such is missing

the point. Ethnonational diasporas are bona fide entities, as viable as other ethnic minorities.

However, because ethnonational diasporas find themselves living under social and political conditions that are more hostile and difficult than those faced by some other ethnic minorities, theoretically, they represent the extreme cases of the entire ethnic phenomenon. Hence, their systematic study can and should provide answers to some vexing general questions, such as whether ethnicity is an invented or authentic phenomenon, whether ethnic identity is inherent or conditional on environmental factors, whether or not it is a permanent feature of postmodern life, and whether or not adequate strategies exist that could reduce the tensions and conflicts associated with these groups.

To provide even more insightful answers to both the analytical and practical questions regarding the future of diasporism and diasporas, some additional issues must be studied. These studies should be conducted within the clusters set forth as follows.

The first cluster of future studies should begin by reexamining the explanatory power of the basic distinctions between the various types of diasporas, that is, transnational and transstate (Miles and Sheffer 1998); stateless and state-linked; and historical, modern, and incipient. Because the number of diasporas is still growing, and because they develop gradually, special attention should be given to incipient diasporas. Monitoring the development of these groups systematically may produce significant information about ethnicity in general.

The second cluster should focus on the contradictory demographic trends—that is, on the growing size and numbers of diasporas on the one hand, and assimilation and integration trends on the other hand. In this context, there is a need not only for studies of specific ethnic diasporas but also for further comparative studies. This is because the comparative study of the phenomenon is still in its initial phase. As in other fields of academic studies, without the development of such a perspective it will be hard to construct a sound theory of diasporic existence.

It should be added that the definitional borderline between, on the one hand, individuals and groups of tourists, international migrants, guest workers, asylum seekers, and refugees who reside in host countries for long periods and, on the other hand, permanent diasporas, is still blurred. This ambiguity should be clarified for the sake of comparative studies of diaspora formation. When this is done it should be remembered that, for profound emotional, political, and legal reasons, the duration that transient individuals and groups can and wish to remain in host countries before they finally make a choice about their future, or are actually allowed to settle down, is variable and depends on both the host governments and the migrants.

The third cluster of future research should tackle the question of the point at which migrants form new diasporas or join existing ones. Again, the main reason for the ambiguity in this respect is connected to other sensitive issues pertaining to the migration and settlement of ethnic groups. The need to clarify this aspect has not only major theoretical but also practical implications—conceptual and empirical work in this direction will generate a better understanding, especially, of the

motivations of individuals and groups to undertake the heavy burdens of diasporic existence. Such studies are also necessary to facilitate assessments of the potential for further ongoing development of diasporas. But, rather than using legal definitions, such as the date of application for or attainment of citizenship, or using psychological tests, one should apply individual and collective choice models to this crucial issue in the life cycle of every migrant, as well as in the development and survival of diaspora communities.

More particularly, this is needed because in the debate over the origins and nature of ethnicity in general, and of ethnonational diasporas in particular, the element of autonomous choice by individuals, families, and groups has largely been overlooked. It is suggested that the working hypothesis here should be that, while in certain pluralist societies it is relatively easy to defect from ethnonational diasporas, to integrate, and sometimes to assimilate, it is almost impossible for outsiders to fully assimilate into such societies, especially when these diasporans maintain special physical markers and behavioral patterns.

The fourth cluster of research and studies should deal with the main theoretical issue that still requires further exploration. The question is why—despite individual and collective hardships, multiple crosscutting and frequently contradictory forces, such as culturally assimilationist versus tolerant-pluralist, socially absorptive versus xenophobic, politically conflictual versus accommodationist, economically equalizing versus discriminatory, as well as the effects of modernization, mass communication, demographic inferiority, and territorial concentration or dispersal, which are at work in the international arena as well as in host countries' domestic affairs—members of ethnic diasporas maintain their identity, connections with their homelands, patterns of organization, and determination to maintain a certain degree of freedom of collective action?

Here, the applicability of available theoretical explanations about the elusive issue of ethnogenesis and the revival of ethnic minorities, namely, the primordialist, cultural/ideological conflict, economic modernization, rational choice, conflict migration, migration orders and crises, and imagined communities, all should be reconsidered and reevaluated. For it seems that none of such explanations per se are sufficient to unravel the vexing riddles of the revival of historical diasporas, the reorganization of modern diasporas, the awakening of dormant diasporas, and the establishment of new diasporas. It appears that the most promising avenue toward a theory is to combine the cultural-symbolic and personal and collective choice approaches with a focus on elite/grassroots interactive behavior.

The fifth cluster should include further analyses of the fundamental reasons for the adoption of and changes in the main strategies diaspora communities pursue in their host countries to ensure their continued existence. These can be arranged on a spectrum that includes assimilation, integration, communalism, corporatism, autonomism, separation, and irredentism. A better understanding of the reasons for their adoption is significant because the type of strategy adopted by a diaspora indicates how it perceives its environments and, in turn, its relations not only with host society and government but also with homeland and other dispersed segments of the same nation. In this context, it should be ascertained if indeed the

strategy of full assimilation into their respective host societies has become less fashionable among both older and newer diasporas. A reexamination of this factor should begin with the working hypothesis that the motivations and reasons for migrating out of the homeland are not decisive in determining the nature of the community that is later established in the host country. It should also be considered further whether the tendencies to preserve the ethnonational identity and form organized entities that maintain close ties with the homeland do indeed stem from growing realization among migrants that ethnic pluralism is a given; that an increased tolerance toward more moderate forms of ethnic existence and organization has recently emerged, especially in some Western countries; and that a continued separation between host societies and diasporas still prevails in non-democratic countries.

The critical question in this respect is whether, indeed, most diasporas rationally choose communalism or corporatism as their preferred strategy. The assumption that should be tested here is that the choice of communalism as the main strategy has become almost universal among state-linked diasporas.

The sixth cluster of studies should be devoted to the question regarding diasporas' adoption and change of strategy, which has been almost totally ignored. It concerns the contagion factor, which is caused by global and international trends among other ethnic minorities, or ethnonational diasporas, or by influences originating in the homeland. It should be seen to what extent the intricate relations between diasporas, host countries, homelands, and other international actors affect the choices of these strategies.

This observation raises some further profound theoretical questions: Do these trilateral and sometimes four- and five-sided networks create transstate political systems that exist alongside and complement transnational organizations, such as regional trading blocs, international defense organizations, and so on? And, even more important, what is the relationship between the growing weakness of the nation-state and room for political maneuvering by the diaspora?

The final cluster of studies should pertain to diaspora-homeland relations. The assumption that should be reexamined is that whereas in the relations between host countries and diasporas tension and conflict are more frequently caused by the attitudes and actions of the latter, in diaspora-homeland relations the former are usually responsible for friction. Even though the basic mutual wish of the homeland and its diaspora to maintain close relations is a *sine qua non*, the actual situation should be thoroughly reexamined, because it is often far from idyllic. In fact, considerable tensions are common here, caused by perceptions held by most homeland leaders that the *raison d'être* of their diasporas is to maintain constant contact with the old country, express their unswerving loyalty, and provide the homeland with services in host countries, particularly regarding issues of defense.

Scholarly work on these various aspects is in progress. Clearly, those who study diasporas will be challenged by the still-existing and very long and rich agenda of definitional, theoretical, analytical, and comparative issues that were only partly mentioned here. But a more profound exploration of these issues will result in a better conception of the place and role of ethnonational diasporas as precursors

of globalized political systems that are likely to occupy a central place in the 21st century.

### Selected Bibliography

- Armstrong, J. 1976. "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas." *American Political Science Review* 70 (2): 393–408.
- Brazier, J., and A. Mannur, eds. 2003. *Theorizing Diasporas. A Reader*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Brown, M. 1996. *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Cohen, R. 1997. *Global Diasporas*. London: University College London Press.
- Gurr, T. 2000. *Peoples Versus States. Minorities at Risk in the New Century*. Washington, DC: The United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Miles, W., and G. Sheffer. 1998. "Francophone and Zionism: A Comparative Study of Transnationalism and Trans-statism." *Diaspora* 7 (2): 119–148.
- Safran, W. 1999. "Comparing Diasporas: A Review Essay." *Diaspora* 8 (3): 255–292.
- Sheffer, G., ed. 2006. *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, A. 1999. "Ethnic Elections and National Destiny: Some Religious Origins of Nationalist Ideals." *Nations and Nationalism* 5 (3): 331–356.
- Vertovec, S. 1997. "Three Meanings of Diaspora." *Diaspora* 6 (3): 277–297.

# Diaspora Themes

## The Concept of Diaspora in Biblical Literature

*Carl D. Evans*

---

The deportations of Jews to Babylonia at the beginning of the sixth century BCE created the Diaspora that defines much of the Biblical story. Biblical writers and prophets expressed a variety of views as they struggled to come to terms with the events that divided the Jewish people between those in the homeland and those in exile. They agreed, however, that the exile did not break the bond of the Diaspora Jews to the homeland.

The word “diaspora” enters the Jewish lexicon for the first time in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) where it is used to translate a variety of Hebrew terms. The Septuagint’s translators used the term without giving an explicit historical reference, but it is clear they had the Babylonian exile in mind.

The Bible’s ideas about Diaspora are framed by the familiar pattern of exile and return. In fact, the only two occurrences of “diaspora” in the Septuagint’s version of the Torah conform to this pattern: in Deuteronomy 28:25 the Israelites are warned that if they do not observe the commandments given by God, “the Lord will give them up . . . and they will be a ‘diaspora’ in all the kingdoms of the earth”; and in Deuteronomy 30:4 they are promised that the Lord will gather them from their “diaspora” if they return to the Lord.

The Babylonian conquest and related deportations created a major crisis for the Jews. For centuries, from the time of Abraham, they believed their homeland had been promised to them by God (Genesis 12:1–4). The Babylonian capture of their land and the deportations left them wondering what had gone wrong.

The dominant Biblical view is that the catastrophe was God’s judgment on the sins of the people. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, writers of the Torah, and others followed this line of interpretation, although they did not always agree on the nature of the sins that had provoked the divine wrath.

There were alternative interpretations, however. The author of Psalm 44 describes a situation of dispersion (vv. 10–17, esp. v. 12) and charges: “All this has come upon us, yet we have not forgotten You, or been false to Your covenant. . . . It is for Your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered” (vv. 18, 23). The Jewish refugees in Egypt, who fled their homeland at the time of the Babylonian invasions, had still another interpretation: the catastrophe had come about because they had stopped making offerings to the Queen of Heaven (Jeremiah 44:15–19), apparently an allusion to Josiah’s religious reform that occurred in the late monarchic period.

The exilic redactor of 2 Kings attributes the catastrophe to the sins of Manasseh, claiming that Manasseh was one of the worst kings ever to rule Judah. “All

this befell Judah at the command of the Lord, who banished [them] from His presence because of all the sins that Manasseh had committed” (2 Kings 24:3–4).

The Chronicler gives another explanation. He attributes the exile to the nonobservance of the Sabbath year (see Leviticus 25:2–6) and anticipates a 70-year period of exile “until the land paid back its sabbaths” (2 Chronicles 36:21).

Despite the deportations to Babylonia and emigration to Egypt, a significant population remained in the homeland. One of their communal laments is preserved in the book of Lamentations: “our heritage has passed to aliens, our homes to strangers” (5:2). The lament ends with the plea: “Take us back, O Lord, to Yourself, and let us come back; renew our days as of old!” (5:21).

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel believed the future lay with those in exile. To Jeremiah the Diaspora Jews were the “good figs” and those left in the land were the “bad figs” (Jeremiah 24). Ezekiel maintained that because of religious apostasy at the Jerusalem temple the glory of the Lord had left the temple and the homeland to be with the exiles in Babylonia. The belief that God was present with the exiles was shared by Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and other prophets and writers. It was also shared by the exiles, even though many still longed for the homeland and asked: “How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?” (Psalm 137:4).

Around 540 BCE, an anonymous prophet of the exile announced that a new day had dawned. This prophet, whose words are preserved in chapters 40–55 of the book of Isaiah and often referred to as Deutero-Isaiah, declared that Jerusalem’s “term of service is over, that her iniquity is expiated; for she has received at the hand of the Lord double for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:2). The occasion for the announcement was the rise to power of the Persian king Cyrus. Cyrus gained control of the Babylonian empire, captured Babylon itself, and issued a decree that allowed the Diaspora Jews to return home and rebuild the temple. According to the book of Ezra, Jews who chose to stay in Babylonia could support the project financially (Ezra 1:2–4). Some Jews did repatriate, but many chose to remain in the Diaspora.

Over the next century repatriated Jews rebuilt the Temple and eventually restored the city of Jerusalem. Their work of restoration was slowed, however, by the devastation wrought by the Babylonians and by depressed economic conditions in the homeland. Another version of Cyrus’s decree, purportedly recovered some years later during Darius’s reign, states that the expenses of rebuilding the Temple would be paid by the Persian palace (Ezra 6:1–5).

A generation passed before the repatriated Jews completed work on the temple. Sheshbazzar, one of the earliest returnees, whom Cyrus had appointed governor, laid the foundations of the temple but further construction was delayed (Ezra 5:16). The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were successful in encouraging the people, and their generation’s leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, to complete the work. It was done during the years 520–515 BCE.

The restoration was also hindered by division within the community. The returnees attributed their difficulty to “fear of the peoples of the land” (Ezra 3:3) and “adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” (Ezra 4:1). The latter group claimed to be descendants of peoples brought into the region by the Assyrian king Esharhaddon.

The book of Ezra also claims that others were brought into the region by “Osnappar” (Ezra 4:10; probably Assurbanipal). According to 2 Kings, an Assyrian king, probably Sargon II, had settled non-Israelites in “the towns of Samaria” (17:24–26). The descendants of the resettled people claimed the right to help with the reconstruction because “we too worship your God,” but their offer of assistance was rejected by the returnees (Ezra 4:3).

Many of the tensions between the returned exiles and the peoples of the land were based on conflicting notions of Jewish identity. Ezra’s officials charged that the returnees had not separated themselves from the peoples of the land whose “abhorrent” practices they likened to those of the indigenous peoples (Ezra 9:1). The returnees had taken “foreign” wives from among the peoples of the land, a practice that Ezra portrayed as a continuation of the “iniquities” that had led to the exile in the first place (Ezra 9:7). Ezra ordered the men to divorce their foreign wives and the women and their children were expelled from the community. For Ezra, the true Israel was identified with the repatriated community.

The views set forth in Isaiah 56 provide a sharp contrast. This text, which probably comes from the same period as Ezra, affirms that Sabbath observance and covenant fidelity are sufficient to form Jewish identity. “As for the foreigners who attach themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants—all who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it, and who hold fast My covenant—I will bring them to My sacred mount and let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be welcome on My altar; for My House shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (vv. 6–7). The welcome to foreigners in Isaiah 56 contrasts also with Deuteronomy’s exclusion of Ammonites and Moabites from the congregation of the Lord (23:4–7).

Thus, struggles over how Jewish identity should be defined, over who was a member of the community and who was not, and over the terms, if any, by which the outsider could become an insider caused divisions within the postexilic community. Different individuals and groups espoused a variety of views as they tried to come to terms with the demographic and religious changes that the exile and return had created.

The biblical writings give little insight into the situation of Jews who chose to remain in the Diaspora. Most of them may have fared well. Jeremiah, after all, had urged the exiles to put down roots: “Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, do not decrease. And seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord in its behalf; for in its prosperity you shall prosper” (Jeremiah 29:5–7).

Many Jews heeded Jeremiah’s advice and chose to stay in Babylonia when the opportunity came to return home. The Murashu archive, found at the Babylonian city of Nippur, gives a glimpse into the successful banking enterprise of one Jewish family. The personal names in the archive show that the Murashu family had extensive dealings with both Jews and non-Jews, and that the Jews had become well integrated into Babylonian society by the fifth century BCE.

Jeremiah mentions several communities of Jews living in Egypt in the sixth century BCE (Jeremiah 44:1), which would have been in addition to the community at Elephantine on the upper Nile. The Jews at Elephantine had their own temple and followed syncretistic worship practices. Jeremiah probably had the former communities in mind when he lumped together “those who are living in the land of Egypt” and those remaining in the homeland, including Zedekiah, the last Judean king, and likened them all to bad figs (Jeremiah 24:8).

Intellectual wrestling with the circumstances that created the Diaspora had produced an array of theological responses, but biblical prophets and writers held fast to the notion that the homeland was central to Jewish identity and destiny for Jews everywhere. Diaspora Jews, no less than Jews in the homeland, maintained close ties to the Land of Israel, a relationship expressed in the Bible’s concluding exhortation: “Any one of you of all His people, the Lord his God be with him and let him go up [to Jerusalem]” (2 Chronicles 36:23).

### Selected Bibliography

- Ackroyd, Peter R. 1968. *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Albertz, Rainer. 2003. *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Baron, Salo W. 1958. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*. Vol. 1, 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Oded, Bustenay. 1977. “Judah and the Exile.” In *Israelite and Judean History*, edited by John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, 435–488. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Smith, Daniel L. 1989. *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile*. Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books.

## The Concept of Diaspora in Talmudic Thought

*Eliezer Segal*

---

The Talmuds and related works recognized that many Jews in their time were in the Diaspora—or as they saw it, in a state of exile (*galut*). The discussions often took the form of biblical exegesis. Therefore, their comments relate to biblical exiles more than to their contemporary situation. Although the existence of a Diaspora was generally considered a deplorable situation to be remedied in the messianic redemption, some rabbis, especially in Babylonia, found positive features in the situation.

In keeping with biblical teaching, the sages of the Talmud and midrash believed Israel was scattered as punishment for her sins. The correspondence between crime and punishment was a stock theme of rabbinic preaching. Accordingly, exile was blamed on Israel’s commission of the gravest cardinal sins and sacrileges. In TB

Menahot 53b, God informed Abraham that his children would be exiled for their sins, and these sins would be deliberate and prevalent and would be committed despite ample opportunities offered to them for repentance. Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai compared Israel's exile to Babylon, Abraham's birthplace, to an adulteress being sent back to her father's house (Tosefta Baba Kamma 7:3; cf. TB Pesahim 87a). "Exile comes to the world on account of idol-worship, sexual crimes, and bloodshed" (M Avot 5:9; see also TB Shabbat 33a). Lamentations Rabbah 1:1: ". . . Israel were not exiled until they denied the one God of the universe, the decalogue, circumcision . . . , and the five books of the Torah . . . Said Rabbi Levi: Israel were not exiled until they had transgressed the thirty-six prohibitions whose punishment is *karet* [excision]."

Occasionally, the rabbis identified lesser sins and transgressions as the causes of Israel's exiles. In most cases, this homiletic trope, though supported by scriptural proof-texts, was used by rabbis to chastise their contemporaries for laxity in the observance of specific precepts. The catalogue of violations and transgressions that provoked the exile included sabbatical years (M Avot 5:9), heave-offerings and tithes (Avot de-Rabbi Natan A 20), circumcision (TJ Sanhedrin 10:5 [29c]), procreation of illegitimate offspring (*mamzerim*), heresy, drunkenness (Genesis Rabbah 36:4), and accepting the hospitality of the government (TB Pesahim 49a). According to Lamentations Rabbah 1:28–29, "they ate leaven on Passover . . . they seized the pledge of the poor within their houses . . . they withheld the wages of a hired servant . . . they robbed the poor of their portions . . . they consumed the poor tithe . . . they worshipped idols . . . because they held the Hebrew bondman in servitude . . ."

According to rabbinic teaching, Israel's dispersions were thematically prefigured in earlier generations of the Bible. Genesis Rabbah 19:9 depicts Adam's banishment from paradise as the archetype for Israel's eviction from the Land of Israel for transgressing commandments. The dove sent out by Noah prefigured Israel's homelessness among hostile nations (Genesis Rabbah 33:6). In Genesis Rabbah 36:4, developing a wordplay on the Hebrew of Genesis 9:21, the rabbis interpreted it in the sense of "he was exiled," implying that Noah was the origin of exile for subsequent generations. In TB Menahot 53b; Exodus Rabbah 51:7, and elsewhere, Abraham is informed of the future exiles of his descendants—Babylon, Media, Greece, Rome—and he pleads on their behalf. He is allowed to choose whether his children will be punished by Gehinnom or exile and is induced to choose the latter. "Because Isaac saw through the holy spirit that his children were destined to be exiled, he said to [Jacob]: Come, and I shall give you a blessing fitting for the exile" (Genesis Rabbah 75:8). Because Jacob foresaw that the exiles would pass by the Ephrath road, he buried Rachel there so that she might pray for mercy on their behalf" (Genesis Rabbah 82:10). Rabbi Joshua ben Levi interpreted Jacob's instructions to his sons in Genesis 43:14 as a portent about their future exiles (Genesis Rabbah 92:3). The Israelites' enslavement in Egypt was a prototype for subsequent exiles, and the divine descent into the burning bush prefigures God's participation in their sufferings (Mekhilta de-Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai pp. 1–2; TB Berakhot 9b; and elsewhere, see below). The Israelites' needless weeping in the desert provoked God to

scatter them in the future (TB Ta'anit 29a). In Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:22, "Moses instructed Israel that if they sinned, they would one day be exiled, how they would repent, and how they would be redeemed."

Many sources stress the severity of exile as a harsh and humiliating punishment. "After all the torments that I inflict upon you, I will send you into exile. Exile is difficult, since it is weighed against them all" (Sifré Deuteronomy 43). "Said Rabbi Joshua ben Levi: When the wicked Nebuchadnezzar sent Israel into exile to Babylon, their hands were bound behind them in iron chains, and they led them naked like beasts" (Tanhuma Yitro 5). The dispersion pollutes Jews with sin (Midrash Shir Ha-Shirim 8:19). "Even though the nations of the world go into exile, their exile is not true exile. Since the nations of the world may eat their bread and drink of their wine, their exile is not true exile. However, for Israel, who may not eat of their bread and may not drink of their wine, their exile is exile . . . For Israel, who walk barefooted, their exile is exile. . . . When they were exiled their strength was enfeebled like a woman's" (Lamentations Rabbah 1:28).

Several rabbinic homilies describe with touching pathos God's anguish that his justice compelled him to exile his children. "Three times every night the Holy One sits and roars like a lion [or coos like a dove], saying: Woe to my children, because on account of their sins I destroyed my house and burnt down my sanctuary and I have sent my children into exile among the nations of the world" (TB Berakhot 3a; cf. TB Sukkah 52b).

Basing themselves on biblical sources such as Isaiah 43:14, "For your sake I was sent to Babylon," or Isaiah 63:9, "In all their affliction he was afflicted," rabbinic traditions relate how God himself participates and suffers in Israel's exiles. "Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai said: Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of God! Every place to which they were exiled the divine presence accompanied them. They were exiled to Egypt and . . . to Babylon, and the divine presence accompanied them . . . And when they will be redeemed in the future, the divine presence will be with them" (TB Megillah 29a; Mekhilta de-Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai pp. 1–2; Lamentations Rabbah 1:32, Exodus Rabbah 23; cf. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 13:9).

Nevertheless, some traditions found positive aspects to the situation. God's love for his children caused him to punish them in ways that would minimize the harm and increase the benefits of their predicament. Sifra Behukkotai 6:5 observes that the devastation of the land is actually a blessing in that it prevents Israel's enemies from establishing a foothold. The hostility of their neighbors prevents Jews from assimilating to paganism and will facilitate the Jews' eventual repentance (Sifra Behukkotai 8:5; cf. Genesis Rabbah 33:6). By distributing Jews throughout many lands, God was safeguarding them against total destruction in times of local persecutions (TB Pesahim 87b; Genesis Rabbah 41:9; Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 11:4). Exile possesses an atoning power (TB Ta'anit 16a). According to Rabbi Eleazar (TB Pesahim 87a), "the only reason why Israel was exiled among the heathens was so that proselytes might be joined to them." It is praiseworthy that Israel continued to observe and study Torah in their dispersion (TB Yoma 9b, etc.).

Although some rabbis maintained that "the subjection to Babylon was harsher than the subjection to Egypt" (TJ Sukkah 4:3), a widespread view in the Babylonian

Talmud held that the Babylonian Diaspora was especially benign and compassionate. “Rav Huna said: The exiles in Babylon are at ease like sons and the exiles in other lands are uneasy, like daughters” (TB Menahot 110a, expounding Isaiah 43:6). “Rabbi Hiyya taught . . . The Holy One knows that Israel is incapable of withstanding the edicts of Esau or of Ishmael. Therefore he sent them as exiles to Babylonia . . . Rabbi Hanina says: Because [Babylonian Aramaic] is akin to the language of the Torah. Rabbi Yohanan says: Because he sent them to their mother’s house . . . Ulla said: In order that they might eat dates and occupy themselves with the Torah” (TB Pesahim 87a). Babylonian sages interpreted 2 Kings 24:16, describing the captivity of “the craftsmen and the smiths” as an allusion to an early wave of rabbinic scholars who established Torah learning and institutions in Babylonia (TB Pesahim 88a).

TB Ketubbot 110b–111a relates an exchange between two third-century Babylonian scholars: “Rabbi Zera used to avoid Rav Judah, because he wished to immigrate to the Land of Israel, but Rav Judah maintained: Anyone who emigrates from Babylonia to the Land of Israel is violating a positive commandment, since it says (Jeremiah 27:22): ‘They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day when I give attention to them, says the Lord.’” Judah was likely fearful for the adverse impact on the Babylonian academies and on the social fabric of the local communities. In the Talmud’s expansion of the dispute, the three occurrences in Song of Songs of “I have charged you . . . that you do not rouse or wake my love” (2:7, etc.) are interpreted in accordance with a teaching of Rabbi Yosé bar Hanina (cf. Song of Songs Rabbah 2:20): “Why was there a need for those three oaths? One was so that Israel should not go up *en masse* [‘in a wall’]; one indicates that the Holy One charged Israel that they should not rebel against the nations of the world; and one indicates that the Holy One charged the nations of the world that they should not oppress Israel excessively.” In other traditions (e.g., Song of Songs Rabbah 8:9; TB Yoma 9b), the failure of the Babylonian exiles to return to Zion “in a wall” is regarded as a fundamental national failure: “If Israel had brought up a wall from Babylon, then the holy Temple would not have been destroyed a second time.”

Rabbinic teachings and prayers speak in glowing terms of the final ingathering of Israel’s exiles in the messianic redemption. TJ Sanhedrin 10:5 (29c): “Rabbi Berekhiah and Rabbi Halabo in the name of Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman: Israel were exiled to three captivities . . . And when they return, they will return from three captivities” Tanhuma Noah 12: “Said Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani: There is a haggadic tradition to the effect that Jerusalem will not be rebuilt until all the exiles have been gathered. And if a person should tell you that all the exiles have been gathered, but Jerusalem has not been rebuilt, do not believe them. Why?—Because thus is it written (Psalm 147:3): ‘The Lord builds up Jerusalem’; and afterward: ‘he gathers the outcasts of Israel.’”

### Selected Bibliography

- Gross, Moses David. 1960. “Galut” [Exile]. In *Otsar ha-’agadah* [Thesaurus of Aggadah], edited by M. D. Gross. Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook.
- Krauss, Samuel. 1947. *Paras ve-Romi ba-Talmud uva-Midrashim* [Persia and Rome in the Talmud and Midrash]. Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook.

- Stern, M. 1974. "The Jewish Diaspora." In *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, edited by S. Safrai and M. Stern, 117–183. Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum.
- Urbach, E. 1987. *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Translated by I. Abrahams. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Yankelovich, Raphael. 1990. "Mashma'ut ha-galut ba-mahshavah ha-yehudit ba-tequfah habatar miqra'it" [The Concept of Exile in Post-Biblical Jewish Thought]. *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 10 (3): 69–76.

## Diaspora in the Hellenistic Period

*Edrel Arie*

---

A considerable amount of evidence is available for a Diasporic existence outside the Land of Israel as of the late Persian period and early Hellenistic era (Katz 2006). We know of the Jewish community in Elephantine, Egypt, and of many additional Jews who arrived in Egypt at the beginning of the Hellenistic period (Bar-Kochva 1996). Thus, a growing Jewish existence is found in Alexandria, the Fayum, and, to a lesser extent, in other places in Egypt. The literary evidence emanating from the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt is relatively rich (Holladay 1989). In Egypt, the Jews became more and more visible as a significant ethnic group—as is clear from the remnants of the anti-Jewish literature that emanated from there (Manethon as well as all other authors that Josephus mentions in the Book of 3 Maccabees, etc.). In the third and second centuries BCE, a growing Jewish existence is evident in the Mediterranean Greco-Roman world (for instance, Jewish communities can be found in Rhodes, other Aegean islands, Greece, Asia Minor, Cyrenaica, Rome, and other cities in Italy). Our evidence comes from archaeological material, literary sources such as the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, historiography, and so on (Katz 2006).

Much can be deduced about Jewish life in the Hellenistic Diaspora and its ideas and ideologies through the writings of Philo the Alexandrian as well as from the translation of the Bible into Greek (the Septuagint), which took place for centuries during the Hellenistic period (Dines 2004). In the first century CE, two sources stand out for their importance: first, the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus, which occasionally describes—in particular in Books 13ff—the situation in the Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora; and second, the excellent overview of the Jewish Diaspora found in the Book of Acts and Paul's letters (Mendels 1998). We also have some evidence from the Hellenistic era of a Diasporic existence in the east, early on, from Josephus, the Book of Tobit, and early rabbinic literature (Gafni 1997).

Jewish communities outside the Land of Israel could be traced first and foremost by their communal life, their adherence to Jewish law and beliefs, and their adherence to Jewish Scripture, examples being the Hebrew Bible and the synagogue, an institution that became central to the communities in the Diaspora

(Levina 2000). A further strong common denominator was the linkage to the Holy Land and to the Temple and its institutions. The Jewish Diaspora in whatever place outside the Holy Land never gave up the longing (even if just sentimental and theoretical) to become again a reassembled national entity in the Land of Israel. This is a central element in Jewish theology in the Diaspora in antiquity, which does not necessarily contradict the extent to which Jews were syncretistic in their organizational systems and spiritual life. Recently, it has been argued that the Jews in the Hellenistic Diaspora (e.g., Greek-speaking Jews) had no desire to return to the Holy Land and gradually lost touch emotionally and physically with it and its Jews as well as with their Holy Bible (Gruen 2002). Moreover, the Jews in the Hellenistic Diaspora, according to this view, lived safely and in relative security, and they did not suffer attacks from their Gentile neighbors. This claim cannot be accepted because, in the first place, there is clear evidence for sporadic attacks against Jews, physical as well as verbal; second, the Jews were always attached in one way or another to their Bible and via the Bible, as well as other traditions, to their land (Mendels 2005). In many other regions of the Diaspora, as well, the Jews kept a very strong Jewish identity—a matter that can be deduced from the writings of Gentiles about them (Stern 1980).

The Jewish world during the Hellenistic period was noticeably dispersed. Most of the scholars who have dealt with the Jewish Diaspora during this period have blurred the distinction between the eastern and western Jewish Diasporas, explicitly or implicitly assuming that knowledge about one Diaspora could inform the other. However, the distinction between the two Diasporas was not only geographic, but it also reflected a much more substantive split. The centrality of Jerusalem and the Land of Israel as a unifying force was a significant factor in the Jewish world before the destruction of the Temple. But this was much less so after the destruction. After the destruction, and the split that grew in its wake, the language difference between east and west strengthened this divide. In the west—namely, the Greek-speaking Mediterranean world—the Jews wrote and spoke only Greek, whereas in the east (Palestine and eastward), Hebrew and Aramaic prevailed—although even there some communities wrote and spoke Greek. The Land of Israel served as the border between the two Diasporas. The language gap between these two Diasporas led to a much deeper cultural gap, which in turn led also in practice to a normative gap. In fact, the accepted scholarly claim that the rabbis in the center, that is, the Land of Israel, maintained contact with the entire Jewish Diaspora, including its Hellenistic part, should be refuted as a consequence of recent research (Edrei and Mendels 2006). There are clear and unequivocal proofs that this connection existed with the eastern Aramaic-speaking Diaspora, but with regard to the western Diaspora a deafening silence on this issue prevails in Jewish sources. This gap can be explained by the widening abyss between the eastern and western Jewish Diasporas.

Diaspora communities naturally vacillate between the desire to preserve all three: their unique identity, their connection to their cultural center, and their desire to integrate into the broader cultural context in which they live (Barclay 1996, Rajak 2001). The destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, by its very nature, upset the balance between these three aspirations, as the physical connection to the center



A fresco titled *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple*, painted by Raphael (1511–1512), depicts the Maccabees driving the Greek priest from the Temple of Jerusalem. The Maccabees were a group of Jewish rebels who coordinated the liberation of Jerusalem from the Seleucid Empire. (Alinari Archives/Corbis)

became an unclear, and even irrelevant, concept. A strong center controls a defined network of communication, and the loss of the center has far-reaching implications for communication systems. The Temple constituted a clear and unequivocal center for the entire Jewish world (Mendels 1997). Its status derived from both its imposing physical symbolism and its recognized functions, as well as from a long supportive tradition. When the Temple disappeared in 70 CE, an alternative center was established in the Land of Israel, a center that in due course created much of the so-called rabbinic literature. However, this center was inaccessible to the Greek Jewish Diaspora (except for those—like the apostle Paul—who made the effort to leave their Greek-speaking abode and come and learn in the Land of Israel). The messages that emanated from this center were essentially different from those that emanated from the previous center, the Temple being basically a place of ritual, and therefore indecipherable for the Hellenistic Greek-speaking Jewish Diaspora. Thus, in looking at the Jewish Diaspora at that time the focus should be on the loss of communication and the clear gap in Jewish practice that developed in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple.

This viewpoint is better understood when contrasted with the situation in the Middle Ages, in which the Mishnah and the Talmud, which had already been committed to writing, served as the basis for both a common learning curriculum and a common normative practice. These works were both accessible and studied extensively during this period. Scholars throughout the Middle Ages wrote about the Talmud. Their works were written exclusively in Hebrew, with some intermittent Aramaic, the language of the Talmud that everyone knew. As a result, in spite of the development of different academic approaches and different customs, everything flowed from community to community because there was no language barrier. This was not the case in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple, when a hierarchical system of communication emerged in the Aramaic-speaking Jewish Diaspora that included a leadership, institutions, a bureaucracy, and a clear new message. This communicative system did not incorporate the western Jewish Diaspora, where a flat system of communication emerged because institutions that paralleled those in the Land of Israel were lacking.

The distinction between the eastern and western Jewish Diasporas is reflected in the Jewish literature that prevailed in each community. The Bible was the common literature of the entire Jewish community, and each separate community maintained access to it in its own language. Yet in the Land of Israel, a new Jewish literature developed during this period—the Mishnah, the Midrash, and, subsequently, the Talmud. This literature spread eastward, and the Babylonian Jewish community became full partners in its development. It could not, however, reach the west because the Jews of the western Diaspora were unable to decode it. Simultaneously, the western Diaspora adopted a very different corpus of literature—the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha—which was rejected in its entirety by the sages of the east.

A comparison of the two different and separate corpora preserved in the two Diasporas strongly supports the claim regarding the isolation of the western Diaspora. The Halachic and Aggadic corpus built on Hebrew and Aramaic was preserved as an oral tradition in the eastern Diaspora (Sussmann, concerning the Mishnah). In contrast, the corpus preserved in the west was a written tradition. The eastern corpus was not translated into Greek, and there seems to have been no attempt to translate it into Greek or Latin. This fact reinforces the hypothesis that the vast majority of Jews in the western Diaspora had no access to this literature. The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, which developed in the early Hellenistic period, were fundamentally different from the eastern literature in both content and genre. Some of this literature was originally written in Greek (such as 2 Maccabees), and other parts of it were written in Hebrew and subsequently translated into Greek (such as 1 Maccabees, for which the Hebrew original no longer exists) and distributed in the Greek-speaking community. Just as the Halachic and Haggadic literature preserved in the east was not made accessible by translation in the west, most of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha did not continue to be preserved in the Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking eastern Diaspora (some exceptions are the Aramaic Testament of Levi, Tobit, Ben Sira, and Jubilees in Hebrew; but they were in any case not formally accepted by the rabbis). It is clear that in Babylonia the Jews were similarly unable to access the literature written in Greek. This literature is practically not mentioned

in the rabbinic literature, and when it is, it is referred to as “external” literature to distinguish it from the biblical canon. One thus gets the sense of two very different communities on either side of the Mediterranean Sea, serviced by two bodies of literature that were distinct in terms of content, genre, language, worldview, and normative practice. On one side, the Bible and rabbinic literature (the latter still transmitted orally), on the other side, the Greek translation of the Bible and the “external” literature (which was committed to writing). This situation led to a reality characterized by two distinct universes of discourse, two different systems of communication, and the different ideologies that developed as a result.

Even before the destruction of the Temple, the normative system in force in the western Diaspora differed from the practices that prevailed in the Land of Israel. For example, there were areas of practice that were relevant to Jewish life in the Land of Israel but were irrelevant in the Diaspora, such as laws relating to agriculture and working the land (*Seder Zeraim*) or laws relating to purity and impurity and the Temple service. There is no doubt that before the destruction of the Temple, these laws constituted a majority of the normative Jewish legal system. This fact accentuates the gap between the Land of Israel and the western Diaspora, and the benefit that the sages saw in living in the Land of Israel: the opportunity to fulfill the entire Torah. This gap should have narrowed after the destruction of the Temple, but in reality the opposite occurred—many normative areas that had previously been identical became different. Thus, for example, laws relating to the holidays and prayer were transformed after the destruction because of the circumstances of the period. Due to an extensive leadership of the rabbis in the Land, Judaism after the destruction became a religion of a text, probably orally preserved by the communities. Hence, new prayers were developed, and the entire structure of the synagogue was reorganized. These innovations could not reach the Hellenistic Greek-speaking Diaspora. Another important example is the Jewish festivals, which before the destruction were constructed around the temple worship. After the destruction, the rabbis transformed the customs to new ones in the synagogue. The family customs that were text based, such as the Passover Haggadah, could therefore not reach the Hellenistic Jewry. It is specifically this area of the normative system, which was adopted in the eastern Diaspora, as in the Land of Israel, that could not reach the western Jewish Diaspora because of the communication and language barrier. After the destruction, when the leaders of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel were struggling for their future survival, the normative gap between the community in the Land of Israel and the community in the western Greek-speaking Diaspora developed into an almost ideological gap, just because the Jews in the west remained strictly biblical in their Halachic behavior.

In spite of attempts to show that the Jews in the western Diaspora knew Hebrew, it is common knowledge that basically they knew only Greek. The Jews of the west knew neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, and their religious lives, including the reading of the Torah and prayer, were conducted solely in Greek (Tov 2003). The Torah was translated into Greek in the third century BCE (and there were attempts at translation even before that); in subsequent centuries the rest of the Hebrew Bible was translated as well (Dines 2004). It should be pointed out that in certain

rabbinic circles, the translation into Greek was viewed as a necessity of the times; the sages recognized that there were entire Diaspora communities that spoke only Greek, and that these would be lost to the Jewish people in the absence of an authentic translation. While the sages struggled to preserve Hebrew as the sole language for religious activity (that is, prayer and Torah study) they simultaneously provided for an authorized translation of Scripture for the Greek-speaking communities. A conspicuous example is the biblical translation of Aquila, the student of R. Akiva, who modified the Septuagint according to the unique approach of R. Akiva, which attributed importance to every letter and word. The sages generally approved of this translation. Nevertheless, the rabbinic literature of the time, that is, the Midrash and the Mishnah, whether preserved orally or in written form, was not translated. Therefore, as the years progressed, these works remained inaccessible to the Greek-speaking Jews. Although scholars agree that the sages in Israel knew Greek to varying degrees (Lieberman 1962), one cannot conclude from this that Jews in the Greek Diaspora knew Hebrew.

Research regarding inscriptions found in synagogues in Israel and in the Greek Diaspora lends support to the latter view. These discoveries led to dramatic conclusions about the differences between the Jewish communities of Israel and the Diaspora, differences that derive primarily from the language barrier. Approximately 100 synagogue inscriptions were found in the Greek Diaspora. These finds have greatly enriched knowledge about the Greek-speaking Diaspora, largely because of the discovery of communities that had previously been unknown. All of the inscriptions are in Greek, in contrast to the findings in synagogues in the Land of Israel, which include inscriptions in Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Of greater significance, however, are the differences in the content of the inscriptions found in the Land of Israel and those found in the Greek Diaspora. For instance, the Greek concept of *soteria* (salvation) is found notably in the inscriptions of the Greek Diaspora and at times in the Greek inscriptions in the Land of Israel, but never in Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions. Similarly, the Greek inscriptions tend to emphasize the Hellenistic focus on the individual donor, while the Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions reflect a worldview that places the community at the center. Also, contributors are praised differently in the inscriptions from the Land of Israel than they are in the inscriptions in the Greek Diaspora. The Greek inscriptions in the Land of Israel state: "He should be remembered for good and for blessing," which is a direct translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic terminology. In contrast, the Greek Diaspora inscriptions use the term *eulogia* (blessing), but not in the context that it is used in the Land of Israel (Roth-Gerson 1987). These examples indicate three facts. First, there was a difference between the character of the synagogues of the Land of Israel and those of the Greek-speaking Diaspora as expressed in the synagogue inscriptions. Second, and even more important, whereas in the Land of Israel there was a strong influence of the rabbinic worldview, the western Diaspora was noticeably influenced by Hellenistic culture. Moreover, synagogues in the Holy Land were actually influenced by both cultures, drawing from both the Hebrew and Greek concepts. The western synagogue, however, did not draw at all from the synagogue model of the Land of Israel. Third, even in the Greek Jewish world, influence went

from west to east and not vice versa—a fact that is astonishing. The Greek inscriptions in the Land of Israel reflect motifs from the inscriptions in the western Diaspora, whereas the Greek inscriptions in the western Diaspora were not influenced by the Greek inscriptions in the Land of Israel. Thus, components of the Greek inscriptions in the Land of Israel that were clearly translations from the Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions did not find their way to the west. Greek inscriptions from the west, however, did influence Greek inscriptions in Israel.

Rabbinic literature points as well to the dichotomy between the Jews in the west and those in the east. The rabbis did not view the western communities as an integral part of the Diaspora as they defined it. The following points, out of many others, can be brought forward (Edrei and Mendels 2006).

First, it is important to note that the evidence from rabbinic literature would indicate that the western Diaspora developed no spiritual centers dedicated to the study of the Oral Law, no yeshivas (academies), and no Torah centers. (This becomes even more apparent when viewed against the background of the Christian schools that were created in many places in the Greek-speaking Mediterranean basin.) There are practically no laws or sayings attributed to sages from the western Diaspora in the entire corpus of the Oral Law (Mishnah, Tosefta, both versions of the Talmud, and the Midrash). It is not surprising that no literature parallel to the Talmud, encompassing the Oral Law, developed in the west. Matya ben Harash is known to have gone from the Land of Israel to Rome to establish a yeshiva, but there are hardly any references to his Torah teachings in the rabbinic corpus. Apparently, he did not foster protégés, and we know nothing about the proceedings of his academy or its fate. Furthermore, according to the testimony of the sages themselves, there were no yeshivas in the Greek-speaking communities. For example, Sifrei Deuteronomy 344 401F (and parallels) tells of two agents who were sent by the Roman authorities to learn the Oral Law; they went to Usha in the Land of Israel for that purpose.

Second, sources relating to rabbinic (nonpolitical) visits to the western Diaspora are sparse and questionable, particularly in contrast to the number of sources that deal with contacts between the center in Israel and the eastern Jewish Diaspora. Also, the places in the western Diaspora mentioned in rabbinic literature are severely limited in number. Rabbinic literature almost totally ignores the vast western Diaspora that existed at the time. This is particularly noticeable compared with the relatively large number of places in this Diaspora mentioned in chapter 2 of Acts, and in the chapters describing the journeys of Paul (Acts 13 ff.) as well as in the Pauline epistles, which give a comprehensive picture of the geography of the western Jewish Greek-speaking Diaspora in the first century CE. The rabbinic corpus testifies that the western Diaspora was not consistently connected to the system of communication or the rabbinic authority in the east. The Sages admit and mention this (Edrei and Mendels 2006).

Given the aforementioned considerations, and many others, one can argue against the view that Judaism disappeared as a religion of the masses after the destruction (Schwartz 2001), that two distinct “Judaisms” arose, with an ever-growing gap developing between them. As a generalization, they could be labeled

the western “written Torah Judaism” and the eastern “Oral Law Judaism.” Whereas in the east a new normative standard, the Oral Law, developed, in the west the Jewish communities remained biblical, maintaining the tradition as it existed before the rise of the rabbis and their teachings. Hence it is no coincidence that in the west it was “biblical” Jews who emerged in the Middle Ages in Germany and France.

The Jewish world during the period under discussion began to separate into two worlds with an ever-widening gap between them. This becomes even more visible in contrast to the elements that were common to the Jews in the east and in the west (e.g., synagogue, purity customs, the Bible). This gap was the result of a geographical divide as well as a language barrier: Hebrew and Aramaic versus Greek. In the course of time, two different knowledge bases and two distinct literatures were created: in the west, the Bible in its Greek translation, along with the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; in the east, rabbinic literature. This gap naturally led to a normative gap of distinct diasporas. While the east developed a normative standard posited by the rabbis, the west maintained a biblical normative standard based on the Septuagint. This gap was apparent particularly in the areas of prayer, synagogue life (reading of the Torah in Greek), and festival celebration. The scholarly claim of an ongoing connection between the Greek-speaking Diaspora in the west and the center in Israel has been challenged.

In contrast, Talmudic sources point to a strong and clear connection between the center in the Land of Israel and the eastern Aramaic-speaking Diaspora. The Jewish communities that were isolated from the rabbinic network served as a receptive basis for the development of an alternative Christian network by Paul and his successors, which enabled it to spread throughout the Mediterranean basin (Mendels 1999). An oral law did not develop in the western Diaspora, and western Jews contributed nothing to the development of the Oral Law in the east. The codex of Roman laws dealing with Jews confirms in a variety of places the gap between the eastern and western Diasporas (Linder 1987; Edrei and Mendels 2006). Sources that discuss rabbinic travels to communities of the western Diaspora for Halachic purposes point out that these visits were chance occurrences. Whereas the Catholic Church at that time tried to create a communication network, a bureaucratic unity, and a church law in order to impose uniform standards in every place (and apostles traveled to many places to preach), such an approach did not exist among the Jews in the west, which fostered only a flat system of communication. Moreover, there was no bureaucratic system to impose, or even transmit, information about the Halacha. No emissaries went out to preach (inter alia because the notion of mission was not inherent in Judaism; Mendels 1998). In contrast, it is clear that the eastern Diaspora did create a communication system that transmitted laws systematically. The Talmud contains stories of sages who traveled between Israel and Babylonia, carrying with them laws and traditions. The Mishnah itself was transferred from Israel to Babylonia and there became the cornerstone of Torah study. The comments of well-known scholars from the Land of Israel are quoted frequently in the Babylonian Talmud and vice versa. No such thing is recorded in the western Diaspora. The few sources that do exist demonstrate that the connection was sporadic. Also, literature written by Gentiles paints a picture of Jews who

live according to the Torah and not according to the Oral Law (Stern 1980). The roots of this phenomenon of dichotomy are not entirely clear unless one accepts the view that the language barrier could cause it. It still remains an enigma: Why did the rabbinic leadership allow this fissure to develop and grow? Did this leadership relinquish the western Diaspora intentionally, and if so, why? On the other hand, why did the western Jews forfeit their connection with the center in Israel? Perhaps the language barrier described here was not a cause but a symptom, reflecting a cultural divide that severed the relationship between the two communities. Or perhaps the divide simply became so great in reality that it could not be bridged. Also, the problem of the consequences of the situation described remains open: What became of the Greek Diaspora? Did it simply assimilate into the Christian community that captured Roman society? Or did it remain an isolated and distinct community, a type of biblical community that later influenced the development of Karaism? These questions remain open for future research.

### Selected Bibliography

- Barclay, J. M. G. 1996. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora. From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
- Bar-Kochva, B. 1996. *Pseudo-Hecataeus, "On the Jews." Legitimizing the Jewish Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dines, J. M. 2004. *The Septuagint*. London: T & T Clarke.
- Edrei, A., and D. Mendels. 2006. "A Split Jewish Diaspora: Its Dramatic Consequences." *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 16 (1): 91–137.
- Gafni, I. M. 1997. *Land Center and Diaspora. Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Gruen, E. S. 2002. *Diaspora, Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Holladay, C. R. 1983. *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 1. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Holladay, C. R. 1989. *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 2. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Katz, S. T., ed. 2006. *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levine, L. I. 2000. *The Ancient Synagogue. The First Thousand Years*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Linder, A. 1987. *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Mendels, D. 1997. *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Mendels, D. 1998. "Pagan or Jewish? The Presentation of Paul's Mission in the Book of Acts." In *Identity, Religion and Historiography*, edited by D. Mendels, 394–419. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Mendels, D. 1999. *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Mendels, D. 2005. "Ancient or American Diaspora?" A review of Guren's *Diaspora* [Hebrew]. *Katharsis* 3: 38–47.
- Rajak, T. 2001. "The Jewish Community and Its Boundaries." In *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*, edited by T. Rajak, 335–354. Leiden-Koeln, the Netherlands: Brill.
- Roth-Gerson, L. 1987. "Similarities and Differences in Greek Synagogue Inscriptions of Eretz Israel and the Diaspora." In *Synagogues in Antiquity* [Hebrew], edited by A. A. Kasher, A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport, 133–146. Jerusalem.
- Sanders, E. P. 1990. *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*. London: Trinity Press International.
- Schwartz, S. 2001. *Imperialism and Jewish Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Stern, M. 1976. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. 1. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.
- Stern, M. 1980. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. 2. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.
- Sussmann, Y. 2005. "Torah she-Beal Peh Peshutah ke-Mashma" [Hebrew]. *Mehqerei Talmud* 3: 209–305.
- Tov, E. 2003. "The Text of the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek Bible used in the Ancient Synagogue." In *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origin until 200 C.E.*, edited by B. Olsson and M. Zetterholm, 237–259. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Trebilco, P. 1991. *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

## Symbols of the Diaspora

*Ellen Frankel*

---

Jewish tradition has derived symbols of the Jewish Diaspora from the Hebrew Bible, especially from the foundational stories in the Torah; from rabbinic literature; and from folklore—and has embroidered these symbols over the centuries. Central motifs of exile—God’s protective presence among Diaspora Jewry, nostalgia for the Jewish homeland, the hope of redemption and return to Israel—have been incorporated into the observance of Jewish holidays, the liturgy, folk art, and synagogue architecture. Even after the establishment of the State of Israel, these reminders of exile remain deeply embedded in Jewish life.

### Symbols of Diaspora in the Biblical Prehistory of Israel

In the Jewish imagination, the human condition is fundamentally defined by the experience of exile and the longing for home. Four biblical stories that are set in the prehistory of Israel symbolize this idea: the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8–3:24), Cain’s murder of Abel (Genesis 4:1–16), Noah’s ark (Genesis 6:9–9:29), and the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9). Each of these stories responds to the question: Why was I forced to leave home? Each explains why human beings live separated from one another.

As recounted in the second chapter of Genesis, God intends that the first two human beings, Adam and Eve, inhabit a garden “in the east” (Genesis 2:8). But when they prove disobedient, God banishes them to the west, stationing at Eden’s eastern boundary “the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24). Eden thus becomes a symbol of a lost home and of death in exile.

In the next generation, Adam and Eve’s elder son, Cain, murders his brother Abel in a jealous rage and, like his parents, is punished by exile. God decrees: “You shall become a ceaseless wanderer on earth” (Genesis 4:12). Then, in an act of compassion, God swears to protect Cain by putting a mark on him so that he will

not be killed as he wanders the earth. In contrast to his parents, Cain heads “east of Eden,” settling in the land of Nod, whose Hebrew root means “to wander.” The “mark of Cain” thus serves as a symbol of the curse of exile.

Several generations later, Noah and his family become the ultimate nomads when they abandon dry land in an ark, accompanied by representatives of all the animals on earth. This ark thus becomes a second cradle of life, repopulating the earth after the flood. For centuries, Noah’s ark has symbolized divine salvation, the hope of renewal, and the ideal of universal peace—for on the ark human beings and wild beasts, predators and prey, coexisted under the same roof.

The fourth narrative in this prehistory tells of a mass migration “from the east” to the land of Shinar, where the new settlers set to work building a great tower reaching to heaven. United by a single language, the builders declare that they intend to “make a name for ourselves; else we shall be scattered all over the world” (Genesis 11:4). God foils their plans by confounding their speech, so that they are “scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:9). This story offers an alternative to the Noah narrative, which likewise ends with a universal dispersion. But whereas Noah’s ark symbolizes God’s redemption of the righteous few, the Tower of Babel represents God’s punishment of the rebellious multitude.

### **Symbols of Jewish Diaspora in the Bible and Rabbinic Legend**

In the Genesis narratives about the founding patriarchal families (Genesis 12–50), the themes of homeland and exile exist in dialectical tension. Abraham and Sarah leave their birthplace of Haran (also called Ur; modern-day Iraq) and travel to the new homeland God promises them and their descendants. Soon after arriving, they voluntarily go into exile, traveling to Egypt to escape famine in Canaan, returning once the famine ends.

When it comes time to marry off his son Isaac, Abraham dispatches his servant Eliezer “to the land of my birth” to bring back a suitable wife. In turn, when Isaac and Rebecca’s son Jacob steals his twin brother Esau’s birthright and then fears for his life, he flees to his grandparents’ birthplace, Haran, where he marries his cousins Leah and Rachel. Twenty years later, Jacob’s family—two wives, two concubines, 12 sons, and a daughter—returns to Canaan. But some years later, Jacob’s sons sell their brother Joseph into exile. Initially enslaved in Egypt, Joseph rises from lowly prisoner to the exalted position of pharaoh’s viceroy. Eventually, Joseph brings his father Jacob, his siblings, and their families down to Egypt, where they settle and multiply. And so begins the first major Jewish Diaspora, lasting four centuries. With the exception of Isaac, who never travels far from his birthplace in Canaan, the other six Jewish forebears—Abraham, Sarah, Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel, and Leah—spend a significant portion of their lives outside the Land of Israel. Jacob’s children and grandchildren end their lives in Diaspora, although Jacob and, centuries later, Joseph, are buried in Israel.

Rachel and Joseph in particular are associated with exile in Jewish tradition. Giving birth to her second son Benjamin, Rachel dies on the road back from Haran and is buried by the roadside, the only one of the matriarchs and patriarchs not to

be interred in the cave of Machpelah in Bethlehem. Centuries later, when the Jews are exiled to Babylonia after the destruction of the First Temple, the prophet Jeremiah laments, “A cry is heard in Ramah—wailing, bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone” (Jeremiah 31:15). In later rabbinic lore and in the Jewish liturgy, Mother Rachel serves as a symbol of compassion, comforting Jews in exile. Throughout the centuries, pictures of the Tomb of Rachel were hung in Jewish homes as symbols of messianic hope as well as mourning for the lost Temple and Jerusalem.

Because he spends most of his adulthood in pharaoh’s palace, Joseph is often taken as a symbol of the “court Jew,” an outsider who has assumed a position of influence among the ruling powers of his adopted country. So assimilated into Egyptian culture is Joseph that his brothers do not even recognize him when they come to beg for food in a time of famine. To honor Joseph, pharaoh gives him an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah (“God speaks; he lives”) and an Egyptian wife, Asenath, daughter of Poti-phaera, priest of On.

Several other biblical characters are also associated with exile. Both Daniel and Esther, each the subject of a biblical book bearing their name, live in Persia among a Jewish Diaspora community. Like Joseph in Egypt, Daniel is a gifted dream interpreter, who uses this talent to become a court Jew, that is, to draw close to the ruling power and thereby improve the lot of his fellow Jews. As a woman, Esther’s options are more limited than Daniel’s but no less critical in aiding her people. Keeping her identity secret, she foils a plot laid by the anti-Semitic minister Haman and so saves the Persian Jews from wholesale destruction. Esther is the only biblical woman to play such a key leadership role in Diaspora. As such, she symbolizes the triumph of the powerless over powerful enemies.

Perhaps the most popular biblical symbol of the Jewish Diaspora is Elijah. Initially depicted in the book of Kings as a fiery prophet of vengeance, Elijah’s character is utterly transformed through the folklore process, especially after the destruction of the Second Temple. In rabbinic lore and folk legend, Elijah becomes the wandering Jew, appearing suddenly in a myriad of disguises—as slave, beggar, Arab, old man, wonder-worker. Most often, he aids Jews in dire need by granting wishes, bestowing treasure, revealing secrets, or dispensing wisdom. He also humbles the powerful and arrogant and teaches them lessons in basic human decency and compassion. He is the harbinger of the messianic age and, as such, symbolizes the eventual ingathering of Jewish exiles to the Land of Israel.

One relatively unfamiliar Jewish legend tells of a faraway land beyond the Sambatyon River, somewhere in the east, where the exiled 10 tribes live. Six days of the week the river boils with turbulence and churning rocks, so that no one can cross. And on the Sabbath, when the river rests, the Jews still remain trapped on the other side, for they are forbidden by Jewish law to travel on this day. A mirror image of the Garden of Eden story, this legend is a fantasy of a different kind of Jewish Diaspora, where Jews dwell in safety but are cut off from the world.

Certain foreign nations have traditionally symbolized various aspects of Jewish Diaspora. Although Babylonia destroyed the First Temple and exiled the Jewish population in the sixth century BCE, it later became a center of Jewish scholarship,

the site of the major Talmudic academies of Sura and Pumpedita. As such, Babylonia came to symbolize the flourishing of Jewish learning in Diaspora, overshadowing Israel's own rabbinic institutions. The Babylonian edition of the Talmud has become standard in Jewish tradition, eclipsing its Palestinian counterpart.

In rabbinic literature, ancient Greece represents the temptations and dangers of assimilation. The Hellenistic Diaspora introduced Jews to Greek literature, aesthetics, lifestyle, sports, and thought, sometimes even seducing them into pagan belief and practice.

Unlike Greek civilization, which not only threatened but also enriched rabbinic culture, the Roman Empire was single-mindedly bent on destroying Jewish civilization. Rome was the engine of irreversible exile, the power that destroyed the Jewish homeland and scattered the Jewish people throughout the empire. In Jewish legend, liturgy, and art, Rome is a symbol of Israel's implacable enemy. To escape censorship and arrest by the non-Jewish authorities, rabbinic sages often referred to Rome euphemistically, using the names of biblical enemies such as Esau, Edom, and Amalek. The Arch of Titus, depicting triumphant Romans bringing captive Jews to Rome in chains, has also come to symbolize the curse of exile. To this day, traditional Jews refuse to walk under the arch, symbolizing their enduring animus against Rome.

Jewish theology reflects this long history of Diaspora. One classic designation for God is *hamakom*, "The Place," indicating that an omnipresent God, not a geographic location, is Israel's true home. In the Torah, the foundational text and



Relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome depicts the triumphant return of the emperor after the sack of the great Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE. His spoils include the golden candelabra, or menorah. (iStockphoto)

national saga of Judaism, most of the events take place outside of Israel, in Egypt or in the no-man's-land of the wilderness. In the Torah, God's presence is sometimes symbolized by a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud, which accompany the people as they journey through the desert. The biblical verb *shohen* (to dwell) is repeatedly applied to God's presence among the people, often within the Tabernacle (which itself contains the root, *shohen*). Eventually, this verb evolved into one of the divine names, *Shekhinah* (she who dwells), the most intimate aspect of God's manifestation, especially among the Jews in exile. Frequently, the *Shekhinah* is characterized as having wings, which shelter and carry the Jewish people. God is sometimes compared to an eagle, which bears its young on outspread wings: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Me" (Exodus 19:4). Hasidic masters embraced the image of the exiled *Shekhinah*, finding solace in the notion that God, like the Jews, suffers as an outcast. The Komarner Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzhak Eizik Safrin of Komarno, taught, "He who voluntarily leaves his home and wanders about as a beggar, living a life of discomfort, but trusting always in the Lord, becomes a partner in the 'Exile of the *Shekhinah*'" (Newman 1987, 502).

### Symbols of Jewish Diaspora in Holidays, Art, and Architecture

Throughout 20 centuries of Diaspora, Jews incorporated motifs of exile—God's protective presence, nostalgia for the Jewish homeland, the hope of redemption and return to Israel—into the observance of holidays, the liturgy, folk art, and synagogue architecture. Even after the State of Israel was established, these reminders of exile remain deeply embedded in Jewish life.

Jerusalem serves not only as a symbol of the Jewish homeland but also as an orientation point for Jews in Diaspora. For Jews living west of Jerusalem, "east" is the direction of prayer. The synagogue ark is traditionally situated on the eastern wall of the sanctuary, and the prayer leader—at least in traditional synagogues—faces east when conducting the service. Two forms of popular folk art—the *mizrach* (literally "east") and its synagogue counterpart, the *shiviti* (from the verse, "I have set—*shivit*—God before me always," Psalm 16:8)—have developed with the express purpose of orienting the onlooker's thoughts and prayers toward Jerusalem, similar in function to the Hindu mandala.

The Western Wall in Jerusalem, also known as the Wailing Wall, is the only extant architectural feature dating back to Second Temple times. Even though it was only a section of the western supporting wall of the Temple Mount and was built by Herod, not by the original Jewish builders, the wall has become one of the most widely displayed Jewish symbols, found in Jewish homes throughout the world, symbolizing the memory of the Temple's destruction and Diaspora Jews' enduring connection to the Jewish homeland.

Another embodiment of these memories is the fast day of Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av, which commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem (586 BCE and 70 CE), the expulsion from Spain (1492), and various other calamities in Jewish history. The Tisha B'Av evening service centers on the chanting of the biblical book of Lamentations, a graphically



A partially assembled sukkah (booth or hut), built for the festival of Sukkoth, on a balcony in Jerusalem. (Yehuda Boltshauser)

horrific portrait of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, and the people's exile from the land. Early on in this mournful account, the narrator cries: "Judah has gone into exile" (Lamentations 1:3). The scripture read the next morning contains Moses' dire prophecies about the future of wayward Israel: "God will scatter you among the peoples, and only a scant few of you will be left among the nations to which God will drive you" (Deuteronomy 4:27). The additional prophetic reading for this day, Jeremiah 8:13–9:23, similarly foretells the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, and the people's exile. Numerous dirges (*kinot*) sung during the fast period echo these themes.

In contradistinction to Tisha B'Av, the fall holiday of Sukkoth celebrates the miracle of Jewish survival in Diaspora. The sukkah, a flimsy dwelling made of wood and tree branches, represents the portable shelters that housed the children of Israel as they wandered in the desert toward the Promised Land. On a theological level, the sukkah symbolizes the fragility of human security, rootedness, and life itself. The 16th-century kabbalists of Safed introduced the custom of inviting to the sukkah seven biblical personalities called *ushpizin* (Aramaic for "guests," derived from the Latin, *hospes*), each of whom represents a mystical aspect of God. An Italian kabbalist, Menahem Azariah de Fano, enumerated seven female counterparts to the male guests (*Sefer Asarah Ma'amarot*, part 2, section 1). Like the prophet Elijah who visits every seder table throughout the Jewish world on the night of Passover, so, too, the *ushpizin* wander the Diaspora visiting each sukkah during the festival, thereby serving as bivalent symbols of both exile and sanctuary.

### Selected Bibliography

- Davis, Eli, and Elise Davis. 1977. *Jewish Folk Art Over the Ages*. Jerusalem: Rubin Mass.
- Frankel, Ellen, and Betsy Teutsch. 1992. *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Gaster, Theodore. 1980. *The Holy and the Profane: Evolution of Jewish Folkways*. Rev. ed. New York: William Morrow.
- Ginzberg, Louis. 1939. *Legends of the Jews*. 7 vols. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Goodenough, Erwin R. 1988. *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, edited and abridged by Jacob Neusner. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Guttman, Joseph, ed. 1970. *Beauty in Holiness*. New York: Ktav.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. 1954. *Man's Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism*. New York: Scribners.
- Hirsch, Samson Raphael. 1957. "A Basic Outline of Jewish Symbolism." In *Timeless Torah*, edited by Jacob Breuer, 303–419. New York: Philip Feldheim.
- JPS TANAKH: The Holy Scriptures*. 1982. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Newman, Louis. 1987. *The Hasidic Anthology*. Rev. ed. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Roth, Cecil, and Bezalel Narkiss. 1971. *Jewish Art*. Rev. ed. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society.
- Scholem, Gershom. 1965. *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*. New York: Schocken.
- Ungerleider-Mayerson, Joy. 1986. *Jewish Folk Art from Biblical Days to Modern Times*. New York: Summit Books.
- Vilnay, Zev. 1978. *Legends of Jerusalem*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Waskow, Arthur. 1982. *Seasons of Our Joy*. New York: Bantam.

## Liturgy in the Diaspora

*Raymond Apple*

---

The Judaism of the early Diaspora, including its liturgy, took its cue from Eretz Israel. Jews living outside the Land paid national and spiritual homage to Jerusalem, depended on its determination of the religious calendar, and went on Temple pilgrimages. Worship centers created in places of Jewish population were not fully fledged temples; the Temple was in Jerusalem. Unusually, the Jewish colony at Elephantine in Egypt built an independent temple in the late seventh or early sixth century BCE—an “altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt” (Isaiah 19:19). Other Diaspora communities in Egypt, Syria, and other regions of the Greek and Roman empires accepted that sacrifices could not be offered outside the Jerusalem Temple but other liturgical practices were possible. At the same time, a standard prayer liturgy utilizing psalm and other texts was developing in Jerusalem, and a large number (said to be 400) of synagogues existed side by side with the Temple. In Herod’s time there was even a synagogue within the Temple precincts; it must be presumed that here and in synagogues elsewhere in Palestine and in Diaspora countries worshippers read or chanted psalms, recited the Shema and Ten Commandments, and read passages from the Torah on Sabbaths and festivals.



Moses, considered the greatest of all the Hebrew prophets, led the Israelites from Egypt to Israel around 1250 BCE and founded the legal and ethical principles of the Israelite nation. He is depicted here holding the Ten Commandments. (Library of Congress)

The liturgy remembered from Jerusalem was maintained by the exiles in Babylon, with the addition of prophetic homilies from Ezekiel and others, though this type of worship was regarded as inferior to the sacrificial ritual. After the return from exile and the erection of the Second Temple, the sizable community remaining outside the Land had private as well as community places of worship, including the grand synagogues in Alexandria and Antioch. When the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE the nonsacrificial liturgy of the synagogue became the standard mode of worship, though the hope remained that the sanctuary would be rebuilt and sacrifices reinstated.

Roman rule was resented, and there was even liturgical resistance, for example, to the words, “Our Father, our King, we have no King but You” in the *Avinu Malkenu* prayer. After the Jewish revolt was crushed, prayers for the restoration of Zion and the Temple and the coming of the “kingdom of Heaven” were maintained, but Diaspora Jews tried to adapt to their new circumstances and obey the law of the land, and they found it expedient to pray for their Gentile overlords. There were, however, constant reminders of Jewish insecurity and in time great occasions such as Passover and Yom Kippur concluded with the cry, “Next year in Jerusalem!”

In Talmudic times, the development of a set liturgy was hampered by the paucity of manuscript prayer books; prayers were recited by heart and prayer leaders resorted to improvisation. Divergent prayer texts grew, especially between Palestinian and Babylonian rites. Travelers from one center to the other brought their own customs and liturgical emphases with them. Babylon, for example, placed more emphasis on public prayer than did Palestine. Differences included variants in the concluding phrases of certain benedictions and the preference for one version of a prayer over another (e.g., *Ahavat Olam* is used in the morning service in Babylon versus *Ahavah Rabbah* in Palestine).

In time, the two communities developed different Hebrew pronunciations, systems of vocalization and accentuation, and even divergent scriptural texts. Torah readings in Babylon were on an annual cycle versus the triennial (or three and a half year) cycle in Eretz Israel and parts of Egypt. Maimonides (12th century) calls the annual cycle the universal practice even in Palestine, though traces of the triennial cycle lingered on and the haftarot (prophetical portions) read in some places (e.g., the Roman usage in Corfu) reflect that cycle. Almost every sizable community in Asia Minor and Mediterranean lands had separate Babylonian and Palestinian synagogues.

The Babylonian center was on strained terms with Eretz Israel. Babylon claimed that Palestinian customs were based on heresy and ignorance, though these allegations may have arisen out of unfamiliarity with the Jerusalem Talmud and the history of Palestinian Halacha. The Crusader invasion meant the decline of the authentic Palestinian tradition, though its features have now become known from genizah material. Because the annual cycle prolonged the Sabbath service, some modern congregations attempted to reinstate the triennial cycle, but had little success. After World War I, when an influenza pandemic made it advisable to curtail public gatherings, a few synagogues resorted to a form of triennial cycle, but later returned to the annual cycle.

The diverging liturgies alarmed the geonim to the extent that Sa'adia Gaon (10th century) feared that Jewish worship would become fragmented and forgotten and Judaism itself would disintegrate. Jewish scholars in Spain asked Amram, gaon of Sura (ninth century), for a guide to the order of the prayers. His response was in effect the first complete Jewish prayer book and laid the foundations for Jewish prayer literature. The second such work was by Sa'adia Gaon (10th century), who addressed himself not only to scholars but also to the ordinary Jew for whom he provided a commentary in Arabic. The basis of the Ashkenazi liturgy was laid in Vitry, in northern France, where Simhah ben Samuel, a contemporary of Rashi (11th century) compiled the *Mahzor Vitry*. The liturgy of medieval Anglo-Jewry was recorded in the *Etz Hayyim*, produced ca. 1286 by Jacob ben Judah, hazzan of London.

The Babylonian/Palestinian dichotomy did not affect every part of the Jewish world. Ethiopian Jewry, which was unaware of Talmudic Judaism and remained apart from the Jewish mainstream, developed its own liturgy using local languages instead of Hebrew, read the Bible in book form instead of a scroll, and used prayers that made no reference to broader Jewish national events. In Israel, some Ethiopians now study the Talmud, but their community is determined to maintain its own traditions. Ethiopians who attend mainstream synagogues tend to follow the oriental Sephardi pattern.

In time, a link was suggested between the Babylonian/Palestinian dichotomy and the Ashkenazi ("German")/Sephardi ("Spanish") rift. Though "Ashkenaz" (Genesis 10:3) had come to be identified with Germany and "Sephard" (Obadiah 1:20) with Spain, the two groupings roughly denoted the Jews of Christian Europe and those of Mediterranean countries. Their different traditions led in the 19th century to Leopold Zunz, Solomon J. L. Rapoport, and others arguing that the Palestinian

usage in liturgy, religious practice, Hebrew pronunciation, and hymnody survived in Italy and migrated across Europe to become the Ashkenazi tradition, whereas the Babylonian usage, dominant around the Mediterranean, became the Sephardi rite. This explains why some groups (e.g., Egypt, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Yemen) who adopted a Sephardi form of liturgy had no intrinsic connection with Spain. Spanish connections are more evident in Turkey, Greece, Holland, England, and their derivatives. The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, claiming a lineage from early in the common era, used a rite similar to that of Yemen.

Differences between the traditions appeared in many areas but particularly in liturgy. According to H. J. Zimmels, “There is hardly any prayer in which the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim do not deviate from each other” (1958, 99). There are varying attitudes toward incorporating piyyutim (liturgical hymns) in the prayer book, the Ashkenazim being more in favor and the Sephardim less so. Ashkenazim were originally more particular about covering the head during worship and standing during the Torah reading. Prayer melodies also diverged noticeably, often reflecting the style of the local environment. Festival customs differed, especially on Passover.

Questions arose as to whether a congregation or individual might move from one affiliation to another or adopt the alternative Hebrew pronunciation. On both issues, rabbinic opinion was cautious but, on an ad hoc basis, a Sephardi was allowed to officiate in an Ashkenazi synagogue and vice versa. There is debate concerning the liturgical tradition (*Nussah Ari*) of Isaac Luria (HaAri is derived from the initials of the Hebrew, “The godly Rabbi Isaac”). If Luria was an Ashkenazi, why did he adopt Sephardi patterns? If he was always a Sephardi, he was maintaining the family tradition. One view is that his father was Ashkenazi and his mother Sephardi, and by upbringing and personal preference he followed Sephardi customs, though his siddur incorporates elements of both, which renders dubious the term applied to his rite, *Nussah S’farad*. Luria was not alone in preferring elements of the Sephardi liturgy; Ashkenazim occasionally became “naturalized” Sephardim, feeling that the Sephardi ritual was more precise.

Sephardi and Ashkenazi traditions both had many subgroups, which were all adamant that theirs was the authentic usage. Ashkenazim had Western and Eastern European variants with their own further divisions; the Sephardim had the North African and Spanish/Portuguese rites and their variants. All (often with manuals recording their particular tradition) accompanied their adherents on their migrations. Other rites, independent of both, include the proudly maintained Italian traditions, which have ancient antecedents—probably from the time of the Second Temple—that predate the Ashkenazi/Sephardi division. Isaac Luria’s followers liken what they claim to be 12 rites to the 12 tribes of Israel: all are windows opened to God, but the 13th, superior to all, is *Nussah Ari*.

The various rites differed in style more than substance and often echoed the musical and even pietistic idioms of their environment. Thus, German Judaism was known for punctuality, precision, and decorum. Hasidic practice, with the same liturgical core, was more passionate and spontaneous. Western Europe adopted stately musical modes, whereas in Eastern Europe the music was more emotional

and less formalized. Hebrew prayer remained the core of the liturgy but some more acculturated communities allowed the vernacular on some occasions and used vernacular nomenclature for their officials and rituals. Many of these developments arose out of social history, including the fear of Gentile disapproval at a time when Jews were seeking social and political emancipation. In England, there were fears that Jewish respectability would suffer if synagogues were indecorous, services were undignified, and Jews lacked cultured preachers.

All groups responded to both external and internal influences. External influences included historical events, especially persecution, both of a general Jewish and a localized kind. Deliverances from calamity were acknowledged by means of special Purims with their own forms of worship. Christianity and Islam influenced and were influenced by Jewish worship; there was no cross-fertilization with eastern religions, though in recent times some Jews have become acquainted with Buddhism and even Hinduism in a search for personal spirituality. Current communities in the Far East, mostly of recent origin, brought traditions from elsewhere and have little connection with local non-Jewish faiths.

Medieval Christian pietistic practices, particularly in commemoration of the dead, came into Judaism in modified form in Germany and moved into most sections of the Jewish world. There were significant Jewish liturgical responses to Christian claims. Apart from abandoning kneeling as a common Jewish practice, the liturgy engaged in subtle polemics upholding the pure monotheism of Jewish belief. More openly, the medieval sixth stanza of the Hanukkah hymn “Ma’oz Tzur” referred to persecution by the Roman church “in the shadow of the cross.” Christian censorship of Jewish worship in Ashkenazi countries included attacks on the *Alenu* because it cited the scriptural verses “they worship vanity and emptiness and worship a god that cannot save” (Isaiah 30:7, 45:20), which were taken as offensive to Christianity. In 1703, the Prussian government ordered these words to be deleted. Christianity also entered the synagogue through christological sermons that Jews were compelled to attend. In Rome, the installation of a new pope entailed Jewish obeisance in the form of bringing a Torah scroll to the Vatican.

Islamic influence included pietistic practices such as washing both feet and hands before prayer, though washing the feet did not become widespread among Jews; prayer customs and posture; and the poetical style of some piyyutim. Islamic monotheism, being closer to Judaism, did not require extensive liturgical polemics as occurred with Christianity. Islamic fatalism did however affect the High Holiday hymn “Unetanneh Tokef,” dating from the time of 11th-century Christian persecution. A Jewish response comes in the last line, asserting that human penitence, prayer, and charity “avert the evil decree.”

Persecution constantly affected both the Sephardi and, more visibly, the Ashkenazi liturgy. In the resultant passages, the suffering is not blamed entirely on the enemy’s wickedness but at least partly on Jewish sinfulness (“because of our sins we were exiled from our land”). Martyrologies appear in particular in the Tisha B’Av prayers, which now often include *kinoth* (dirges) reflecting the Holocaust.

Geographical and climatic influences include prayers for dew and rain (*v’ten tal umatar*), which commence in the Diaspora later in the year than in Eretz Israel. In

the antipodes some rabbis (e.g., Francis Lyon Cohen in Australia) changed the order of the prayers for dew (Tal) and rain (Geshem), inserting Tal on Sh'mini Atzeret instead of Pesah and Geshem on Pesah instead of Sh'mini Atzeret, in the belief that these prayers were for the whole world, not only Eretz Israel. Such modifications have now been abandoned.

Political issues included the prayers to be said for rulers and how to word such prayers in an anti-Semitic country. In Nazi Germany, many congregations omitted the prayers for the government, though they were retained in the Soviet Union in the communist period by the few synagogues that remained open. English-speaking countries, where Jewish communities have enjoyed great stability, have always made a feature of prayers for the regime. In recent years many communities have introduced prayers for the Israel Defence Forces.

Every Halachic scholar participated in debates across the centuries as to when and how to say various prayers or whether to preface major prayers and observances with meditations (*kavvanot*). Poetical accretions were strictly maintained by some communities, especially those that followed Moses Sofer (the Hatam Sofer) of Pressburg (late 18th to early 19th centuries), but were abandoned or modified by others such as Nathan Marcus Adler and his son Hermann, chief rabbis of England, who modified the Anglo-Jewish minhag by liturgical concessions in the late 19th century.

Despite the emphasis on worshipping with a congregation, personal spirituality expressed itself in private prayer, and examples from Talmudic sources were inserted in the siddurim of all rites. Various places in the Amidah were recommended for the insertion of individual prayers, such as prayers for the sick. Introductory reflections on the themes of various prayers and practices were largely the work of Nathan Hannover (17th century), whose *Sha'arei Zion* brought kabbalistic themes into the standard liturgy. Mediterranean communities said *bakkashot* (petitions) in the early hours of Sabbath morning. Women, who often lacked Hebrew knowledge and did not regularly attend synagogue services, had their devotional books (*tehinnoth*), generally in Yiddish or another Jewish vernacular, and women's groups met to pray and weep together and hear stories from the Bible and Midrash. Meditation, though known already in Second Temple times, returned to Jewish practice under kabbalistic influence. Jewish meditation techniques have been adopted by some contemporary groups, even in mainstream congregations.

Hasidic prayer played a role in the controversies with the movement's opponents. The latter objected to the unpunctuality and imprecision of Hasidic worship and its innovations, for example, the formula "For the sake of the unification of the Holy One blessed be He and His Shekhinah," which they saw as theologically suspect, tending toward Sabbateanism and a prejudgment of the issue of whether the precepts require *kavvanah* (intention). Nonetheless the emotionalism of Hasidic worship had a wide influence. Since the modern revival of interest in the movement, outsiders, regardless of the doctrines of the movement, have come under the sway of Hasidic practices. Habad rabbis in particular have attracted many who found establishment Judaism cold and predictable.

Diaspora communities, though not in classical Reform, always prayed for the restoration of Eretz Israel. Even in Israel, the traditional references to living in exile

persist, and there has been resistance to liturgical changes to reflect the new situation, such as Rabbi Shlomo Goren's modernization of the Nahem prayer on Tisha B'Av afternoon. There are differing views as to the religious significance of the state. Some versions of the Prayer for Israel use a text by Chief Rabbi Isaac HaLevy Herzog, referring to "the first flowering of our redemption—*reshit tzemihat ge'ulatenu*" whilst others pray merely for "*ahenu b'Eretz Yisrael*—our brethren in the Land of Israel" and others do not recite any such prayer at all. The Diaspora usage of two days of festivals (*yomtov sheni shel galuyyot*) where Israel observes only one (except for Rosh Hashanah, which lasts two days even in Israel, and Yom Kippur, which is only one day everywhere) required the development of second-day liturgies and readings, allowing Diaspora communities, for example, a separate day for Simhath Torah where Israel combines Shemini Atzeret and Simhath Torah. Diaspora Jews who celebrate the festivals in Israel follow a range of practices on the second days; some rabbis insist that congregants who intend to return to the Diaspora continue to observe two days while other rabbis give more lenient advice.

In the Diaspora, there have always been migrations from one land to another, either forced or voluntary. As a result the whole range of traditions—and siddurim—has been carried around the world, and immigrants have clung to their ancestral practices in their new milieus. Ashkenazim who came to London in the late 17th and early 18th centuries brought with them the ways of Hamburg, and the "English" rite they established was described as "the Polish *minhag* (custom) as used in Hamburg." In larger communities there were several synagogues each following its own ritual; some smaller communities had more than one group praying in different parts of the one building. Newcomers were often highly suspicious of the validity of the *minhag* and the competence of the rabbis in their new locale. Issues still arise when a new rabbi changes the established pattern or congregants insist on using their own *nussah* when saying Kaddish or leading services.

There are also problems as to the production of standard prayer books. Even where there is relative liturgical homogeneity, as in Britain, there are calls for variant practices to be acknowledged in the Singer ("authorized") Daily Prayer Book, though the original compiler in the late 19th century based himself on the rule books of the founding congregations of the London United Synagogue. In the United States, the Rabbinical Council of America did not entirely succeed in creating a unified liturgy for Modern Orthodox congregations. Though there was high respect for the editorial skills and English style of Rabbi David de Sola Pool, other groups continued to prefer different siddurim.

Non-Orthodox movements often began with liturgical modifications. In the early 19th century, battle was joined on issues such as worship in Hebrew; prayers for the restoration of sacrifices, the return to Zion, and rebuilding of the Temple; and references to a personal Messiah and the resurrection of the dead. The acceptance of instrumental music on Sabbath, mixed choirs of men and women, Gentile singers, and worship with uncovered heads and without *tallithim* (prayer shawls), also provoked controversy. Separate seating for men and women was not originally an issue, though mixed seating, egalitarian services including female officiants, and calling women to the Torah, later became normative. Non-Orthodox movements

formulated their own prayer books, which incorporated modern material from non-Jewish as well as Jewish sources. How traditional a service should be is regularly debated in Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and other non-Orthodox groups. Some compromise by retaining the original Hebrew text while adding an interpretive translation, thus sidestepping major theological questions but keeping the emotional flavor of the familiar words. An example is the Reconstructionist use of Hebrew names for God while the word “God” is reinterpreted as process, not person. The German Orthodox leader David Hoffmann objected to innovations being “hidden or obscured by paraphrases.”

Hoffmann was a powerful champion of tradition and persuaded some German communities to retain the Orthodox siddur and reject a new liturgy that allegorized doctrines such as messianism, the resurrection of the dead, and the rebuilding of the Temple. In the modern period, however, congregations have moved from one category to another, with the consequent changes in liturgy and ritual practice.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abrahams, I. 1914. *Companion to the Authorised Daily Prayer Book*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- Baer, S. 1868. *Seder Avodat Yisrael*. Berlin: Schocken.
- Brodie, I., ed. 1962–1967. *The Etz Hayyim of R. Jacob ben Jehuda of London*. Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook.
- Cohen, J. M. 1993. *Blessed Are You: A Comprehensive Guide to Jewish Prayer*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Elbogen, I. 1967. *Der Juedische Gottesdienst*. Hildesheim: Olms.
- Encyclopedia Judaica*. 1972. S.V. “Liturgy.” Jerusalem: Keter.
- Idelsohn, A. Z. 1932. *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development*. New York: Sacred Music Press.
- Jacobs, L. 1972. *Hasidic Prayer*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Jacobson, B. S. 1966. *Meditations on the Siddur*. Tel Aviv: Sinai.
- Levy, I. 1963. *The Synagogue: Its History and Function*. London: Vallentine Mitchell.
- Petuchowski, J. J. 1970. *Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy*. New York: Ktav.
- Wieder, N. 1947. *Islamic Influences on Jewish Worship*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Zimmels, H. J. 1958. *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Zunz, L. 1859. *Die Ritus des Synagogalen Gottesdienst*. Berlin: Springer.

# The Concept of Exile and Diaspora in Sephardi Thought

*Marc D. Angel*

---

During their many centuries in exile, Jews tried to understand the meaning of their predicament. The prevalent religious explanation was “because of our sins we have been exiled from our land” (from the holiday musaf prayer). The exile is a punishment of temporary duration. Ultimately, God will send the Messiah to redeem the Jews and return them to their Land of Israel, where they will live in peace, prosperity, and spiritual fulfillment. Maimonides believed the messianic age would be preceded by sincere repentance among the Jews (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance, 9:2). When God accepts this repentance, he will end Israel’s exile.

The 11th-century Sephardic poet, Judah Halevi, captured the Jewish feeling of exile in his poem “Libi bemizrah”: “My heart is in the east [Israel] but I am in the furthest west [Spain].” He would gladly forfeit the comforts in his land of exile, if only he could return to the homeland of his people. Throughout the centuries, Jews longed for the coming of the Messiah, the ingathering of Jews in the Land of Israel, and the end of the exile.

Although exile was generally understood as punishment, positive value was also attributed to it. The Talmud (Pesachim 87b) records the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer that Jews were exiled so they could gather converts in the lands of their dispersion. The Sephardic biblical commentator Rabbi Yitzhak Abravanel suggested that the sufferings of exile were a means of spiritual purification, a necessary evil on the road to messianic times (commentary on Bereishith, chapter 15).

Among the Sephardic kabbalists of 16th-century Safed, the exile of Israel was viewed as the earthly manifestation of the symbolic exile of the Divine Presence. Just as Jews mourned their own state of exile, they were also to mourn for God’s exile, that is, his distancing himself from Israel and humanity. The earthly and metaphysical exiles reflected a spiritual breakdown in the relationship between God and Israel, indicating a deeper universal alienation between God and humanity. Redemption of Israel will signify a restoration of the spiritual harmony that was supposed to prevail between God and his creations.

Some Safed kabbalists thought human action could hasten the arrival of the Messiah. Rabbi Yaacov Berav, who settled in Safed about 1535, restored the ancient practice of granting semikah (rabbinic ordination). This form of ordination had ceased with the exile of Jews from Israel during Roman times. Reinstating semikah in the Land of Israel, Rabbi Berav thought, was a step toward reestablishing the Sanhedrin, the authoritative judicial body of Judaism. It was generally believed the Sanhedrin would only be restored in messianic times.

Yosef Nasi, one of the most prominent Jews of the 16th-century Ottoman Empire, sought to establish a Jewish settlement in the vicinity of Tiberias. By creating industry there, he hoped Jews would be attracted to return to their ancestral land.

This would hasten the ingathering of exiles to Israel—and help induce the coming of the Messiah.

Messianic longings came to a head during the 17th century, with the emergence of the pseudo-messiah Sabbatai Zevi. Born in Izmir, Sabbatai Zevi was a charismatic mystic who succeeded in convincing much of world Jewry that he was the long-awaited Messiah. He was expected to usher in the redemption in 1666. When he accepted Islam under threat of death by the sultan, the messianic bubble burst. Although some fervent followers retained faith that Sabbatai Zevi would reemerge as the Messiah, most Jews recognized that he had perpetrated a cruel fraud. A deep despondency afflicted much of world Jewry. A pervasive feeling emerged that Jews should accept their fate in exile and wait patiently—and passively—for the Almighty to redeem them when he was ready to do so.

However, some believed it possible to force God's hand and hasten the coming of the Messiah through human efforts. Rabbi Hayyim Abulafia (ca. 1660–1744), an erudite and saintly sage who grew up in Jerusalem, was among those who expected the arrival of the Messiah in 1740. The Talmud indicated that the future redemption of Israel would manifest itself in Tiberias (Rosh Hashanah 31); so Rabbi Abulafia decided to reestablish a Jewish community there. Although the Messiah did not appear in 1740, Rabbi Abulafia continued his efforts to rebuild the city. In 1742, Rabbi Hayyim Benattar (1696–1743), a great sage born in Sale, Morocco,



View of the Sea of Galilee from the ancient, and modern, city of Tiberias, Israel. (Gilad Levy)

visited Rabbi Abulafia in Tiberias. Some thought the meeting of these two saintly personalities in the holy city of Tiberias would bring on the messianic era. According to a traditional story, though, the two sages realized redemption was not imminent. They embraced, wept, and foretold each other's deaths. Rabbi Benattar died in the summer of 1743, and Rabbi Abulafia died in the spring of 1744.

The Safed kabbalists, Rabbi Abulafia, and others undertook specific actions to hasten the coming of the Messiah, but their activism was rooted in a mystical worldview. They believed their deeds would not in themselves lead to redemption, but would trigger a response from God so that he would send the Messiah and end Israel's exile. In the 19th century, though, Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (1798–1879) called for a practical, this-worldly activism aimed at restoring Jewish sovereignty in the Jews' ancestral homeland.

Born in Sarajevo, Rabbi Alkalai published his first work, *Shema Yisrael*, in 1834. He called on rabbis to inspire members of their communities to migrate to the Land of Israel. In this and later writings, he stressed the need for Jews to take the initiative in ending their position of political powerlessness. The key to ending the exile was for Jews to move to the Land of Israel, build a sound economy, and learn to govern themselves. Rabbi Alkalai argued that the Jewish tradition recognized two phases in the ultimate redemption of the Jews. The first was a natural, gradual return to the Land of Israel; the second was a miraculous redemption led by the Messiah. He believed the Jews of his generation should undertake the first phase of the redemption by taking practical measures to restore Jewish life in the Holy Land.

Rabbi Alkalai was pragmatic in his analysis. He favored a gradual—not massive—immigration to Israel, so that the economy and government there could grow organically and slowly. Those who went there first would lay the groundwork for others who would come later. He thought Jews in Israel should work in a variety of commercial activities, including agriculture. To ensure the stability of the Jewish enterprise, he called on Jewish leaders throughout the Diaspora to seek the support of the heads of state of the nations of the world. He also undertook to create a charitable mechanism among world Jewry, whereby the Jewish settlements in Israel could be supported until they were self-sufficient.

Rabbi Alkalai, a prolific author, traveled far and wide preaching his message that true repentance entailed a return to the Land of Israel. To end the exile, Jews needed to shed their passivity and dependence on miracles; they had to exert their energies to bring on their own redemption. Once the Jews did their part, only then will the Almighty complete the process of redemption by sending the Messiah.

Although Rabbi Alkalai's view found few supporters during his lifetime, his teachings took root in subsequent generations, leading to a more practical and activist approach to Jewish redemption. Yet even during the modern period, not all Jews shared Rabbi Alkalai's vision. Some retained their traditional passivity, patiently awaiting miraculous intervention; others were moving in another spiritual direction altogether.

When Jews were gaining political rights in Europe during the 19th century, many no longer felt as though they were in "exile," but rather that they were part of a Jewish Diaspora, that is, a religious group whose members willingly lived in different

countries. The Reform movement, which arose in Germany, eschewed the notion that Jews yearned to return to the Land of Israel. Rather, it stressed, Jews were members of a religion and not a nation; they were “Germans of the Mosaic persuasion.” While Reform took this attitude to the extreme, other westernized Jews also thought of themselves more as citizens of their countries of residence than as members of an exiled Jewish people awaiting return to Israel.

Most Sephardic Jews lived in Muslim countries and were less prone to the westernized view of exile and Diaspora. Sephardim, even those who were relatively comfortable in their societies, still saw themselves as members of the Jewish nation in exile. With the rise of the State of Israel in 1948, the majority of Jews in Muslim countries migrated to Israel, often with a sense of fulfillment of a pre-Messianic redemption. The long exile was finally ending.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Angel, Marc D. 1991. *Voices in Exile: A Study in Sephardic Intellectual History*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House.
- Angel, Marc D. 2006. *Foundations of Sephardic Spirituality: The Inner Life of Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights.

## **Lurianic Kabbalah and the Idea of the Diaspora**

*Shaul Magid*

---

The 16th century was a century of great Jewish intellectual activity, especially in the area of Kabbalah. It was also a time of great Jewish migration eastward from the Iberian Peninsula to Jewish centers in Amsterdam, Italy, Greece, Poland, and particularly Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). Eretz Israel was conquered by the Ottomans in 1516, and Sultan Bayezid II embarked on a modernization project in which the Jews from Spain and Portugal played a constructive role. He invited many exiles to immigrate to his empire. Many who settled in Eretz Israel did so for religious reasons, as Eretz Israel was still the backwater of the empire and held little economic opportunities. This was arguably the first sustained and systematic repopulation of Eretz Israel since the destruction of the second Commonwealth in 70 CE. The cities of Acre, Tiberias, Gaza, Jerusalem, and Safed were all sites of Jewish immigration in this period and subsequently became centers of Jewish intellectual life.

Safed already had a small yet stable Jewish community by the beginning of the 16th century. Its Jewish population increased dramatically after 1516 until the latter third of that century when it began a steady decline due to periods of harsh plague, conflict with the Arab population, and other maladies. During the short period from the 1530s until the late 1570s Safed had a robust kabbalistic community led by the renowned kabbalist Moses Cordovero (d. 1570). By 1570, it was the global



Prayers and petitions made at the grave of Rabbi Isaac Luria in the ancient cemetery in Safed, the city where the Kabbalah, Judaism's foremost body of mystical texts, celebrated its most significant development in the 16th century. (Richard T. Nowitz/Corbis)

center of Kabbalah. In that year, a young and virtually unknown aspiring kabbalist, Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (d. 1572), arrived in Safed from Egypt with the expressed intent of studying with Cordovero. Luria was born in Jerusalem to a Sephardic mother and Ashkenazic father, who died when he was a small child. He was raised by a wealthy maternal uncle in Egypt, where he also studied with the well-known Talmudists Bezalel Ashkenazi (no relation) and David ibn Zamra (who also immigrated to Safed around this time). As far as historians know (there is little data that is not hagiographic) he was an autodidact in the Jewish mystical tradition.

Raised in the comfort of privilege, Luria was quite precocious and apparently very charismatic. After a few short months Luria parted with the kabbalistic master Cordovero—disagreeing with his rendering of certain passages from the medieval classic of Kabbalah, the *Zohar*—and began teaching a group of students that soon included the long-time disciple of Cordovero, Hayyim Vital. Vital quickly became Luria's primary disciple, and much of Luria's teaching that has survived (he wrote little) was filtered to some degree through Vital and Vital's son Samuel.

This period in Safed was full of messianic anticipation. Although there were some tragic false messianic figures in the generation before Luria, such as David Reubeni and Abraham Halevi, the demographic shift from Iberia to Eretz Israel was interpreted by many kabbalists as a sign of the impending redemption. There was even a failed attempt in Safed by the rabbinic leader Jacob Berab to reinstitute official ordination (*semikha*) in preparation for what many hoped would be a renewed

Sanhedrin or high rabbinic court in the Third Temple in Jerusalem. This is all to say that Eretz Israel played a major role in this kabbalistic school. One example of the centrality of Eretz Israel among these kabbalists is the short monograph published by a disciple of Cordovero and Luria, Nathan Shapira, entitled *Tuv ha-Aret*, first published in 1616, which was devoted entirely to the mystical dimensions of the Land of Israel according to the kabbalistic teachings of Cordovero and Luria. Cordovero, who spent most of his life in Safed, stressed the metaphysical and ontological difference between Eretz Israel and the Diaspora, which kabbalists refer to simply as *huz la-aretz* (outside the land). Cordovero's focus on Eretz Israel was more conventional than Luria's (Luria grew up in Egypt and only lived in Eretz Israel for a short 18 months before dying of a plague in the summer of 1572).

Given its location in Safed, it is somewhat surprising that not only does the Lurianic circle acknowledge the Diaspora, but it also views the Diaspora as an essential dimension of its messianic vision. In the minds of these mystics, these physical locations (Israel/outside Israel) are reified into metaphysical constructs. The sanctity of Eretz Israel is attributable to the unique divine effluence that descends to its very soil. This dimension of Lurianic teaching becomes essential for the mystical Zionism of Abraham Isaac Kook in the early 20th century. The Talmudic sages remark that "the air of Erez Yisrael makes one wise." Although these kabbalists surely agree and offer innovative rendering of this passage, there is still a notion that *huz la-aretz* plays a central role in the final chapter of Jewish exile and should not be negated or abandoned before the end-time.

Lurianic cosmology is founded on the notion that during creation a tumultuous rupture resulted in the descent of shards of cosmic vessels that contained sparks of divinity into the netherworld. These shards descended into what became the realm of the demonic, trapping them in this dark space ostensibly void of God. Exile is a state whereby Israel is commissioned by God, via the covenant (Torah), to weaken the demonic and liberate these sparks from their imprisoned state, enabling them to return to the (broken) God above and resulting in redemption of the world. In the Lurianic imagination, redemption is the transformation and culmination of the world as we know it. This process, generically called *tikkun*, or reparation, was completed through a combination of Jews fulfilling mitzvah (divine commandments) and proper meditative practices accompanying these mitzvot (known in Lurianic nomenclature as *kavvanah*) performed by the kabbalistic elite. Included in this process of *tikkun* were ascetic practices of penance and visiting the graves of past righteous men in order to strengthen individual souls to achieve a state of completion.

The details of Lurianic cosmology are far beyond the scope of this short entry. For these limited purposes, it is important to note that many of the imprisoned sparks exist in geographical areas where the demonic is most dominant, that is, outside Eretz Israel. Thus, although these kabbalists remained ensconced in Safed (after Luria's death many in his circle dispersed to parts of Italy, Syria, and Poland), they stressed that there were many divine sparks embedded in the lands outside Israel that needed liberation. In some cases, Luria was able to accomplish this feat of *tikkun* without the need to relocate. However, abandoning the Diaspora before

the final sparks were redeemed was viewed by some as an act of forcing the end and was prohibited by the rabbinic sages.

The relationship between the Land of Israel, the Diaspora, and redemption is a complex one in Kabbalah more generally and Lurianic Kabbalah in particular. According to rabbinic Judaism, Eretz Israel is the locale of the fulfillment of God's promise and thus its holiness, even in exile, remains intact. According to most medieval codes, living in Eretz Israel fulfills a positive commandment and, in some opinions, is an obligation. In post-rabbinic Judaism this idea is perhaps articulated most strongly by the 11th-century philosopher, mystic, and poet Judah Halevi (who lived in Spain) and the kabbalist and jurist Moses Nahmanides, who immigrated to Eretz Israel from Barcelona in the late 13th century. One of the main criteria of Messiah in rabbinic texts later codified by Moses Maimonides was the "gathering of the exiles from the four corners of the earth," that is, a massive demographic shift from the Diaspora to Eretz Israel. Such a dictum came alive among early traditional proto-Zionists and Zionists, such as Abraham Kalisher and Yehuda Alkalai, and its secularized version led to the Zionist notion of "negating the exile," which was common in the labor Zionism of David Ben-Gurion, among others.

Some kabbalists had a more creative and, one might say, daring view of the notion of the ingathering. One early kabbalist, Abraham bar Hiyya (d. ca. 1136), made the audacious claim that in the future the entire world will be called Eretz Israel (*Megillat ha-Megillot*, Scroll of the Revealer, 110). While this is surely a marginal position (he was addressing a certain issue regarding the resurrection of the dead) it is one that emerges among some Lurianic kabbalists and was perhaps even advocated by Luria himself. Moshe Idel notes that there is an important distinction between Bar Hiyya and the Lurianic position. Bar Hiyya argues that the transformation of the Diaspora into Eretz Israel will result from resurrection, that is, it will indicate the final end of exile. Exile is understood here as the distinction between the holy and profane and not simply one of Jewish geographic and even existential existence. For Luria, it seems, it is precisely the act of performing mitzvah in this world that erases the boundaries separating the holy from the profane and separating the land outside Eretz Israel from Eretz Israel itself.

This idea is more common among kabbalists living in the Diaspora, such as Naphtali Hertz Bacharach (who lived in Poland), author of *Emek ha-Melekh*, whereas the Lurianic circle that remained in Eretz Israel seemed to harbor the idea that the demonic realm (the Diaspora) would be destroyed and not transformed in the future. In either case, however, it is quite clear that the Lurianic position was not to reject the Diaspora/exile/land outside Eretz Israel. Quite the opposite, his metaphysics requires engagement with this land and its metaphysical correlate in order to redeem the trapped sparks, liberating God from self-imposed exile and redeeming the world. One could argue that according to Luria, Jews should not abandon the Diaspora before they are no longer needed there. When that is, is anyone's guess. It is not insignificant, however, that many in Luria's circle emigrated from Eretz Israel to Italy and other parts of Europe and the Levant after his death when the messianic hope that captured the imagination of his generation went unfulfilled. Perhaps they believed they still had a mystical role to play in the Diaspora.

Many stayed in Eretz Israel and thus the importance of Eretz Israel continued to play a role in kabbalistic thinking. But the Diaspora remained a live and necessary category for Lurianic kabbalists and thus an important dimension of Jewish habitation and piety in post-Lurianic mysticism.

### Selected Bibliography

- Fine, Lawrence. 2003. *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fraternity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Idel, Moshe. 1980. "Some Conceptions of the Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought." In *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture, Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, edited by Ruth Link-Salinger, 124–141. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Idel, Moshe. 1986. "The Land of Israel in Medieval Kabbalah." In *The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives*, Lawrence A. Hoffman, 170–187. South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press.
- Rosenberg, Shalom. 1983. "Exile and Redemption in Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century." In *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, edited by Bernard Cooperman, 399–430. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## Communication in the Premodern Jewish Diaspora

*Sophia Menache*

---

Like any other human activity, communication is the product of space and time; its means, scope, and content are critically influenced by the particular socioeconomic and political framework. Different societies develop their own language and customs, thus forming their own communication framework. These two premises left their mark on the development of communication worldwide and, more specifically, in the Jewish Diaspora. Still, the Jewish Diaspora represents a *sui generis* phenomenon, because of the global dispersion of Jews and the lack of a political framework that could provide a supporting communication network. The intercommunity communication network served to turn the otherwise abstract concept of "Jewish people" into a living reality and delineated the boundaries of the Jewish Diaspora. The diffusion of print and the emergence of Jewish journals marked a watershed dividing the two main stages in the development of communication in the Jewish Diaspora, which for purposes of analysis may be defined as the premodern and the modern period.

### The Premodern Period

Two main factors informed the communication nature of the Jewish Diaspora: religion and trade. From the destruction of the Second Temple onward, the Jewish religion underwent tremendous changes as the continuous exegesis of holy texts (Halacha) replaced the crucial role of the Temple in Jewish ritual. The textual

essence of the Jewish collective encouraged the high literacy rate of Jews—per se, a rare phenomenon in medieval times. In complete contradiction to the oral character of other traditional societies, communication in the Jewish Diaspora thus combined written and oral messages. Jewish literacy, however, was not the outcome of the Mosaic faith alone; it was also fostered by the involvement of Jews in trade on both a local and an international scale. Trade—with its rhythm, routes, seasonal fairs, and written contracts—further played a crucial role in fostering the reception and transmission of reliable information in the shortest period of time and broadening the scope of communication. The many regulations concerning trade and all kinds of contracts in Talmudic literature hint at the close relationship between the faith and the occupation of Jews. Jewish languages—first, Aramaic and Hebrew, and at later periods, jargons like Ladino and Yiddish—defined the audience of communication as well as the subject and content of messages.

The communication network in the Jewish Diaspora was based on the community (*kehillah*), which represented its most basic cell. The communal leadership—religious and lay—developed the central means of communication and bestowed on them a hierarchical-normative character. Eastern Jewish communities advanced centralizing organization patterns, which were legitimized and fostered in the framework of the Islamic world. As an intrinsic part of their office, the heads of the leading centers of study, as well as the political leaders (*exilarchs*), were responsible for fostering a fluent communication exchange with the different communities under their rule. The prevalence of correspondence among Jews in the Islamic world was probably due to the fact that many Jews served as scribes (*kātibs*) in governmental offices so they were able to introduce Arabic epistolary practices in the communities of North Africa and Andalusia.

The fall of the Roman Empire in 476 and the emergence of the Germanic kingdoms all over Europe created the mosaic background that was to characterize Western Jewry. The development of feudalism and the crystallization of an autarkic economy left their mark on the emergence of autonomous Jewish communities—a fact corroborated time and again by prominent Talmudic scholars. Like many other corporations at the time, the autonomous Jewish community enjoyed royal license to develop its own regulations, which had force of law over its members. The autonomous community, as a result, may have posed an obstacle to the development of an intercommunity communication network. Though Christian kings favored the appointment of a supreme Jewish leader from time to time, such as the archpresbyters of Anglo-Jewry or the chief rabbi in Aragon, the royal nominees were actually treasury agents and could not be regarded as real factors in the communication network.

Intermittent links between scattered communities thus characterized the communication network among Jewish communities as a whole. From the 11th century onward, rabbinical synods were expected to strengthen intercommunity links. At first, the initiative came from the “three communities” (Worms, Speyer, and Mainz), which were later joined by others. In the absence of a regular schedule, the initiative for such meetings usually came from an outstanding scholar whose authority was widely recognized. Synods were usually conducted in trading centers,

such as Troyes or Mainz, or during trade fairs. The Bologna Synod (1416) also encouraged the emergence of a political alliance among Jewish communities in different districts of Italy. However, it was not until the second half of the 16th century that intercommunal networks appeared in Europe, in Poland and Lithuania (the Council of the Four Lands), and in Moravia and Western Hungary. All were promoted by contemporary rulers to rationalize fiscal practices and augment the taxes collected from Jews.

The communication network among Jewish communities was, therefore, influenced by external factors—first and foremost by the political elite, whose patronage conditioned Jewish life. Still, the aspiration to develop communication links between different communities was first and foremost the outcome of a sense of solidarity among Jews. The idea of the “Chosen People” embodied the most essential sense of Jewish solidarity and bestowed on it divine legitimacy. Especially in times of crises, Jewish solidarity visibly crystallized, revealing the existence of an efficient communication network along trade routes. Letter exchanges before the First Crusade provide a case in point. In early December 1095, the Jewish leaders of northern France warned their coreligionists in the Rhine area about the approaching crusade. The Mainz community acknowledged receipt of this information only one month later, revealing the high efficacy and speed of information transmission.

Centers of study and outstanding or itinerant scholars provide an additional aspect of the communication network in the Jewish Diaspora. The yeshivas present a suitable example of the first category, with Jewish scholars from faraway areas coming to leading centers of study (like those of Sura and Pumbedita in Babylon). By means of their *responsa* (written answers covering a most rich spectrum of subjects), outstanding scholars provided an additional communication channel of great efficacy. Rabbenu Gershom’s sanction of monogamy, for example, was respected across large areas of Western and Central Europe; Maimonides’s codification was also implemented near and far, while his philosophical treatises provided food for hard debate across the Pyrenees. His missive to the Yemenite Jews (1172) further points to the existence of communication links among scattered communities. Additionally, whether as casual visitors or in their capacity as preachers, itinerant scholars acted as communication channels among different communities.

### **The Modern Period**

Modern communication, especially print, left its mark on the development of society as a whole and of the Jewish Diaspora, in particular. In contrast to the corporative essence of medieval society—of which the Jewish community was an integral part—the modernization process brought about the gradual alienation of the individual from society. Communication became a very important tool in the emergence of an imagined collectivity; as such, it was not further led by the traditional leadership but by professional communicators, who did not always act in accordance with traditional norms; indeed, they often challenged them. The efforts of the rabbinical leadership to regulate the use of print while avoiding the uncontrolled diffusion of books and new ideas (Synod of Ferrara 1554) were, therefore,

part of the unavoidable struggle between traditional and modern values. But attempts at regulation were condemned to failure. Though at first print allowed a better diffusion of religious books, it gradually paved the way for the dissemination of heterodox and heretical ideas. The printed text did not, therefore, define Jewish Orthodoxy any further; rather, it actually challenged it. Print spread very fast in the Jewish Diaspora as a whole. In the Ottoman Empire, for example, Jewish print anteceded by about 200 years analogous developments in the surrounding society. The itinerant nature of press artisans brought about the rapid spread of the new technology and explains the diffusion of Lurian ideas as well as the success and scope of the messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi in the 16th and 17th century, respectively.

The interaction between Jews and the surrounding society, accelerated by the modernization process, facilitated the emergence of a Jewish secular press. Jewish newspapers played a very important role in defining the identity of the emerging Jewish bourgeoisie, while dealing with the many challenges posed by modernization. They were no longer limited to the Jewish languages, but incorporated the vernacular of the surrounding intellectual elites. Jewish newspapers thus reflected the gradual disintegration of the traditional community and the integration of its members into the market society. They addressed Jews as private individuals and created an illusory community, thus offering a means for practicing Judaism on an individual basis. Earlier 18th-century journals, such as *Koheleth Mussar* and *Measeff*, were written in Hebrew and tried to bring Jewish audiences closer to European culture. But *Shulamit* was written in German; it accepted contributions by non-Jews and tried to widen its circle of readers while adapting its messages to the values of the German bourgeoisie. The number of subscribers to these journals hint at their crucial role in strengthening a sense of identity among the Jewish bourgeoisie, with its growing weight in communal affairs.

The beginning of the 19th century heralded two main changes in Jewish communication, while revealing a split along the lines of language and state allegiance. As an outcome of the integration of Jews into European society, the formerly united Diaspora—of an international nature and, as such, over political entities—changed its essence and meaning. Hebrew and other Jewish languages were gradually replaced by the national languages of those countries in which the Jews lived and of which they sought to become active and equal citizens. Publications like *The Jewish Chronicle* in England, *Archives Juives* in France, and *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* in Germany were the most faithful reflection of the integration process of Jews into the emerging national states. The appearance of these publications further hints at two different but complementary processes. They voiced the struggle for the emancipation of Jews, but they also revealed a growing interest in the development and well-being of Jewish communities worldwide, mainly in distressed communities, such as those in the Ottoman and Russian Empires.

By the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the waves of Jewish emigration and the development of the Jewish national movement heralded further changes in the communication network. The emigration of 2.5 million Yiddish-speaking Jews from Eastern Europe fostered the emergence of a united

cultural framework of unprecedented scope that was essentially different from the premodern framework. Jewish journalists became active professionals in their new homes while at the same time integrating into the flourishing cultural Yiddish framework. On the other hand, the development of the Jewish national movement provided an additional catalyst for new arenas of discussion and the diffusion of ideological tenets. The prosperous communication network in the Jewish Diaspora provided food for anti-Semitic stereotypes, such as those promulgated by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

The Holocaust and the concentration of the Jewish people in Israel in the 20th century fostered further significant changes in the communication network. The disappearance of Eastern European Jewry brought about the gradual decline of Yiddish journals and their eventual collapse. On the other hand, the establishment of the State of Israel facilitated the renaissance of a new type of Hebrew journalism, in parallel with the continuous development of newspapers in English, and to a lesser degree, in French and Spanish, and much later in Russian, for different linguistic Diasporas. The development of electronic media—radio, television, and Internet—further met the needs of the Jewish intercommunal network while allowing its extension worldwide.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Cesarini, D. 1994. *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Menache, Sophia, ed. 1996. *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora: The Pre-Modern World*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill.

## **The Concept of Diaspora and Exile in German-Jewish Literature and Art**

*Mark H. Gelber*

---

Numerous German-Jewish (or Austrian-Jewish) literary and cultural figures, as well as their achievements, have been lauded as integral to Western culture in general, and they have been widely viewed as representative of some of the most impressive intellectual and artistic accomplishments in human civilization. Several names may be mentioned to emphasize this point, including Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx (who was converted to Christianity by his parents), Albert Einstein, Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin, Else Lasker-Schüler, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Gerschom Scholem, Paul Celan, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hannah Arendt, and many others. However, recent reevaluations of the cultural productivity of Jews in Central European culture have departed from the model or very idea of a Jewish contribution to German literature and culture. It may be that this idea has come to appear unseemly or untenable after the Nazi attempt to erase Jewish literature and culture

from the German national tradition, in addition to eliminating Jews physically in the genocide that came to be known as the Holocaust. As an alternative to the idea of a Jewish contribution, the idea of a Diasporic Jewish voice or a Jewish literature in exile in this German-language cultural space has been developed. It has tended to emphasize the Jewish aspects of this cultural production, while minimizing or marginalizing the Germanic aspects. Another related model is based on the notion of a unique German-Jewish culture, functioning throughout Central Europe and beyond, which could be viewed *sui generis*. Accordingly, this hybrid German-Jewish culture, sometimes but not always called a symbiosis, would in theory belong neither to German nor to Jewish culture alone. But, by partaking of both, it could be seen to belong to both at the same time it created something entirely new. The problem of classification has perplexed many observers, but it is almost always admitted that the particular cultural milieu of Central Europe normally lends the literary and artistic productivity of the Jews who live in the Diaspora communities in this part of the world a specifically Germanic or Austrian quality. One may speak in this sense of influences, intertextuality, and intercultural exchanges, which inform the diasporic consciousness of the literature and culture of Central Europe.

In 1929, Walter Benjamin wrote an article entitled "Jews in German Culture" for the major German-language *Encyclopedia Judaica* project, edited by Jacob Klatzkin. This encyclopedia project ended with the rise of Nazism, and it remained fragmentary; the last volume to be published contained the entries beginning with the letter "K." Benjamin's initials appear at the end of his article, signifying authorship, although next to them may be found the initials of Nahum Goldman and Benno Jakob, who apparently edited the entry. There is some evidence that Benjamin was not at all happy with their intervention and changes. In any case, his contribution is divided into two parts. The first considered German Jews in the *Geisteswissenschaften* (that is, broadly conceived, the humanities), but in this article it especially referred to philosophy, including Jewish thought, political philosophy, and psychoanalysis. Here, Benjamin surveyed the Jewish presence within these fields in German culture from Moses Mendelssohn to Karl Marx and Moses Hess, and from Hermann Cohen to Otto Weininger and Sigmund Freud. In the second section of his essay entitled "Dichtung," which denotes creative literature and belles lettres in the broadest sense, Benjamin considered Jews to be participants in the project of creating German national literature, from the time of the 13th-century medieval Jewish *Minnesänger* (troubadour) Süsskind von Trimberg to the outstanding Jewish writers and expressionist poets of the 1920s, including Franz Kafka, Else Lasker-Schüler, Alfred Döblin, Arnold Zweig, and Lion Feuchtwanger. Although Benjamin usually viewed Jewish writers as being heavily dependent on German models, he also seemed to consider them sometimes as full and independent partners in the literary and cultural endeavors that constituted German culture. Sometimes they even played very important roles in this regard. For example, Benjamin credited Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Boerne with the innovative creation of the German feuilleton, which eventually became an important German literary-journalistic genre, although it must be admitted that their accomplishment was rooted in their exposure to French journalistic writing during their long sojourns in exile in Paris.

Also, Benjamin cited Berthold Auerbach, Leopold Kompert, and Karl Emil Franzos as the initiators of the German literary genre known as “ghetto literature.”

In both sections of Benjamin’s article there is no unifying thesis or underlying structure. Sometimes, as in the case of Georg Simmel, he will comment on “the Jewish element” in his philosophizing or attempt to categorize Weininger’s work in terms of “Jewish resentment.” Normally, however, he is content to point to the Germanic context of Jewish writing, for example, the role of Hegel in the development of the “Science of Judaism” (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) or Max Nordau’s relationship to German romanticism and German naturalism. If, for Benjamin, there is one unifying aspect to the productivity of the figures he presents in his article, it is perhaps the implicit criterion of German language productivity by Jews. This criterion is not at all obvious. At the end of the 20th century, Sander Gilman and Jack Zipes edited an ambitiously conceived English-language compendium of *Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture (1096–1996)*, in which they included, in addition to writers who lived in Central Europe and worked in German, several writers who produced texts in Hebrew or in Yiddish. Although not at the center of their project, Jewish literary and cultural projects that were generated in languages other than German—usually Jewish languages—were of definite interest to Gilman and Zipes, as long as they were carried out or came to fruition within the ambience of, or in contact with, Central European culture. For example, they included an article about the earliest extant Yiddish *purimspil*, which was traced to Leipzig. An essay on the Hebrew-language periodical *HaMe’asef* is included in their compendium (it was one of the centerpieces of the Hebrew Haskalah movement from the 1790s); and it published odes in Hebrew in honor of political leaders like Frederick the Great of Prussia or Joseph II of Austria alongside Hebrew translations of important 18th-century German literary figures, such as the dramatist, critic, and theoretician G. E. Lessing, the writer and playwright C. F. Gellert, or the poet J.W.L. Gleim. The impact and adoption of German literary models, for example, the ode, as well as the Jewish fascination with Central European political leaders are important aspects of this Jewish literary production. At the same time, one can sense the pertinence and value of the discrimination already articulated: namely, the difference in focus between a view that is concerned with a Jewish contribution to German culture as a possible sign of the Jewish attempt to integrate or assimilate into it, versus one that is devoted to recording and understanding a Jewish voice in this particular cultural space, as an attempt to maintain cultural integrity despite acculturation.

Benjamin viewed Mendelssohn’s Bible translation as the gate through which Jewry entered German cultural space. In fact, learning German and aiming to become masters of the language were revolutionary acts within Jewry and had far-reaching consequences regarding Jewish integration into German culture. Despite a scurrilous refrain in German anti-Semitic writing to the effect that Jews as others, that is, other than truly German, were inherently unsuitable or racially incapable of writing pure or paradigmatic German, Jewish writers consistently refuted this claim by the plain virtue of their stylistic virtuosity and significant literary achievements. In 1939, shortly before the outbreak of World War II, the popular German-Jewish novelist and art critic Georg Hermann claimed that it was precisely the

German-language authors of Jewish origin who had become the truly towering figures in modern German literature. In this regard, he mentioned Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Arthur Schnitzler, Peter Altenberg, Rudolf Borchardt, and others. One piece of evidence he submitted to bolster his claim was that German literature was known or renowned internationally owing primarily to the German-language literature produced by German and Austrian Jews, especially Arthur Schnitzler, Franz Werfel, Lion Feuchtwanger, Jakob Wassermann, Stefan Zweig, and Arnold Zweig. Georg Hermann emphasized that Central European theater was deeply indebted to Jewish input—to talented dramatists, directors, and actors of Jewish origin. But theater criticism was especially dominated by Jews. The same was true, according to Hermann, regarding literary scholarship and criticism. He argued that virtually all of the significant research and publications about Goethe, the central figure of German classical literature, were written by Jewish scholars writing in German. Whether or not there was a specifically Jewish reading of Goethe, though, is a topic he does not consider.

This viewpoint is no doubt related to the famous and controversial debate about the Jewish role in German culture, which had been initiated by Moritz Goldstein in a provocative polemic written in 1912 entitled “Deutsch-jüdischer Parnass.” He claimed rather boldly that the Jews in Germany had become the custodians and arbiters of the spiritual—specifically, the literary and cultural—treasures of German society, while at the same time it denied them the very right and capability to fulfill this role. Goldstein cited the power of the Jews in the German press and celebrated their dominance in the world of music and public concerts, noting their monopoly in the venerable and prestigious German theater. In his estimation, theater audiences in Central Europe were overwhelmingly Jewish in their composition. He opined that Jews were also on the verge of taking undisputed control of German literature and literary studies, as many Jews were to be found among the ranks of Germany’s best poets and writers. Perhaps even more astounding, the leading minds in the Germanic seminars at the universities were, according to his view, Jewish. This claim of a Jewish domination in Central European literary and cultural life appears to have established itself in diverse quarters. In this context, one may think of a subsequent comment by Stefan Zweig, a very successful and popular Austrian-Jewish cultural mediator, translator, writer, and poet of the first half of the 20th century. He remarked in his memoirs, *The World of Yesterday*, written very late in his career and shortly before his suicide in exile in 1942, that “9/10ths of what the world celebrated as Viennese culture . . . was either promoted, nourished, or even created by Viennese Jewry.”

The issue of the Central European or Germanic element in, or influence on, German/Austrian-Jewish creativity is thus placed within a radically different framework, if one argues, as Goldstein did, that Central European literature and culture were largely Jewish. Nevertheless, this viewpoint seems to have had no measurable resonance or real reception. In fact, with the advent of modern Jewish nationalism and Zionism in Central European culture toward the end of the 19th century, and the continuing tenacity of various strains of anti-Semitic writings that were becoming ever more pernicious and threatening, certain emphasis was placed on the

incompatibility and unbridgeable abyss that ostensibly existed between Germanic culture and Jewish culture, even if these ideas were not embraced by a majority of Central European Jewry before the rise of Nazism.

Within the framework of cultural Zionism and the modern Jewish Renaissance, the idea of a German-language Jewish national literature and culture was presented as an alternative in its own right, even if according to some it was destined to be part of a transitional phase in Jewish cultural history. Concrete steps were taken to bring this Jewish national literature and culture in German into existence. These included the following: (1) a new cultural orientation in the Zionist press; for example, at the turn of the century its primary journalistic instrument, *Die Welt* (Vienna), dramatically expanded the amount of space it devoted to literature written in German in the spirit of Jewish nationalism and Zionism; (2) the founding of a Jewish national publishing company in Berlin, the *Jüdischer Verlag*, which sought to establish itself as the center of the Jewish national literate cultural enterprise in German; and (3) the publication of ambitiously conceived literary and artistic anthologies, like the *Jüdischer Almanach* (1902) or *Jüdische Künstler* (1903), which attempted to delimit a Jewish national canon in literature and the arts, while focusing on German language authors and emphasizing the role of Central European Jewry in the Jewish national literary and artistic productions. Dynamic intellectuals and artists, including Nathan Birnbaum, Martin Buber, Berthold Feiwel, and Efraim Moses Lilien spearheaded this movement, but a long list of German-Jewish and Austrian-Jewish writers and poets were brought into their orbit.

The leaders of this trend conceived of the exciting possibility of producing and packaging outstanding and significant Jewish literature and art in the Diaspora, as a prelude to or preparation for the true or full blossoming of Jewish art and literature, which would eventually take place in the Land of Israel and in Hebrew. The diasporic legacy in the Jewish Renaissance was considered to be a definite drawback or flaw in the artistic authenticity of these Central European/Jewish texts and artworks, measured according to neoromantic, nationalistic, evaluative criteria. German cultural Zionism sought to include in its cultural projects a substantial number and wide variety of German-language Jewish writers, poets, and critics of diverse backgrounds and orientations, as well as artists and musicians. While accepting to a large degree the inevitability of various Diasporic influences and aesthetic features associated with Central Europe, they nevertheless encouraged the production of literature and art that focused on Jewish figures and themes from the Bible or Talmud, or which gave expression to Jewish suffering in exile, other Jewish spiritual and religious experiences, and Jewish identity concerns in the Diaspora. These tended to argue explicitly or implicitly for Jewish difference and separate consideration from the Central European Germanic cultural milieu. Not all of the contributors included within the parameters of this enterprise subscribed to the idea of an exclusionary or independent Jewish national poetics, but at the least (by virtual of their consent regarding publication) all were evidently willing to have their work read in this light. Some names not normally associated with a Jewish national literature in German or with Jewish art in Germany and Austria appear in cultural Zionist anthologies and related publications, including Karl Wolfskehl, Efraim Frisch, Max Liebermann, and Stefan

Zweig. It is fair to say that each one of them changed their views over time concerning Zionism and their own relationships to Jewish culture and Central European culture. Eventually, they all experienced the rise of Nazism first hand. Wolfskehl, Frisch, and Zweig sought to escape Europe in exile far away from Central Europe. Liebermann, who served as president of the Prussian Academy of the Arts, had to resign from his position in 1933 after the Nazis came to power. He died in Berlin in 1935, finally realizing the cogency of Jewish nationalism and Zionism, after having mostly distanced himself from these ideas and movements for almost his entire life.

German-Jewish literature and culture does not end with the Nazi period, despite the deep rupture caused by Nazi persecution and displacement of Central European Jewish writers. Whereas most Central European Jewish writers who managed to survive in exile continued to live and write (mostly in German) outside of Germany and Austria after World War II, some, including Alfred Döblin and Hilda Domin, returned to continue their lives and writing careers in Central Europe. Some very prominent Jewish writers, including Arnold Zweig, Stephan Hermlin, and Anna Seghers, returned to communist East Germany or they grew up there (Jurek Becker, Chaim Noll). Their writings and careers need to be evaluated in terms of providing a perspective or commentary on Jewish-related issues in Germany.

Some observers have claimed that a resurgence or even a renaissance in German-Jewish and Austrian-Jewish letters has been underway at least since the 1990s, and perhaps beginning even earlier. Writers, journalists, and cultural critics, such as Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Ralph Giordano, Henryk Broder, and others have played major roles in German culture; and perhaps some Jewish-related issues they raised in their writings and public appearances encouraged new Jewish writers in German to find innovative ways to probe contemporary issues related to Jewish identity in post-Holocaust Central Europe. Germany (East, West, and now united Germany) and Austria have typically been perceived as a special category as a landscape for Jewish life and culture after the Holocaust. Nevertheless, writers and poets, including Rafael Seligmann, Maxim Biller, Barbara Honigman, and an Austrian contingent including Robert Menasse, Robert Schindel, and Doron Rabinovici, may be considered to belong to this group. Recent immigrants to Central Europe from the former Soviet Union who write in German, including Vladimir Vertlib and Wladimir Kaminer, also belong in this context. Their works are infused with Diasporic consciousness and a new sense that Central Europe may provide, at the present time and for the foreseeable future, a very good alternative for Jewish identity construction and a dialogue about it, despite the Holocaust and Zionism, or even in face of both.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Albanis, Elisabeth. 2002. *German-Jewish Cultural Identity from 1900 to the Aftermath of the First World War*. Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer.
- Elon, Amos. 2002. *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch 1743–1933*. New York: Picador.
- Gelber, Mark H. 2000. *Melancholy Pride: Nation, Race, and Gender in the German Literature of Cultural Zionism*. Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer.

Gilman, Sander L., and Jack Zipes, eds. 1997. *The Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture 1096–1996*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Robertson, Ritchie. 1999. *The Jewish Question in German Literature 1749–1939*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

## The Concept of Sephardi and the Ashkenazi in German-Jewish and German Anti-Semitic Thought

*Mark H. Gelber*

---

In the critical discourse concerning European Jewry, some attention has been paid to the myth and mystique of Sephardi superiority among Ashkenazim, specifically among Central European, German-speaking Jewry. Numerous examples show that by the late 18th century and into the 19th century, the Sephardim were regularly celebrated and idealized in diverse writings authored by Central European Jews. The Sephardi case appeared to provide some observers with an alternative model to the difficult political, economic, and social reality of the Ashkenazim, as they negotiated survival during times of restrictions, oppression, and political turmoil, which also included periods of toleration, emancipation, retrogressive loss of rights, and an ongoing battle for civic enfranchisement and equality.

The model that is alluded to in this discourse is the model of the Sephardi golden age, which came to an abrupt end by the start of the 16th century. Although set somewhat remotely in the distant past, the glory of Sephardi Jewry in the mind of the Ashkenazim was based on the ostensibly easy integration and demonstrable public success of Sephardim in Iberian Islamic society. That success was economic, political, military, social, and cultural; and it also included impressive literary, philosophical, scientific, and poetic accomplishments. In contrast, Ashkenazi Jewry, on the threshold of the 19th century, had precious little to boast of in these same categories. Thus, the allure of the Sephardi model, as it was developed in Ashkenazi writing and consciousness, proved to be quite strong. What is interesting in this same context—although not well known at all—is that German anti-Semitic writing also tended to differentiate clearly between Sephardim and Ashkenazim. This literature often constructs a positive, mostly idealized image of the Sephardi in contradistinction to a negative image of the degenerate Ashkenazi. One acts as the other's foil. It has been suggested that one of the overarching purposes or consequences of this construction is to render the anti-Semitic polemics against the Ashkenazi Jews more reasonable, owing to plain differentiation between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Nevertheless, the similarities and differences between German-Jewish (Central European Jewish) and anti-Semitic German discourses in this regard are of certain interest.

The writings of Heinrich Heine, one of the towering poetic figures in Western literary history, provide a good example of the idealization of the Sephardim among Ashkenazim in German-Jewish literature. He and his poetic personae identified repeatedly with Spanish or Portuguese Jews. Positively depicted Sephardi characters appear in his literary works from the very beginning of his career. Heine repeatedly identified his poetic and literary voice with that of the aristocratic Spanish or Portuguese Jew, and his preoccupation with positively depicted Sephardi characters in his literary works until the very end of his life is an important feature of his literary-historical legacy. In his early drama, *Almansor*, written when he was a 23-year-old student in 1820, is one of the first indications of his youthful fascination with medieval Spain and the tragic fate of its Moorish and Jewish populations. Jeffrey Sammons and other commentators have viewed the Moors in the play as an allegorical figuration of oppressed German Jewry. In this sense, *Almansor* may be read as a protest against the wretched treatment of Jews in German lands after the “Hep! Hep!” riots of 1819. In this play are the often-quoted and arresting lines: “where books/are burned, in the end people will be burned as well.”

In 1824, Heine began to write his romantic novel, *The Rabbi of Bacherach*, which is also pertinent to the Sephardi-Ashkenazi issue. Following upon his short-lived but active association with the Association for Culture and Science of the Jews (Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden) in Berlin, Heine worked intensively on this novel, which, however, remained a fragment and was only published much later in his career. The Berlin Verein, whose activities signaled the beginning of the movement called *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (science of Judaism), devoted a good amount of serious attention to the literary and cultural productions of Sephardi



Heinrich Heine, early 19th-century  
German poet and intellectual.  
(Library of Congress)

Jewry, with a view to presenting a paradigmatic model of integration that might be applicable to German Jewry. Leopold Zunz and Abraham Geiger, for example, were especially enchanted by Sephardi culture, and they immersed themselves in its literature. Heine was certainly exposed to and perhaps also infected, to a degree, by this tendency; in any case, it would have served to strengthen a predisposition in this direction that was already securely in place. The novel, although set in Ashkenaz, focusing on the Rhine Valley, and moving along to Frankfurt, incorporates a substantial amount of literary material drawn from the time when Spanish Jewry was nearing its catastrophic end. The novel is based partially on the confrontation of two separate cultural traditions, the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi: Spanish Jewish culture presents a paragon of elegance, urbanity, and dynamic secularization in contrast to the provincial pettiness, comic vulgarity, and backwardness of the Ashkenazim. The worldly Sephardi knight, Don Isaak, even if in actuality an apostate, appears dramatically in the third and last chapter of the fragment, and he dominates the ending, which was written many years later. He seems to provide the most attractive modern possibility for the Jews, taking all of the options presented in the novel into account. According to this reading, Heine uses the Sephardi case from the past as a paradigm to comment on the present reality of the Jews in German lands, while allowing him to give subtle voice to his own social and political concerns regarding contemporary Ashkenazi Jewry.

A final example is Heine's late poetry collection, *Romanzero* (1851), the title of which recalls the Judeo-Spanish literary genre. In the "Hebrew Melodies" section of the book, two ambitiously conceived poems focus on Sephardi Jewry. One, "Jehuda ben Halevy," contains more than 800 lines of verse and is regularly cited as one of the most extraordinary poetic creations in Heine's entire career. In addition to Halevi, Ibn Gabirol and Ibn Ezra are also mentioned. The venerable background of Sephardi Jewry as developed in the poetry seems to lend credibility to Heine's image of poetic genius as a figure of virtually royal dignity. It may be that late in his life the Sephardi world came to dominate the Ashkenazi, in terms of Heine's Jewish interests, perhaps even displacing it almost completely. Also, the impressive Sephardi poetic accomplishments may have provided Heine with an alluring model, in terms of setting a permanently high literary standard for his own verse.

Heine's interest in and literary incorporation of Sephardim within the Jewish context may be measured against his differentiation of humanity into two types, the "Hellene" and the "Nazarene," which he formulated in the 1830s. These are ahistorical anthropological categories representing human types. "Hellenism" is Heine's term for a sensual and materialistic orientation to the world, which he normally champions in his writings, while "Nazarenism" is the spiritual and debilitatingly ascetic, spiritual-religious orientation to the world, characteristic of traditional Judaism and Christianity. Don Isaak, the Jewish apostate in *The Rabbi of Bacherach*, falls into the Hellene category, despite his attachment to aspects of Jewish identity. In this sense, the Sephardi fictional character becomes an embodiment of the "Super-Jew," or the "Trans-Jewish Jew," who points the way out or in a direction beyond the boundaries of traditional Jewish religious affiliation and identification. Thus, Heine uses the Sephardi/Ashkenazi differentiation to transcend the normative categories

related to Jewish belonging. He replaces them with different identity criteria, rendering Jewishness itself antiquated or no longer essentially relevant in a new configuration of modern identity. One implication of this new individual classification would be that anti-Semitism becomes totally irrelevant, because Jews or Christians or others might be, on an individual basis, either Hellenes or Nazarenes, and this new categorization would be primary.

Interestingly, the tendency to use a positive valuation of Sephardi experience, in contrast to Ashkenazi failings and degeneracy, established itself to a degree in varieties of *völkisch*, racial and racist rhetoric characteristic of mid-to-late 19th-century German anti-Semitic writing. Julius Langbehn, the author of the stupendous bestseller *Rembrandt der Erzieher* (Rembrandt the Educator, 1890) provides a good example in this regard. Fritz Stern called Langbehn the father of German *völkisch* thought, who formulated a primitivistic and rear-guard attack on modernity, emphasizing the creative release of elemental passions and energies in order to envision a new Germanic society based on art, genius, and power. He believed that every *Volk* (nation) comprised an honorable and a dishonorable element. He claimed that Jews who affirmed their Jewishness proudly were authentic and pure, the aristocrats of their people. In fact, Rembrandt had memorialized this type in his paintings of Dutch (Sephardi) Jewry. Unfortunately, most modern Jews were not in this category, and they were reprehensible types. Still, the Sephardi essence is not by itself the exclusive or decisive factor that renders an individual Jew honorable, according to Langbehn, as other criteria play important roles in this regard.

The rise of racial anthropology and racial science in the second part of the 19th century appeared to lend a certain pseudoscientific legitimacy to the intuitive differentiations and valorizations propounded by Langbehn and others. Already in the 1860s, anthropologists like Carl Vogt had claimed that the Sephardim were the true descendents of the original Semitic race, and that the Ashkenazim were in fact a different racial group. He also cited Rembrandt in his arguments. Another view was advanced that there had always been two antagonistic Jewish races going back to Biblical times; they were easily identifiable by skin color. Influenced no doubt by the new higher biblical criticism, which at the time was very much in vogue in Germany, some claimed that the Sephardim originally worshipped "Elohim," while the Ashkenazim worshipped "Jahwe."

Racial science attempted to document the two Jewish racial types: the honorable Sephardi, characterized by a fine nose, bright black or dark eyes, and delicate limbs; and the ignoble, degenerate Ashkenazi, characterized by a large mouth, thick nose, and curly hair. Craniometric studies, which were widely considered scientifically objective, tended to corroborate these discriminations. Many racial studies focused on the issue of racial admixture, and sometimes the Sephardim were presented as the unadulterated Jewish race, which had preserved its racial purity going back to ancient times. The Ashkenazim were the unfortunate product of insidious racial admixture with highly negative consequences. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, one of the most celebrated and popular racial anti-Semites, claimed that early racial admixture of inferior racial material, followed by negative crossbreeding between widely dissimilar racial types and periods of isolation and endogamy, yielded

the most degenerate and contaminated mongrel racial strain possible: modern Jewry. Yet even Chamberlain admitted the existence of honorable Jews and a noble Jewish racial type, singling out the accomplishments of Spanish Jewry in this connection. Not all racial anti-Semites or racial thinkers did so, however; many eschewed words of praise for the Sephardim, and in many racial studies they are not mentioned as an exception to the rule of Jewish racial deterioration and degeneration.

It is important to remember that the Nazis made no allowance for Sephardi difference as they conducted their war against Jewry during World War II. Their encounter with Sephardim, not only in Germany but also in the Balkans, North Africa, France, Italy, Holland, and elsewhere ignored the theoretical framework for excluding Sephardim from the fate of genocide. That framework was securely in place well before the Holocaust in the very corpus of anti-Semitic writings, which were a prelude to the genocide.

### Selected Bibliography

- Efron, John M. 1989. "Scientific Racism and the Mystique of Sephardic Racial Superiority." *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 34: 75–96.
- Gelber, Mark H. 2004. "The Noble Sephardi and the Degenerate Ashkenazi in German-Jewish and German-Anti-Semitic Consciousness: Heine, Langbehn, Chamberlain." In *Confrontations/Accommodations. German-Jewish Literary and Cultural Relations from Heine to Wassermann*, edited by Mark H. Gelber, 45–56. Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer.
- Schorsch, Ismar. 1989. "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy." *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 34: 47–66.

## The Concept of Diaspora in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

*Marc D. Angel*

---

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993) was the most influential rabbinic sage of Modern Orthodoxy during the 20th century. A renowned Talmudic scholar, he was also a profound philosopher, an eloquent orator, and an engaging teacher. For many years he was the towering rabbinic figure of Yeshiva University in New York, the Rabbinical Council of America, and the Religious Zionists of America (or Miz-rachi). He was the spiritual head of the Orthodox community in Boston, where he resided.

Soloveitchik was a preeminent Diaspora rabbinic sage, whose love of Israel was integral to his religious worldview. He was part of a family whose love of Israel was based on the age-old religious traditions of Judaism. He broke new ground, though, by identifying with the Zionist enterprise, even though many of its leaders were non-Orthodox. Although he believed Jews should be motivated by Torah ideals and

a sense of destiny, he recognized that many Jews were Jewish by fate; this latter group included nonreligious Jews who identified with the Jewish nation and were prepared to defend it. The task of Mizrachi was to work with Zionist leadership so as to gain wider appreciation of Torah values and observances within Israel.

Soloveitchik's attachment to the land and state of Israel was balanced by his commitment to the Jews in the Diaspora. Although he was the spiritual head of Mizrachi, he only visited Israel once, in 1935. He remained a quintessential Diaspora Jew, with a religious longing for the Holy Land. In a sense, he was in self-imposed exile; he could have visited (or emigrated to) Israel but consciously chose to remain in the United States.

Soloveitchik was fully cognizant of the traditional religious view that Diaspora—that is, exile—is punishment for one's sins. It is a temporary condition (however long it may endure), to be terminated by the arrival of the Messianic Era. At that time, Jews will return to the Land of Israel, and the teachings of Torah will be universally accepted.

Yet for Soloveitchik, the real center of the Jewish people was not a land but the Torah. The land was a means to an end, a physical space for the spiritual flowering of the Jewish people in the ways of Torah. Those in the Diaspora who lived according to Torah were thereby living a meaningful religious life. Those in the Land of Israel who did not do so were not being true to Judaism. Soloveitchik believed the urgency of confronting the reality of modern Zionism—joining in the rebuilding of a Jewish state—but his primary concern was to promote religious life in the new state.

The unity of the Jewish people depended on a mutual sense of kinship and destiny between Diaspora and Israeli Jews. "The Jews of America are forbidden to be quiet or to relax as long as the danger confronting the State of Israel persists. Nor can the inhabitants of the Holy Land prattle on about such nonsense as 'the new type of Jew' being created there who has nothing in common with the diaspora Jew" (Soloveitchik 2000, 69). Soloveitchik was particularly critical of those nonreligious/antireligious Israeli leaders who sought to divorce the Jewish state from its religious foundations.

He was also worried that the love of Israel would decline in the Diaspora as Jews continued to assimilate and move away from traditional religious patterns. "The Torah has engendered an everlasting bond between the Jew and the Land of Israel. The stress in Torah and tradition on the primacy of the Land of Israel must be the basis of Zionist education in the United States" (Soloveitchik 1999, 98).

Soloveitchik viewed the Jewish people as an ontological entity—*Kenesset Israel*, congregation of Israel.

The community is not just an assembly of people who work together for their mutual benefit, but a metaphysical entity, an individuality; I might say, a living whole . . . We, for instance, lay claim to *Eretz Israel*. God granted the land to us as a gift. To whom did He pledge the land? Neither to an individual, nor to a partnership consisting of millions of people. He gave it to the *Kenesset Israel*, to the community as an independent unity, as a distinct juridic metaphysical person. . . . The owner of the Promised Land is the *Kenesset Israel*, which is a community persona. (Soloveitchik 1978, 9)

It is this overarching persona of *Kenesset Israel* that links individual Jews to their people.

The Jew who believes in *Kenesset Israel* is the Jew who lives with *Kenesset Israel* where she may be and is prepared to die for her, who hurts with her pain and rejoices in her joy, who fights her wars, suffers in her defeats, and celebrates her victories. The Jew who believes in *Kenesset Israel* is the Jew who joins himself as an indestructible link not only to the Jewish people of this generation but to *Kenesset Israel* of all generations. How? Through Torah, which is and creates the continuity of all the generations of Israel for all time. (Soloveitchik 1974a, 98)

For Rabbi Soloveitchik, then, the essential unity of the Jewish people is attained through commitment to Torah. Over the generations, the Diaspora has produced magnificent Torah communities and outstanding Torah scholars. Although in the ideal world Judaism can find its best expression in the Land of Israel, the world is not yet ideal. Meanwhile, the task is to ensure that Torah study and observance can thrive in Israel—and the Diaspora.

### Selected Bibliography

- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 1974a. *Al ha-Teshuvah*, edited by Pinchas Peli. Jerusalem: Education Department of World Zionist Organization.
- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 1974b. *Hamesh Derashot*. Jerusalem: Machon Tal Orot.
- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 1978. "Community." *Tradition* 17 (2): 7–24.
- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 1999. *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*. Vol. 2, edited by Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House.
- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 2000. *Fate and Destiny* [Kol Dodi Dofek]. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House.

## Jewry as an Archetypical Diaspora

*Gabriel Sheffer*

---

Most observers still regard world Jewry, including Israel, as an utterly unique phenomenon, yet the Jewish Diaspora can and should be regarded as an archetypical ethno-national-religious historical diaspora. It is true that each nation and each diaspora, including Jewry and the Jewish Diaspora, is unique in a sense. In this vein, the proponents of the view of world Jewry's uniqueness stress a number of factors that purportedly have determined and perpetuated the unique features and status of the Jewish Diaspora and its relations with its homeland—Eretz Israel. These unique features are the extraordinary and unmatched historical persistence of the Jewish Diaspora; its admirable ability to overcome social, political, and economic calamities inflicted on it since the very earliest times of its historical existence, including the major exiles, the Shoah, and numerous pogroms; the outstanding Jewish contributions to the development of the monotheistic universal religions—Christianity and Islam—and particularly the Jews' shared paternity of the Judeo-Christian

tradition; world Jewry's other various contributions to the cultural, economic, and scientific development of Western civilization; the purported extraordinary influence the Jewish Diaspora is capable of exerting on various host societies and governments; the recent revival of some defunct Diasporic communities in Western and Central Europe; and the unparalleled continuous political, diplomatic, and economic assistance that certain groups and organizations extended to the Yishuv (the pre-Israel Jewish community in Palestine) and later to the Jewish state.

Nevertheless, when the history and current position of the Jewish Diaspora is succinctly examined, similarities to other diasporic entities also become evident. Thus, although the aforementioned unique features are characteristic of the Jewish Diaspora, in themselves they mean neither that it is an exceptional nor a deviant diaspora, nor that its relations with its homeland are incomparable. Thus, even a very fast and sketchy examination would show that some of its features are shared by other ethno-national-religious diasporas that emerged in antiquity and still exist. Such an examination would show that other diasporas have also experienced probably not all, but at the least similar, historical developments and that consequently those diasporas exhibit analogous traits and patterns of behavior to those of the Jews. In the same vein, in the religious sphere, other diasporas contributed to the emergence and spread of universal religions; not only the Jews but various other diasporas significantly contributed to human culture; and they helped shape economic and commercial practices that still persist. In the sphere of diaspora-homeland relations, most ethno-national diasporas extend assistance to their homelands. Hence, it would become clear that in all these, as well as in other, respects the Jewish Diaspora has not been unique.

Yet because of its age, endurance, cultural-religious contributions, transformation from a stateless into a state-linked diaspora with a role in establishing the State of Israel in parts of its historical homeland, support of Israel and Jewish communities in distress, organization, and other characteristics—in fact, the Jewish Diaspora is an archetypical historical diaspora that still exists today. Although it is facing some critical dilemmas and problems, its core membership remains solid and active (Cohen 1997; Sheffer 2005; Safran 2005). Accordingly, and as agreed upon by some observers of the general diasporic phenomenon, various features of the archetypical Jewish Diaspora can serve as a basis for a general profile that fits most ethno-national-religious diasporas and has explicit implications for the continued existence of such diasporas in general and of the Jewish Diaspora in particular (Sheffer 2003a; 2005).

The following is the profile that characterizes World Jewry and turns it into an archetypical diaspora: Originally, the Jewish Diaspora was created by both expulsion from Eretz Israel and voluntary migration from that homeland. Throughout its history, the Diaspora's organized communities in host lands have voluntarily and autonomously been established, but only after Jewish migrants decided or were permitted to permanently settle in host countries. In most cases, the decision to permanently settle in a host country has been taken by individuals, families, and small groups after an initial period of learning about and adjusting to life patterns in the host country. In all its host countries, the Jewish Diaspora has remained a minority group.

In its host countries, the Diaspora has preserved its ethno-national-religious identity. Following what has been called the “integrated theory” to the sources of ethnic identity and existence (Kellas 1991), it can be said that the Jewish identity and identification of core members of the Diaspora, which are based on a combination of primordial psychological/mythical and instrumental-constructed factors, serve as the bases for maintaining their affinities and ability to work together. On this basis core members of the Diaspora have maintained a great degree of solidarity and cohesion. Constant contacts among the Diaspora’s elites and activist grassroots individuals and groups are avowedly maintained. These contacts have cultural, social, economic, and especially political significance for the Diaspora members, for their host countries, for their homelands, for other diasporic communities of the same origin, and for other interested actors.

This is the essential basis for all organized activities of the Diaspora. One of the purposes of these activities is to create and increase its readiness and ability to preserve a continuous interest in and cultural, economic, and political exchanges with its nation-state. This highly organized Diaspora deals with various aspects of its cultural, social, economic, and political needs in a way that usually complements, but at times also clashes with host societies and governments’ needs. The Diaspora communities in various host lands adopt and try to implement coherent strategies: in most cases that is the communalist strategy (Sheffer 2000, 2003b).

The emergence of diasporic organizations creates the potential for the development of multiple authority and loyalty patterns. To avoid undesirable conflicts with the norms and laws established by the dominant group in its host countries, the Diaspora accepts certain social and political rules of the game of these countries. At certain periods in its history, however, real or alleged dual, divided, and ambiguous loyalties, which are generated by the dual or multiple authority patterns, may create tension between various social and political groups in the host country and the Diaspora. On certain occasions, such confrontations lead to the intervention of Israel on behalf of its Diaspora or to Israeli intervention in the affairs of the Diaspora itself.

Finally, and most importantly, the capability of the Diaspora to mobilize its members to promote or defend their own or their nation-state’s interests in their host countries will result in the formation of either conflictual or cooperative triadic or four-sided relationships and exchanges involving homeland, diaspora, host country, and other interested actors. Now these relations constitute an inherent part of international politics and influence the behavior of all parties involved.

In conclusion, neither some current bleak predictions concerning future demographic trends, which cause a depressive mood among lay and religious activists, nor the ingrained belief in Jewish power characterizing the thinking of other observers, accurately predicts the Jewish Diaspora’s future. Because the Jewish Diaspora can and should be viewed as such an archetypical entity, the same applies to other, similar diasporas. Their autonomous choices and actions will also determine their survival, continuity, and revival. In turn, these depend on a realistic analysis of the current situation, which must be done within the general theoretical and comparative framework of diaspora studies.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Robin. 1997. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press.
- Kellas, James. 1991. *The Politics of Nationalism*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Safran, William. 2005. "The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective." *Israel Studies* 10 (1, Spring): 36–60.
- Sheffer, Gabriel. 2000. "The Loyalties of Ethno-National Diasporas and the Case of the Jewish Diaspora." In *Still Moving: Recent Jewish Migration in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Daniel Elazar and Mark Weinfeld, 311–336. New Brunswick, NJ: Transactions.
- Sheffer, Gabriel. 2003a. *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheffer, Gabriel. 2003b. "Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique?" In *Contemporary Jewries: Convergence and Divergence*, edited by Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Yosef Gorny, and Yaacov Ro'I, 23–44. Boston: Brill.
- Sheffer, Gabriel. 2005. "Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora's Current Situation." *Israel Studies* 10 (1, Spring): 1–35.

## Jewish Self-Hatred

*Ritchie Robertson*

---

The very term "Jewish self-hatred" is controversial and perhaps objectionable. Is it to be understood as denoting a pathological condition peculiar to Jews? Or does it just describe some of the negative feelings that may arise in social interaction and that may have been experienced with particular intensity by Jews in a predominantly Gentile society?

The term was popularized by the eccentric critic and polemicist Theodor Lessing (1872–1933) in his book *Der jüdische Selbsthaß* (1930). Lessing's word *Selbsthaß*, awkwardly translated as "self-hatred," has been relatively common in German since the 18th century to describe morbidly self-critical emotions associated with depression: thus, Goethe applies it to Byron's self-tormenting poetry. For Lessing, "self-hatred" is explicitly a "pathology," a "sickness," which may afflict anyone, but which is most strikingly illustrated by the psychopathology of the Jewish people. History, according to Lessing, is a meaningless process, on which one can impose meaning, either by blaming others for one's sufferings or by blaming oneself for them. The Jews, thanks to their powerful ethical will, blamed themselves for falling short of the highest ethical standards. Their repeated misfortunes—invasion, exile, oppression—strengthened not their anger against their enemies, but their dissatisfaction with themselves. Thus, Jews hate themselves precisely because their ethical ideals are so lofty. In modern times, assimilation to Western culture means betraying the Jews' ethical and prophetic heritage. Racial anti-Semitism is therefore welcome because it forces Jews to rediscover this ambivalent identity.

Lessing's book must be understood as a product of its age. In the 1920s, increased anti-Semitism made many German Jews skeptical about assimilation and anxious

to rebuild a distinctive Jewish identity. As his autobiography reveals, Lessing himself had earlier experienced an extreme, even masochistic identification with Germany, as embodied in his youthful friend Ludwig Klages, who eventually rejected him by saying, "You are a loathsome, pushy Jew!" (Lessing 1935, 363–364). For giving a disparaging and ill-informed account of Jewish communities in Galicia, he had himself been attacked by Benjamin Segel (who later helped expose the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as an anti-Semitic fabrication) as a "Jewish anti-Semite." Lessing's account of Jewish self-hatred should therefore be read not as the analysis of a phenomenon, but as a symptom of Lessing's own tendency to swing between emotional extremes. More generally, it typifies a widespread tendency among German Jews in the 1920s, disturbed by the anti-Semitism that had become increasingly vocal during and after World War I, to distance themselves from German culture and reconstruct their Jewish identities—sometimes with the aid of Zionism, sometimes with a nostalgic attraction to the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe.

The Viennese journalist Anton Kuh (1890–1941), rejecting both these alternatives, asserted in *Juden und Deutsche* (1921) that all German Jews suffered from self-hatred, because their religion and their characteristic upbringing imposed the authority of a patriarchal God and the patriarchal family. Kuh extended the argument by claiming that Germans, too, suffered from self-hatred, which is shown in their deference to patriarchal authority, ready acceptance of foreign fashions, and unease as newcomers to the community of nations. This affinity between Germans and Jews, he argued, only strengthened their antagonism.

Caution should be applied not only to the sweeping claims made by Lessing and Kuh, but also to the alleged self-hating Jews of whom Lessing offers case studies. All are Jews who denied their Jewishness and/or sharply criticized aspects of Jewish behavior. The most clearly pathological, Arthur Trebitsch, undoubtedly suffered from paranoid delusions. Otto Weininger (1880–1903) is a more difficult case. His doctoral dissertation, *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Sex and Character, 1903), notoriously argues that the male principle is intellectually and ethically far superior to the female principle, and that the latter predominates in Jews, who therefore are sensual, amoral, unintellectual (their supposed intelligence is really mere watchfulness), inwardly empty, and adaptable. And although women are passively pliable, Jews are active and aggressive in their drive to assimilate. Hence, modernity is dominated by Jewish and feminine values. In a footnote, Weininger added that he, the author, was himself "of Jewish descent." Soon after his book's publication, Weininger dramatically committed suicide. Though his account of Jewish psychology is antithetical to Lessing's, his biography reveals a similar identification with supposed German ideals, embodied this time in his father, an anti-Semite who loved Richard Wagner's music.

Another of Lessing's case studies is the once-famous journalist Maximilian Harden (1861–1927), founder and editor of the monthly *Die Zukunft* (The Future). Harden fiercely attacked Jewish influence in journalism, commerce, and politics. He anticipated Weininger by ascribing a feminine character to all Jews, in contrast to the masculine German. He published a notorious article by his friend, the

industrialist Walther Rathenau (also of Jewish descent), entitled “Höre, Israel!” (Hear, O Israel!) which enjoined the Jews of Prussia to abandon the vulgar language and clumsy, slouching posture that made them obviously different from Germans. In politics, Harden was an authoritarian and militarist, who on the outbreak of war in 1914 published bloodthirsty editorials calling on German troops to act like barbarians. Ironically, in 1922 he was attacked and severely injured by German nationalists, who were given a light sentence after a biased trial.

Harden was initially the mentor for another Jewish journalist often charged with Jewish self-hatred, the Austrian Karl Kraus (1874–1936). In his magazine *Die Fackel* (The Torch), Kraus constantly attacks journalism for debasing language, falsifying facts, and destroying the world through the “black magic” of printer’s ink. Many of his antagonists were Jews, notably Moriz Benedikt, editor of the Viennese liberal newspaper the *Neue Freie Presse*. Yet, though Kraus also attacks Zionism, denounces the pretensions of over-keen assimilationists, and, in his great drama of World War I, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (The Last Days of Mankind), makes his spokesman mutter about “Jewish-capitalist world-destruction,” the charge of Jewish anti-Semitism cannot be sustained.

These cases, insofar as they demand explanation, suggest a complex social analysis rather than a psychopathological inquiry. By the late 19th century, Jewish belief and practice had virtually vanished from many Western Jewish households. Jewish identity was almost without content, yet the rise of anti-Semitism, signaled by Wilhelm Marr’s founding of the Anti-Semitic League in Germany in 1879, made it hard to shake off. A passionate identification with Germany, especially as a militarist power, accompanied an equally passionate rejection of Jewishness, imagined with the aid of gender stereotypes.

This implies that Jewish self-hatred is best approached through social psychology. In 1941, Kurt Lewin, a former professor of psychology at the University of Berlin who pioneered the study of group dynamics in the United States, explained it as typifying the behavior of members of underprivileged groups. They want to identify with the attractive community outside, but that community insists on identifying them, in turn, with the group they unwillingly belong to. Frustrated self-haters turn their aggression not on the attractive community (in which they can see no wrong), but on themselves and/or their own group. Another possibility is “identification with the aggressor,” described by Bruno Bettelheim in a controversial essay. From his own observation, he maintains that some Jews in concentration camps coped by imagining their guards to be all-powerful and superhuman, so they could submit to their power without being degraded. Bettelheim explains this as narcissistic identification with the all-powerful enemy, onto whom Jewish captives projected their own undesired emotions. Hence, self-hatred and anti-Semitism, even in less extreme conditions, reinforce each other: the anti-Semite projects his or her hatred onto the Jews, imagining them as powerful, and the Jew compensates for feelings of inferiority by identifying with the aggressor.

More recently, Sander L. Gilman has developed this approach in terms of otherness and stereotyping. “Self-hatred results from outsiders’ acceptance of the

mirage of themselves generated by their reference group—that group in society which they see as defining them—as a reality” (Gilman 1986, 2). This “mirage” is composed of stereotypes that can easily be confused with realities within the world. Hence, physical appearance, bodily comportment, clothing, and language can all form part of stereotypes. Stereotypes in turn can be imagined as part of ethnic, religious, or class identities that are imagined in mythic terms as being unchangeable. Therefore they survive independently of empirical reality.

Gilman focuses especially on the stereotype of the Jew’s hidden language. Throughout modern German history, assimilation has required adoption above all of proper German. The bad Jew speaks a distinctively “Jewish” German (often stigmatized as *Mauscheln*). If no fault could be found with the Jew’s use of German, it was denounced for irony or for journalistic dishonesty (as in attacks on Heinrich Heine). Wagner deepened the attack by claiming, in “Das Judentum in der Musik” (Jewishness in Music, 1850), that the Jew, being estranged from nature and community, could not sing or compose music. Racial theorists then gave such claims the seeming authority of science. Thus, as Jews approached their goal of assimilation, it kept being withdrawn and declared impossible on grounds that were increasingly tenuous and increasingly hard to oppose. This situation could easily generate insecurity about oneself and discomfort with conspicuously unassimilated Jews. Rather than label these feelings “Jewish self-hatred” and “Jewish anti-Semitism,” however, it would be better to see them as painful but not exceptional effects of group dynamics.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bettelheim, Bruno. 1947. “The Dynamism of Anti-Semitism in Gentile and Jew.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 42: 153–168.
- Gilman, Sander L. 1986. *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kuh, Anton. 1921. *Juden und Deutsche*. Berlin: Reiss.
- Lessing, Theodor. 1930. *Der jüdische Selbsthaß*. Repr. Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1984.
- Lessing, Theodor. 1935. *Einmal und nie wieder*. Repr. Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1969.
- Lewin, Kurt. 1948. “Self-hatred among Jews.” In *Resolving Social Conflicts*, 186–200. New York: Harper.
- Rathenau, Walther. 1897. “Höre, Israel!” *Die Zukunft* 18 (6 March): 454–462.
- Segel, Benjamin. 1910. *Die Entdeckungsreise des Herrn Dr. Theodor Lessing zu den Ostjuden*. Lemberg: Hatikwa.
- Weininger, Otto. 1903. *Geschlecht und Charakter. Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung*. Repr. Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1980.

## Diaspora, Exile, and Jewish Identity

*Howard K. Wettstein*

---

“Diaspora” is a relatively new English word and has no traditional Hebrew equivalent. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term first appears in English usage in 1876, and in 1881 it is used by Wellhausen, in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, in connection with Jewish dispersion. But the term seems closely related to the more traditional *galut* (exile). Nevertheless, reflection reveals crucial differences.

Diaspora is a political notion; it suggests geopolitical dispersion, perhaps non-voluntary. However, with changed circumstances, a population may come to see virtue in diasporic life. *Diaspora*—as opposed to *galut*—may thus acquire a positive charge. *Galut* rings of teleology, not politics. It suggests dislocation, a sense of being uprooted, in the wrong place. Perhaps the community has been punished; perhaps awful things happen in our world.

*Galut* is a pervasive theme—perhaps even the dominant motif—in Jewish history. From the perspective of the Hebrew Bible and Jewish religious tradition, history is virtually a study in exile. The original exile is the expulsion from the Garden (Eisen 1986). Before the expulsion, Adam and Eve were in harmony with their world. Afterward, they experience life as we know it, an uncanny constellation of richness, even exquisite beauty, along with all manner of awfulness.

The story suggests that the human plight, the human condition, is a consequence of bad choices. Its more subtle suggestion is that such choices are themselves paradigmatically human. Our plight, our condition of *galut*, is a consequence of being human in the world in which we live, no formula for bliss. It is only in the Edenic mythological past and the messianic mythological future that human existence is not radically troubled and confused. To apply the notion of exile to the human condition is thus to allude to the Eden story, but more importantly, it is to call attention to such “normal dislocation.”

A central facet of the religious impulse is the drive to find meaning in such exilic existence. Even without the well-known horrors of Jewish history, the religious impulse would have an abundance of raw materials. Skipping ahead to what is, until the 20th century, the catastrophe of catastrophes: the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, the subsequent defeat of Bar Kochba in 135 CE, and the dispersion of Israel. The destruction of the First Temple—in 587 BCE—and the subsequent Babylonian Exile was calamitous. But that exile lasted only half a century; exile could still seem an exception. Exile becomes the rule after Bar Kochba and the second expulsion from Jerusalem, this time with no foreseeable return.

To the exiles, the prospect of living without the foci of national and religious life must have seemed a violation of the cosmic partnership between God and Israel. Temple times—the sacrificial worship practices in place, in the context of something approaching the dignity of sovereignty—were, in retrospect, Eden. The *churban* (destruction), by contrast with “normal dislocation,” was a cosmic jolt.

Rabbinic Judaism is in part a response, a reconstruction of national and religious life. Continuities between pre- and postdestruction Judaism granted, and taking a



Students holding the biblically prescribed lulav palm branch during prayers over the festival of Sukkoth at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Wyncote, Pennsylvania. (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College)

bit of dramatic license, one might say that result was nothing less than a religion of *galut*. And since the attempt to reconstruct was made in keen awareness of the human condition, it is a religion of *galut*, both normal and catastrophic. Dramatic license aside, there are of course many foci of the Jewish religious outlook, and certainly no adequate single formula, *galut* included.

The best-known ways in which the rabbis came to terms with *galut* are developments in practice, for example, increased emphasis on prayer and the study of the Torah as among the highest forms of religious practice, and a shift in the locus of ritual holiness from the sacrificial altar to the family table. The focus here is on theological developments.

Ways of thinking about divinity are dynamic. Subject a community to great trial or triumph and its way of thinking about God may well alter or enlarge. The Hebrew Bible is characterized by anthropomorphic depiction of God. But post-*churban* rabbinic literature—specifically, Midrash Rabbah on Lamentations—reveals a new level of divine affective engagement and self-awareness. God has become almost one of us in affect. He suffers, weeps, and even mourns. “Woe is Me!” he cries in Proem 24, “What have I done?” Sometimes the Midrash sees God in maternal terms: Proem 22 compares God to a mother sparrow whose nest has been destroyed. Proem 24 sees God in a paternal role, speaking of himself as a king who drove away his sons, who were in any case badly raised.

Strikingly, such radical imagery is developing simultaneously with the Christian emphasis on (and very different interpretation of) divine vulnerability. These

developments are heightened when the Talmud speaks of God himself, after the *churban*, as living in exile. This is no doubt in part a matter of empathy that He is with us, He feels for us. But it is equally an expression of divine dislocation. Here we approach discontinuity with what we know of God from the Bible, an anthropomorphic quantum leap.

Such superanthropomorphism yields new possibilities of relationship. With the more remote Divine Presence of Genesis, for example, relationships are quite limited—for the people, if not for the privileged few. Quite another matter is a God who is vulnerable in the ways explored, whose range of affective response is not unlike our own, whose self-perception is of one whose fate is tied up with that of the community. Such a God can function as life partner, as it were, of the community and, derivatively, of the individual.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Eisen, Arnold. 1986. *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

# History of the Diaspora

## Jews and Judaism in Ancient World Literature

*Timothy Andrew McCaffrey*

---

Ancient literary references to the Jews in Greek and Latin literature date back as far as the fifth century BCE and appear in the work of authors such as Herodotus and Aristotle. Works alluding specifically to the Jews dwelling outside of Judea are also common. Although a significant amount of pagan literature discussing the Jews is concerned with the geographical features of Judea, the quality of various local produce, and narratives of military clashes between the Jews and their conquerors, the following authors specifically discuss the Jewish presence beyond the borders of Israel.

### **Hecataeus of Abdera (fourth century BCE)**

Hecataeus is the first major Greek scholar to mention the Jews outside of Judea. He relates, in his *Aegyptiaca*, the oldest account of Jewish origins in Greek literature. Living in the Hellenistic Eastern Mediterranean, Hecataeus wrote an adaptation of the biblical Exodus. In it, he states that the Jews were expelled from Egypt after a pestilence and that the Egyptians presumed the Jews were responsible for the disease. The Jews were forced out in two groups. The smaller of the two, led by Danas and Cadmus, whom Hecataeus characterizes as the most outstanding of their tribe, eventually landed on the shores of Greece. The larger group followed Moses into the land that became Judea. Hecataeus' description of Moses as lawgiver and account of the establishment of Jewish tradition may be the first Gentile investigation into the origins of Jewish custom. Various adaptations of this account (see Diodorus and Strabo) came to be repeated and refashioned throughout the Greek and Latin literary tradition.

### **Diodorus Siculus (late first century BCE)**

Diodorus, a Sicilian Greek, wrote an account of the Egyptian origins of the Jewish people. Diodorus viewed the Jews as part of an early wave of colonists sent out from Egypt, and the Exodus narrative in his *Bibliotheca Historica* specifically names the area around Argos as the part of Greece where some of the Jews landed after their departure from Egypt (see Hecataeus). The historian Herodotus had already noted three centuries before that the Syrians (Jews) of Palestine practiced circumcision, but to Diodorus, circumcision is proof of the Jews' Egyptian origins.

**Cicero (106–43 BCE)**

Cicero, the Roman statesman and rhetorician, in his *Pro Flacco*, makes anti-Semitic allusions to the Jews living at Rome. Defending Flaccus, who, as governor of Asia, was tried at Rome on charges of confiscating Jewish gold sent to the Temple at Jerusalem, Cicero feigns fear of the Jewish mob at Rome, whose numbers and solidarity made them a formidable risk to anyone who might offend them. Stereotypes characterizing the Jews as a large, insular, and irascible mob were common anti-Semitic tropes.

**Strabo (63 BCE–24 CE)**

Although Strabo, a Greek of Asia Minor, seems not to have even visited Judea, he exhibits a not insignificant interest in relating the history and customs of the region's inhabitants. Similar to other accounts (see Diodorus and Hecataeus), Strabo's *Geographica* offers circumcision as proof of the Jews' Egyptian origin, and relates another account of Moses and the emergence of Jewish tradition.

**Tibullus (ca. 54–ca. 18 BCE)**

Tibullus, an Augustan poet of Rome, in his *Carmina I*, composed during a visit to the East, longs for his beloved Delia. Searching for reasons he might have remained with her at Rome, he cites the accursed day of Saturn as a possible excuse to tarry. This reference to the Sabbath (see Ovid) may also refer to the Roman view that Saturdays were inauspicious for transactions in general.

**Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE)**

In his *Remedia Amoris*, Ovid, an Augustan poet of Rome, mentions the Jewish day of rest. He warns against allowing a foreign Sabbath to stay one's feet. Book I of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* includes further reference to the Jews. One urges the reader not to miss out on an opportunity to witness the seventh-day rites of the Syrian Jews. Another suggests courting a girl on the Sabbath because shops will be closed and a lover might avoid having to buy gifts, a reference to the popularity of the day of rest at Rome (see Tibullus).

**Horace (65–8 BCE)**

Horace, the Roman satirical poet, states, in *Satire I.4*, that he amuses himself with the trivialities of verse, and, if a reader objects to this playfulness, he will be forced by a mass of poets, acting as Jews, into their throng. Here, Horace speaks both to the number of Jews at Rome and the extent of their missionary activity. The status of Horace as a *libertini* (freedman) is well known. *Libertini* was also the class of many Jews at Rome, and some have suggested that Horace was a Jew. This assertion is challenged by the occurrence of common anti-Semitic tropes in his satires. At one point

in *Satire* I.5, Horace remarks on the credulity of Apella the Jew. Accusations of gullibility were standard, jocular invective aimed at the Jews of Roman society. Fear of the Jewish mob, found elsewhere in Latin literature (see Cicero), emerges also in Horace's *Satire* I.9, in which a friend warns Horace not to offend the circumcised Jew.

### **Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 BCE–65 CE)**

A Roman philosopher born in Roman Spain, Seneca's is the first example of a Roman's expression of anger at the impact of Jewish religion and rites on Roman culture. In a few lines of Seneca's *De Superstitione*, the philosopher declares the Jews a most filthy race, and he decries the effect they have had on Rome, that the conquered have given their laws to their conquerors—an allusion to Rome's occupation of the Jewish homeland.

### **Valerius Maximus (early first century CE)**

Most details about Valerius Maximus are unknown, but he wrote the first account of actual events involving Jews in ancient Italy. His work, *Facta et Dicta*, was widely popular as a source for writer and orators. One preserved portion of his work records events taking place in 139 BCE, when the Jews, accused of transmitting their rites to the people of Rome, were expelled from the city by Cornelius Hispalus.

### **Petronius (first century CE)**

Who Petronius actually was is unclear, but the one work attributed to him is regarded as a huge contribution to world literature. In his *Satyricon*, a narrative set in what is modern-day France, references to Jews appear at several points. In one instance, Petronius introduces a circumcised slave and his attempt to recite from Virgil, Rome's poet laureate. The Jewish slave's master goes on to discuss the slave's battery of talents, from cobbler to confectioner, mentioning only two flaws: he is circumcised and he snores. Circumcision and Judaism appear again in a later passage. The story's protagonists, attempting to elude capture, entertain the notion of disguising themselves with paint and propose circumcising themselves in order to appear as Jews. Further discussion of Jewish custom appears in some fragments of the text. Jewish worship of a pig god explains their abstention from pork, they pray to the sky (see Plutarch), and the Sabbath is observed by fasting (see Martial).

### **Quintilian (late first century CE)**

Quintilian, a Roman rhetorician from Spain, accuses Moses of being an instigator of malice in his *Institutio Oratoria*. In the same work, he mentions that he acted as the attorney of Queen Bernice (see Suetonius, Dio), the daughter of Agrippa I, and bride of Herod. Bernice spent much time at Rome.

### Martial (late first century CE)

Martial, a poet of Spanish origin, lists, in *Epigram IV*, the stink of women fasting on the Sabbath (see Petronius) among other odors still preferable to the stench of the Bassa area of Rome. Martial targets a woman named Caelia in *Epigram VII*, accusing her of readily accepting any lover of any nation, even the circumcised Jewish groin, before choosing a Roman lover. A few lines later, Martial mentions his own circumcised Jewish slave. Martial also relates an anecdote about Menophilus, an actor, whom he had often seen at the baths. Martial notes that this man wore a large buckle over his genitals, even while bathing, as a chastity belt to preserve the quality of his voice. During exercises in the palaestra, a public place for athletics performed in the nude, Martial saw Menophilus training in his buckle, which suddenly became loose and fell, revealing a circumcised Jew. Several lines of *Epigram XI* are addressed to an unnamed, but circumcised, poet. Martial forgives the Jewish poet for envying, disparaging, and plundering his work but attacks him for his romance with Martial's own beloved boy. Finally, a portion of *Epigram XII* mentions Jews at Rome. Martial explains his preference to remain at Bellona in Spain rather than live at Rome, citing the fact that Bellona has none of the Jewish beggars so numerous at Rome. The Jewish beggar is a standard characterization and was closely associated with synagogues and the activities of synagogues.

### Plutarch (ca. 46–ca. 120 CE)

A Greek historian and commentator, Plutarch bemoans the Sabbath custom in his *De Superstitione*, as it is one of many foreign evils adopted by the Greeks of his day. In his *Questiones Conviviales*, Plutarch debates the origins of their abstention from pork. Worship of pigs (see Petronius) is introduced as a possible explanation for the Jewish aversion to pork. Later, Jewish custom is equated with the rites performed in honor of the pagan deity Dionysus (see Tacitus). Confusing the Day of Atonement with Sukkoth, the discussion cites commonalities between the Jewish rites performed on that day and various Dionysian customs. The parading about with lulav is associated with similar use of the thyrsus in Dionysian rituals. Jewish indulgence in wine and the pouring of libations during the Sabbath, a possible reference to the benedictions over a cup of wine, are also noted for their similarity to Dionysian rites. The text also seems to indicate that the descriptions of Jewish custom were based on actual events observed at Athens.

### Tacitus (56–ca. 120 CE)

Tacitus, a Roman rhetorician and historian, dismisses the notion that the Jews worshipped Dionysus (see Plutarch). In Book V of the *Historiae*, Tacitus states that there is no relationship between the deity worshipped by the Jews and the god Dionysus, because the gaiety of the worship of Dionysus is in stark contrast to the worthless and filthy Jewish customs. This opinion comes at the end of an exposition on various theories concerning the origin of the Jewish people (see Hecataeus,

Diodorus, Strabo). Tacitus notes that there is evidence that the Jews originated in the Greek island of Crete, because a mountain there possesses the name Ida, and the people dwelling around this mountain were called Idaei, a name that could have been barbarized to produce Iudaei (Judeans). Tacitus discusses the possibility that population pressures during the reign of Isis forced a group out of Egypt under the leadership of Hierosolymas and Juda, emptying into the neighboring regions. Tacitus then remarks that some commentators believe Jews to be Ethiopians, and others attribute to them Solymi ancestry, a race sung of by Homer. This then would explain the name Solyma, letters found in *Hierosolyma*, the word for Jerusalem. After discussing the various theories, Tacitus seems to agree with the consensus that the Jews were a group of Egyptians forced out because of plague and led by a man named Moses. In discussing the Jews dwelling among the Gentiles, Tacitus declares that what is profane to the Jews is sacred to his own Roman people; that Jewish rites and customs are base, mean, and ugly; that the Jews display goodwill among themselves but open hostility and hatred to all others; and that it is their tributes heaped up to the Temple at Jerusalem that is the source of their wealth. Another account of Jews at Rome comes in a statement by Tacitus in his *Annales*, in which he records the proscription of Jewish rites at Rome and a senatorial edict directing the conscription and stationing at Sardinia of 4,000 men of military age tainted with the Jewish superstition. The remaining Jews at Rome were to leave Italy if they did not renounce their profane rites. This account appears among the events of 19 CE. The same events are recorded elsewhere (see Suetonius, Dio)—though there is some disagreement as to the source of the edict.

### Suetonius (second century CE)

Suetonius, a Roman who chronicled the lives of Caesars in his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, provides insight into the Roman nobility's personal feelings toward and interactions with the Jews. Suetonius describes the Jewish reaction at Rome after the death of the Julius Caesar. He writes that many foreigners grieved at Caesar's death, especially the Jews, who flocked to his pyre through continuous nights. Jewish affinity for Julius Caesar originated in his feud with Pompey, whom Caesar defeated in war, and who was the first Roman to conquer Judea, at which time Pompey entered the Holiest of Holies.

Suetonius specifies Emperor Tiberius as the source of the edict of 19 CE, which expelled the Jews from Rome (see Tacitus, Dio). Suetonius does not mention Sardinia specifically as the destination selected for the conscripted Jews (see Tacitus), but he does write of the mandated burning of all clothes and implements associated with Judaism at Rome. He also notes that the threatened punishment for those not renouncing their Jewish faith was perpetual servitude. Suetonius also narrates an account of Tiberius on a sojourn to Rhodes. During his visit, Tiberius sought out Diogenes, a Jew called a grammarian by Suetonius, who gave popular lectures every Sabbath. Upon Tiberius' request for a meeting, Diogenes ordered his slave to defer the future emperor's visit for seven days, until the following Sabbath. When the same Diogenes sought an audience with Tiberius at Rome, Tiberius ordered

that Diogenes be put off for seven years, indicating awareness, either on the part of Tiberius or Suetonius, of the Jewish sabbatical year.

The Emperor Claudius, by some accounts, seems to have maintained rather amiable relations with Jews (see Dio), but Suetonius writes that Claudius also expelled the Roman Jews. As for Titus, Suetonius writes that he carried on a love affair with Queen Bernice (see Quintilian, Dio). The daughter of Agrippa I and sister of Agrippa II, Bernice had been married to Herod until his death. After coming to Rome, Suetonius reports that she lived as if married to Titus, while rumors of their engagement circulated Rome. Eventually, Titus gave in to public and political pressure and sent Bernice from Rome. The final mention of Jews by Suetonius appears in his *Life of Domitian*, who levied a particularly harsh tribute on the Jews of the empire (see Dio). Events associated with the tax left an impression on the young Suetonius. He remarks that as a young boy he saw a man of 90 years physically examined for circumcision in a crowded courtroom.

**Juvenal (ca. 60–ca. 130 CE)**

A Roman whose poetry offers a street-level view of Rome, Juvenal’s resentment of the Jews is displayed often in his satires. In *Saturae III*, Juvenal presents Umbricius standing before the Porta Capena, the start of the Appian Way, noting that the gardens and sanctuaries surrounding this area are now all leased to Jews, whose entire furnishings consisted of a basket and hay, an allusion to the Jewish method of keeping food warm on the Sabbath. Juvenal continues by stating that the Muses who once inhabited the fount have been evicted, that the trees pay tolls, and that the



Illuminated manuscript page from a 15th-century edition of *Satires* by Juvenal. (The Schøyen Collection MS 2047)

woods engage in begging. The grove, portrayed as a beggar, has taken on the very characteristics of its new tenants, a use of the common indigent Jew motif (see Martial, Artemidorus). In the same poem, Juvenal reuses this stereotype, describing Umbricius in the midst of an argument, during which he asks a Jew the whereabouts of his stand for begging and the location of the synagogue at which he might be found (see Artemidorus). A beggar Jew appears in *Saturae VI* with a basket and hay. She claims to be an interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem, a great priestess, and a faithful mediator of the heavens, a sky-worshipping allusion (see Petronius). Juvenal burnishes his vitriolic commentary of the Jewess by spitefully remarking that in the end she only takes a small amount of coin for payment, because Jews will say anything for very little compensation.

### Artemidorus (late second century CE)

Writing in Greek, Artemidorus lists, in his *Onirocritica*, synagogues and beggars among other apparitions in dreams that foretell grief, suffering, and general decline to all men and women (see Juvenal). He remarks that no one hastens to a synagogue without worries and that beggars, here Jews, are generally odious, have no possessions, and hinder all plans. A second reference to Diaspora Jews by Artemidorus in the same work notes a Jewish revolt in Cyrene, modern-day Libya, during the time of Trajan (see Dio). Artemidorus relates an anecdote involving a man who saw letters written on his sword, which later proved harbingers of the Jewish revolt and his own actions in suppressing it, but he gives no other details of this uprising.

### Dio (160–230 CE)

Dio was from Greek Asia Minor, an area that had long maintained contact with Jews, and his *History of Rome* offers interesting details on Jews in this region and elsewhere. Dio mentions that Herod of Palestine, accused by his brothers of some crime, was banished beyond the Alps. Dio also tells of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in 19 CE (see Tacitus, Suetonius). Dio attributes the Jewish expulsion not only to the success of their proselytizing but also to the great number of them flocking to the capital. He mentions Tiberius as having issued the edict (see Suetonius) and notes that by the time of Claudius' rule, Jewish numbers had recovered to such an extent that the emperor was constrained from driving them out for fear of conflict. Instead, says Dio, Claudius forbade their assembling, but he allowed them to continue living according to their traditions. Elsewhere, Dio provides evidence of Claudius' good relationships with Jewish nobility. Agrippa, living at Rome, actually helped Claudius gain the principate, and in so doing secured for himself an enlarged domain and the rank of consul from a grateful new emperor. Agrippa, as well as Mithridates and Polemon, both of whom received honors similar to those of Agrippa, were all granted permission to enter the senate house at Rome and express their thanks in Greek.

Other accounts of Jewish nobility at Rome that are recorded elsewhere emerge in fuller detail in Dio's work. Queen Bernice, at the height of her power in 75 CE,

arrived at Rome with Agrippa. While her brother was busy securing the rank of praetor, she took up cohabitation with Titus at the palace, expecting to be married to him and acting as his wife, but eventually being banished because of popular displeasure (see Suetonius). Not recorded elsewhere is Bernice's eventual return to Rome, which Dio states occurred after Titus acquired power. The emperor Domitian is not portrayed as being so well disposed to Judaism. Dio's account of the emperor reports that Domitian executed Flavius Clemens and Flavius Domitilla, his relatives, along with many others, on charges of atheism. Apparently, they had been perceived as drifting toward Judaism. Dio asserts that similar punishments were given to many individuals corrupted by this religion.

One description of events taking place in Jerusalem discusses Jews not living in the Roman Empire at all. In relating Titus' activity suppressing a rebellion of the Jews in Judea, Dio remarks that the rebels were assisted by many men that professed the same religion, but who brought succor from as far away as the Euphrates. Dio also provides details of the uprising at Cyrene, Libya, during the reign of Trajan (see Artemidorus). He reports that the Jews slaughtered Greeks and Romans, ate their flesh, and bound themselves with their entrails. The Jews, according to Dio, even smeared themselves with the blood of their victims and wore their skin as clothing. Finally, the Jewish rebels began sawing Gentiles in half from head to toe, killing 200,000 people. Similar uprisings are noted at Egypt and at Cyprus, on which island no Jew was thereafter permitted to set foot.

### Libanius (fourth century CE)

Libanius, a rhetorician in Rome's Greek east, delivers antiquity's final noteworthy description of Jews of the Diaspora by a pagan author. A native of Antioch, Libanius is remarkable for his close relationship with the Jewish patriarchs at Jerusalem. The nature of their interactions is on display in several of his letters addressed to them, and it seems to be one of mutual affinity. In view of this relationship, Libanius' discussion of Jews at Antioch in his *Oratio de Patrociniis* becomes a bit abstruse. Recording the events of a dispute between himself and his Jewish tenants, Libanius calls them typical Jews who had left their positions and were intent on imposing their own condition on the future of their employment. Libanius characterizes his employees as drunkenly insolent and expresses displeasure at the Jews' decision to approach the commander of the army stationed there. This commander then ordered the judge deciding the case to pardon the Jews. Libanius notes, however, that initially, before the commander's intervention, he had already lost favor with the judge by requesting his tenants' release from prison pending the outcome of the lawsuit.

### Selected Bibliography

- Gruen, Erich S. 2002. *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Menahem, Stern. 1974–1984. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*. Vols. 1–3. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.
- Williams, Margaret. 1998. *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

# History of Jews as a Minority

*Robert M. Seltzer*

---

This essay delineates and summarizes the positive and negative features of the Jewish experience as a minority in lands of its ever-changing Diaspora from ancient to modern times. Being a minority posed immense challenges for Jewish survival but in the long run contributed the flexibility of the Jewish tradition. Differences between the context in premodern and modern times are stark, but there are continuities that merit analysis.

A Jewish Diaspora existed since the Babylonian Exile of 586 BCE in the sense of a network of permanent settlements of a people outside its original homeland that maintained its ancestral legacy. Even though Jews were a majority within the Land of Israel at least until the Bar Kokhba revolt against Rome (132–135 CE), the greater part of the Jewish people may have lived in Diaspora conditions as a semiautonomous group with its own social institutions in a Gentile environment for several hundred years. The first-century CE historian Josephus quotes the Greek geographer Strabo to the effect that there was hardly any place in the inhabited world without the presence of the Jews (*Antiquities* XIV, 115). The New Testament remarks that in the time of Jesus and his apostles, “there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem, . . . Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judaea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs” (Acts 2:5–11). Even though the densest Jewish population was in the Galilee region of the Land of Israel and in the Mesopotamian region of the Persia Empire until these areas were conquered by the Arabs in the seventh century, there is ample evidence of long-standing Jewish settlements by then, ranging from settlements on the Rhine River to the northern shore of the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains, from the Iberian peninsula across both shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the Roman Middle East and Sassanian Iran, and south to the Arabian peninsula.

Although the liberties and limitations defining the status of the Jews in premodern times differed from land to land and era to era, everywhere Jews were excluded from the ruling elite (except for a very few instances, such as the Khazar kingdom of the steppes and a short time in Yemen where there were Jewish kings, or notable Jewish courtiers in Islamic and Christian Spain). Jews were not part of the military or feudal hierarchy. The Jewish community had its own courts to handle disputes according to Jewish law, although arrangements concerning transfer of property and contracts posed no problem because of the Talmudic dictum *dina demalkhuta dina* (the law of the kingdom is the law). Special taxes and other financial exactions were applied to the Jews. In some situations the number that could marry annually was limited. In addition, Jews were specifically excluded from many businesses and professions, prohibited from owning land, and segregated as to residence (although Jews preferred to live in proximity to their religious institutions and each other). If they resided in a locality, that meant they had the right to

practice Judaism as they saw fit; if Jews were *not* allowed to worship in their own way, rear their children in their own religious tradition, observe the laws of kashruth, bury their dead according to Jewish practice, and so forth, they could not live as a community in that place.

By 1000 CE, the center of gravity in the Diaspora was shifting westward to Europe from the Middle East, but its scope was even greater than before, from Kievan Rus to the cities of Central Asia and on to Kaifeng, the capital of Sung China, from Yemen to Cochin on the Malabar Coast of India and the African highlands of Ethiopia. Some communities flourished for a while (for example, southern Italy in the early Middle Ages) and then disappeared, whereas other formerly outlying regions surged ahead in Jewish population and cultural hegemony (Poland after the Black Death). In modern times, there is almost no region on any continent in the Old or New Worlds that has not possessed a Jewish minority.

Even though considered *galut* (exile) in the Jewish theology of the traditional prayer book and other classical works, the Diaspora condition can in retrospect be seen to have been an impetus for the continued vitality of Judaism as an intellectual tradition. Not only did Jews borrow extensively from the popular cultures in their multiple environments, but in certain challenging eras they interacted with the high civilizations in times of their greatest flourishing. Jewish communities existed in Egypt during the Achaemenid Empire of the fifth and fourth century BCE, but when the Ptolemaic dynasty occupied that land after the conquests of Alexander the Great, the burgeoning Jewish community of Alexandria gave rise to a Hellenistic Judaism of vast historical importance, a Judaism without which there would have been no Christian Church. The Jews of the region that was called "Babylonia" (central Iraq) long after the disappearance of the ancient Babylonian Empire, in the third century CE, developed its own rigorous version of rabbinic discourse, eventuating in the Babylonian Talmud. Without the presence of Judaism in sixth-century Arabia, there might have been no Islam. During the Abbasid caliphate, the yeshiva of Baghdad were the most important centers of Jewish religious law for most of the Diaspora, except for the dissident Karaites who, rejecting rabbinic authority and the Talmud, also flourished in that region. Similar accounts could be given for Jews in other arenas of intense cultural creativity: the Maghreb, Andalusia, and Provence, as well as the cities of the Rhineland in the Middle Ages; northern Italy during the Renaissance; and the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period.

Semiautonomous minority status did not prevent premodern Jewry from interacting with the surrounding population and culture. Jews spoke the vernacular language of their neighbors, sometimes developing a Jewish dialect of it such as Judeo-Persian, Ladino, or Yiddish. They borrowed customs and symbols from their neighbors and reworked them to fit the Jewish religious context. Premodern Jewish theological speculation drew on the high scientific and philosophical traditions derived from Plato and Aristotle. Modern scholars have noted the influence of the Franciscan system of penances on the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* (the pietists of the Crusade era), and of neo-Platonism on the Kabbalah (the Jewish mystics of 13th- to 15th-century southern France and northern Spain).

Had the vast bulk of the Jewish people remained in an increasingly stagnant Middle East after 1200, the Jewish tradition would have found itself isolated from those regions where dynamic intellectual and economic developments were taking place.

The critical difference between being a premodern minority and a modern minority lay in the sweeping transformation of the entire historical context. Premodern societies were characterized by some form of social and legal segmentation, such as the division into polis-citizens, slaves, and resident aliens of classical Greece; the dhimmi of the Islamic realm, the millets of the Ottoman Empire; or the aristocracy, clergy, bourgeoisie, and peasantry of ancien régime Europe. “Modernity,” a long, contradictory, and apparently unending series of drastic social, cultural, and political transformations that began in 17th- and 18th-century Europe and some of its overseas possessions, gradually but inexorably demolished those circumscribed social units, each with its with different privileges and obligations to the ruling elite. Of all the characteristic features of modernity—such as the emergence of a class of entrepreneurial capitalists more daring and independent than any before, a greatly increased secular sphere of life, a heightened sense of individual autonomy over against traditional religious imperatives, the ascendancy of scientific and pragmatic modes of explanation and planning—the most decisive for the Jews was the modern justification of sovereignty as grounded in the “people” rather than in a divinely appointed monarch.

The modern Jewish communities that gradually took shape in Western Europe and North America in the 18th century, in Central Europe during the 19th century, and in Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the 20th century, each had to respond to this new polity as it worked itself out unevenly in one country after another. Earlier the absolutist regimes of the early modern period had sought greater direct control over the Jews. The full-fledged nation-state after the era of the French Revolution dismantled the legal basis of premodern estate-system and other internal social divisions, erasing the privileges and disabilities attached to each of them. In theory, every citizen (a term that acquired broad new meaning) was to be equal before the law—though there remained a considerable gap between theory and practice. In the 1820s, this process came to be called Jewish “emancipation.” Jews no longer paid their taxes as a group but as individuals. Jewish religious courts lost their quasi-political authority. Jews were emancipated as individuals, not as a group. The ideological force that shaped the new political order in Europe and the United States was the Enlightenment and its continuation in classical liberalism. Jews were not emancipated by a movement specifically directed to them alone; on the contrary, they were conceded to deserve equal status before the law to other citizens because they were subsumed under the universal category of human beings as such.

Emancipation forced a reconfiguration of Jewish institutions because of the transformed legal status of the Jews and the Jewish community, increasingly a voluntary association of religionists. At the same time a different Jewish economic profile was emerging as old occupations closed down and new educational and career opportunities opened up, as a result of the spread of capitalism, the growth of modern schools and universities, the Industrial Revolution, and such notable inventions as the railroad and the steamship (which made possible mass migration)

and the popular press (which made possible greater contact between Jews). Furthermore, Enlightenment and its successor movements, such as romanticism and nationalism, posed an exacting challenge to Jewish philosophies and ideologies. As the most conspicuous diaspora people in Europe, Jews were one of the earliest of minorities to undergo the transition from the old to the new context of liberation and enfranchisement—pioneers in modernizing a traditional culture in order to cope with a new era of world history.

Modernization of the Jews has its special complications because the Jews are in some sense a group with an ethnic culture, albeit one with distinct subcultures, and as the followers of a religious tradition that embodies a distinctive worldview (the radical monotheism of not only the multiple varieties of historic Judaism but also the font of Christianity and Islam), an elite literary and sophisticated intellectual heritage that values learning as an end in itself, and a literature shot through with the imperative of justice in the community, nation, and world and committed to the sanctity of human beings created in “the image of God.” Therefore, the modernization of Judaism took place on both social and the ideological levels. In the nation-states of the West, the definition of Jews as a religious identity predominated, so that in Germany Jewish thought was shaped by the Enlightenment, romanticism, philosophical idealism, and academic *Wissenschaft*. In Eastern Europe, by the end of the 19th century, other models of modern Jewish communal life took center stage in response to growing political ferment between competing nationalities. The vision of emancipation held by most liberal and socialist ideologists was that the collective legal standing of ethnic minorities was to be constitutionally guaranteed. At the Versailles Peace Conference after World War I, the successor states to Austria-Hungary and Czarist Russia were forced to sign treaties formally confirming the legal and cultural rights of their respective minorities. This arrangement did not enjoy much success in the interwar years, nor did the total emancipation promised by radical socialism. Zionism, for a long time a minority movement within the Jewish minority, did find fruition after World War II.

As a project of modern Jewish social reintegration, the Zionist movement was predicated on the principle that so long as the Jews remained everywhere a minority, they would remain vulnerable to the forces of persecution and loss of identity. Only in their own land (and, according to political Zionism, in a sovereign Jewish nation-state) could Jews find a solution to the difficulties a minority faced in coping with pressures that the hegemonic culture could bring to bear. Cultural Zionists held that in a “spiritual” center a vibrant modern Hebraic culture would vitalize the Diaspora. Since 1948, the State of Israel provided the Jewish people a recognized voice in the international arena and an effective means of rescuing threatened branches of the Diaspora. Ironically, some of the problems of Jews being a minority have been transferred to the State of Israel, which has had to withstand a prolonged state of siege, fight four wars in its defense, and be smeared by allegations akin to anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust. Like Diaspora Jewry, Israel had to react creatively and energetically to these challenges.

In premodern times the Jews, as a minority everywhere, found it difficult to protect themselves effectively against the onslaught of military or paramilitary

forces, leaving a heritage of persecution and expulsion that resonated with the biblical theme of exile. The upsurge of anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere between the 1880s and the 1940s demonstrated that modern Jew hatred can be just as murderous or more so than those of the First Crusade (1095), the Black Death (1348–1349), and the Chmielnicki massacres (1648–1649) because of the devastating technology that can be used against the victims. The rationale for premodern persecutions was usually religious, but historians detect economic and political reasons that made persecution tempting and convenient: to confiscate the Jewish wealth and eliminate economic competitors, because certain rulers appeared to side with the mob in times of violent social tensions. In modern persecutions the rationale has often been overtly political and economic: Jews had acquired too much power; they were arrogant and dominating; there was no defense against their malevolent cunning but to destroy them root and branch. Singling out a minority to blame gave the illusion of doing something for the insulted and injured. Under such secular arguments, however, often lay Manichean or apocalyptic notions of a quasi-religious nature.

Another dilemma experienced by modern Diaspora Jewry (including secular Israelis who settle there) is loss of members through assimilation. The creation of a so-called “neutral society” (the term is used by social historian Jacob Katz for a zone neutral to specific religious identity) made it easier for individual Jews to pull away from the Jewish community and be absorbed into the majority. To be sure, Jews have always been, in a biblical phrase from 1 Chronicles 4:43, *she'erit ha-peletah*, a “remnant that escaped.” Although the vast majority of Jews are Jews by birth, there have always been converts to Judaism (“Jews by choice” in the current terminology). In modern Europe and the United States, Jews by birth increasingly resemble Jews by choice because they voluntarily chose to take their Jewish faith seriously and actualize it in their lives.

In premodern Judaism, Jews were a minority in fact but not in their own eyes. While the traditional Christian replacement theology held that the Old Israel, the Jewish people, was superseded by the Church as the New Israel, Jews viewed themselves as God’s beloved, a people chosen by the Eternal to provide God’s only Torah with a dwelling place on earth. Jews were the people who assumed the “yoke of the commandments” and the privilege of demonstrating that they were obedient to the covenant with God to which their ancestors had subscribed at Mount Sinai. There was a range of theological explanations for the persecutions Jews were forced to undergo besides that of punishment for the sins of the fathers as articulated in Deuteronomy. These disasters could be understood as echoing the *Akedah* (binding of Isaac) of Genesis 22; they were *yisurin shel ahavah* (chastisements of love) from a God who inordinately cared for them; they were a witness of the faithfulness of the people of Israel to its God, so that persecutions seldom ruptured Jewish faith and sometimes strengthened it.

The difference between premodern and modern experience of living as a vulnerable minority is captured in the words of Labor Zionist and intellectual Hayim Greenberg:

Until recent times we were . . . a minority statistically only, but not psychologically. . . . Jews survived as a numerical and persecuted minority in an alien world not because they were a separate tribe, a distinct people (in the modern, nationalist sense) or a different race. Tribes, peoples, racial groups disappeared many times when they mingled with others more numerous and stronger than they. . . . We were . . . the Congregation of Israel. This is much more than a group sharing common memories (time and environment frequently eradicate group memories and eliminate them as influencing factors); it is more than blood kinship. . . . During many centuries Jews were aware that, in addition to being a people like any other, a collective physical entity, they were also . . . a group of “conspirators” against the forces of darkness and uncleanness in the world, and that this “conspiracy” was part of Providence’s plan leading to the “end of days” which would come about sooner or later—time was not a factor and it was not desirable to hasten the end. (Greenberg 1955, 65f.)

Modern Jewish theology has had to reinterpret the uniqueness of the people of Israel in line with new assumptions and methodologies. One of the greatest differences modernity brought was the realization that Jews were “just a minority.” To be sure, modern learning made educated Jews much more aware of the impact that Jews and Judaism have had on human history. Historical consciousness enables a minority to gain a more nuanced and more complete comprehension of its total heritage against the background of world history. Many Jews are now aware of the remarkable varieties of long-forgotten Jewish cultures and “the Jewish contribution to civilization.” But modern Jewish self-awareness drove home how feared, despised, and hated Jews were and how helpless they could be when attacked. The new communal agencies and structures turned out to have no effective power when confronted by the Nazis and their cohorts. The Holocaust intensified immensely a sense of powerlessness, indicating that the Jews could count on few friends.

Modern minorities have come to think they have human rights. Perhaps the greatest ignominy is to be stripped of these rights in an attempt to force them back into subordinate status—or, worse, to dehumanize them. Certainly one of the motives for Jewish memorialization of the Holocaust is to exorcise the anger and guilt brought on by feelings of powerlessness resulting from it, as well as to derive some lessons about modes of self-protection in the future.

For all the problematic minority status of Diaspora existence, there can arise unprecedented opportunities. Thus, in premodern times the Jews could do little as a subjugated minority to further *tikkun ha-olam* (“repair of the world”). Now there are some opportunities to do so. Moreover, an openness to the other to an extent not conceivable in premodern times can enable the spiritual leaders of a minority, such as the Jews, to perceive elements of their heritage that have been forgotten, obscured, or eclipsed, and enter productive dialogue with other faiths, so that each interacting tradition may gain in knowledge, wisdom, and mutual understanding.

### Selected Bibliography

- Biale, David. 1986. *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*. New York: Schocken Books.  
 Funkenstein, Amos. 1993. *Perceptions of Jewish History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Graetz, Heinrich. 1975. *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays*, edited by Ismar Schorsch. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
- Greenberg, Hayim. 1955. *The Inner Eye I*, New York: Jewish Frontier Association.
- Katz, Jacob. 1972. *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History*. Westmead, England: Gregg International Publishers.
- Katz, Jacob. 1986. *Jewish Emancipation and Self-Emancipation*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Levine, Etan, ed. 1983. *Diaspora: Exile and the Jewish Condition*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Myers, David N. 1995. *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pinson, Koppel S., ed. 1958. *Nationalism and History: Essays on Old and New Judaism by Simon Dubnow*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Rawidowicz, Simon. 1986. *Israel: The Ever-Dying People and Other Essays*, edited by Benjamin C. I. Ravid, 13–50. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Rivkin, Ellis. 1967. “The Diaspora: Its Historical Significance.” In *Studies of the Leo Baeck Institute*, edited by Max Kreutzberger, 265–318. New York: Leo Baeck Institute.
- Rotenstreich, Nathan. 1972. *Tradition and Reality: The Impact of History on Modern Jewish Thought*. New York: Random House.
- Schorsch, Ismar. 1994. *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press.
- Seltzer, Robert. 1986. “The Experience of Being a Minority: The Jewish Experience: Ghetto, Assimilation, or . . .” In *People of God, Peoples of God: A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Asia*, edited by Hans Ucko, 2–12. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. 1982. *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

## The Lost Tribes of Israel

*Amotz Asa-El*

---

Historically, the lost tribes of Israel refers to the expelled and disappeared inhabitants of the biblical Kingdom of Israel that was conquered and destroyed by Assyria in 722 BCE, but mythologically they are a constant component in Judaism’s yearnings of national restoration and visions of redemption in the days to come.

### The Emergence and Disappearance of the Israelite Kingdom

The 10 lost tribes constitute a collective reference to the Israelites who did not survive the First Temple’s destruction in 587 BCE, as opposed to the tribes of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin, who then forged what became the Jewish people, as evidenced in the book of Esther’s reference to Mordechai as “the Jew” (Esther 2:5), the first such reference in any known literature. This post-Israelite identity became known universally as “Jewish” after the disappearance of the tribes that inhabited the Israelite kingdom.

For its part, the Israelite kingdom—which was dominated by Ephraim and joined by all tribes except Judah and Benjamin as well as Levi, which did not

possess a specific region, and Simon, which passively merged into Judah—seceded in 928 BCE from the kingdom Solomon bequeathed to his son Rehoboam. That kingdom, in its turn, was first established in 1025 BCE by Saul, who hailed from Benjamin, and in 1006 BCE was restored by David, who belonged to Judah.

The tribes that descended from Jacob the Patriarch—Reuben, Simon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin—were never tightly united. Even under David's and Solomon's united kingdoms there were intra-Israelite tensions, particularly between the two largest tribes, Judah and Ephraim, but also between the smallest tribe, Benjamin, and its large neighbor to the south, Judah. The tension with Benjamin resulted in repeated civil wars, most notably the one described at length in Judges 20, when "all the Israelites came out, from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of the Gilead," to wage war on Benjamin because of the rape and murder of a woman in the town of Gibeah. Similarly, the rivalry between David and Saul concealed the historic friction between Judah and Benjamin. After Saul's death this tension also produced a violent clash between the soldiers of Joab and Abner, who were, respectively, David's and Saul's military commanders.

Still, the main tension was between Ephraim and Judah, and it surfaced soon after the death of Moses, when the former protested to Joshua (who was himself a member of their tribe) that the region carved out for them in the Promised Land was too forested and hilly. Similar tensions emerged subsequently during the pre-royal period, when the people of Ephraim challenged Gideon the judge for allegedly not deploying them in his successful attack on the kingdom of Ammon.

The tribes' disjointedness owed not only to genealogy but also to geography. Even before they entered the Promised Land, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh asked Moses to stay put in Transjordan, whose grasslands they found suitable for their sheep and cattle. Moses reluctantly agreed, but only after receiving a promise that the soldiers of the two and a half tribes would not only join the conquest of the Promised Land but would also in fact lead it. Still, the consequent spread of the 12 tribes on both sides of the arid and inhospitable Jordan Valley could only intensify the seclusion in which the Transjordanian tribes dwelled, and further weaken pan-Israelite solidarity and cohesion. Thus, when Deborah the prophetess summed up the battle in which Sisera the Canaanite was defeated, she scolded Reuben: "Why did you tarry among the sheepfolds, to hear the piping of the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart" (Judges 5:16).

The northern tribes' battle with the Canaanites was shunned not only by Reuben and Gad of the east but also by Asher and Dan of the north. Even more curiously, the southern tribes of Judah and Simon are not mentioned for better or for worse by Deborah, apparently indicating her own realization that their location was too far even in her demanding eyes for them to travel through the Samaritan Mountains to join the battle that took place east of Mount Carmel.

Other Israelite figures, most notably Samson, who belonged to the tribe of Dan, did not quarrel with other tribes, but their careers did not break through the confines of their immediate tribal settings. In fact, the Bible generally leaves

the impression that the Israelite leaders before King Saul were hardly concerned about the other tribes' travails. In Gideon's case the refusal to weld the Israelites into a functioning polity was even ideological. When, after his impressive military victories, the "men of Israel" implored him to become their king, he replied, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you" (Judges 8:23). This attitude led philosopher Martin Buber to portray the tribes' existence before the rise of the Israelite kingdom as an idyll. The way he saw it, theirs was a society of farmers who combined political anarchy with religious piety and industrious husbandry. Either way, behind the passage that appears repeatedly in the book of Judges—"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes"—lurked a failure to confront invasions from without and crime from within. This pervasive lack of security ultimately produced the popular demand for political power and national unity, which eventually gave rise to the Israelite monarchies.

Yet even when the Israelite kingdom was established, its limbs were never been connected by an efficient highway system. It seems that well before its destruction the Israelite kingdom was mainly what immediately surrounded Samaria, while its links to Transjordan and the Galilee remained weak.

Culturally, the Israelites appear to have been less committed to the Torah and more open to foreign influences, apparently owing to their proximity to the Mediterranean and the coastal plain, which was part of the international highway connecting Egypt with Phoenicia, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The Israelite tolerance of foreign culture even included the acceptance of a Gentile, Isabel, as its queen.

The Kingdom of Judah, by contrast, identified with the Temple at Jerusalem and remained less alien to the Mosaic tradition and more mentally distant from the outer world. It was also more marginal from the viewpoint of foreign invaders, whose main strategic focus was traditionally the coastal plain and those more immediately connected to it, like the Israelite kingdom.

The rivalry between Judah and Ephraim was foretold in Genesis, where the two tribes' founders square off, first when Joseph shares with his older brothers his dreams of dominating them, and in turn is sold by them to slavery, and then, after Joseph's rise to prominence as pharaoh's deputy and his dramatic encounter with his brothers, when Judah confronts Joseph on behalf of all their brothers.

The strife between Judah and Israel not only resulted in the failure to remain politically united, but it also made them more vulnerable to external pressure and occasionally even led to wars between them. Soon after Israel's secession, the Transjordanian kingdoms of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, which had previously been subjugated by the Israelites, restored their independence. Then Egypt and the Philistines attacked Israel. Eventually, Judah, too, attacked Israel and took lands in southern Ephraim, capitalizing on Israel's evident weakness after its debilitation by Egypt. During the reign of King Asa (908–867 BCE), Judah even called on a foreign power, Aram, to take sides in its conflict with Israel.

Although there were also periods of harmony between the two kingdoms, most notably in the times of kings Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahab and Omri of Israel, when the kingdoms fought mutual enemies jointly and Judah did not interfere

while Israel built Samaria as its new capital city, the separation of the two in their lives and deaths emerged as a defining trauma in Jewish history.

The Israelite kingdom was ultimately defeated in 722–720 BCE by Assyria, led successively by kings Shalmaneser V and Sargon II, whose policy was to exile the nations they conquered to distant lands. Judah, at the same time, was spared Assyria's assault thanks to King Hezekiah's shrewd maneuvering among regional powers. At the same time, Hezekiah consolidated his kingdom's bonds to the Temple and the Torah and "sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the Lord, the God of Israel" (2 Chronicles 30:1). At that point, effectively, Israelite history ended and Jewish history began. After the Assyrian conquest, there no longer were Israelites, only Judeans, who eventually became known as Jews.

The Bible points to the exiled Israelites' initial locations: "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (2 Kings 17:5). These places are between today's northeastern Syria and northwestern Iran. In those areas archaeology has found evidence of Israelite names like Hilkiyahu, Paltiyahu, and Neriyahu, but research has no answer for the Israelites' whereabouts since their initial relocation. Apparently, the historic disappearance of the Israelite tribes had more to do with culture than with geography, as they proved to lack the Judeans' determination to cling to their nationality and heritage.

### The Emotional Effect of Disappearance

The disappearance of the 10 tribes troubled both Jeremiah, who ended up in Egypt, and Ezekiel, who was among the Judeans exiled to Babylon after Jerusalem's destruction in 583 BCE. Jeremiah said the lost tribes "shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them; I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble; for I am become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born. Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say: 'He that scattered Israel doth gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock'" (Jeremiah 31:6–9).

Ezekiel said: "I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations" (Ezekiel 37:21–22).

Yet when Persia's King Cyrus mandated the restoration of Jerusalem's Temple, some two generations after Jeremiah's time, his call was heeded by "the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites" (Ezra 1:5). The Israelites had vanished by then. In fact, throughout the Second Temple era there is no indication that the 10 tribes were actively sought. Some even ceased to expect them altogether. Rabbi Akiba, for instance, said, "The Ten Tribes shall not return again, for it is written (in Deuteronomy 29:28): 'And he cast then into another land

like this day.' Like this day goes and does not return, so do they go and not return" (Mishna Sanhedrin, 10, 3).

Others, like Rabbi Eliezer, disagreed: "Just like the day first grows dark and then grows light, so also after darkness falls upon the 10 tribes light shall eventually shine upon them."

Indeed, the quest to restore the lost tribes would turn on imaginations for centuries both within and beyond the Jewish people, and remains potent until today. Allusions to the mystery of the lost tribes appeared already before the Second Temple's destruction. Flavius Josephus, for instance, mentioned the tribes' survival beyond the River Sambatyon, which he believed was beyond the Lebanon Mountains. The Sambatyon was mentioned also in rabbinic sources, from Genesis Rabba 73:6 to the Jerusalem Talmud (Sanhedrin 10:6), all of which agreed that it was an unnatural river that was impassable throughout the week, and only on Saturdays it would rest, when the observance of the day would prevent its passage. Josephus said the river flows on Saturdays and dries up on weekdays. Either way, the river's existence, and the lost tribes' presence beyond it, was universally accepted by Jews throughout the Diaspora.

Rabbi Akiva mentioned the Sambatyon's unnatural behavior as proof of the Sabbath's divinity, and 17th-century scholar Manasseh ben Israel said the Sambatyon's sand, even when placed in a bottle, would rattle throughout the week and rest on the Sabbath. Roman historian Pliny the Elder also mentioned as fact the existence of a river called Sambatyon, which stops flowing on Saturdays.

In 880 CE, the myth of the lost tribes took a new turn with the arrival in Kairouan, North Africa, of a tall, dark-skinned traveler who presented himself as Eldad of the tribe of Dan, or Hadani. The myth he created was later further bolstered by reports that claimed to speak no language other than Hebrew.

Hadani impressed Jews of all walks with tales about the lost tribes that were as rich with detail as they were fantastic. The tribes of Naphtali, Gad, Dan, and Asher, he reported, lived in East Africa near the biblical land of Havilah, which is rich with gold. These four tribes live as nomads under King Addiel. Although they were frequently fighting wars, they made good use of the presence of Samson's and Delilah's descendants in their midst. The only thing that separated them from the "sons of Moses" was the River Sambatyon, which was vicious during the weekdays and would only calm on the Sabbath, when it would become shrouded in fog or wrapped in flames. In that area, the lost tribes would alternately study and fight, rotating among them every three months.

In Central Asia lived the tribes of Simon and half of Manasseh, taxing 25 Gentile kingdoms. Zevulun, Issachar, and Reuben lived between today's northern Iran and Turkey, while Ephraim dwelled in the Arabian Peninsula. Hadani agreed that the Jews of the Muslim and Christian spheres were descendants of Judah and Benjamin.

Hadani's audience's simple belief in the existence of the lost tribes persisted uninterrupted, and in 1524 played a role in a bizarre episode involving the Vatican and the pope himself. It began when David Reubeni, apparently an Ethiopian Jew sold to slavery and redeemed by Jews in Alexandria, arrived in Ssfed, claiming to be

on an official mission on behalf of the king of the 10 tribes. Reubeni said he had been ordered to return to the king of the 10 tribes with a stone from the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Claiming that he commanded an army and that the people of Israel's redemption was imminent, Reubeni took his message to the Vatican, after entering Rome riding a white horse. Although most local Jews were skeptical about his stories, Reubeni was granted an audience with Pope Clement VII in 1524. In the meeting, he tried to convince the pope to create a Jewish-Christian alliance against the Ottoman Empire. Two years later, Reubeni met also with Portugal's King John III in Lisbon. There he sparked a messianic storm among the local Marranos and was joined by Solomon Molcho, a Marrano who declared his Jewishness and claimed to be the Messiah. Eventually, the two were arrested. Molcho was burned at the stake and Reubeni died in jail.

Both Hadani and Reubeni's tales were fraught with fantasies that each of them evidently invented. Still, the audiences they received attested to the enduring power of the quest to locate the lost tribes and the universal agreement that the lost tribes existed.

Similarly, when the Mongols were approaching eastern Europe in the 13th century, both Christians and Jews often associated the invaders with the 10 tribes. Contemporary German and French chronicles claimed that some Jews contended that Genghis Khan's armies descended from the lost tribes and that once he redeemed the Jews from Christianity's rule he would make them rule the world.

The lost tribes also figured prominently in the redemptive designs of messianic imposture Sabbatai Zevi, who was active in the 17th century in Asia Minor, Palestine, and today's Greece. In the letters he sent to the Diaspora after proclaiming Zevi the Messiah, Nathan of Gaza promised that within a few years, besides unseating the Ottoman sultan and marrying the soon-to-be-resurrected biblical Moses' daughter, Rebecca, Zevi would redeem the 10 tribes. As news of the Messiah's arrival spread, rumors abounded, and one of them was that the lost tribes had been found.

Zevi's eventual arrest and conversion to Islam did not dent the faith in the existence of the lost tribes or in their future restoration. After Zevi's death, some of his followers claimed that he had crossed the Sambatyon and would remain with the 10 tribes until he will choose to return.

The survival of the lost tribes was accepted as truth until the modern era, not because of any empirical evidence but because of sacred scripture. If anything, a factual discovery that would disprove the existence of the Diaspora's 10 missing pieces would be perplexing. To contemporary Jews, Hadani's stories were novel mainly in the encounter they suggested with a reality that was only supposed to be unveiled once redemption actually dawned. Beyond that, the stories also excited Jews in their implicit refutation of Christian dogma, which contended that the Jews' dispersal was part of a humiliating plan whereby they could not be politically independent and militarily successful.

Indeed, even more potent than the pervasive belief that the lost tribes still existed was the faith that they would play a major role in the redemption, based on explicit prophecies like this one in Jeremiah (29:13): "And I will turn your captivity,

and gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, says the Lord; and I will bring you back unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.”

### Searching for the Lost Tribes

Spanish-born Kabbalist Abraham Abulafya set out to locate the Sambatyon in the Land of Israel, though he never got past Crusader-ruled Acre, where he landed in 1260. Twelfth-century traveler Benjamin of Tudela mentioned stories about the tribes of Dan, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali dwelling in a place called Nisaphur, where they were ruled by a Levite prince. The Spanish-Jewish merchant added that the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh lived in the Arabian Peninsula. In the middle of the 17th century, Manasseh ben Israel, while seeking England’s agreement to the Jews’ readmission into England, said the ingathering of the lost Israelites was possible logistically and imperative religiously.

In recent times, the quest to find the lost tribes has only intensified and was joined by Jews motivated by modern nationalist ideas and Christians motivated by a theology that sees in the restoration of the lost tribes a vital stage on the way to the Second Coming. The quest to locate the tribes has sometimes produced theories that linked an assortment of ethnicities—from the British to the Japanese, American Indians, and even the Eskimos—to the lost tribes of Israel.

However, the most historically logical direction in which the 10 tribes were sought was Central Asia. The first to suggest that general direction was Benjamin of Tudela, who wrote:

There are men of Israel in Persia who say that in the mountains of Nishapur four of the tribes of Israel dwell, namely, the tribe of Dan, the tribe of Zebulun, the tribe of Asher, and the tribe of Naphtali, who were included in the first captivity of Shlamane-ser King of Assyria, as it is written (Kings II 18:11): “And he put them in Halah and in Habor by the River of Gozan and in the cities of the Medes.” The extent of their land is twenty days’ journey, and they have cities and large villages in the mountains; the River Gozan forms the boundary on the one side. They are not under the rule of the Gentiles, but they have a prince of their own, whose name is Rabbi Joseph Amarkala the Levite. There are scholars among them. And they sow and reap and go forth to war as far as the land of Cush by way of the desert. (Adler 1987, 53–54)

Benjamin of Tudela did not personally visit these sites and conceded he was merely conveying what he heard from others. Modern scholars, adventurers, and believers embarked on expeditions aimed at finding the lost tribes in Asia and Africa.

In Central Asia various ethnicities were explored as descendants of the 10 tribes. Names such as Gadoon, Ephtalite, and Amnasa—arguably reminiscent of Gad, Naphtali, and Manasseh—as well as the embrace of Islam in areas generally dominated by polytheistic religions, led some to see in various Central Asian groups descendants of the 10 tribes. The Jews of Bukhara, in today’s Uzbekistan, have been speculated as hailing from the tribe of Issachar because the name Issachcaroff is common among them.

The Pathans, who control the famous Khyber Pass between Pakistan and India, have been traced this way to the tribe of Gad. A local river, Gazni, resembles the name Gozan that the Bible cites as the exiled tribes' original destination. According to oral traditions that were put in writing already in the Persian chronicle of 1612 *Makhsan I-Afghani*, the Dorani and Yosofzai tribes of the Khayber area are descendants of the 10 tribes. Members of a large tribe nearby, Afridi, whose name reminds some of Ephraim, light candles on Saturday and wear a garment decorated with black stripes reminiscent of a Jewish prayer shawl.

The largest Afghan tribe, the Pashtun, has an ancient tradition tracing its origins to King Saul. According to local oral traditions the Afghans' forefathers were two of Saul's sons who after his death served King David. Local tales reveal an awareness of Solomon's Temple, as well as its destruction by the Babylonians and the exile that followed it. The trek to Afghanistan, according to these traditions, followed a revolt against the Babylonians that compelled its perpetrators to hide in a remote and difficult-to-access area, which the Afghan mountains clearly are.

In 1891, H. W. Bellew, a senior British colonial official in Afghanistan, presented a paper in London where he described the Pashtuns' belief that they descend from the 10 tribes, though he stressed that as devout Muslims it is for them but an explanation of their pre-Muslim roots. This was possibly the first secular, public discussion of the lost tribes based on relatively impartial and firsthand observation. At the same time, Jewish scholar Adolf Neubauer argued that the Samaritans—of whom a small community survives outside today's Nablus—descended from the 10 tribes.

Such secular interest in the lost tribes has increased in recent decades. Biblical scholar Allen Godbey argued that the more worldly northern tribes knowingly went with their faith to various parts of Africa and Asia, where some of them later joined the rising monotheistic religions that competed with Judaism.

Recent research, based on Assyrian inscriptions, among other things, concludes that the Israelites' deportations were incomplete and left behind at least some of them in the northern parts of the Land of Israel. As for the expellees' destinations mentioned in the Bible, which are generally between Iran's Zagros Mountains in the east and the sources of the Euphrates River in the west, archaeology has indeed unearthed in these locations Assyrian-era documents containing Israelite names as already mentioned.

The search for the lost tribes remained focused on central and southern Asia. Beyond Afghanistan, on the Indian-Burmese border, there are tribes that have been suggested to descend from the lost tribe of Manasseh. In recent years, some of their members have officially converted to Judaism and moved to Israel. Some Burmese tribes, who eventually became Christian, preserved ancient sacrificial rituals—which the surrounding Confucian and Buddhist faiths reject—as well as tales of the deliverance from slavery in ancient Egypt. Some see these as proof of their Israelite ancestry. Though they eat pork and use it in their rituals, they are said to do so to commemorate and atone for the original sin for which they were originally exiled.

Israeli author Hillel Halkin, generally a skeptic about the searches for the 10 tribes, recently followed Israeli rabbi Eliyahu Avichail, who has spent decades

tracking down the lost tribes, for a journey to alleged lost tribe communities in China, Thailand, and the Indian-Burmese border. Halkin tells of an ancient song among the Mizos of northeastern India about the crossing of the Red Sea; another tradition that says the Mizos' ancestors worshipped a god named Yah; that centuries ago their ancestors used to circumcise their boys; that old Mizo texts mention the Israelite patriarchs; and that during a spring holiday celebrated in their region, the Mizos eat unleavened bread, much like the Jews do on Passover. Based on these and other findings, Halkin concluded that, in the provinces of Mizoram and Manipur in northeastern India, there is a population whose claim to have descended from the tribe of Manasseh is valid, despite its modern-era conversion to Christianity by European missionaries.

In Africa, genetic tests have traced to ancient Israel the origins of the Lemba tribe of southern Africa, which observes dietary and purity laws reminiscent of Judaism's. As for Ethiopian Jewry, the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's ruling that its members are Jewish explained that this community descended from the tribe of Dan.

The Beta Israel (House of Israel) communities, who lived in various locations across Ethiopia for centuries, were pejoratively called by their neighbors *Falashas*, or foreigners, and were discriminated against. According to some traditions, the Beta Israel, whose complexion resembles that of their black neighbors, originated with King Solomon's entourage to the queen of Sheba. Others attributed their roots to the lost Israelites. However, scholars tend to dismiss that possibility as well as the Israelite roots of various other African tribes (most notably the Lemba of southern Africa) as the Israelite exiles seem to have been led north rather than south. The more accepted theory locates the Beta Israel's ancestry in Yemen, which is relatively close and whose Jews are also dark skinned.

### Selected Bibliography

- Adler, Elkan Nathan, ed. 1987. *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages: 19 Firsthand Accounts*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Becking, Bob. 1992. *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill.
- Bellew, H. W. 1977. *An Inquiry Into the Ethnography of Afghanistan*. Karachi, Pakistan: Indus Publication.
- Bustenay, Oded. 1979. *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Ludwig Reipert.
- Godbey, Alan. 1930. *The Lost Tribes: A Myth*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Halkin, Hillel. 2003. *Across the Sabbath River*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Harel-Hoshen, Sarah, ed. 1991. *Beyond the Sambatyon: The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes*. Tel Aviv, Israel: The Diaspora Museum.
- Katz, Nathan. 2000. *Who Are the Jews of India?* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Quirin, James. 1992. *The Evolution of the Ethiopian Jews: A History of the Beta Israel (Falasha) to 1920*. Philadelphia: University Press of Pennsylvania.

# The Samaritan Diaspora

*Alan D. Crown*

---

An extensive Samaritan Diaspora in time as well as space is attested by inscriptions; archaeological evidence; legislation in various places; references in Greek, Arabic, and Syriac writings; and, of course, domiciliary details in the scholia of manuscripts. Samaritan envoys, merchants, civil servants, soldiers, and settlers were likely to be found wherever there was a Jewish Diaspora in the Mediterranean basin. However, northward, in Spain, France, and toward the Danube frontier, there is no evidence of any Samaritan community or legislation aimed at them.

There are ample testimonies as to the date of the final contraction of Samaritan settlement but it is uncertain when the Diaspora began. Alexander the Great is said to have taken Samaritan conscripts to Egypt and settled them as district guards on land allotments in the Thebaid. The Samaritan book of Joshua, supported by the *Kitab al-Tarikh* of Abu'l Fath, relates that Samaritans were living on the Tyrian littoral at the time of Alexander's invasion and gives the impression that there were Samaritans in Egypt, in some sort of organized community, at the time of his death.

In 331 BCE, Samaritans fled to escape the king's wrath after they burned alive Andromachus, the prefect of Syria. The papyri from Wadi Daliyeh relate to the aftermath of this affair. Apart from those who died at Daliyeh, one may assume that some escaped to the east across the Jordan, though there is nothing to connect them at this time with the Samaritan settlements at Siyagha and Nebo.

Ptolemy Lagus carried numerous Samaritans as captives to Egypt where they were settled, and others followed of their own accord as economic and other conditions in Egypt were favorable to them. There was a military settlement in the Fayyum called Samaraeia from Ptolemaic times.

When the Hasmonean renaissance in Palestine was at its height, the Samaritans were at their nadir. The destruction of Shechem at the time of Hyrcanus' campaign against Samaria is recorded archaeologically, and, it seems, the Samaritans of that city were forced to move elsewhere. Some may have left the country.

By the second century, there was a substantial Diaspora throughout the Mediterranean islands. A permanent trading colony of Samaritans with its own synagogue, on the isle of Delos, shows that there were Samaritans in Thasos, in a community that had a life of at least five centuries; likewise there was a community at Rhodes. Inscriptions from Athens indicate that the Samaritans were not restricted only to the islands. One of these inscriptions indicated that a Samaritan woman married a man from Antioch. Perhaps the latter was also a Samaritan. An inscription from Piraeus indicates a community there in the third century CE. At Thessalonica, the community was sufficiently large to have maintained a synagogue, one portion of which was named "the Tower of the Samaritans."

Samaritan sources bespeak a widespread emigration in reaction to Judean hegemony undertaken, apparently, in groups. Abu'l Fath gives details of sailing away

in ships to the “ends of the earth,” that is, to points west in the Mediterranean basin, certainly to Sicily where there was a community and synagogue in Syracuse, by land to Babylon or to the northern frontiers of the empire inside the Fertile Crescent, and some to the eastern regions beyond the Jordan, presumably to the Hellenized cities of the Decapolis. The account is clearly exaggerated but indicates the capacity of the Samaritan community to react on a community basis in a manner no longer possible after the Romano-Byzantine period.

In the second century CE, the Samaritans appear to have been located in every major coastal city in Palestine, and they were to be found in Italy and throughout Asia Minor. Roman destruction of the Phoenician and Greek maritime empires had left a vacuum that had been partially filled by Judean shipping. The new port of Caesarea, in which the Samaritans were a sizable group, was a base for extensive seafaring activities. By the beginning of the Byzantine era the Samaritans made up about one third of the population of Caesarea. Doubtless, they were among those involved in the shipping ventures.

Frequent references to the Egypt Diaspora in the early Christian world show that the Samaritans were administrators, merchants, laborers, and soldier-settlers. The disputed letter of Hadrian Augustus to Servianus, reported in *Scriptoriae Historiae Augustae*, speaks of both Samaritans and Jews in Egypt: “some are blowers of glass, others makers of paper, others are at least weavers of linen or seem to belong to one craft or another.” Attention is drawn to the Samaritans of Carthage in 632 CE, and it may be assumed that Samaritans were settled on the North African coast.

Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* (chapter 26) indicates that there was a Samaritan community at Rome with connections to the rest of the Diaspora. There is a dubious tradition that a statue was erected to Simon Magus by his Samaritan compatriots in Rome, which might indicate that the Samaritan community had grown to include a number of wealthy individuals, perhaps even some merchants. Samaritans in imperial service could have been free to visit Rome and settle there, before the operation of the anti-Samaritan legislation.

The fourth century CE saw conflicts between the Church and the Jews and Samaritans at Ravenna and Rome. By the fifth century CE, the Samaritans were scattered throughout Italy. They had a synagogue in Rome at least into the sixth century and were well established in Sicily as merchants, farmers, and slave owners at Syracuse, Catania, Cagliari, Naples, and Palermo. Evidence of a long period of settlement is seen in two inscribed columns that appear to have been part of a Samaritan synagogue in Syracuse.

There are complementary Samaritan and Byzantine references to an influential Samaritan community at Constantinople. Justinian’s edict of 527 CE issued in Constantinople speaks of the Samaritans in the “glorious city.” John of Ephesus, gives the impression of a substantial and troublesome Samaritan community in 579.

The Samaritans made common cause with the Persians in their campaigns against the emperors of Byzantium, and they took refuge from Byzantium in Persia. In 530 CE, 50,000 refugees are alleged to have been taken by Cabades from Persia to work in his silver mines in Armenia, apparently the beginning of an Armenian and

Persian Diaspora. There is also some evidence that there was a Samaritan community in Babylon, though the number of Samaritans may have been so small that they were forced into religious symbiosis with the Jews.

Famine, plague, and the devastating earthquakes of 549–550 CE must have seen many Samaritans anxious to leave their homeland, and it is, perhaps, at this time that the Samaritan Diaspora in Arabia expanded, perhaps to include the island known as Samiri in the Red Sea, which is said to have remained the home of a Samaritan group until the 13th century.

The Samaritan Diaspora was lost to sight soon after the Moslem conquest apart from Damascus and Egypt. By the 10th century CE, there were concentrations of population in Alexandria and Cairo where the community had its own *rais* who was responsible for all the Samaritan synagogues in Egypt. By the 15th century, only 50 Samaritan families seem to have been left in Cairo.

When the community in Egypt came to its close is unknown. The last known Egyptian manuscript seems to have been written in Cairo in 1761. The Egyptian Diaspora must have come to an end at about the same time the community in Gaza was so reduced that the last members returned to Shechem.

Damascus seems to have assumed more the role of a second Samaritan homeland than a diaspora. Refugees and exiles from Shechem increased the community during the heyday of the community, the 12th through the 14th centuries. Their number diminished rapidly by the end of the 17th century when an adjacent Samaritan community in Aleppo ended.

### Selected Bibliography

- Avi-Yonah, M. 1972. "The Samaritans in the Roman and Byzantine Periods." In *Eretz Shomron, Thirtieth Archaeological Convention, 1972*, edited by Joseph Aviram, 34–37. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.
- Bruneau, Ph. 1982. "Les Israélites de Délos et la Juiverie Délienne." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 106: 466–504.
- Crown, A. D. 1989. "The Samaritan Diaspora." In *The Samaritans*, 195–217. Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr.
- Finkel, J. 1933. "Jewish, Christian and Samaritan Influences on Arabia." In *McDonald Presentation Volume*, 147–156. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kraabel, A. T. 1984. "New Evidence of the Samaritan Diaspora has been Found on Delos." *Biblical Archaeologist* 47 (1): 44–47.
- Lifshitz, B., and J. Schiby. 1968. "Une Synagogue Samaritaine à Thessalonique." *Revue Biblique* 75 (3): 368–378.
- Robert, Jean et Louis. 1969. "Bulletin épigraphique no. 369, une synagogue Samaritaine à Thessalonique." *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 82: 477–478.

# History of the Karaite Diaspora

*Fred Astren*

---

Karaism is a Jewish sect whose teachings recognize only the Hebrew Bible as a divinely revealed authoritative source for law. Consequently, Karaites deny the authority of rabbinic tradition and leadership, rejecting the concept of the Oral Law and its literature, the Mishnah and Talmud. Karaism offered a competitive alternative to rabbinic (Rabbinite) Judaism from the late 9th through 11th centuries, especially in the Islamic Middle East. During this so-called “classical” period, Karaites challenged Rabbinite hegemony, in part, by reinterpreting the meaning of the Exile and proposing new responses to the Diaspora. In the Middle Ages, Karaism flourished in Islamic lands, but during the 11th century, the center began to gravitate to the Byzantine Empire and later to the Crimea. Later, Karaite communities were established in Eastern Europe in Poland-Lithuania. Today, Karaites are found mainly in Israel.

Anan ben David, an unsuccessful eighth-century candidate for the office of exilarch, is often acknowledged in Karaite tradition as its founder. In fact, Anan’s teachings and the movement based on them demonstrate considerable doctrinal and Halachic differences from later Karaism. Salo Baron characterized Anan’s teachings as a metropolitan elitism that attracted a segment of the educated classes to a rigorist movement that challenged many rabbinic legal premises and interpretations (Baron 1957, 210–222). Anan’s emphasis on Jewish particularism led him to demand a complete segregation of Jews from Gentiles and the separation of the literate and pious from the illiterate and impious. This Diaspora-oriented ideology stands in contrast to activist messianic movements of the era.

Karaite origins are more properly dated to the late ninth and early tenth centuries, when a variety of different trends in early medieval Judaism contributed to an identifiable movement characterized by five key features: scripturalism, anti-rabbanism, quasi-ascetic rigor, millennialism, and a view to bring an end to the Diaspora.

The rise of scripturalism among Jews seems to parallel similar concerns developing at that time among Muslims. By focusing on scripture to the exclusion of tradition, Karaites were able to generate a strong anti-rabbinic ideology, claiming that the rabbis had concocted the Mishnah and Talmud for their own benefit. In this context, early Karaite polemics blame the rabbis for the Exile. They maintained that grievous rabbinic error had led Israel to forsake the divine covenant and thus to the misfortune of living scattered across the lands under the dominion of non-Jews.

Building on this critique of rabbinic Judaism, Karaite scripturalism also provided the basis for adhering to a rigorist interpretation of the Law. Early Karaites were known for fasting and night prayers, prohibiting sexual activity on the Sabbath, and shunning the consumption of meat and wine as long as the Temple remained in ruin. For example, the tenth-century Japheth ben ‘Eli prescribes “such super-

erogatory acts as fasting, donning coarse clothing, and refraining from permissible delights and celebrations, while praying continually at night” (Frank 2004, 201). Although many Karaites would come to be important merchants in medieval Egypt and elsewhere, early Karaism rejected commerce and the accumulation of wealth, understanding both to be features of life in the Diaspora under the leadership of the rabbis and antithetical to the Karaite legal rigorism. Some of these practices echo the ideology of the early medieval pietistic movement known as the Mourners of Zion, whose ascetic and sorrowful understanding of Jewish life and law stand in contrast to rabbinic notions of joy and a more lenient interpretation of the Law.

Legal rigorism and quasi-ascetic practices thus provided for a way of life in the Diaspora, but they could also be understood to be mechanisms for establishing conditions in preparation of the End of Days. Karaite millennialist anticipation differed from messianic movements of the seventh and eighth centuries in that the awaited messiah of the Karaites was not an identified living individual. The utopianism of messianism was preserved (including expectation of the ingathering of exiles and the end of the Diaspora) while the dangerous militant activism of the earlier movements was avoided by an absence of a messianic leader. Both rabbis and Karaites understood the danger of messianic movements that could lead to death and destruction at the hands of Gentiles. For the rabbis, the messiah would come of his own accord and in God’s time. In the meantime, they formulated a way of life, but in so doing, made accommodation to Exile and life in the Diaspora. The rabbis reinforced their diasporic perspective by prohibiting such matters as working to “hasten the End” and ascetic responses to the destruction of the Temple and the Exile. Both rabbis and Karaites understood that messianism and asceticism were forms of resistance to Exile that if allowed to persist could upset the rabbinic Halachic and hegemonic system.

In contrast to the rabbis, formative Karaism was impelled by a focus on the Land of Israel (called “Palestino-centrism” in Ankori 1959, 22–23) that went beyond conceptual concern for the Temple and the future ingathering of the exiles to a concrete, well-articulated call for the return of Jews to the Holy Land. A figure associated with the late ninth-century origins of Karaism in the Land of Israel is Daniel ben Moses al-Qumisi, who insisted that “it is incumbent upon you who fear the Lord to come to Jerusalem and to dwell in it, in order to hold vigils before the Lord until the day when Jerusalem shall be restored” (Nemoy 1952, 37).

From a millennialist perspective, immigration to the Land of Israel and the consequent eradication of the Exile would be a necessary condition for the coming of the messiah. From a quasi-ascetic perspective, Karaite interpretation and practice would provide the rules for living while millennialist objectives remained unrealized. From an anti-rabbinic perspective, focus on return to the Land of Israel would subvert rabbinic norms of accommodation to diasporic normality.

In this light, the establishment of an active Karaite community in Jerusalem was an important symbolic gesture. In practice, the immigrant Karaite community grew to become the intellectual center for Karaites across the Middle East and Mediterranean. The community was marked by its particular practices, its own synagogues, a calendar distinct from the Rabbinites, and perhaps one or more formal

academies whose scholars were known across the Karaite and wider Jewish world. Karaite scholars such as Salmon ben Jeroham, Sahl ben Masliah, and Yusuf al-Basir, focused on Halacha, Bible commentary, and philosophy. The literary output from this community, most often written in Judeo-Arabic (but also Hebrew), and often marked by a lack of consensus on important matters, constitutes the “classical” expression of formative Karaism. The prevalent use of Judeo-Arabic stands as a marker identifying the abiding condition of Exile, which was understood not to have been eradicated through mere immigration and occupation of the center of Jewish space. Correspondingly, the use of the host culture’s language (though not alphabet) marked an enhanced recognition of Hebrew, reserved as the language of sanctification and for use in messianic times.

With the 11th-century decline of Palestine after the Saljuq Turkish and Crusader invasions, the Jerusalem center ceased to exist. In the Middle East, Karaism persisted in Egypt, some of whose prominent families rose to influential government positions under the Fatimids. At the end of the 11th century, Maimonides ruled on Karaite practice in a famous takkanah on ritual purification and in his letters and responsa. As late as the mid-16th century, the Rabbinite Samuel b. Moses ha-Levi ibn Hakim ruled that Karaite-Rabbinite marriages, a long-standing practice in Egypt, were legitimate. Other smaller, less influential Karaite communities were found in Damascus and Iraq. In Europe, there is brief mention by Ibn Daud that Karaism was extirpated in Spain.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, a new center of Karaite communal life and intellectual activity coalesced in the Byzantine Empire. In the linguistic and cultural translation from an Arab-Islamic to Greek-Christian culture and society, Karaites were forced to reassess their Jerusalem and Palestinian inheritance. Obviously, focus on the Land of Israel could no longer be conceived of as a practicable matter. More importantly, while deemphasizing the central tenet of a return to Zion, Karaites correspondingly redefined the other components of their ideological system. Millennialism—the ideological coefficient of a return to Zion—was reframed in a less activist register, not unlike that of the rabbis. Quasi-ascetic rigor was redefined and narrowed, as evidenced in the 15th-century struggle over the use of Sabbath candles. Appositely, vehement anti-rabbanism began to be mitigated on account of the maneuvering for position and competition among Jewish communities and sects in Byzantium, leading Karaites to portray themselves as less threatening to the rabbis than other sects (such as the Mishawites). Clearly, Karaism no longer posed an existential challenge to rabbinic Judaism. These changes eventually opened the door for Karaite accommodation to rabbinic literature, Halacha, and thought. The anti-diasporic stance of “classical” Karaism had given way to an acquiescence to Exile. Important Byzantine Karaite scholars include Judah Hadassi, Aaron ben Joseph, and Aaron ben Elijah.

Fifteenth-century Ottoman Turkish dominance in the Balkans and Anatolia was marked by the 1453 conquest of Constantinople, after which a reinvigorated, although reduced Karaite community emerged in the new imperial capital. There, Karaites studied alongside Rabbinite Jews in rabbinic academies, were exposed to Sephardic Jewish influences and maintained contact with Karaites in other lands.

The Karaite Diaspora echoed the florescence of the Ottoman imperial host culture in an intellectual revival marked by the consolidation of Karaite Halacha and further interest in philosophy under the leadership of Elijah ben Moses Bashyachi and Caleb ben Elijah Afendopolo.

To the north, Karaites are first noted in the Crimea in the 13th century and in Poland-Lithuania in the late 14th century. In both regions, Karaites adopted forms of Turkic languages dominant of the Mongol political sphere. In Eastern Europe, the Karaim language acted as an ethnic marker to further distinguish Karaites from Rabbinites and from the majority Slavic-speaking peoples. Nonetheless, prominent Karaite scholars from the late 17th and early 18th centuries, such as Mordecai ben Nissan of Kokizow, Solomon ben Aaron Troki, and Simha Isaac Lutzki, continued to study and write in Hebrew.

It is important to note that in the modern era Karaism followed divergent paths in the Muslim Middle East and Christian Europe. In Europe, Karaite particularity led to the development of an identity that was purposefully distinct from that of Rabbinites. After the final partition of Poland in 1795, when the vast majority of Eastern European Jews became subjects of Russia, the small community of Karaites was able to obtain exemptions from the Czarist government's anti-Jewish policies. In World War II the anomalous character of Karaite identity led to Nazi policies that treated Karaites differently from other Jews. Under Soviet Russian rule, Karaite religion moved away from Jewish ideological formulations by emphasizing the "Old Testament" basis of the religion and by incorporating some Christian liturgical elements into the prayers. After the fall of the Soviet Union only a few hundred Karaites—lacking strong leadership and a coherent community—remained in Eastern Europe.

From the Middle Ages onward, Karaites in the Muslim Middle East continued to be acknowledged both by Rabbinate Jews and Muslims as part of the recognized Jewish minority. The largest community continued to reside in Egypt, while smaller ones were found in Istanbul, Damascus, and Iraq. In the 20th century, Egyptian Karaites tended to view themselves as indigenous Egyptians, some of whom embraced Egyptian nationalism or communism, while most of whom were resistant to Zionism, at least until after the 1956 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars when Egyptian domestic policies became increasingly anti-Jewish. Karaites in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world experienced hostility and like other Jews dissolved their communities and emigrated to France, Switzerland, the United States, and Canada, but mostly to Israel.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there are approximately 25,000 Karaites in Israel with only smaller communities elsewhere in the world, most notably in California's San Francisco Bay area, where there are approximately 300 families. In both environments, the challenges of minority life and acculturation are generating new notions of Karaite family, religion, community, and identity.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Ankori, Zvi. 1959. *The Karaites in Byzantium, The Formative Years, 970–1100*. New York and Jerusalem: Columbia University Press and the Weizmann Science Press of Israel.

- Astren, Fred. 2004. *Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding*. Columbia: University of South Carolina.
- Baron, Salo W. 1957. "Karaite Schism." In *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. 5, 209–285. New York and Philadelphia: Columbia University Press and The Jewish Publication Society.
- Frank, Daniel. 2004. *Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Gil, Moshe. 1992. *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, Philip E. 1993. *Karaite Separatism in Nineteenth-Century Russia, Joseph Solomon Lutski's "Epistle of Israel's Deliverance."* Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press.
- Nemoy, Leon. 1952. *Karaite Anthology*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Polliak, Meira, ed. 2003. *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

# Persecution of Diaspora Jews

## History of Jewish Persecution and Expulsion

*Frederick Schweitzer*

---

In the common or Christian era, persecution and expulsion—the threat or actuality—have been constants in Jewish history. The primary motive or rationale has consistently been anti-Semitism, which has taken many forms. Anti-Semitism may be defined basically as fear and hatred of the Jews. It derives from the accusation of Jews as “Christ-killers,” deicides, perpetrators of the inexpiable arch-crime that makes them a criminal people for all time. In committing that arch-crime and all subsequent criminality they presumably engaged in, Jews were seen as the agents of Satan, armed with his superhuman powers and devoted to his service; this demonization was pronounced by Jesus himself, castigating Jews, saying that God is not your father, “your father is the devil and you choose to carry out his desires”; he is a “murderer” and “liar” (John 8:44). The Antichrist is the Jewish leader who will wade through oceans of blood and tears to rule the world and inflict infinite suffering and destruction for three and a half years until Jesus’ second coming and the end of history. Parallel is the notion of Jews as eternal conspirators, bent on taking over the world; destroying Christianity; and fomenting revolutions, wars, epidemics, depressions, and every kinds of calamities. The Shylock image depicts Jews as greedy exploiters guilty of terrible economic depredations; the Jews invented both capitalism and communism, which they, as international bankers and international revolutionaries, deploy to dominate peoples by manipulating governments, controlling the media, and subverting culture. Jewish brainpower augments such threats by using ideas as weapons: “Intelligence—that is the mortal sin of the Jews,” exclaimed one fearful anti-Semite (Perry and Schweitzer 2002, 166). A later addition to this farrago, but with medieval precedents, is that of the “alien” and “foreign” Jews as race defilers and polluters of the nation. Another stereotype is of the Jews as the bearers of disease and plague; poisoners of air, food, wine, and water; and the Jewish physician who poisons his patients as required by the Talmud.

By 1200, two powerful motives to wreak violence on Jews had emerged: the accusation of ritual murder (about 244 are recorded but this is certainly an understatement; 72 such accusations have been documented in the 20th century) and host desecration (a minimum of 100 medieval examples). As putatively ordained by Jewish law, ritual murder is a crime committed to celebrate Passover and requires kidnapping a Christian, usually a boy in the image of the Christ child, and draining away his blood in a replay of the crucifixion for ritual, medicinal, or magical purposes. Some medieval popes resolutely condemned ritual murder as utterly false, but to very little avail, as at Trent in 1475, the site of the shrine (until 1965) of Blessed Simon of Trent, the alleged victim of ritual murder. The cycle at Trent repeated the

archetypal pattern that began in 1144 with another alleged victim of ritual murder, St. William the Martyr of Norwich in England: after torture, trials, confessions, and executions of suspects, the remnant was expelled, their property was confiscated, a proclamation barred Jews “forever” from Trent, and a lucrative pilgrims’ shrine was erected. The archetypal pattern of host desecration was similar: the Jews were accused of stealing the consecrated hosts of the body of Christ, whereupon accusers claimed they “tortured Jesus again” by stabbing, beating, boiling, or burning the hosts, which “bled” or cried out, making it impossible to destroy or hide them. The Jews would be caught, tried, confess under duress, and be burnt alive. Their property would be confiscated, and the synagogue would be converted into a church or chapel. Those who escaped burning were massacred, baptized, or expelled. These presumed crimes cost the lives of countless numbers of Jews. Although most Protestant denominations condemned Eucharistic transubstantiation as superstition, and host desecration lapsed in those areas, it persisted long afterward in Catholic lands. Protestantism did not significantly curb accusations of ritual murder, which continued unabated in Central and Eastern Europe, and began to appear in Latin America and later in the Middle East.

Whatever the circumstances or pretext for persecution on a given occasion, it is this body of myths and stereotypes of the Jew as standing menace that causes anti-Semitism to endure and makes it dangerous and often lethal. This web of myths and supporting ideology originated in the New Testament as interpreted by the Church Fathers and elaborated and acted upon in the Christian Middle Ages and, usually in various secular guises, in later periods and the present. Thus, it did not lie at the root of expulsions and persecutions of Jews in the pre-Christian era. The fate of Jews at the hands of the Assyrians (the inventors of mass deportation and resettlement, and thus initiators of the Diaspora), Babylonians, Hellenistic Greeks, and Romans was the usual one of peoples defeated in war, whose territory was conquered and occupied, or whose revolts against foreign occupation and rule failed. Jewish revolts in Judaea against Roman rule in 66–73 and 132–135 resulted in their expulsion from Jerusalem, from which they were barred for centuries; many captives were enslaved and settled permanently in Rome, and other Jewish communities were unmolested. Even the anti-Semitic Voltaire, rebutting the idea that the Diaspora was divine retribution for deicide, explained, “Indeed, if while Jerusalem and its Temple existed, the Jews were sometimes driven from their country by the vicissitudes of empires, they have still more frequently been expelled through a blind zeal from every country in which they have dwelt since the progress of Christianity and Islam” (Perry and Schweitzer 2007, doc. 10).

The prototypical expulsion of Jews by Christian authorities was by Bishop Cyril of Alexandria in 414, the earliest recorded. He assaulted the city’s Jewish quarter, converting synagogues into churches, confiscating property, and expelling survivors who did not accept baptism. His actions violated the Christian belief—one of the few restraints on persecution—that Jews must survive until the end-time and the return of Christ in order to testify to the truth of Christianity. By the 10th century, church policy had been elaborated sufficiently that popes stipulated that Jews were to be preached to “incessantly,” and if they refused baptism, they should be

expelled so that the righteous would be uncontaminated by infidels. By then there had been many expulsions, threatened or actual, accompanied by confiscations, forcible conversions (violating church law), and—especially when lay leaders or mobs took part—massacres. Thus, in Spain, before the Muslim conquest of 711, the Jews were twice commanded to be baptized or banished, and the numerous church councils meeting at Toledo issued a series of anti-Jewish edicts that verged on prescribing genocide. In the years 558 to 629, several bishops and kings of Gaul ordered Jews to be baptized or banished. In 629, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius reconquered Judaea from Persia, enslaved and deported many of its Jews, and in subsequent years imposed the choice of baptism or expulsion on all the Jews of the Byzantine Empire; Heraclius probably commanded the kings of the Franks, Burgundians, Lombards, and Visigoths in the west (theoretically his subordinates) to throw down the same gauntlet of baptism or banishment—which, urged by their clergy, they did. Scattered in the chronicles are references to expulsions and forced conversions by the clergy of Sens, France, in 876; Vienna in the 930s; Mainz, Germany, in the 930s and 1012; Orléans, France, in 1007–1010 (where riots and forced baptisms set off similar ravages in Rouen, Limoges, and elsewhere in France); Bologna, Italy, in 1171; and Bury St. Edmunds, England, in 1190.

When Christian scholars and ecclesiastics discovered the Talmud in the 12th century, they concluded that Jews followed it rather than the Bible, that it was heretical and “of earth,” and therefore the criminal Jews forfeited any right to tolerance; this idea exposed Jews increasingly to inquisitorial proceedings, conversionist sermons, and coerced baptism. In the same period, the belief arose, contradicting Christian tradition, that the Jews knew Jesus was divine, but with malice aforethought crucified him anyway, and so revealed their irredeemably evil and satanic nature. In the many anti-Jewish treatises of the 12th and 13th centuries, Jews are equated with sexual depravity, with money as “filthy lucre,” and generally with filth and excrement. Such attitudes and rationales went far to dehumanize Jews—Christian polemic constantly refers to them as dogs, goats, pigs, vermin, and the like—psychologically empowering their tormentors to murder and maim with impunity. Papal policy as set forth in Calixtus II’s *Constitutio pro Judeis*, issued in 1120 and reissued at least 15 times by 1450, was rarely sufficient to counter angry preaching and incitement. Calixtus condemned forced baptism, assaults on Jews and their property, desecration of synagogues and cemeteries, and acknowledged their right of local self-government and to practice Judaism. Church law forbade forcible baptism and in earlier centuries Jews were permitted to return to their ancestral faith, but in 1201 Pope Innocent III nullified the prohibition, pronouncing that despite torture or intimidation, one who has received “the grace of Baptism . . . might properly be forced to hold to the faith which they had accepted perforce” (Perry and Schweitzer 1994, 137–138).

The Crusades, which represent Christendom’s adaptation of the Muslim idea of holy war and jihad, faced the Jews with the choice of baptism or death. For more than two centuries, crusading ardor caused enormous Jewish casualties, beginning in 1096 in France, the Rhine valley, and the communities (such as Prague) encountered on the trek east, for as one preacher explained, “After traversing great

distances, we desire to attack the enemies of God in the East, although the Jews, of all races the worst foes of God, are before our eyes. That's doing our work backwards" (Perry and Schweitzer 1994, 133–134). In Bavaria in 1298, following rumors of host profanation, great bands of people led by one Rintfleisch rampaged over the countryside for most of the summer massacring thousands of Jews. A generation later, from 1337 to 1339, another bloodthirsty mob led by one Armleder ran amok over the same areas and into neighboring lands, seeking revenge on the Jews for host desecration. Massive casualties stemmed from a series of massacres in France by the Pastouraux (shepherds), spontaneous crusading movements of starving flagellants in the 1320s, who accused Jews and lepers of poisoning the wells. More widespread and lethal massacres followed the Black Plague of 1348: the ensuing *Judenbrand* (Jew-burning) caused huge casualties and blotted out some 300 Jewish communities. Persecution was so prevalent that occasionally Jews expressed thankfulness for expulsion as a lesser evil. After 1400, resort was made more often to expulsion so that by 1541 all of Western and most of Central Europe was devoid of Jews. A great many towns and principalities in politically fragmented Germany executed expulsions in those decades: Augsburg, Brandenburg, Cologne, Constance, Geneva, Nuremberg, Salzburg, to name a very few. The cycle of massacre, arrest/expulsion, readmission (out of financial calculation), and expulsion several times over, was cynically used, as at Mainz in 1420, 1438, 1462, and 1471. For money, monarchs granted municipalities the prerogative—examples appear in England, Germany, Italy, and Poland—*de non tolerandis Judaeis*, enabling town councils to exclude or expel Jews arbitrarily and without royal permission. Learning from the monarchs, townspeople were fertile in inventing devices to destroy and profit.

The Jewish community of Vienna was extinguished in the 1420s by a process of host desecration allegations; arrests, trials, and burnings at the stake; forced conversions, especially of children; confiscations; and expulsion “forever” from all Austria. In the 17th century, the Habsburg emperor invited Jews back to Vienna, but as the learned anti-Semitic professor Johannes Eisenmenger explained, they had to be re-expelled because they “cruelly murdered” a Christian woman, torturing and lacerating her with many stabbings, and, because this crime was “accompanied by numerous robberies and other ruthless depravities, his imperial majesty, moved by praiseworthy Christian zeal, decreed the expulsion of the evil-doing Jews. In the year 1670 he had proclaimed with trumpet blasts in the public squares of Vienna that all Jews be eternally banned and that none be any more seen, upon pain of life and limb.” The Jews fled to Turkey and Venice (Perry and Schweitzer 2007, doc. 9).

In 1568, Pope St. Pius V expelled the Jews from the Papal States except for Rome and Ancona, thus eradicating numerous small communities, expropriating synagogues and cemeteries for Catholic use, and sweeping those who did not escape abroad into the notorious Roman ghetto (founded in 1555), where they were subjected to tyrannous theocratic rule, policies calculated to impoverish, missionary pressures and compulsory weekly sermons, censorship of their books, and much else intended to crush and humiliate them until the insalubrious, overcrowded, curfew-regimented ghetto's dissolution in 1870. Since Passion plays—Jew-hatred dramatized—often unleashed sack and mayhem, the popes banned performances

in Rome, but everywhere else Jews remained subject to that annual danger and to paroxysms sometimes triggered by Antichrist plays. In 1586, the prohibition on Jewish settlement in the Papal States was rescinded, and they became a place of refuge in some measure.

Throughout the two centuries of their presence in England after 1066, the Jews' financial contributions accounted for some 10 percent of royal revenues; thus, the Crown protected them the better to exploit and ultimately kill this golden goose. Riots, arson, and massacre at the time of the Third Crusade and Richard the Lion-Heart's coronation in 1190 may have been the single worst atrocity against Jews in the Middle Ages; John's reign was more notable for extortionate taxation, a prerogative the Magna Carta compelled him to share with the barons. Under the long reign of the pious Henry III, Jews were subject to a range of extortionate taxes, forced loans, fines, confiscations, pogroms, arbitrary arrests to be sold as chattel, and accusations of ritual murder (Chaucer refers to the alleged victim, Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, in his *Canterbury Tales*) that utterly impoverished them. Henry expressed royal attitudes accurately in stating, "No Jew shall remain in Our realm unless he can serve the king" (Baron 1952–1983, 4:109). Under Edward I, the Jews were unable to "serve the king" and enrich his treasury; he accused them of participating in "a malicious conspiracy, continu[ing] a new form of usury more malicious than the old" (Baron 1952–1983, 4:113). In his 1275 "Statute concerning Jewry," Edward forbade "usury" by anyone and permitted Jews to enter commerce, handicrafts, and agriculture; but—as with later similar efforts—these fields fiercely



A massacre of Jews in York, England, is dramatized in this 19th-century engraving.

During the Third Crusade, there were several anti-Semitic riots in England in which Jews were killed by angry mobs. Religious zealotry and anti-Semitism were widespread in Europe during the Middle Ages. (John Clark Ridpath, *Ridpath's History of the World*, 1901)

resisted new competitors. Edward's halfhearted scheme failed, and in 1290 he expelled the Jews, perhaps 16,000 persons; many Jewish children were prevented from leaving with their families, suggesting that Edward partly implemented the theologian Duns Scotus's prescription to kidnap and baptize children to prevent their parents from killing them.

Philip II Augustus of France initiated drastic changes in royal Jewry policy when he ordered "his Jews" (his chattel) arrested in their synagogues on a Sabbath day, and extracted an enormous fine for the crime, seemingly, of being Jews; he canceled all debts payable to Jews but made one-fifth payable to his treasury. A year later, in 1182, he expelled all the Jews, confiscating their real property and allowing them three months to dispose of other possessions. The king soon ran out of money, however, and recalled the Jews in 1194, establishing a division of the exchequer to manage Jewish revenues. St. Louis IX was less concerned to profit from his Jews than to make them disappear by conversion, to forbid their use of the Talmud—burning so many copies in the 1240s that few survived, and to compel them to renounce "usury" or "leave my land." Philip IV the Fair ruled almost all of France; consequently, his brutal policies affected some 100,000 Jews. Philip's sole concern was to replenish his treasury: in 1306, his agents simultaneously arrested all the Jews, condemned them to exile for some unspecified crime and to depart within a month, forfeit all their property except for a few pennies and the clothes they were wearing, and transfer to the exchequer all loan records so that he could collect every penny of interest and principle. That was essentially the end of France's 1,000-year-old Jewish community. Out of financial desperation, Jews were recalled in 1315 only to be expelled in 1322, recalled again in 1359, and banished "in perpetuity" in 1394 with the usual staggering cruelty and losses.

In the 13th century, Spain was remarkably hospitable to Jewish life, but in the 14th century the violence that was rife elsewhere spilled over into Spain. Accusations of ritual murder and host desecration multiplied. In the 1340s, massacres stimulated by the Black Plague erupted, and dynastic wars also triggered pogroms in the 1360s. In 1391, following a campaign of the most rabid preaching of "holy war" by Archdeacon Ferrand Martínez, brutal riots exploded that resulted in the bloody sacking of the Jewish quarter of Seville, despite the efforts of civil authorities and some clergy to check it. Massacre and rapine swept across Spain, causing as many as 50,000 deaths and forcing Jews to choose baptism or death or, when possible, flight that took many to North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps 200,000, the majority of Spanish Jewry, acceded to baptism. Violence increased their number in subsequent decades, and such "new Christians" or Marranos—the term means "pigs" in Castilian—became subject to the Inquisition. Many Marranos, secretly maintaining contact with professing Jews, were Christian in name only. As Christians, however, Marranos could enter the professions and hold office in church and state, until laws requiring *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood)—closely paralleling the 1935 Nazi racial laws—disqualified and removed them. The secret allegiance of Marranos to Judaism aroused such anger that the Spanish Inquisition was founded in 1478 to deal with them, but it emerged that the Inquisition must fail—despite autos-da-fé and forced baptisms, growing impoverishment

and degradation—in disciplining the Marranos so long as freely practicing Jews remained. In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella decreed the conversion or expulsion of all Jews within three months from Spain and their other lands, Sardinia and Sicily, and in 1510 from southern Italy, although with the help of the Inquisition it took until 1541 to finish. A contemporary chronicler recorded how the Jews lost everything: “For Christians took their many estates, very many rich houses and landed properties for a few coins. . . . and a vineyard for a small piece of cloth or linen, because they could not take out either gold or silver” (Perry and Schweitzer 2007, doc. 5). Perhaps 150,000 to 200,000 Jews departed, finding refuge in Poland and the Ottoman Empire after experiencing the tribulations of armed attack and robbery on their journey. The Marranos, by contrast, seeking to escape the Inquisition’s torture chambers, could depart only clandestinely.

Portugal’s Jewish population greatly increased with the Spanish expellees of 1492, possibly 120,000. On some technicality, however, John II enslaved many of them. His successor Emmanuel freed them, issued a decree of expulsion for 1497, but instead ordered the baptism of all children aged 4 to 14. In practice, his agents dragged everyone up to 20 and older to the baptismal font, on the assumption that the parents would follow their children, but many of them smothered their children and killed themselves. Emmanuel blocked their departure and forced a “General Conversion,” as the event is called in Portuguese annals, and only a few managed to leave. On Easter 1506 in Lisbon, these New Christians were attacked by Old Christians; they were instigated by rabid monks and driven by envy, fear, and hatred to engage in ferocious massacres in “spontaneous” riots and pillaging that lasted several days and caused 2,000 deaths and the destruction of property. Portugal followed Spanish precedent in founding its own Inquisition in 1540 to track the New Christians or Marranos. The Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, in pursuit of Marranos as Judaizers in Iberia and elsewhere, burning books and burning people as late as the 18th century, wrote one of Jewish history’s bleakest chapters, a fusion of religious fanaticism and royal ruthlessness.

The Reformation brought no relief for Europe’s Jews, for in many ways it simply transmitted medieval Catholic anti-Semitism in a more virulent form. This was particularly true of Martin Luther, whose toxic diatribe *On the Jews and their Lies* (1543) was exploited by the Nazis. He was instrumental in the expulsion of the Jews from Saxony in 1536, and he urged German rulers to set fire to their synagogues and homes, deprive them of prayer books and the Talmud, bar them from money-lending and commandeer all their money, deny them safe-conduct in traveling, execute or maim their rabbis, and, to emulate the wisdom of France and Spain, expel them forever or, he hoped, lynch them. Outrages long persisted in Europe, if less frequently, such as the expulsions—in the course of artisan revolts—of the Jews of Frankfurt in 1614 and Erfurt in 1615. In 1745, the pious Empress Maria Theresa expelled the Jews from Prague as punishment for “treason” committed by the Jews of Alsace.

The Deluge, a period in Polish history lasting from 1648 to 1667, was a cycle of catastrophes and slaughter that befell Jews and Poles in the revolt of the Cossacks and peasantry of Ukraine led by Bogdan Chmielnicki; they decimated hundreds of



Riot instigated by Vincent Fettmilch in the Jewish quarter of Frankfurt, Germany, on August 22, 1614. Fettmilch, a Calvinist, petitioned unsuccessfully for the expulsion of the Jews from his native Frankfurt. In response, he gathered a large mob and invaded the Jewish quarter on August 22, 1614. He was hanged in 1616. (Isadore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

Jewish communities in a series of appalling massacres that featured every imaginable atrocity. Jewish losses, counting casualties of war, massacre, plague, famine, forced conversions, and captives sold into slavery, were immense. The Haidamak massacres and rapine, lasting from the 1720s to about 1770, a reprise of Cossack and peasant marauding and barbarities, again caused widespread destruction and desolation and resulted in enormous casualties.

Jews were barred from Russia from its beginnings, and there were virtually none under the czars until the Partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, 1795) created a huge area that was organized as the Pale of Settlement, to which Jews were confined until 1917, as in a great ghetto. Jews were excluded from numerous towns and hamlets in the Pale; a blizzard of edicts handicapped them in earning a living and often expelled them from communities by canceling residence and travel rights. Some privileged Jews settled outside the Pale, notably Moscow, from which they were expelled in 1891: the police came at night, smashed down gates and doors, rounded up the hapless Jews, and herded them away, many in chains. After the assassination of the czar, Alexander II, in 1881 (automatically but wrongly blamed on the Jews), waves of pogroms broke out, many of them ignited by accusations of ritual murder—that of Kishinev in 1903 was especially cruel and destructive—and

continued intermittently until 1914, by when over a million Jews had fled Russia. The government openly pursued anti-Semitic policies and propaganda, blaming the Jews for the loss of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904–1905 and the ensuing revolution, expelling the Jews of Kiev in 1910, and indicting Mendel Beilis for ritual murder in a notorious case of 1911. During World War I, the high command evacuated several hundred thousand Jews from the war zones of the Baltic region, Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine, carrying out expulsions in the most brutal, arbitrary way conceivable, causing enormous loss of life and suffering; these were more like pogroms than evacuations. Ferocious massacres and deportations, together with famine and epidemics, prevailed in the course of the 1917 Russian Revolution and prolonged civil war between the Reds and Whites, and in the war and population displacements that accompanied the rebirth of Poland (1918–1923).

That not all Jews were massacred, forcibly baptized, or expelled over these many centuries stems from the influence of the Catholic theology positing that the Jews were to be preserved—albeit humbled and degraded to prove the truth of Christianity—until the end-time and the great ingathering at Jesus' return. That countervailing force faded in modern times under the impact of secularization, "racial science," fanatical nationalism, and totalitarian ideologies, and thus the Holocaust, the unprecedented attempt to annihilate an entire people, as well as the genocidal policies of Stalinist Russia, became possible.

### Selected Bibliography

- Baron, Salo Wittmayer. 1952–1983. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*. 18 vols. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Cohn, Norman. 1981. *Warrant for Genocide*. 3rd ed. Chico, CA: Scholars Press.
- Langmuir, Gavin I. 1990. *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Perry, Marvin, and Frederick M. Schweitzer, eds. 1994. *Jewish-Christian Encounters over the Centuries*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Perry, Marvin, and Frederick M. Schweitzer. 2002. *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from the Middle Ages to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Perry, Marvin, and Frederick M. Schweitzer. 2007. *Antisemitic Myths: Historic and Contemporary Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Wistrich, Robert S. 1991. *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*. New York: Pantheon.

## Varieties of Anti-Semitism

*Ritchie Robertson*

---

Anti-Semitism is a durable, but not a unitary phenomenon. The persistence of hostility to Jews as such is as remarkable as the variety of justifications given for it. One should therefore distinguish among varieties of anti-Semitism. These are not mutually exclusive: rather, they are emphases that predominate at different periods in anti-Semitic discourse. They find expression in language, imagery, and ideology,

but not always in practice. Although anti-Semitic discourse shows much continuity, it can exist without issuing in violence. Thus, in 18th-century England, anti-Semitic caricature was widespread, yet violence against Jews was rare. This does not exonerate anti-Semitism, but it does show that anti-Semitic discourse can exist in some independence from the violence that at other times it sanctions.

Anti-Semitic discourse originates in the Roman Empire. The Jews perplexed the Romans by their strict monotheism and their peculiar customs, such as observing the Sabbath and refraining from eating pork. Cicero, Tacitus, and others charged them with godlessness, unsociability, and misanthropy. It was widely rumored that they had been expelled from Egypt for having leprosy, and that they worshipped an ass's head in their Temple. Some of these charges, especially the image of Jews as sick, resurface in modern anti-Semitism.

It can be argued, however, that classical hostility to Jews was in principle an ordinary example of hostility to minorities, and that anti-Semitism acquired a special character from the emergence of Christianity. What was initially a movement of apocalyptic renewal within Judaism developed, especially under the guidance of Paul, into a distinct religion that defined itself by contrast with Judaism. Its opponents are bluntly described in the New Testament as "the Jews" (e.g., John 8:14–56 and elsewhere). The Gospel accounts transfer the blame for Jesus' death from the Roman authorities to the Jews by exaggerating the influence of the high priest and crediting the Jewish public with demanding that Jesus should be executed rather than the bandit Barabbas (e.g., John 18:40). Paul worked out a theology in which the new law of Jesus superseded the old law of Moses. From a Christian perspective, therefore, Judaism no longer had any reason to exist, and its survival could be attributed to the obstinate blindness of its adherents.

The place of the Jews in the Christian understanding of history was influentially defined by Saint Augustine (354–430). The dispersion of the Jews after the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE was a collective punishment for their killing of Jesus and their blindness to his divinity (*City of God* XVIII, 46). Thus, by their very existence in exile, the Jews confirm the Scriptures' prophecy of the misery of unbelievers (Augustine cites especially Psalm 69).

Christian anti-Semitism had diverse consequences. On one hand, the Jews were often bitterly denounced. The anti-Jewish sermons of Saint John Chrysostom (347–407) have become notorious. On the other hand, the Jews' function as a living witness to Scriptural truth meant that they must be preserved, not exterminated. Hence many popes and princes tried to protect Jews from popular violence.

In the later Middle Ages, however, Jews were being demonized. From the 1150s onward, the blood libel, which alleged that Jews stole Christian children to drink their blood at Passover, became frequent. Jews were popularly associated with the Devil, heretics, and imaginary witches. This development has been ascribed to the expansion of the medieval state, which sought to classify society and define outsiders as objects of persecution. During the Reformation, these demonic images were combined with classical and theological stereotypes to license the persecution of Jews, who easily provided scapegoats for the schisms within Christianity. Martin Luther (1483–1546) notoriously denounced the Jews (especially in *Von Jüden und*

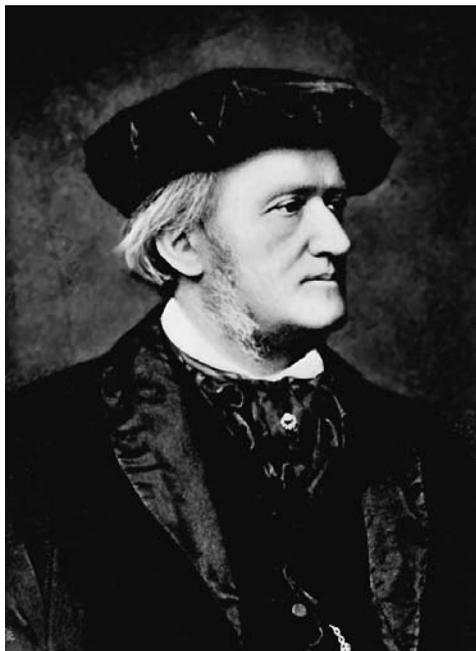
*ihren Lügen* [Of Jews and Their Lies], 1543) as haters of Christ, as proponents of a theology of works rather than faith, as sick and infecting others, and as unwilling to work.

Luther's charge of idleness announces the rise of economic anti-Semitism. In the Middle Ages, financial dealings, frowned upon by the Church, were entrusted to Jews (though not exclusively: banks developed, especially in Italy), who thus became indispensable but increasingly unpopular. Being forbidden to practice crafts or agriculture, Jews were blamed for concentrating on unproductive work. Many Gentiles encountered Jews as peddlers, supplying goods to isolated communities, or as middlemen buying and selling farm produce. With the growth of an international capitalist economy, and eventually with multinational banks like that of the Rothschilds, Jews were associated with money and, hence, with calculation and excessive rationality.

Within theological anti-Semitism, the Jews' supposed rationality was explained also from their adherence to an essentially intellectual law that was subjected to analysis in the Talmud. Secularization in the Enlightenment period juxtaposed this image of the overly rational Jew with a contradictory image, based on Jewish religious practice, of the Jew as addicted to irrational superstition and therefore unfit to enter enlightened society. Thus, Voltaire (1694–1778) describes the Jews as “always superstitious, always greedy for others' property, always barbarous, servile in misfortune, and insolent in prosperity” (Voltaire 1963, 151). More sympathetic enlighteners thought Jews could enter civilized society by wholly abandoning what had long become a fossil religion: thus, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) wrote: “The euthanasia of Judaism is the religion of pure morality” (Kant 1964, 320–321). Hence, once theological barriers had fallen, the complete surrender of Judaism might admit Jews to enlightened European society.

Another barrier, however, was already appearing in the form of modern nationalism. A nation (*Volk*) was defined by its territory, its physical character, and, above all, its language, which was the source of its creativity and the expression of its collective soul. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), the ideological founder of modern nationalism, judged the Jews by this standard to be merely a parasite on settled nations. Although Jews benefited in the late 18th and the 19th centuries from emancipatory legislation, they also encountered a backlash that denied that they could really become members of national communities. If nationhood was defined by language, then the Jews, it was alleged, could never really master modern European languages. Either a distinctively “Jewish” intonation was always detectable or else Jews, however perfectly and indeed brilliantly they might write, revealed their difference by the sheer brilliance of their writing and by the overly intellectual irony they introduced. These charges were especially leveled at Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) by conservatives irritated by his politically subversive journalism.

This nationalist anti-Semitism was radicalized by Richard Wagner (1813–1883) in his essay “Das Judentum in der Musik” (“Judaism in Music,” 1850), which exercised immense influence, especially after its republication in 1869. Wagner insists that Jews can speak European languages only as foreigners. Their real language, Hebrew, survives only as a dead, liturgical language. Hence they lack the creativity



German composer Richard Wagner revolutionized the genre of opera during the 19th century. However, he is also well known for the vicious anti-Semitism he openly displayed throughout his life. (Library of Congress)

that comes only from a living language spoken by a national community. Their excessive rationality also debars them from song, the language of the emotions. Synagogue music is merely fossilized, like the Jewish religion. Jews can acquire European culture only superficially, by buying into it, thanks to their commercial success, which is bringing about the Judaization (*Verjudung*) of Europe. The only solution is for Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, to be redeemed by perishing (*Untergang*).

This essay owes its power to combining a vast range of stereotypes. Theologically, Wagner typifies the Jews as the Wandering Jew, condemned to nomadism for denying Christ, but he also maintains that as a fossil people—uncreative and dedicated to international commerce—the Jews cannot fit into a national community. By “perishing” he may mean a complete sacrifice of identity (Kant’s “euthanasia”) rather than physical extermination, yet his description of the Jew’s supposedly immutable character makes it obscure how such a change can take place.

These stereotypes required only the spurious authority of “racial science” for full-scale racial anti-Semitism to be born. In the ideological framework of Nazism and its extermination program, radical versions of nationalist anti-Semitism mix with pseudoscientific racism. Nationalism, rather than science, underlies *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1899) by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, which evokes an apocalyptic picture of pure, emotionally profound races (like the Germans) beleaguered by swirling masses of mongrels and groups of shallow, hyper-rational Jews. Strictly racial anti-Semitism may be illustrated from the work of Hans F. K. Günther, the Nazis’ chief racial ideologist and the first professor of *Rassenkunde* (“racial science”). Günther professes to adhere to physical anthropology, distinguishing races by the then standard correlation of physical features such as height and skull measurements. Into a familiar racial taxonomy he incorporates such

stereotypes as the Jews' inability to master a language and the feminine character (contrasting them especially with "masculine" Germans) ascribed to Jews most notoriously in Otto Weininger's eccentric *Sex and Character* (1903). These claims owe their plausibility to the rhetoric of science.

At the present day, anti-Semitism continues to assume new forms. Although the Holocaust has generated shock, soul-searching, and collective penitence, it has also on occasion produced a lingering resentment against the victims, which has led the German-Israeli controversialist Henryk M. Broder (1986, 125) to declare that "Germany will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz." Further afield, since the Six-Day War of 1967, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fabrication purporting to reveal an international Jewish conspiracy, began to circulate in Arabic translations. Although the *Protocols* were originally a fantasy generated by nationalist anti-Semitism, their survival may be attributed not only to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East but also, more generally, to the strains arising from an age of globalization and the consequent search for scapegoats.

### Select Bibliography

- Broder, Henryk M. 1986. *Der ewige Antisemit*. Frankfurt, Germany: Fischer.
- Gilman, Sander L., and Steven R. Katz, eds. 1991. *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1964. "Der Streit der Fakultäten." In *Werke*, Vol. 6, edited by Wilhelm Weischedel, 320–321. Frankfurt.
- Oberman, Heiko A. 1984. *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Age of Renaissance and Reformation*. Translated by James I. Porter. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Poliakov, Léon. 1974–1977. *History of Anti-Semitism*, 4 vols. Translated by Miriam Karlin. New York: Vanguard Books.
- Voltaire. 1963. *Essai sur les mœurs*, edited by René Pomeau. Paris: Garnier Frères.

## Literary Anti-Semitism

*Mark H. Gelber*

---

Although literary anti-Semitism can be documented as far back in time as pre-Christian, Hellenistic antiquity, the precise terminology—"literary anti-Semitism"—is of fairly recent provenance. Apparently, the term is a neologism dating from about 1979 or 1980. Literary anti-Semitism has been defined as the potential or capacity of a text to encourage or positively evaluate anti-Semitic attitudes or behaviors in accordance, generally, with the delineation of such attitudes and behaviors by social scientists and historians. An understanding of literary anti-Semitism proceeds from literature itself, that is, from analyses of how anti-Semitic attitudes manifest themselves in literature and how anti-Semitically charged elements function and interact in texts. Literary anti-Semitism, like anti-Semitism itself, cannot be measured exactly, although it might be said that literary works have an anti-Semitic

potential. In any case, literary anti-Semitism is a relative concept because literary works that fall in this category can merely be more or less anti-Semitic than others. To the degree that texts provide more flagrant examples, on one hand, or less obviously objectionable ones, on the other, they can be assessed in general in terms of the degree of literary anti-Semitism they manifest. The purpose of an analysis in this regard is not to rank literary works according to their literary anti-Semitism. Rather, analyses that incorporate a concern for literary anti-Semitism serve to sensitize readers to the dehumanizing aspects of individual works. Texts that contain negative images of Jews together with other relativizing features—possibly positive images of other Jewish characters or formulations that tend to argue for individualization and against stereotyping—counterbalance possible literary anti-Semitism, but do not necessarily succeed in neutralizing it totally. The reason for this is the possible reading of a fictional negative Jewish type and related material as indicative of the true Jew, while a positively drawn Jewish figure and related material may be read as an exception to the rule.

It appears that literary anti-Semitism is as old as anti-Semitism itself. Some scholars have speculated that Manetho, an Alexandrian author who wrote in Greek under the patronage of the Ptolemaic court in the third century BCE, was the first writer to produce a text that may be classified as an example of literary anti-Semitism. However, only a few fragments of the work in question, a history of Egypt entitled *Aegyptiaca*, have been preserved. As the possible initiator of the anti-Semitic trend in the ancient Hellenistic literature of the Diaspora, Manetho attributed opprobrious origins to the Jewish people, designating Jews as outcasts, lepers, and idolators. And, in his account of the exodus from Egypt, he identified the Jews with the Hyksos, an ignoble, cruel, and barbaric people who had invaded Egypt and ruthlessly dominated the country for an extended period of time. Similarly, in another passage, he calumniated the Jews as lepers and polluted persons, who ravaged Egypt and desecrated its sacred temples.

It is likely that these negative attributes, which were common deprecations in antiquity, were applied in this particular case to the Jewish people, although they were used regularly in vitriolic writings against other human objects of scorn in ancient Egyptian culture. The negative association of the Jews with the lowliest elements of Egyptian society—lepers—and the delineation of their ignoble origins, perfidy, and perniciousness, established a literary precedent only by the novel substitution of the Jewish people for other, older objects of animosity. This pattern continued through the Hellenistic and into the Roman period throughout the Diaspora. Additional examples might include Mnaseas' (ca. 200 BCE) reference to the alleged ass worship of the Jews, a motif Apion, Democritus, and Tacitus also used (first century CE). Apollonius Molon (first century BCE) related the tale of a Greek who was kidnapped, conveyed to the Jewish Temple, and fattened in order to be slaughtered in a yearly Jewish ritual that included cannibalistic rites and oaths of hostility against the Greeks. These examples of pre-Christian, pagan literary anti-Semitism may be categorized according to type, as they manifest different varieties of literary anti-Semitism. Manetho's attempt to discredit the origins of the Jewish people is aimed at their national identity, whereas libelous tales of ass worship or the Jewish

ritual sacrifice of foreigners fall within the realm of religious (pagan) anti-Semitism. On one hand, Alexandrian literary anti-Semitism is no doubt related to the special legal status accorded Jews in this Hellenistic city, which provided them with some economic and statutory privileges. On the other hand, religious tensions were probably generated because Jews did not participate in many of the communal (civic) religious activities of the city, whereas some Jewish religious rituals, especially Sabbath observance and the maintenance of strict dietary laws, confirmed an impression of Jewish exclusiveness.

The frequency and the intensity of literary anti-Semitism appear to change drastically with the rise of Christianity in ancient times. It may be said that Christianity canonized literary anti-Semitism. Although Christianity was born of, or derived from, Judaism, it needed to distance itself early on from the mother religion in order to establish itself as a religion in its own right and as a distinct alternative to Judaism. Criticism and attacks against Jews and Judaism became commonplace in Christian literary culture and an important component of the Christian literary canon, beginning with the synoptic Gospels. Often, the Jewish background and milieu of the events at the crucible of the birth of Christianity were blurred or erased in the literary depictions, and Jews were characterized and condemned as nefarious haters of humanity or as pedantic, malicious legalists. Whereas pre-Christian, pagan anti-Semitism originated from a more or less conscious vexation with the legal privileges, exclusiveness, and distinctive religious behavior of the Jews in the Diaspora, Christian anti-Semitism thrived on the fanciful invention of the Jews' collective responsibility for the death of Jesus. In the book of Matthew, the Roman prelate, Pontius Pilate, is exonerated of guilt regarding his role in the crucifixion, whereas the Jews are seen to take on collectively the responsibility for it: "Let his blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27: 22–26). Whether or not this expression was meant originally to be understood literally, or as an assumption of responsibility for all time, and there is good reason to believe it was not intended in these ways, over time and very often it certainly was understood as proof of Jewish guilt. Many Christians held the Jews to be eternally accountable for the crucifixion of the Christian Messiah. They were vilified as the scornful, eternal enemies of Jesus and of all true Christians. As Christian polemics and theology developed, it often appeared that the very validity of Christianity was predicated on the antiquated, no longer pertinent message of Judaism. With the ascendancy of a Christianity bitterly opposed to Jews and Judaism, many examples of literary anti-Semitism became an intrinsic part of the literature of the Christian, Mediterranean-European world and continued to be so even as Western literature gradually emancipated itself from the service of established Christian religion. As Christianity spread throughout Europe and the world, eventually becoming the largest single religious expression (in all of its denominations and variations), literary anti-Semitism became embedded in Christian culture throughout the world.

The events in the life of Jesus immediately before the crucifixion, as depicted in the Gospels, were transformed and incorporated into Christian ritual and eventually found their way into the mystery plays and Passion plays that became popular community events in Christian Europe. To the extent that these plays promoted negative

or hateful images of Jews, they served to continue and develop the Christian tradition of literary anti-Semitism, which was already firmly anchored in religious literature and life. In turn, these religious-ritualistic plays had an impact of their own on the school dramas, which taught religious lessons, and Shrovetide plays (*Fastnachtspiele*), out of which more modern forms of drama gradually evolved. These different dramatic presentations were often vehicles of anti-Semitic prejudice, as they tended to emphasize the collective Jewish guilt in the death of Jesus, denigrated the Jews or the stock Jewish character who emerged as a stage type, and sometimes directly advocated anti-Semitic behaviors or adoption of anti-Semitic opinions.

Despite the eventual emergence of individualized characters in Western drama, Jewish stage characters—which had been traditionally used almost exclusively as reminders of Jewish evilness, actualized concretely in dishonest usury, suspected host desecrations, or alleged murder of innocent Christian children for Jewish ritual purposes—were less successful in breaking out of their customary roles as arch-villains, collaborators with the Devil, embodiments of the Antichrist, or the unsuspecting butts of well-deserved Christian ire or mischievous humor. Positive Jewish characters on stage or in poetical and literary works before the 17th century are virtually unthinkable, given the theological purpose of Christian anti-Semitism and the more violent, oppressive, and brutally predictable course of Christian anti-Semitism in the aftermath of the Crusades. The word “Jew” itself became early on a term of malediction in the European languages. Thus, a mere reference to a Jew or identification of a literary character as a Jew was no neutral designation of a religious preference or national identity, but rather it contained an opprobrious sense, a reprobation, for centuries; in fact, this holds in many places through the present time.

Although no history of literary anti-Semitism of the Diaspora or of specific national literary traditions has been written, the literary history of specific national literatures indicates that core texts in the canon of several Western literatures are primary examples of literary anti-Semitism. Thus, it can be demonstrated that literary anti-Semitism is endemic to Western literary culture. In English literature, for example, works by Geoffrey Chaucer, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and others have been regularly cited as examples of literary anti-Semitism. There has been a tendency to relativize the literary anti-Semitism of texts written by canonical authors by suggesting a sharp distinction between the author and the text. In other words, it has been claimed that it is not logical for an author who cannot be labeled fairly as an anti-Semite, given a wide range of evidence in this regard, to have produced a work that nevertheless might be considered an example of literary anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, the standard methodology associated with the study of literary anti-Semitism tends to distinguish between the anti-Semitic author and the anti-Semitic text. In other words, a writer who can be labeled as an anti-Semite need not write a work that can be considered literary anti-Semitism, whereas a writer who cannot be labeled fairly as an anti-Semite might nevertheless produce a text that is an example of literary anti-Semitism.

A question has been raised concerning the possibility of locating literary anti-Semitism in works written by Jewish authors. On one hand, this question has been

linked to the issue of Jewish self-hatred, and on the other hand, to the issue of the possibilities and parameters of legitimate Jewish self-criticism, that is, Jewish satire of Jewish behavior. However, concern for literary anti-Semitism focuses on literary texts and therefore the issue of the author is for all intents and purposes neutral to the question of whether or not a specific literary work may be an example of literary anti-Semitism. Literary satire of Jewish behavior may constitute an example of literary anti-Semitism, if no or insufficient counterbalancing features are perceived clearly by the readerships.

In the face of the Shoah, the tragic genocidal attempt to eliminate European and world Jewry, which succeeded in killing millions of innocent Jews, a question has been raised about whether or not literary anti-Semitism in the post-Shoah world, especially in the lands of the perpetrators in Central and Eastern Europe (but elsewhere as well), is especially heinous and reprehensible. The Shoah made perfectly clear, by way of actualization, that the distance between literary anti-Semitism and other varieties of anti-Semitism is not that great, given political power and a willingness to commit crimes against humanity or, in this case, against Jewry. It has been suggested that literary anti-Semitism—Christian and non-Christian—may have contributed to make the Shoah possible. Instances of literary anti-Semitism in German or Austrian literature in post-Shoah European literary culture, or in the Eastern European literatures, have appeared to constitute a special category in light of the past. Some observers have viewed these more recent examples as especially egregious and immoral. In a more general sense, the idea of the continuity of literary anti-Semitism is brought into focus in an interesting way, because certain periods of time in history and certain geographical spaces produced their own particular varieties of literary anti-Semitism. Some periods of time have proven to be very ripe for the expression of literary anti-Semitism. Also, the question should be raised concerning whether or not literature that is anti-Zionist or anti-Israel must of necessity also be anti-Semitic. There appears to be general agreement that this is not necessarily the case, but that the borderline between these expressions and literary anti-Semitism needs to be demarcated carefully in texts that fall into these categories. Recent studies have shown that persons who express strong anti-Israel political opinions are several times (roughly six times) more likely to harbor anti-Semitic opinions than those who do not have these same political opinions. Thus, it is quite probable that a connection or ties between anti-Zionist/anti-Israeli literature and literary anti-Semitism exist, or that some other relationship between these categories can be established.

### Selected Bibliography

- Gelber, Mark H. 1985. "What Is Literary Anti-Semitism?" *Jewish Social Studies* 47 (1): 1–20.
- Katz, Steven T., and Sander Gilman, eds. 1991. *Antisemitism in Times of Crisis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Perry, Marvin, and Frederick M. Schweitzer, eds. 2002. *Anti-Semitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

## Western Democracies and the Holocaust

*William D. Rubinstein*

---

The historiography of the rescue of Jews from the Nazis by the democracies has gone through several phases. Initially, relief at the defeat of Nazi Germany and its allies was so universal among Jews and others that few, and certainly few Jewish survivors, seriously questioned Allied policy. Beginning in the 1960s, in such works as Arthur Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York, 1968), David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* (Boston, 1968) and *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York, 1984), and Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe* (Oxford, 1979), a backlash set in that has led to severe criticism of the attitude and actions of the United States, Britain, and other Western democracies. In particular, the works of David S. Wyman have been especially influential. According to this critique, elite and public opinion in the West was almost invariably hostile to the admission of significant numbers of Jewish refugees to the democracies or to Palestine, while the immigration bureaucracies of the democracies erected significant “paper walls” to even permissible migration. In addition, mass unemployment during the Depression produced widespread hostility to any significant migration. During World War II, even less was done. The Bermuda Conference of 1943, convened to assist Jewish refugees, was an abject failure. Auschwitz was not bombed, and Jewish migration to Palestine was severely curtailed. Policy makers in America, Britain, and other democracies were often demonstrably anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist, if also anti-Nazi.

More recently, in the manner of most historical debates, a reaction to this negative viewpoint has also been voiced and will be summarized here. This revisionist view makes two main points: contrary to the negative view, the record of the democracies in allowing German Jewish refugees to migrate was extremely generous, especially after *Kristallnacht* in 1938. By 1940–1941, when the emigration of Jews to the West became impossible, nearly three quarters of German Jews had emigrated. After the war began, however, the emigration of Jews became impossible because the Nazis (not the democracies) forbade the emigration of Jews, obviously as a prelude to genocide. The Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe were no longer refugees, as they had been during the 1930s, but the exact opposite, prisoners—prisoners of Hitler and the Nazi death machine. As such, they could not escape from Nazi-occupied Europe. Moreover, the fate of Europe’s Jews was never in the hands of Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, or the democracies, but of Adolf Hitler and the SS. The Western allies pursued the goal of the total destruction of Nazi Germany with relentless efficiency.

Although the democracies never allowed the unlimited immigration of German Jews, and no country took in more than a share of those seeking to enter, together they offered refuge and a new life to the majority of German and Austrian

Jews. Immigration to the United States was determined by national quotas, set by Congress in 1924 and reduced in 1931. Throughout most of the 1930s, the immigration quota for Germany (of Jews and non-Jews) was set at about 26,000 per year, a figure that rose to about 29,000 a year after the *Anschluss* with Austria. It is impossible to know how many German and Reich Jews actually came to the United States, but 161,051 Jews from all countries migrated to the United States between mid-1933 and mid-1942. This number was 36 percent of *all* migrants to the United States in this period. Probably well over 100,000 German and Austrian Jews migrated to the United States, out of a total Jewish population of 500,000 in Germany and 185,000 in Austria. There is, moreover, no real evidence that substantial numbers of Reich Jews actually wished to emigrate from Germany until the *Anschluss* early in 1938 and *Kristallnacht* later that year. Britain did not have an immigration quota system like America's. Permission to migrate to the country was purely at the discretion of the Home Office (the Justice and Immigration Ministry) and was very difficult; in general, persons outside the British Empire had little chance of success. However, the British government provided an increasing and striking exception to this rule *in favor* of German Jewish refugees. British public opinion was genuinely moved by their plight, and the Anglo-Jewish community agreed to pay for all Jewish migrants. It is believed that about 75,000 German Jews and "non-Aryan Christians" migrated to Britain, chiefly in 1938–1939. Substantial immigration also took place to other parts of the British Empire. Despite the barriers to unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine (a British mandate after 1917–1919), about 63,000 Reich Jews migrated there. Other parts of the Empire (e.g., Canada, Australia) took in about 40,000–45,000. Other German Jews went to Latin America and other parts of



Prayer books and rubble lie scattered on the floor of the choir loft in Zerenerstrasse Synagogue, which the Nazis destroyed during *Kristallnacht* on November 9, 1938. *Kristallnacht* represented the first night of organized and concentrated German Nazi terrorism against Jews and Jewish establishments. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Europe. By September 1939, only 164,000 Jews remained in Germany in its pre-1933 boundaries. Had the outbreak of the war been postponed for another year or two, it is likely that virtually all Jews would have left. About 83 percent of German Jewish children and youth had emigrated from Germany by late 1939. About 68 percent of Austrian Jewry managed to emigrate in 18 months, including an estimated 90 percent of the Austrian middle class.

A number of important points should be made about these statistics. First, no one knew what the fate of the Jews left behind in Nazi Germany was to be: the mass murders did not begin until the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, and previous Nazi policy was to brutalize and expel the Jews, not kill them. Second, no other group of refugees of the 1930s received such relatively generous treatment, a product of universal horror in the West at Hitler's demented brutality. Third, 95 percent of Jews murdered in the Holocaust did not live in Germany or the Reich, but in other parts of Europe, especially Poland, the western Soviet Union, and Hungary. These Jews were not subject to Nazi rule before Germany conquered or became hegemonic in these countries after the war began in September 1939. They were not refugees and, unlike the Jews of the Reich, were not compelled to flee. In addition, the Jews of the Soviet Union (numbering about 3 million in 1939 and more than 5 million in mid-1941 after the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland and other areas) could not emigrate under any circumstances: any Jew who expressed the desire to leave Stalin's realms might well have been shot.

The outbreak of World War II fundamentally altered this situation. Instead of being compelled to emigrate from Nazi Germany, the Jews of Germany and other parts of Europe were *forbidden to leave* any part of Nazi-occupied Europe. Jews were officially forbidden to emigrate from the Polish Government-General (central Poland, including Warsaw) in October 1940. In mid-1941 Jews were forbidden to emigrate from any part of Nazi-occupied Europe.

This order coincided with the start of the actual genocide of the Jews. From that point, Europe's Jews became prisoners awaiting execution. They could not be reached by the Allies, who were at war with Germany, and were in the process of being slaughtered by the Nazi death machine.

Although plans for rescuing Jews were continuously produced by Jewish and pro-refugee groups in America and Britain throughout the war, what they all have in common was their complete inability to rescue anyone. The reason for this was precisely that the Jews were no longer refugees—which these groups failed to understand—but were prisoners of Hitler, whose life's mission was to kill all of them. A perusal of these plans—which are reproduced in the *The Myth of Rescue* (Rubinstein 1997)—shows their utter futility. The British might have been more generous in allowing Europe's Jews to immigrate to Palestine, but, once again, the central problem was that no Jews could emigrate. Although some Jews who managed to flee were indeed prevented from entering Palestine (usually being interned for the duration of the war in Mauritius), no Jew who escaped from Nazi-occupied Europe was ever sent back by the Western allies. Few historians take seriously such proposals as the "blood-for-trucks" scheme allegedly proposed by Heinrich Himmler to the leaders of Hungarian Jewry in 1944. They continued to be deported to

Auschwitz while the scheme was being considered. There is no evidence that Hitler (as opposed to Himmler) knew or approved of the proposal; he would certainly have forbidden it.

Probably the central proposal for rescue not acted upon but well-known today is the bombing of Auschwitz. The main points that should be made here are these. First, no one, anywhere, proposed bombing Auschwitz (or any other concentration camp) before May 1944, when Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel, who had jumped from a train on the way to Auschwitz and made his way to Switzerland, first proposed it. Bombing Auschwitz—or any other concentration camp—is not mentioned in *any* plan for rescue made before this. Second, when the proposal was first made, it was received dubiously by Jewish and pro-refugee groups. It was opposed, for example, by the Executive of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, the *Yishuv's* government, headed by David Ben-Gurion, on the grounds that Jews would certainly be killed. It was initially opposed by the U.S. War Refugee Board, established in January 1944 and responsible for rescuing Jews, for the same reason; its head, John Pehle, only changed his mind in October 1944 after deportations to Auschwitz had ceased. Logistically, it would have been very difficult to have bombed the gas chamber at Auschwitz (the size of a tennis court) with the aviation and bombing technology that existed in 1944, and prisoners would indeed almost certainly have been killed, probably without stopping the killing process. Proposals to bomb Auschwitz tragically coincided with the preparations for D-Day (June 6, 1944), the Normandy landing, and the liberation of France. It is difficult to imagine the senior leaders of the West agreeing to divert military resources needed for the invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe, or Jewish leaders asking for this diversion. Probably the bombing of Auschwitz should have been tried, but it might well have proven to be a fiasco. Liberation for the 3.5 million Jews of Europe who managed to survive the war came on May 8, 1945, when Nazi Germany was wiped off the earth by the armed forces of the Allied powers.

### Selected Bibliography

- Rosen, Robert N. 2006. *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.
- Rubinstein, William D. 1997. *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis*. London: Routledge.
- Shatzkes, Pamela. 2002. *Holocaust and Rescue: Impotence or Indifference? Anglo-Jewry 1938–1945*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.

## Euro-Arab Anti-Semitism

### *Bat Ye'or*

---

Euro-Arab anti-Semitism is closely linked to the strategic, political, and economic constraints of Europe's Arab/Muslim policies; to the changed demographic pattern

of Europe due to Muslim immigration; and to the threat of terrorism. Current European Judeophobia intertwines with the European political and cultural Mediterranean/Arab strategy that encompasses all member states of the European Union (EU). The European Commission and the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (ECFSP) coordinate this policy through an elaborate network.

Such a strategy involves comprehensive planning, conceived in the 1960s by the French president, General Charles de Gaulle. In the European Community (EC), he championed a strategic Euro-Arab alliance as a rival pole to America and an instrument for French interests in former Arab colonies (Gaullist Arab policy). French diplomats developed contacts with their Arab counterparts, notably with Haj Amin al-Husseini, former mufti of Jerusalem, whom de Gaulle had saved from the Nuremberg trials in 1945, and with Libyan diplomats. The outbreak of international Palestinian terrorism in Europe, followed by the Yom Kippur War (October 1973) and the Arab oil embargo, allowed France to introduce a common European oil policy and to carry along the EC in the Euro-Arab pact.

In the 1970s, the EC and the Arab League associated with different but converging aims. The EC adopted a pro-Arafat stance and sponsored Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) policy, hoping thereby to protect itself from Arab terrorism, to maintain its energy supplies, and to promote its economic interests. On their side, the PLO and the countries of the Arab League welcomed the Gaullist plan as a means to separate Europe from America, destroy Israel, and achieve technological parity with Europe.

This informal alliance created a framework called the Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD) between the EC bodies and member states, on the one hand, and the Arab League, the Arab Mediterranean countries, and the PLO, on the other. EAD encompasses the whole Euro-Arab relationship in strategy, business, social and human affairs, immigration, culture, and media. The European Commission promoted associations and common projects between the two parties. It created numerous legal, financial, and economic instruments intended to disseminate and establish the Euro-Arab common strategy (Eurabia) as a domestic and foreign policy binding the member states of the EC through an expanding network of activities and organizations. Canada and other European non-EU countries, as well as bodies like the International Committee of the Red Cross, participated as observers or active delegations in the EAD meetings. Numerous Euro-Arab conferences and EC/EU documents provide information on EAD's unfolding. EAD focused on solidarity with the Palestinians; it triggered European public sympathy for the PLO, while demonizing Israel. Traditional European anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism furthered Arab propaganda.

The European Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation (PAEAC) represents the main instrument of EAD anti-Israeli policy. Its members are parliamentarians from each major European political party. Created in 1974 in Paris and supported by the European Commission, PAEAC fulfils Resolution 15 of the Second International Conference in Support of the Arab People held in Cairo (January 1969). In June 1974, its Arab counterpoint, the Arab Interparliamentary Union (AIPU), was created.

Euro-Arab policy worked for rapprochement and solidarity between the EC and the Arab world at all political and cultural levels, regionally and internationally. It involved the ECFSP, the universities, and the media and aimed to create a strategic Euro-Arab pole. Europe's anti-Israeli strategy results from its planned long-term vision to create a joint society with the Arab Mediterranean countries and the PLO.

After the 1995 Barcelona Declaration, the Mediterranean Partnership enlarged the EAD framework and included Israel, in view of implementing the Oslo agreements. The partnership determines EU strategy toward the United States, Israel, and the Arab states, as well as the domestic policies of EU member states in relation to Muslim immigration to the EU.

The Mediterranean Partnership intends to set up a vast Euro-Arab demographic, political, economic, and cultural zone. Using multiculturalism and immigration, the EAD network introduced Islam and Arab culture as a political force to the European continent. Through the combined effects of demographic and terrorist pressures from within and without, and with oil dependency, Euro-Arab anti-Zionism hardened.

Euro-Arab Judeophobia avoids targeting European Jewry, reduced by the Shoah to demographic and political marginality. Although it professes antiracism, it demonizes the State of Israel, which is accused of being "the root cause" of Islamic terrorism. As a European militant ideal for peace and justice in the Middle East, EU Mediterranean policy promotes Palestinian victimology and Israel's malevolence. The cynical and secretive character of this Judeophobia results from the opacity and impunity of EU collegiality.

The European Council adopted *The European Common Strategy in the Mediterranean Region* on June 19, 2000. This document charges the European Council, the European Commission, and the EU member states to ensure the consistency, unity, and effectiveness of the common strategy, with special attention to the media and universities. Cultural and media collaboration and solidarity with the Mediterranean (Arab) world are prescribed even more urgently—as a matter of European security—in the report of the European Commission for Culture, Science and Education presented to the European Parliamentary Assembly by Luis Maria de Puig from the Spanish socialist group (November 2002). Euro-Arab anti-Semitism reached a peak with the second intifada (Autumn 2000) and the coalition war against Saddam Hussein (2003) when the EU increased the effectiveness and visibility of its Mediterranean policy at the request of the European Council.

Multiculturalism is a crucial dimension of the Euro-Arab strategic alliance. It fuels the cultural and media jihad waged in Western academia with a Judeophobic, anti-American, and anti-Western character. Euro-Arab anti-Semitism promotes a political, historical, cultural, and theological Palestinian replacement doctrine, whose main themes claim the nonexistence of Judeo-Christian values, the Islamization of Christian theology through the Muslim Jesus, the return to a Christian replacement theology whereby Palestine replaces Israel, the transfer of Jewish history to the Palestinians, the crucifixion of Palestine by an Israel born in blood and sin, and the Nazification of Israel. These themes, taught by the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, by European clergy and specialists in

interfaith dialogues, are promoted throughout Europe by the EAD network as well as by European and Palestinian nongovernmental organizations funded by the EU. Euro-Arab anti-Semitism belongs to a common Mediterranean strategy that pursues Israel's demise by inciting its constant and universal vilification. Its themes correlate with traditional European Judeophobia but within the militancy and ideology of Islamic jihad against Israel and the West. This context places Israel at the core of a crucial 21st-century conflict.

### Select Bibliography

- Al-Mani, Saleh A. 1983. "The New Anti-Semitism." *The Euro-Arab Dialogue: A Study in Associative Diplomacy*, edited by Salah Al-Shaikhly. London: Frances Pinter.
- Bat Ye'or. 2005. *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses.
- Bourrinet, Jacques, ed. 1979. *Le Dialogue Euro-Arabe* [The Euro-Arab Dialogue]. Paris: Economica.
- Hopwood, Derek, ed. 1983. *Euro-Arab Dialogue. The Relations between the Two Cultures. Acts of the Hamburg Symposium, April 11th to 15th, 1983*. English version. London: Croom Helm.
- Völker, Edmond, ed. 1976. *Euro-Arab Cooperation*. Europa Instituut, University of Amsterdam. Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff.

## The New Anti-Semitism

*Danny Ben-Moshe*

---

The new Anti-Semitism is a term that came into use to describe attacks on Jews across the world that erupted in the aftermath of the outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian fighting in September 2000 after the collapse of the Camp David peace talks. The conflict unleashed a wave of suicide bombings in Israel and led to Israel reoccupying Palestinian areas. This fighting triggered an outburst of anti-Semitism not seen since the end of the World War II. Nearly 100 synagogues were attacked across the world in the four weeks from the end of September to October 2000; more were burnt down at any time since *Kristallnacht*, when Nazis attacked Jewish institutions in Germany in 1938.

The 2002–2003 Anti-Semitism Worldwide Report published by Tel Aviv University identified three waves of anti-Semitism: the first was in October 2000, after the outbreak of the Intifada; the second was triggered by the World Anti-Racism Conference in Durban, where anti-Semitism appeared to get United Nations (UN) sanction, and overt hostility to Israel received international media coverage and intensified as a result of 9/11; and the third related to Operation Defensive Shield, the Israeli military operation against armed Palestinian groups in Jenin in March 2002. Since then, a fourth wave can be identified, related to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Different triggers start new waves of anti-Semitism, but the main and fifth one is the anti-Semitism that has erupted since Israel's attack on Lebanon in July 2006.

The new anti-Semitism has been described as “Judeophobia.” This term, coined in the book *A New Anti-Semitism? Debating Judeophobia in 21st-Century Britain*, refers to anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom, but it can also be applied more broadly. According to the authors, Barry Kosmin and Paul Ignaski (*Ha'aretz*, June 3, 2003), Judeophobia is,

... a fear of, and hostility toward Jews as a collectivity, rather than the propagation of racial ideologies of the old anti-Semitism. . . . It is a mindset characterized by an obsession with, and vilification of, the State of Israel, and Jews in general, in the case of Britain, as a consequence of their strong sense of attachment to Israel. Today's Judeophobia is an assault on the essence of the Jewish collectivity, both in terms of a Jewish sovereign state in its ancient homeland, and the nature of robust, emancipated, and self-aware Diaspora communities.

Whereas the old anti-Semitism involved attacking Jews for a range of reasons, including raw prejudice and hatred, the new anti-Semitism pertains to attacking Jews because of the perpetrators' opposition to Israel. For the new anti-Semites, anyone who supports Israel is a legitimate target for hatred and vilification.

Kosmin and Ignaski further explain (p. 285) :

The core characteristic of elite Judeophobia involves a campaign of vilification against Israel as a state: evident in an obsessive focus on Israel's culpability for human rights and civil rights abuses in its conflict with the Palestinians. Israel is singled out for opprobrium whilst gross violations of human and civil rights elsewhere—such as Chechnya, Algeria, Sudan, Tibet and Burma, to name just a few—go relatively unnoticed as they are not subject to the same scrutiny. Furthermore, in a particularly spiteful element of the campaign of vilification, Israel is equated to Nazi Germany.

Since the 1974 UN resolution that equated Zionism with racism, delegitimization of Israel has become central to the new wave of anti-Semitism. What is clearly distinct about the current wave of anti-Semitism is that, whereas the old was aimed at individual Jews in the Diaspora, the new is aimed at the collective Jewish state, albeit by using classical anti-Semitic characteristics, which in turn manifests in attacks on the Diaspora. This is indeed one of the unique characteristics of the new anti-Semitism, for while the Diasporas of other countries are not vilified as a result of conflicts in the homeland, such as Hindus in relation to Kashmir, or Buddhists for attacks on Muslims in Thailand, Jews are vilified because of the situation in Israel.

The new anti-Semitism applies against Israel the characteristics traditionally identified with Jews, such as power, greed, and evil. Classical anti-Semitic images customarily directed at Diaspora communities have now, as part of the new anti-Semitism, come to be directed at Israel. Invoking the blood libel, *The Independent* newspaper in the United Kingdom published in 2003 an editorial cartoon of Ariel Sharon biting the flesh of a Palestinian baby, with Sharon saying, “What's wrong? Have you never seen a politician kissing a baby?” In 2002, the Italian daily *La Stampa* resorted to traditional Christian anti-Semitism with its cartoon of a baby Jesus surrounded by Israeli tanks saying, “Don't tell me they want to kill me again.”



Jewish leaders at the opening of the executive council of the World Jewish Congress in Paris on November 12, 2006. Anti-Semitism in Europe and the threat posed to Israel by Iran were the main items on the agenda. In the foreground is a poster of a caricature showing former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon published January 27, 2003, in the British daily paper *The Independent*. (Jack Gueza/AFP/Getty Images)

### Distinguishing New Anti-Semitism from Criticism of Israeli Policy

The key issue in the debate about the new anti-Semitism is to identify at what point criticism of Israel moves from being legitimate to anti-Semitic. Natan Sharansky, a former cabinet member of the Israeli government with responsibility for the government's response to anti-Semitism and currently a distinguished fellow at the Shalem Center, the Jerusalem research institute, offers the following three criteria to test the distinction between the new anti-Semitism and legitimate criticism of Israeli policy:

*Demonization:* This is clear when classically anti-Semitic images portraying Jews as evil are used against Israel, such as the depiction of Sharon as Hitler or refugee camps as Auschwitz. Dehumanizing Israelis is not legitimate criticism.

*Double standards:* Sharansky says that while it is not acceptable to have double standards against Jews today, it is possible to have them against the Jewish state, such as the UN High Commission for Refugees, which dedicates 35 percent of its annual condemnations against Israel—more than those against the human rights violations of all the world's dictators put together.

*Denial of legitimacy:* Sharansky identifies this in European intellectual circles “where Israel is presented as the last anachronism of the time of colonialism.” Denial of legitimacy is seen when calls from mosques say death to the Jews, and a columnist in the London *Observer* says he does not read letters from Jews;

and denial of legitimacy is seen in collective punishment, where all Israelis, be they academics or artists, are boycotted and Jews alone are denied the right to exist as a nation.

The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia has offered some criteria to distinguish criticism of Israel from anti-Semitism. They have argued (p. 13), “anti-Israeli or anti-Zionist attitudes and expressions *are* anti-Semitic in those cases where Israel is seen as being a representative of ‘the Jew’, i.e., as a representative of the traits attributed to the anti-Semitic construction of ‘the Jew’.” By contrast, if Jews are offended or criticized for Israel’s policies or as representatives of Israel based on the above definition, “we would have to qualify hostility towards Jews as ‘Israelis’ only then as anti-Semitic, if it is based on an underlying perception of Israel as ‘the Jew’. If this is not the case, then we would have to consider hostility towards Jews as ‘Israelis’ as *not* anti-Semitic, because this hostility is not based on the anti-Semitic stereotyping of Jews.”

### The Agitators

Traditionally, anti-Semitism has been advanced by the far right, but the difference with the new anti-Semitism is found in the fact that it is being driven by far left and Arab and Islamic groups and individuals. If anti-Semitism has gone through Christian, Nazi, and communist phases it is now in an Islamic phase, as Islamic movements transform the Arab-Israeli conflict from a political to a religious one. The anti-Semitism, which has been imported from Christian Europe to the Middle East, is now being exported back to Europe through Arab and Muslim émigré communities. Although the stereotypes are old, the technology is new: satellite TV beaming the best of Arab anti-Semitism straight into the homes of Muslims in London, Paris, Rome, and Sydney.

The European Union Monitoring Commission on Racism and Xenophobia contracted Berlin’s Technical University to report on the new anti-Semitism, and the report stated that “anti-Semitic incidents were committed above all either by right-wing extremists or young radical Muslims, mostly of Arab descent, who are often themselves potential victims of exclusion and racism” and it added that anti-Semitic statements often come from pro-Palestinian groups. The report also noted that the Arab media calls for attacks not just against Israel, but also against Jews around the world. The Berlin report was controversially not published, some say because the government did not want to offend Europe’s 15 million Muslims, an increasingly important voting block.

New anti-Semitism is widely invoked on the political left. In one of the more blatant examples of the new anti-Semitism, Britain’s *New Statesman* magazine, on January 14, 2002, had a cover story on the Zionist lobby illustrated on the front page with a large Star of David piercing a much smaller Union Jack, an appropriately anti-Semitic image for an article that described the scheming and wealth of the Jews. Although the article about the Jewish lobby ultimately noted that it was relatively ineffective its imagery was based on and reinforced classical anti-Semitic stereotypes.

The new anti-Semitism involves relativism, a dimension of Holocaust denial traditionally associated with the far right and Arab and Islamic groups, which has now filtered through to the left. Relativism makes the Holocaust relative to other suffering. Thus, not only has the Holocaust not been a barrier to the new anti-Semitism, but it is actively challenged as part of the new anti-Semitism. As the unpublished Berlin University report stated:

Israeli policies toward the Palestinians provide a reason to denounce Jews generally as perpetrators, thereby questioning their moral status as victims that they had assumed as a consequence of the Holocaust. The connection between anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment lies in this opportunity for a perpetrator-victim role reversal. In particular there is an attempt by the right-wing to compare Israeli policies with the crimes perpetrated against Jews throughout history in order to minimize or even deny the guilt and responsibility of their own nation.

The new anti-Semitism demonstrates how anti-Semitism is a phenomenon with multiple dimensions that can be triggered in different ways for different reasons in different places. Anti-Semitism has become inextricably bound up with the conflict between Israel and her neighbors and is likely to continue in ways that correlate to developments in that conflict. The new anti-Semitism is not as simple to identify and combat as its old form, and efforts to reach agreements on its definition must continue. Anti-Semitism remains a real concern for world Jewry who dedicate significant resources to countering it. This is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Chesler, Phyllis. 2003. *The New Anti-Semitism: The Current Crisis and What We Must Do about It*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.
- European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. 2003. *Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in the European Union*. Vienna: EUMC.
- Foxman, Abraham. 2003. *Never Again? The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco.
- Ignanski, Paul, and Barry Kosmin, eds. 2003. *A New Antisemitism? Debating Judeophobia in 21st Century Britain*. London: Profile Books.
- Schoenfeld, Gabriel. 2004. *The Return of Anti-Semitism*. San Francisco: Encounter Books.
- Sharansky, Natan. "On Hating the Jews." *Commentary*, November 2003.

# The Dissemination of Early Christianity beyond the Jewish Diaspora

*Marianne Dacy*

---

Christianity moved out of the Land of Israel slowly and irregularly; it was successful in some places and made no headway in others. Whether Christianity was rejected or accepted was influenced by the original cultural and religious composition of the population.

In the first century of the common era, there were an estimated 4 or 5 million Jews in all the principal cities of the Greco-Roman world and along the main trade routes. They were especially numerous in the trade city of Alexandria, and there were strong communities in Rome and Antioch, the center where the term “Christian” was first coined. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire: it had a population of between a quarter and a half million inhabitants and 20,000 to 40,000 Jews.

## The Pauline Mission

When the apostle Paul began his outreach to the Gentiles, he often explained the Jewish Scriptures in a way that highlighted the role of Jesus. This often caused friction in the synagogues and riots, but it captured the attention of non-Jews. The effect of the assimilation of Greek language and culture was the creation of a common means of communication with non-Jews. Successful Jewish propaganda, showing the superiority of Judaism as a moral and monotheistic religion over paganism, paved the way for the spread of Christianity.

On his second and third missionary journeys, Paul traveled west to Macedonia and Thrace, which was inhabited by non-Jews. This change in direction from heavily populated Jewish areas, as well as Christianity’s ability to adapt to local cultures, also paved the way for its success.

However, where tannaitic influence was strong in the local Jewish community, as in Nisibis, Christianity was established with more difficulty. In that city, a Christian bishopric was not founded until 300. In Nehardea, another center of Talmudic learning in Babylonia, Christianity also made little progress.

There were other factors as well. Christianity had spread to areas of Western Europe before the reign of Constantine in the first quarter of the fourth century. As early as the late second or early third century, Christian communities in the western part of the empire had attained some geographical independence from Jewish populations. Why was this so?

Part of the answer lies in the spread of influence of the Roman Empire. Where the Romans moved, and where they traded, they brought Christianity, as well as Mithraism and their own pantheon of gods inherited from the Greeks. In parts of

Gaul and in areas of Arabia there were no recorded Jewish communities in the first century CE. Yet in the British Isles and Ireland, and in the less densely populated West, Christianity began to spread from the late second century. This may suggest that the Celtic inhabitants were disposed favorably to the new religion brought by the Romans. Mansi's list of bishops attending the Council of Arles in 314 names several areas of Gaul and three places in Britain—Eboracum (York), Lindinonium (Lincoln), and London (Colonia Londinensium—that sent delegates, as well as Basti and Boetica (in present-day Spain), which had Christian populations but apparently no Jews. Another center of Christianity not far from the River Rhine was Agrippina, modern-day Cologne, which is recorded as having no Jewish population either in 314 or at the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325.

Africa sent 12 delegates to the Council of Arles, but only three towns had Jewish populations, which included Carthage. Gaul was divided into several provinces and sent at least 36 delegates. Only five towns represented had Jewish populations.

### **Christian Populations Indicated by Delegates to the Council of Nicaea**

The Church historian Eusebius reports that more than 250 bishops attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 (*Eusebius Vita Const.* 3.6 and 9), but estimates have been as high as 600. All the Latins and the most famous bishops came from towns with Jewish populations. The number of bishops attending the Council varied with the months.

The more important sees in the Eastern Church, except for Heracleopolis, had Jewish populations. These were Nicomedia, Caesarea, Heraclea (Egypt), Higher Thebes, Cyprus, Neocaesarea, Nisibius, Caesarea, Gangra, and Myra (Asia Minor). In the Provinces of Spain, Rome, Egypt, the Province of Thebes, and Upper Libya, there was an approximately 50 percent correlation with the Jewish population. In these areas, about half the Christian population had spread to areas where there were few Jews.

There was a close geographical association with Jewish communities in the Province of Palestine. On the other hand, Christianization in strong Samaritan areas, such as Neapolis and Sebastae, was sporadic and slow. When the land was reorganized under Diocletian into Palestine Prima, Secunda, and Tertia, this greatly increased the Samaritan Diaspora and possibly made Christianity's progress easier in the wake of a less concentrated Samaritan presence. In the Province of Syria, only 9 of 21 episcopal delegates lived in towns with Jewish populations.

In the Province of Mesopotamia, only Tarsus and Adanu in the Province of Cilicia had Jewish populations from the 11 towns represented by delegates. No Jews were present in the Province of Cappodicia, which sent nine delegates, or in Armenia, represented by six delegates. The Province of Arabia sent six delegates, yet no town represented had a Jewish population. The Province of Phrygia, which sent seven delegates, had Christians who lived in only one Jewish center, Laodicia. The latter city held an ecumenical council in 360, which passed four anti-Jewish canons, including the stipulation that Christians were not to accept festal presents from Jews or to celebrate festivals with them.

Christianity in the more populated areas of the Roman Empire in the east was closely aligned to the Jewish population. In less populated parts of the west, where there were fewer Jews, such as Gaul and Arabia, Christianity had begun to spread to areas without recorded Jewish populations by the end of the second century CE, brought to Gaul by the Romans.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Crown, Alan. 1989. *The Samaritans*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr-Paul Siebeck.

Dacy, Marianne. 2001. "The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism." PhD diss., University of Sydney, Department of Semitic Studies. <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/837>.

Hefele, Karle Joseph von. 1883–1896. *History of the Councils of the Church from the Original Documents*. 5 vols. Translated by William R. Clark. Repr. New York: AMS Press, 1972.

Juster, Jean. 1914. *Les Juifs dans l'Empire Romain*. 2 vols. New York: Burt Franklin.

# Religious Fusion and Interaction in the Diaspora

## Jewish Diaspora and the Spreading of Christianity

*Edward Kessler*

---

Christianity, as one might expect, has had and continues to have a significant impact on Jewish life in the Diaspora. This article will begin with a discussion of the terms *galut* and *diaspora*, followed by a brief historical survey, which will include examples of Christian influence on the development of the Jewish Diaspora as well as the impact of Christian attitudes toward Zionism and the State of Israel.

It is necessary first to appreciate the difference between living in the Diaspora, a Greek word meaning “scattering” or in the *galut*, a Hebrew word meaning exile. There is a tension between the view that Jews outside Israel live in a Diaspora (a voluntary situation desirable to the individual) or in *galut* (an undesirable situation). Thus, *galut* may be understood in negative terms whereas Diaspora indicates a more positive role for the Jewish people. Traditionally (and for most of the last two millennia), Jews and Christians have viewed Jewish existence in terms of *galut*. For Christians, *galut* represented a divine punishment because the Jewish people rejected Christ, but for Jews it illustrated the suffering of a Chosen People waiting for redemption at a time of God’s choosing through his anointed (Messiah). Of course, this attitude has considerably changed among Christians and Jews today, although strictly observant Jews outside Israel view their existence in terms of *galut*.

One should realize first that the Jewish Diaspora was not a Christian creation. In fact, well before the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE), more Jews lived in the Diaspora than in the Land of Israel. The beginnings of the Diaspora can be seen in Assyria’s destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE, which led to the scattering of the 10 tribes of Israel. Some went to Egypt; but the first major Diaspora community to flourish was in Babylon, shortly before the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE.

In the early postbiblical period, the major challenge faced by Jews was the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. The Temple at Jerusalem had been the center of Jewish religious life. Its demolition, followed 65 years later by the expulsion of Jews from the city by Emperor Hadrian, was a serious threat to the survival of Judaism. In fact, only two Jewish groups survived its destruction: rabbinic Jews and the Jewish followers of Jesus.

The rabbinic way of life was a new stage in the development of Judaism, and it enabled Jews to survive without a homeland as well as without a Temple. The rabbis’ ability to respond to the new situation enabled them, eventually, to dominate Jewish life for the next 1,800 years.

Coin issued by Roman emperor Hadrian to commemorate the founding of Aelia Capitolina (formerly Jerusalem) after the Romans successfully quelled the second Jewish revolt (also known as the Bar Kokhba Revolt). The coin's reverse depicts a priest plowing with bulls. (Zev Radovan/Land of the Bible Picture Archive)



Unlike the Sadducees, Zealots, monastic groups (such as the Qumran community), and Hellenists, the Jewish followers of Jesus were the only other Jewish sect that survived and flourished. Jesus the Jew followed Jewish customs, such as the dietary laws; prayed in the Temple; and was called a rabbi. Yet the followers of Jesus quickly distanced themselves from Jewish customs and rituals and eventually from Judaism altogether. The date of the split is the subject of much debate, some suggesting it began as early as Paul of Tarsus (around 60 CE), others as late as Constantine (ruled 306–337 CE), or even later. One scholar, James Dunn, has sensibly described the separation in terms of a series of “partings of the ways.”

Yet once Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire at the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312 CE, significant numbers of Jews began to live under Christian rule. They maintained a strategy of yielding to political authority, which not only enabled them to survive but also contributed to the success of Jewish life in the Christian world. By relinquishing desire for sovereignty, Jews gained autonomy in regulating their lives. Under the motto *dina d'malkulta dina* (the law of the land is the law), the Jewish community based its existence on the law of a particular host society, and as a result Christian influence on Jewish life and practice became more common. For example, the banning of polygamy, which is traditionally ascribed to Rabbenu Gershom in the 10th century, was clearly influenced by Christian custom, as was the adoption of wedding rings, a new development from around the seventh century. Judaism clearly had a good digestive system.

Jews who lived in the Diaspora affirmed their connection to the Land of Israel by praying toward Jerusalem. Synagogues in Western Christian lands were designed so that the ark (*aron ha-kodesh*) was located in the eastern wall, facing Jerusalem. It is worth noting that synagogues, like churches, drew architecturally from Roman civic architecture, particularly the basilica or hall of justice. The synagogue at Sardis, Turkey (third–fourth centuries CE), for example, is basilican in form with a colonnaded forecourt leading to the Jerusalem-facing entry wall.

Those Jews in the Diaspora who flourished still looked forward to a return to the Land of Israel and reflected on biblical texts such as Jeremiah 29:10, “He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him, as a shepherd his flock.” Those Jews who suffered oppression mourned their land more actively and prayed for the

messianic era to be initiated by God, an era that would bring them back to Israel. This is illustrated by the following story in the Talmud:

Wherever Israel went into exile, the Shechina [God's presence] went along into exile. They went to exile to Egypt, the Shechina went with them . . . They went to Babylon in exile and the Shechina went with them . . . And when they will eventually be redeemed, the Shechina will be redeemed along with them. (Megillah 29a)

The name Schechina, or Shekinah, represents the feminine aspect of God and is understood as God's presence. The story indicates that alongside the hope of divine restoration there existed the mystical idea that God was also exiled with his people. This affirmation is a direct response to the Christian *adversus iudaeos* teaching that Judaism became obsolete with the advent of Christ. Jews responded by suggesting that wherever they lived, God was with them. Just as Jews suffered in exile, so God suffered with them, demonstrating that God still cared for his people.

Jewish responses to Christianity can also be found in rabbinic biblical interpretation, such as interpretations of the *Akedah* (the Binding of Isaac; Genesis 22), one of the most well-known stories in the Bible. The *Akedah* is a shocking account of how Abraham's faith in God was demonstrated by a willingness to sacrifice his long-awaited son at God's command. This story has been a source of fascination for Jews and Christians for many centuries, but relatively little attention has been given to the question of the influence of Christianity upon Jewish exegesis.

It is striking that the rabbinic portrayal of Isaac parallels a number of aspects of the Christian understanding of Jesus. Like Jesus, Isaac was willing to give up his life (Lamentations Rabbah Proem 24). Like Jesus, Isaac was not forced to offer himself as a sacrifice but willingly gave himself up to his father (Fragmentary Targum 22:10). Like Jesus, Isaac was described as weeping bitterly when told by Abraham that he was to be sacrificed (Midrash Composed under the Holy Spirit, 65). Like Jesus, Isaac shed blood (Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Pisha 7). Like Jesus, Isaac is depicted at the gates of Hell (Gehenna; Song of Songs Rabbah 8:9). In a similar way to Paul's assertion concerning baptism (Galatians 3:28), the *Akedah* is described as atoning for all, Jew and non-Jew (Leviticus Rabbah 2:11). Perhaps most remarkably, Isaac is described as having died and having been resurrected (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 31).

One other example in the rabbinic writings provides evidence that the rabbinic interpretation was influenced by Christian teaching: "And Abraham placed the wood of the burnt-offering on Isaac his son' (Genesis 22:5). Like a man who carries his cross (*tzaluv*) on his shoulder (Genesis Rabbah 56:3)." The reference to a cross is clearly influenced by the Christian description that Jesus carried his cross to the crucifixion.

Thus, Jewish interpretations of the *Akedah* illustrate that rabbinic exegesis cannot be understood properly without reference to the Christian context. Indeed, Jewish biblical interpretation may be more easily understood when viewed in terms of exegetical encounter, because the rabbis were not only aware of Christian exegesis but were influenced by it. Jews and Christians lived (and continue to live) in a biblically oriented culture and to a certain extent they are both "bound by the Bible."

The host communities, both Christian and Islamic, had significant impact upon Jews in the Diaspora in other ways. Jews often adopted the languages, dress,

customs, names, and even religious styles of the majority population. Examples include the many Orthodox Jews who today wear distinctive clothing similar to that of 18th-century Polish gentry. The Reform Jewish movement based its early worship services on German Lutheranism. Moses Maimonides and other Jewish philosophers wrote in Arabic, and Yiddish is a combination of Hebrew, German, and Polish. Despite living as a vulnerable minority within Christian Europe for centuries, there was extensive cross-fertilization between Diaspora Jews and their host Christian communities. That interplay included the fervent messianic movements that swept Europe in the 16th to 18th centuries, including some Jews who believed the reforms of Martin Luther were a precursor to the messianic era and some Christian millenarians who similarly believed the messianic claims of Sabbatai Zevi.

At the same time, as the power of Christendom increased in Europe, Jewish life became more difficult and violence against Jewish communities became more common. This was epitomized by the Crusades (11th to 16th centuries), which were holy wars preached by the papacy against the enemies of Christ and his Church. The Crusades appealed widely to popular imagination and whipped up Christian emotion against Jews. For example, Urban's call in 1095 led crusaders to depart for the Holy Land but on their way through Germany they encountered prosperous Jewish communities in cities like Worms, Mainz, and Cologne. Although the bishops tried to prevent anti-Jewish violence, many Jews were killed or forcibly baptised. Others died by their own hands as martyrs sanctifying God's holy name (*Kiddush ha-Shem*). Extensive loss of Jewish life was prevented by Bernard of Clairvaux during the Second Crusade. He stopped anti-Jewish preaching and expected Christians to adhere to traditional church policy protecting Jews. During the Third Crusade, the Jewish community of York was massacred in 1190 in Clifford's Tower, in King Richard I's absence. Narratives of these pogroms entered Jewish folklore and consciousness, contributing to a mindset that Jews were surrounded by (Christian) enemies. For understandable reasons, Christianity was viewed as a constant threat to Jewish life in the Diaspora.

The dislocation in the relationship between Jews and Christian in Christian lands can also be seen in the architectural divergence between synagogue and church, which increased from the seventh century onward. Churches experimented with both centralized and longitudinal forms, although the basilican form remained predominant. Churches grew increasingly articulated on the exterior, taking pride of place as freestanding monuments in the civic realm. Synagogues, aware of their precarious position within the dominant Christian culture, adopted relatively inconspicuous exteriors to blend into the urban fabric.

For the most part, Jews passively accepted that they would suffer expulsions from Christian lands and pogroms at Christian hands, but they believed the Jewish people could live beyond such events. This survival technique is illustrated by the fact that even as the Jewish lights of Western Christian Europe were extinguished one by one—expelled from England (1290), France (1306), and Spain (1492)—new Jewish centers were being established in Eastern Christian Europe as well as in Islamic Turkey and the Middle East. A legacy of the mentality that saw the Jewish community as being utterly engulfed by Christian enemies remains entrenched in

the popular imagination. Rabbinic Judaism reinforced a perception among Jews that they were on their own, that no one else shared their vision, and that all outsiders were enemies. For centuries this reflected considerable truth. This mindset was reinforced by Christian inquisitions and pogroms and, in the 20th century, by the Shoah.

A significant change began, however, in the past 100 years when Jews in the Diaspora began to discover that there were Christian communities in the world with which they could share a vision of a decent society. The transformation in relations between Judaism and Christianity is one of the few pieces of good news in modern encounters between religions. In the past 100 years, the need for Christianity to abandon its historical religious animosity and misleading caricature of Judaism has been overwhelming. These views are now generally admitted as being wrong, but their full and public rejection was required before the possibility of rebuilding good relations with Judaism. Thus, what was required was a shift from what was, for the most part, an inherent need to condemn Judaism to the need to condemn Christian anti-Judaism. As far as the Christian contribution to anti-Semitism is concerned, the Protestant Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in particular, instead of being part of the problem, have now become part of the solution.

It was partly for this reason that an English Liberal Jew, Claude Montefiore (1858–1938), called for

[Jewish] theologians who shall neither be afraid of Christian doctrine on the one hand, nor be on the constant search for contrasts on the other, who will not wish to impoverish Judaism by insisting on differences and contrasts, but will rather seek to enrich it by finding out what the great minds of other religions have thought and taught, and how much is consistent with Judaism, and valuable and worthy of adoption and incorporation, and how much must be rejected . . . We need theologians who do not want to sit in corners and erect peculiar systems of their own, but who are willing to profit and learn even from those whose traditions and accents are other than their own.” (Montefiore 1923, 560–561)

On the other hand, Joseph Soloveitchik (1903–1993), who was the leading 20th-century Modern Orthodox religious authority in the Diaspora and whose religious opinions and rulings are considered authoritative by many Jews, took a contrasting position. While happy for Jews and Christians to work together in the social and political arenas, his 1964 essay on interreligious dialogue, entitled “Confrontation,” prohibits dialogue with Christians. Although Soloveitchik was influenced by Christian theologians and philosophers such as Soren Kierkegaard, he argues for a rejectionist approach. From his theological understanding of the development of human nature Soloveitchik concludes that the faith experience is private and incommunicable. Building on that argument he determines that interreligious dialogue is intrinsically flawed and should not be undertaken.

Whatever the views of theologians such as Montefiore and Soloveitchik, Christianity continued to have an impact on Jewish life in the Diaspora, including Christian attitudes to Zionism and the State of Israel. Zionism benefited from the Christian West’s rediscovery of the Holy Land in the 19th century, as well as from the climate created by numerous influential Christians, like George Eliot, who

advocated the restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the capture of Palestine by General Edmund Allenby (1861–1936) and the publication of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and the decision of the League of Nations to award Great Britain the mandate over Palestine, all facilitated the political and practical progress of the Zionist movement.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Zionism became a preeminent part of Jewish identity in the Diaspora. Many major Christian statements on the new relationship of the Church and the Jewish people stammer or even fall silent on the subject of Zionism and the State of Israel. In 1969, Edward Flannery (1912–1998) argued that the Christian psyche is subliminally predisposed to anti-Zionism, which provides an outlet for suppressed or unconscious anti-Semitism.

Roman Catholicism's official attitude toward Zionism changed greatly in the course of the 20th century. In 1904, Pope Pius X rejected Theodor Herzl's plea for support unequivocally: "The Jews have not recognised our Lord, therefore we cannot recognise the Jewish people." Nine decades later, in 1994, the Holy See established official diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, and Pope John Paul II, during his historic visit to Israel in 2000, displayed deep respect for the nation of the Jewish people. The papal visit made a profound impact on Jews both in Israel and the Diaspora. In what has become an iconic image, John Paul II placed a written prayer in a crevice of the Western Wall. The short, typed prayer with an official seal, read: "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations. We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking Your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant." Pope Benedict XVI's moving visit to Auschwitz in 2006 is significant, not least because of his German nationality.

The Protestant churches, although equally vociferous in their condemnation of anti-Semitism, present a greater variety of views toward Israel, which also have an impact on Jews in the Diaspora. For example, Christian Zionists, including fundamentalists and evangelical movements associated with the International Christian Embassy, believe God is working through Zionism to fulfill biblical prophecy and usher in the messianic age. From the 18th century, a steadily growing minority of Protestants in Europe and America argued that a Jewish "restoration" in the Holy Land would accompany the creation of Christian nation states elsewhere, fulfilling one of the "dispensations" leading to the millennial redemption prophesied in the Old and New Testaments.

On the other hand, the restoration of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel and a national renaissance have severely undermined the age-old Christian claim that the "wandering Jew" is divinely doomed to eternal exile and suffering. This view has buttressed replacement theology and the supersessionism inherent in the notion of the Church as the New Israel.

For some of the more radical evangelicals, support for the State of Israel is critical not only in terms of national survival but also, ultimately, to advance the Second Coming of Jesus as the Messiah who will be acknowledged by the whole world. It is not wholly surprising, therefore, that Jews are somewhat ambivalent about their

support because Jews become transformed into pawns on the chessboard of history, being used to fulfill the final predetermined game plan.

Most mainline Protestants firmly oppose such prophetic dispensationalism and reject millenarianism, but nonetheless endorse Zionism, as did Paul Tillich (1886–1965) and Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), as a necessary and morally justified response to anti-Semitism. There are also other Protestants who make absolute moral demands on Israel and conclude that Zionism represents a profane corruption of Judaism's true prophetic mission. Naim Ateek, for example, has argued that since the creation of the state, some Jewish and Christian interpreters have read the Old Testament largely as a Zionist text to such an extent that it has become almost repugnant to Palestinian Christians. This has led to discussions by some Protestants in the West about divestment campaigns and other anti-Israeli initiatives, which cause great anguish among Jews in the Diaspora. Although some Jews have consequently questioned the value of dialogue with Christians, these criticisms demonstrate that Christianity continues to have an impact on Jewish Diaspora life, for better and for worse. This serves to show that at the beginning of the 21st century, the State of Israel and the Diaspora are both integral not only to the formation of Jewish identity but also to relations with Christians and Christianity.

### Select Bibliography

- Collins, John. J. 1983. *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*. New York: Crossroad.
- Dunn, James D. G. 1991. *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International.
- Kessler, Edward D., and Neil Wenborn, eds. 2004. *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Montefiore, Claude G. 1923. *The Old Testament and After*. London: Macmillan.
- Ross, James R. 2000. *Fragile Branches: Travels through the Jewish Diaspora*. New York: Riverhead.
- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 1964. "Confrontation." *Tradition* 6, no. 2.

## Jewish Influence on the Formation of the Christian Scriptures

*Alison Salvesen*

---

It was in all likelihood the needs of the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt that first gave rise to the earliest Greek versions of Scripture collectively known as the version of the Seventy [translators] or Septuagint (LXX). Though the pseudonymous *Letter of Aristeas* is largely unhistorical, its statement that the Torah was rendered into Greek in Alexandria is corroborated by the vocabulary used in the LXX Pentateuch. Other books, including LXX Isaiah, also appear to originate in Egypt.

As the Hebrew biblical text became both more standardized and more authoritative among Jews in the first century BCE, there was increasing dissatisfaction

Page from the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of ancient manuscripts discovered in caves in the Judean desert. Archaeologists believe the scrolls may shed great light on the history of Judaism, early Christianity, and the Bible. (Pictorial Library of Bible Lands)



with the earlier, “Old Greek” translation because it did not always correspond closely to the emerging standard Hebrew text. It is probable that the move to revise the Greek started in Palestine, where Hebrew was best known, and may be reflected in some of the Greek scroll fragments found at Qumran, which contain revisions to improve the literal correspondence with the proto-Masoretic Hebrew text (see Ulrich 2000). In addition, it seems that certain LXX books that were translated later, such as Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, were rendered more literally in order to match more closely the formal structure of the Hebrew.

The process of revision toward the proto-Masoretic Hebrew text continued, through the version of “Theodotion,” who may not have been a single person, and culminated in the literal version of Aquila, a convert to Jerusalem who is said by the Christian writer Epiphanius to have come from Sinope of Pontus. Epiphanius dates Aquila’s revision to ca. 130 CE. Rabbinic sources also say that Aquila was a proselyte, who was influenced by R. Akiva and worked under the authority of Palestinian rabbis Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Joshua ben Hananiah (Jerusalem Talmud, Meg. i. 71c; Jerusalem Talmud Kid. i. 59a.; Babylonian Talmud Meg 3a). The other named Jewish translator of the second century is Symmachus, who according to Epiphanius was born a Samaritan before converting to Judaism. He produced his revision toward the end of the second century, probably in Palestine. Other early Christian witnesses say Symmachus was a Jewish Christian, an Ebionite, but this is not borne out by the evidence of his translation, which tallies closely with rabbinic midrash and is rather less literal than that of Aquila.

Greek-speaking Christians displayed a preference for the older unrevised LXX, because the Hebrew was of little interest to them, and more importantly the LXX

was held to support their belief in Christ as Messiah and Son of God, while they suspected that the new Jewish revisions deliberately set out to undermine such claims. This does not mean they had no contact with the revised versions used by Jews. They were aware of the latter because of their use in debates between Jews and Christians. Sometimes Christians even used such versions unwittingly, as in the case of Justin Martyr (d. ca. 165). In his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, written in Ephesus, Justin cites Micah 4:3–7 using a form of the Greek text that had undergone a similar revision toward the Hebrew to that witnessed by the text-type of a scroll of the Minor Prophets found at Nahal Hever in the Judean Desert (see Tov 1990). Whether Justin had acquired such a Greek text from Palestine or whether it was in general circulation in Asia Minor is unknown.

On the whole, Christian Greek Scriptures tended to be much less reliably copied than Hebrew scrolls and to be altered consciously or unconsciously in a direction that supported Christian teaching. The classically trained Christian scholar Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254) is the first to remark on textual corruption among Greek witnesses and the discrepancy between the contents of Greek and Hebrew manuscripts (Commentary in Matthew 15:14 and Letter to Africanus 4–5). His goal was to restore what he considered must have been the original text produced by the LXX translators. Since he assumed the Hebrew text had not altered since their time, he used the Hebrew text of his own day alongside the Jewish revisions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, rather than working solely from the best Greek exemplar. The result was a massive six-columned work known as the Hexapla. Though he carried out most of the work in Caesarea of Palestine, where he settled in 232 CE, he probably began it while he was still living in Alexandria, which would imply that it was contacts with Jews in the Diaspora, as well as their texts and versions, that sowed the seeds of the project. The fifth column of the Hexapla, containing Origen's revised text of the LXX, was copied and circulated separately, at first with his critical markings showing what he had inserted to correspond with material found in the Hebrew and later Jewish versions (asterisks) and what was found in LXX but not in Hebrew (obeli). In time these signs dropped out, with the result that Greek readings conforming to the current Hebrew text were introduced into the stream of Christian manuscript transmission. Some of these additions were quite substantial, especially in Exodus and Job. However, the pluses of the LXX, compared with what was in the Hebrew proto-MT, also tended to be perpetuated. Another effect of Origen's work on the Hexapla was to make available to Christian exegetes the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. In spite of theological qualms, many scholars found readings from the "Three" to be very useful in elucidating the meaning of obscure words and phrases in Scripture, and some were translated into Syriac, Latin, and Armenian.

For Origen, the original translation of the LXX was inspired, which is why he wished to restore it, to the extent of using Jewish tools but without acknowledging the inspiration of the Hebrew text, at least for the Christian Church. The Latin-speaker Jerome (d. 420 CE) went much further. He began to study Hebrew during a period as a hermit in Syria, from a Jewish convert to Christianity, and continued his studies in the language in Constantinople, Rome, and Bethelhem, with local

Jewish teachers who had remained within the fold. His proficiency in the language, his familiarity with the Hexapla, and his strong philological interests led him eventually to consider the Hebrew text the ultimate authority in terms of both text and meaning. When the pope asked him to revise the Old Latin version of the Old Testament, which had been rendered piecemeal from the LXX, and bring it in line with Origen's revised LXX text, Jerome at first complied. But his awareness of the problems of producing a translation of a translation brought him to the point where he realized that only a return to the "original" Hebrew, which he considered the ultimate authority, would suffice. Drawing on Origen's work and using Jewish informants, he embarked on the *Iuxta Hebraeos* version, or version according to the Hebrews, now commonly known as the Vulgate. This eventually became the authoritative Latin Old Testament for the Roman Catholic Church. In many cases Jerome rejects typical Christian readings of the text if there is no basis for them in the Hebrew text, and he introduces some interpretations from Jewish sources where these do not militate against Christian doctrine. In other places he ingeniously adds Christological elements, as in the Psalms, where the name Jesus appears as a translation for *yeshu'* (e.g., Psalm 51[50]:14, 79[78]:9 and 85[84]:5). He was also aware that the Hebrew canon was shorter and only translated those books recognized by Palestinian Jews: he did translate Tobit and Judith, but this was under pressure from his patrons, and he warned the parents of a young girl that she should beware of reading apocryphal books.

Though Jerome's translation of the *Iuxta Hebraeos* version was all carried out in Palestine, the seeds for it must have been sown by Jews in the Diaspora who were prepared to teach and to challenge Jerome. The work of Origen and Jerome effected a partial rapprochement between the Christian Greek and Latin Old Testament texts and the Hebrew Bible as understood by the rabbis of the third and fourth centuries.

### Select Bibliography

- Barthélemy, D. 1963. *Les devanciers d'Aquila: première publication intégrale du texte des fragments du Dodécaprophète trouvés dans le désert de Juda, précédée d'une étude sur les traductions et recensions grecques de la Bible réalisées au premier siècle de notre ère sous l'influence du rabbinat palestinien*. VT Supplements 10. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Kamesar, A. 1993. *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the Quaestiones hebraicae in Genesim*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Kelly, J. N. D. 1975. *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*. London: Duckworth.
- Salvesen, A. 2003. "A Convergence of the Ways? The Judaizing of Christian Scripture by Origen and Jerome." In *The Ways that Never Parted*, edited by A. Yoshiko Reed and A. Becker, 233–258. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 95. Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr.
- Tov, E. with R. A. Kraft and P. Parsons. 1990. *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever: 8 Hev XII gr*. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 8. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Trigg, J. W. 1998. *Origen. The Early Church Fathers*. London: Routledge.
- Ulrich, E. 2000. "Septuagint." In *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, edited by L. Schiffman and G. J. Brooke, vol. II, 863–868. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

## History of Judeo-Christian Communities in the Jewish Diaspora

*David J. Rudolph*

---

Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities distinguish themselves from other Diaspora Jewish communities in their belief that Jesus is the Messiah. They differ from Christian churches in their synagogue lifestyle and stance that Jewish life is a matter of covenant responsibility and/or national duty for Jews. Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities are significant to the history of the Jewish Diaspora in part because they represent a bridge between the synagogue and the church. As David Noel Freedman (1969, 86) put it, "Jewish Christians were able to have active and effective relations with Gentile Christians and at the same time retain operating status in the non-Christian Jewish community. Thus a link was forged, however tenuous, between Christianity and Judaism and it persisted as long as the Jewish Christian community continued to exist. This halfway house with conduits to both sides, could serve as meeting place and mediator, communication center and symbol of the continuity to which both enterprises belonged."

The earliest Diaspora Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities were established in the first century CE by Torah-observant, Jesus-believing Jews from the Land of Israel who "traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message [that Jesus was the Messiah] only to Jews" (Acts 11:19). These communities were part of a Jewish "sect" called the *Natzerim* ("Nazarenes," Acts 24:5). Epiphanius, the fourth-century Church Father, describes Nazarene communities of his day:

[They] did not call themselves Christians, but Nazarenes . . . they remained wholly Jewish and nothing else. For they use not only the New Testament but also the Old like the Jews . . . [They] live according to the preaching of the Law as among the Jews . . . They have a good mastery of the Hebrew language. For the entire Law and the Prophets and what is called the Scriptures, I mention the poetical books, Kings, Chronicles and Esther and all the others are read in Hebrew by them as that is the case with the Jews of course. Only in this respect they differ from the Jews and Christians: with the Jews they do not agree because of their belief in Christ, with the Christians because they are trained in the Law, in circumcision, the Sabbath and the other things. (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29; trans. Klijn and Reinink 1973, 173)

Direct evidence of Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities from the 5th through 17th centuries is scanty. This is because, in the post-Nicean church, the catholic view that Jews could not become Christians and remain Jews was backed by canon law and Constantine's sword. Messianic communities in this period were forced to go underground. The Second Council of Nicea in 787 was the first ecumenical council to formally ban Jesus-believing Jews who lived as Jews from the church. Jesus-believing Jews were required to renounce all ties to Judaism through professions of faith like the one from the Church of Constantinople ("I renounce absolutely everything Jewish, every law, rite and custom").

Joseph Rabinowitz established the first Messianic synagogue of modern times in Kishinev, Russia, in 1884. It was called *Beney Israel, Beney Brit Chadashah* (Israelites of the New Covenant). Neither Rabinowitz nor his synagogue was connected to a Christian denomination; the government of Bessarabia legally designated the Messianic community a distinct Jewish sect (Kjaer-Hansen 1995, 64). Rabinowitz's synagogue considered circumcision, the Sabbath, and festivals incumbent upon Jews as section 6 of the community's *Twenty-Four Articles of Faith* makes clear:

[As] we are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, who was the father of all those who were circumcised and believed, we are bound to circumcise every male-child on the eighth day, as God commanded him. And as we are the descendants of those whom the Lord brought out of the land of Egypt, with a stretched out arm, we are bound to keep the Sabbath, the feast of unleavened bread, and the feast of weeks, according as it is written in the law of Moses. (Kjaer-Hansen 1995, 104)

The Messianic community referred to their building (which seated 150–200 people) as a “synagogue,” and they read from a Torah scroll (Kjaer-Hansen 1995, 146). Traditional synagogue prayers were used with Messianic additions, and Jesus was referred to by his original Hebrew name, *Yeshua*.

Prominent Messianic Jewish leaders in the late 19th and early 20th centuries included Rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein in Hungary, Mark John Levy in the United States, Philip Cohen in South Africa (whose Jewish Messianic Movement published the journal *The Messianic Jew*) and Hayyim Yedidyah Pollak (Lucky) in Galicia. Other leaders included Paul Levertoff in Germany and England (who held the chair of Hebrew and Rabbinics at the *Institutum Judaicum* in Leipzig), Alex Waldmann, Israel Pick, Yehiel Tsvi Lichtenstein-Herschensohn, and John Zacker (who founded the Hebrew Christian Synagogue of Philadelphia in 1922). These individuals paved the way for the emergence of the Messianic Jewish community in the second half of the 20th century.

Historically, the earliest opponents of modern Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities were not traditional Jews but Hebrew Christians with a traditional Christian theology of Judaism and the Torah. In the 1917 issue of *The Hebrew Christian Alliance Quarterly*, the official journal of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America (HCAA), Messianic Judaism was labeled a heresy, and followers were banished from the Alliance ranks. The *Alliance Quarterly* leaves no ambiguity about the HCAA stance on the Messianic community: “We felt it our duty to make it clear that we have nothing to do with this so-called ‘Messianic Judaism,’ in any shape or form, nor have we any faith in it.” The journal goes on to state, “Their grand sounding designation is a misnomer, for it is neither ‘Messianic’ or ‘Judaism.’ It does *not* describe any movement of Jews in the direction of recognizing our Lord Jesus as the Messiah, but an agitation on the part of some Hebrew Christian brethren, who have much to learn as to the true character of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The editors note that the HCAA stands opposed to the “misguided tendency” of Messianic Judaism and that “we will have none of it!” They conclude with the statement, “We are filled with deep gratitude to God, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in enabling the Conference to so effectively banish it [Messianic Judaism] from our

midst, and now the Hebrew Christian Alliance has put herself on record to be absolutely free from it, *now and forever*" ("Messianic Judaism" 1917).

In the decades that followed, Messianic communities receded from attention in Jewish Christian circles as Jewish missionary agencies and Hebrew Christian churches marginalized Messianic Jews. Hebrew Christian ministries like the American Board of Missions to the Jews put on a veneer of Jewishness to draw Jewish people to the gospel; Jewish identity and lifestyle were missiologically motivated and not a matter of covenant or national duty (Cohn-Sherbok 2000, 40–41). It is estimated that more than "230,000 Jews became Christians during the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (Glaser 1998, 159). Almost all of these Jewish "converts to Christianity" assimilated into Gentile churches. Their children intermarried and, with rare exception, no longer identified as Jews (Rudolph 2005, 65; Rudolph 2003, 48–50; Cohn-Sherbok 2000, 54). Against this backdrop of indifference to Jewish difference and failure to maintain Jewish continuity, a resurgence of Messianic Jewish communities in the tradition of Rabinowitz occurred in the early 1970s.

Between 1967 and 1974, a large number of Jews in their early 20s became believers in Jesus and maintained their Jewish identity and lifestyle as a matter of covenantal responsibility and/or national duty. These young "Messianic Jews" joined the Hebrew Christian Alliance and, through majority vote, steered the organization in the direction of Messianic Judaism. In 1975, to the chagrin of the Hebrew Christian old guard, they successfully changed the name of the organization to the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA). This about-face reflected a sea change in the theological and cultural ethos of the movement, "It signaled a shift in the movement's sense of identity . . . Along with the change in name came a new focus on the development of distinct congregations of Jewish Yeshua-believers" (Kinzer 2005, 291). The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) was formed in 1979, and the International Association of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS) followed suit in 1986. In 2006, these two umbrella organizations represented more than 200 Messianic congregations in the Diaspora. An additional 200+ congregations around the world remain unaffiliated. The UMJC defines Messianic Judaism as "a movement of Jewish congregations and congregation-like groupings committed to Yeshua the Messiah that embrace the covenantal responsibility of Jewish life and identity rooted in Torah, expressed in tradition, renewed and applied in the context of the New Covenant" ([www.umjc.org](http://www.umjc.org)).

A common misunderstanding about Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities today is that they are the same as "Jews for Jesus." Most Messianic Jews, however, will deny any connection between the two. Why is this? The terms "Messianic Jew" and "Messianic Judaism" historically represented a commitment to Jewish continuity. In recent years, these terms have been co-opted by Jewish missionary agencies (of the HCAA variety) that maintain the traditional Christian view that the New Testament is ultimately indifferent to Jewish life (Telchin 2004, 21–158; Maoz 2003, 43–258). The prime example of such a group is Jews for Jesus, a Protestant evangelical missionary organization with a staff of more than 200 people (Ariel 2000, 219; [www.JewsforJesus.org](http://www.JewsforJesus.org)). Unlike mainstream Messianic synagogues, Jews for Jesus expresses little commitment to Jewish life and Jewish continuity. Most of the con-

verts they make join Protestant churches, and their children assimilate into Gentile Christian culture. The official stance of Jews for Jesus is that all of the distinctively Jewish covenant responsibilities specified in the Torah, including circumcision, are optional for Jews because Christians are “free” from the law (Brickner 2005, 193). By contrast, mainstream Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities are committed to Jewish continuity independent of their outreach within the Jewish community. They consider Torah observance to be a matter of covenant responsibility for Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

- Brickner, David. 2005. “A Final Word from David Brickner, Executive Director of Jews for Jesus.” In *The Messianic Movement: A Field Guide for Evangelical Christians*, edited by Rich Robinson, 186–198. San Francisco: Jews for Jesus.
- Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. 2000. *Messianic Judaism*. London: Cassell.
- Freedman, David Noel. 1969. “An Essay on Jewish Christianity.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1: 81–86.
- Glaser, Mitchell L. 1998. “A Survey of Missions to the Jews in Continental Europe 1900–1950.” PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, Faculty of the School of World Mission.
- Kinzer, Mark. 2005. *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.
- Kjaer-Hansen, Kai. 1995. *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Klijn, A. F. J., and G. J. Reinink. 1973. *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill.
- “Messianic Judaism.” 1917. *Hebrew Christian Alliance Quarterly* 1 (July/October): 85–88.
- Rudolph, David J. 2005. “Messianic Jews and Christian Theology: Restoring an Historical Voice to the Contemporary Discussion.” *Pro Ecclesia* 14 (1): 58–84.

## Islamization and Jews in the Medieval Middle East

*Fred Astren*

---

Islamization refers to the complex set of religious, social, and cultural changes in the Middle Ages that transformed societies of the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, and parts of Central Asia into Islamic societies. These processes occurred at different rates in different regions and took from two to four centuries, or more in some areas.

The establishment and vast military expansion of the Muslim caliphate, which began in the early seventh century, led to an overwhelming majority of world Jewry becoming subjects of the new empire under conditions that generally permitted (along with Christians) communal autonomy and religious liberty in exchange for subservient social status and discriminatory taxation. Although the history of Jews and Judaism was shaped in many ways through accommodation and resistance to

the extensive historical transformations of Islamization, scholars of medieval Jewish history have given little attention to the topic.

The role of Jews in the seventh-century Muslim conquests of the Middle East is difficult to gauge because the Arabic sources offer little specific information on Jews and are problematic in their reliability. Legendary materials explain that as a consequence of Jerusalem's conquest in 638 the caliph, identified as 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, permitted Jews to reside there after centuries of exclusion. Islam had no theological necessity for excluding Jews from occupying the conceptual center of their sacred geography. Other narratives portray Jews of both the Byzantine Empire and later in Visigothic Spain welcoming the invaders in reaction to harsh anti-Jewish policies of their rulers, but such actions cannot be fully corroborated historically.

The policies for communal autonomy and religious liberty, known as *dhimma* ("protection" or "covenant"), took decades, if not longer, to develop and be institutionalized. The conditions for *dhimmi*s, as the subjects of the policies are called, included the payment of either or both a poll tax (*jizya*) and a land tax (*kharaj*) and agreement to certain stipulations that symbolized subservience to Muslim dominance. These conditions, epitomized in a late-circulating document known as the "Pact of 'Umar," included prohibitions against bearing arms or teaching the Koran, as well as sumptuary regulations, regulations limiting construction of new synagogues (and churches), and others. Nonetheless, *dhimma* benefited Jews by offering religious and social toleration and by encouraging Jewish communities to organize systematic and competent leadership in order to act effectively under the terms of corporate recognition. Rabbinic leadership capitalized on *dhimma* and the near total unification of world Jewry to advance its version of Judaism to the exclusion of local traditions and other variations in practice and belief.

Although conversion to Islam is a component of Islamization, forced conversion is rare in Islamic history, with a few exceptions proving the rule, most notably under the Almohads in 12th-century Morocco and Spain and the Safavids in 17th-century Persia. In medieval Jewish literary sources, it is uncommon for conversion to Islam to be addressed, perhaps because losses sustained by the community were not as important in terms of the rabbinic worldview as sanctification and upholding the Law. Medieval Arabic sources adopt a Muslim triumphalism that accepts the inevitability and correctness of conversion to Islam without much consideration for process and detail.

At first, Muslim authorities discouraged conversion, but later conversion became attractive for Jews and Christians as political and economic challenges made *dhimmi* taxes increasingly difficult to bear, especially for farmers. In the Middle East, conversion to Islam took place gradually. Richard Bulliet suggests that it reached a critical mass of 50 percent of the population in many regions in the 9th and 10th centuries, 80 percent at the beginning of the 11th, and approached 100 percent in many regions in the 12th and 13th centuries (Bulliet 1979). The earliest centuries probably produced little Jewish conversion, because on the one hand rabbinic self-governance was consolidating and even spreading, and on the other hand, Islam represented the faith of only a small elite that ruled much larger indigenous populations. At this time, Jews who converted to Islam would have

done so for individual reasons, or because their forebears had been enslaved in the great conquests. The descendants of slaves, living in Muslim environments and cut off from family and Jewish community, would have found conversion easy and reasonable.

It is likely that in the 9th and 10th centuries the majority of Jewish conversions to Islam occurred, and the threat to Jewish communities became discernible. By this time, Islam had developed a religious and social system that offered meaning but also social status and financial opportunity. In the second half of the 10th century, the Karaite Japheth ben ‘Eli testifies to Ismaili Muslim efforts at converting Jews (Wasserstrom 1995, 132–133). From the 11th century on, a truly Muslim society existed, when numerical preponderance and the influence of social institutions defined society as a whole. It is likely that by this time fewer Jews were converting because with the elaboration of Muslim law demands made upon Muslims became heavier. It is noteworthy that in the 13th century, when much of the Middle East and North Africa had become fully Islamized, Jews and Christians began to lose social status and economic opportunity as the urban quarter and marketplace became more Muslim.

A component of Islamization in many regions was Arabization, the adoption of Arabic language and customs, which among Jews led to Judeo-Arabic culture. Arabization and Islamization permitted Jews to enjoy a measure of participation in the intellectual and economic life of the Muslim world. Some Jewish historical developments mirrored cognate Muslim phenomena, such as messianic movements, scripturalism, and the linguistic concerns of the Masoretes.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bulliet, Richard W. 1979. *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period, an Essay in Quantitative History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gil, Moshe. 1992. *A History of Palestine, 634–1099*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gil, Moshe. 2004. *Jews in Islamic Countries in the Middle Ages*. Boston: Brill.
- Humphreys, R. Stephen. 1991. *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lewis, Bernard. 1984. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wasserstrom, Steven M. 1995. *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

## Christian–Jewish Dialogue: 18th Century

*Klaus L. Berghahn*

---

When one speaks of the beginnings of a Christian–Jewish dialogue in 18th-century Germany one has also to keep in mind its limitations: the still prevalent anti-Judaism (even among many intellectuals), the extraordinarily restrictive edicts, and

the mental reservations of most Jews in their contact with Christians. The century-old Christian hatred of the Jews made such a dialogue almost unimaginable, and Jewish self-isolation made it improbable. The edicts of the 18th century compounded this discrimination and segregation; they regulated and restricted all aspects of Jewish life under Christian governments and discouraged any form of Christian–Jewish dialogue.

Against this backdrop of religious hostility and governmental restrictions, the Enlightenment's philosophy of tolerance, which spread from England (through the writings of John Locke) to the continent, was a glimmer of hope for the Jews. However, the toleration debate was mostly concerned with tolerance among the Christian churches and sects, and only since the middle of century included the Jews. Tolerance was the thin veil of piety over a deep-seated enmity toward the Jews, which was ritually resurrected in the Easter liturgy and the Passion plays. It was merely a sentimental feeling toward the older religion than a civic duty, a gesture that when tested would easily collapse.

In Germany, the first conditional attempts to tolerate at least one exceptional Jew can be found in belles lettres around the middle of the century. In Christian G. Gellert's sentimental novel *Das Leben der schwedischen Graefin von G.* (The Life of the Swedish Baroness of G., 1747), a rich Polish Jew is introduced, who becomes the benefactor and friend of her husband. Yet the whole episode is still an exercise in tolerance on the lowest level: one noble Jew as the exception to the rule. The same ambivalent model is used in Gotthold E. Lessing's one-act comedy *Die Juden* (The Jews, 1749), in which a nameless traveler saves a baron from the hands of robbers. When the grateful baron offers his benefactor a lavish reward and on top of it his daughter's hand in marriage, the traveler has to decline: He is a Jew. The play ends in confusion and without a happy end. Tolerance is postulated by the example of one honest Jew who in the end accepts the friendship of the Christian baron. Here, as in Gellert's novel, personal friendship is the first step toward tolerance.

However, Lessing's play had unforeseen consequences for the beginnings of a Christian–Jewish dialogue. When it was published in 1754, Johann D. Michaelis, a famous orientalist at the University of Goettingen, immediately criticized it: Although a noble Jew was not inconceivable, the idea was highly improbable, and this distracted from the pleasure of the comedy. In his rebuttal, Lessing used two arguments, one practical and the other tactical. The improbability would disappear if the living conditions under which the Jews suffered were improved. Why should education and wealth, which the traveler displayed, have less of a cultivating influence on a Jew than on a Christian? To add authenticity to his argument, he quoted from a private letter of a young Jew, Moses Mendelssohn, who was deeply offended by Michaelis's critique. In the years after Lessing introduced Mendelssohn to the literary sphere of the Enlightenment, he became a respected philosopher of the German and Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) and the most influential promoter of a Christian–Jewish dialogue.

This was the beginning of a lifelong and consequential friendship between Lessing and Mendelssohn. For friendship was the foundation of tolerance as it was from now on practiced in the philosophical discourse of the Enlightenment. One

Moses Mendelssohn was a prominent 18th-century philosopher and the founder of modern German Judaism. He became an important voice for Jewish emancipation and for an end to discrimination against Jews. (Library of Congress)



should, however, not overlook the fact that this dialogue was limited to a small group of intellectuals, of which Lessing and Mendelssohn formed the nucleus. At the end of his life Mendelssohn gratefully acknowledged that he had the good fortune “to have known some excellent men, who were not of my creed, as my friends.” And his correspondence with leading intellectuals of the German Enlightenment—Kant, Lessing, Nicolai, Herder, Abbt, Ramler, Sulzer, Dohm, and even Michaelis and Lavater—supports this statement. Browsing through the letters Mendelssohn exchanged with his Christian friends over 30 years one cannot only admire the openness and trust that bespeaks their friendships, but, even more important, how they transcended the confines of institutionalized religion, sustained toleration on the basis of natural religion, and advanced the cause of Jewish emancipation. Many Jewish intellectuals, maskilim like Gumperts, Herz, Wesseli, Maimon, Friedlaender, Bendavid, Ascher, and more, followed Mendelssohn’s example and enhanced this productive and emancipatory Christian–Jewish dialogue. Or, as George Mosse once observed, “Friendship was no temporary bond, but a solid and durable chain linking Christians and Jews.”

Yet the friendship cult of the 18th century had another restriction that should be noted, if we are not to paint too harmonious a picture of the Christian–Jewish dialogue. One could encounter true, fair-weather, or even false friends. A case in point for this last contingency is Johann C. Lavater, a Swiss theologian and proselyte, who entered Mendelssohn’s life to start an interreligious disputation, first privately when he visited Mendelssohn, and then publicly when he published his translation of Charles Bonnet’s *Untersuchung der Beweise fuer das Christentum* (Investigation of the Evidence in Favor of Christianity, 1769) with a provocative dedication to Mendelssohn: either to refute Bonnet or convert. With friends like these who needs enemies? Without going into details of this well-known controversy,

one can make two significant observations: first of all, Lavater fanatically interrupted the still fragile Christian–Jewish dialogue by dragging a merely tolerated Jew into a religious dispute that Mendelssohn despised, like any *pilpul*, and that also endangered his very existence in Prussia; second, that Mendelssohn’s Christian friends were appalled by this conversion attempt, agitated against Lavater, and forced him to apologize for his indiscretion.

Berlin, where Gentiles and Jews freely socialized at the end of the 18th century, became center stage for a wide-ranging Christian–Jewish dialogue. When the political climate seemed ripe for public discussions of reforms, Mendelssohn and his friends intensified the toleration debate by intervening on behalf of the Jews. The philosophical dialogue among friends spilled over into the public sphere by discussing the higher concerns of human dignity and rights. This was around 1780, when Lessing’s drama of toleration, *Nathan der Weise* (Nathan the Wise, 1779) and Christian W. Dohm’s treatise, *Ueber die buergerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (On the Civil Improvement of the Jews, 1781) were published, and when the Austrian Emperor Joseph II issued the Edict of Tolerance (1782).

Lessing’s play is famous for its centerpiece, Nathan’s Ring Parable, in which he argued in front of the Muslim Saladin that the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, share the same ethical values and should therefore tolerate each other. Equally important is the plot development of the drama, in which all main characters overcome their prejudices in tense and extensive dialogues, pronounce in the end the virtue of tolerance, and become friends.

Dohm’s discourse on the improvement of the civil status of the Jews, which was inspired by Mendelssohn, went beyond the toleration debate by arguing that the Jews could become useful citizens, as they were already in France and Holland, if the severe restriction of their living conditions was lifted. His reform project anticipated the Prussian Emancipation Edict of 1812, to which Wilhelm von Humboldt contributed an even more radical proposal that—in contrast to Dohm’s—would emancipate the Jews with no restrictions attached. This hopeful period for the Jews culminated in Emperor Joseph II’s Edict of Tolerance, which allowed the Jews of Lower Austria (Vienna) to attend schools and universities, practice all trades and professions, and establish their own businesses. It was praised all over Europe as a quasi-emancipation edict.

Friendship, dialogue, and tolerance laid the foundation for mutual respect and acceptance between Christian and Jewish intellectuals; the capstone, however, was the integration of the Jews into a Christian society, or civil rights for a minority. Nothing less was on Mendelssohn’s mind when he finally entered the toleration and/or emancipation debate. In three important contributions between 1782 and 1784 he developed his political philosophy.

First, he encouraged his friend Marcus Herz to translate Manasseh ben Israel’s message to Cromwell for readmission of the Jews to England (*Vindiciae Judaearum*, 1656), for which Mendelssohn wrote an introduction that he understood as an “appendix” to Dohm’s memorandum. In the preface of *Rettung der Juden* (Rescue of the Jews, 1782), Mendelssohn makes a small but significant correction of Dohm’s title page; instead of speaking of a “civil improvement” of the Jews he calls for their “civil

acceptance,” which means—ever so cautiously hinted at—nothing less than civil rights and equality for the Jews. He supported Dohm’s assertion that the Jews would be productive citizens, as in Holland, if the edicts would not restrict their industry. However in arguing against excommunication and for freedom of conscience by using arguments of natural religion (“the prayer house of reason which should be open to everyone”), he left himself open to the criticism that soon followed. He had to answer his critics, and he did so in his book *Jerusalem: Or on Religious Power and Judaism* (1783). Therein his *Confessio Judaica* is embedded in natural law arguments for the separation of church and state, and it ends with an appeal for the right to be different. Freedom of religion and conscience are intertwined with pleas for toleration and civil rights.

This is also the hidden message of his final contribution to the debate “What is Enlightenment?,” which appeared in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in 1783–1784. After discussing the new concepts of enlightenment, culture, and *Bildung* (self-cultivation) as “modifications of social life [. . .] and efforts of men to improve their social conditions,” he concentrates on *Bildung* as the center of humanities destiny. Here he differentiates between the subject of the state as a human being and as a citizen. If these two essential aspects of human life are not in harmony, “the affairs of the state are lamentable.” Here he breaks off the argument and replaces it with a gesture of silencing, if not despair: “In this case philosophy puts a hand over its mouth . . .” Mendelssohn, who had pleaded from the beginning of his intellectual life for toleration and human rights, does not dare demand civil rights also, but the development of the thought and his aposiopese clearly point to what Mendelssohn had hoped for all along: the emancipation of the Jews.

The Christian–Jewish dialogue became a surrogate for the social connectedness of the Jews. As long as governments denied them their basic rights, this circle of friends constituted a utopia of intellectuals (*Gelehrtenrepublik*) in anticipation of a world without oppression, prejudice, and hatred. Participating in the discourse of the Enlightenment, the Jews could carry their struggle for emancipation into the public arena. They were no longer viewed as useful functionaries of absolutism, but more and more as productive intellectuals who contributed to the philosophical, educational, and literary discourses of the time—and, as George Mosse put it, to the “symbolic process of emancipation.”

### Selected Bibliography

- Berghahn, Klaus L., ed. 1996. *The German-Jewish Dialogue—Reconsidered. A Symposium in Honor of George L. Mosse*. New York: Lang.
- Gilman, Sander, and Jack Zipes. 1997. *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096–1996*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul, and Jehuda Reinharz. 1995. *The Jew in the Modern World. A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mosse, George L. 1985. *German Jews beyond Judaism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Robertson, Ritchie, ed. 1999. *The German-Jewish Dialogue. An Anthology of Literary Texts 1749–1993*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Contemporary Judeo-Christian Communities in the Jewish Diaspora

*David J. Rudolph*

---

Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities in the contemporary Jewish Diaspora are synagogues that believe in Jesus the Messiah and embrace the covenantal responsibility of Jewish life and identity rooted in Torah, expressed in tradition, renewed and applied in the context of the New Covenant. Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities are significant in the contemporary Jewish Diaspora in part because they serve as a bridge between the synagogue and church and help to meet the unique needs of intermarried (Jewish-Christian) couples and their children. This entry will focus on how Diaspora Messianic Jewish congregations express their Jewishness and Messianic distinctiveness.

The Messianic Shabbat (Sabbath) service is more upbeat than the traditional synagogue service. Modeled after worship described in the Psalms of David, Messianic Jewish services commonly incorporate song, dance, and instrumental music, along with traditional Hebrew liturgy. Readings from the Torah and the New Testament are also typical. "Messianic services are joyful; singing and dancing are part of the experience, and there is an effusive vitality that is rarely felt in mainline synagogues or churches" (Feher 1998, 139). Although the average Messianic synagogue service has exuberant singing and dancing, some Messianic congregations follow a more classic synagogue model, based on the siddur (prayer book). High Holy Day services in Messianic synagogues also tend to be more traditional and replete with Hebrew liturgy.

Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities observe all of the major Jewish festivals and distinguish themselves from other Diaspora Jewish communities by interpreting festival tradition in light of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah. This is in keeping with their philosophy that "Messianic Judaism is Judaism, in all facets of its teaching, worship, and way of life, understood and practiced in the light of Messiah Yeshua" (Kinzer 2001, 11). Rather than creating a new festival tradition, their philosophy is to enter into conversation with the present tradition and adapt it as needed to reflect their distinct Messianic beliefs. On Yom Kippur, liturgy from the mahzor (prayer book for the High Holy Days) is included in their services as well as other prayers that thank God for sending Yeshua (Cohn-Sherbok 2000, 118). The Sukkoth service typically includes the special parashoth (Torah readings) for the festival in addition to readings from the New Testament. Blessings are recited over the *lulav* (palm leaves as well as other species) and *etrog* (a citrus fruit), and Yeshua's celebration of Sukkoth is recalled (John 7; Cohn-Sherbok 2000, 110–111). On Hanukkah, Messianic rabbis encourage children to recall the story of the Maccabees and the lesson it holds for resisting assimilation in the present day. It is emphasized that Yeshua also celebrated Hanukkah (John 10:22). Messianic synagogues usually do not celebrate the birth of the Messiah during Christmas time (Harris-Shapiro 1999, 147). More commonly, his birth is remembered as a community event during Sukkoth, when

the symbol of the sukkah (booth) reminds Messianic Jews of how God took on human form (as a Jew) and dwelled among his creation. Christmas is a “holiday that is sometimes celebrated at the individual level but is not part of the congregation’s communal festivities” (Feher 1998, 109).

In a Messianic synagogue, Passover is filled with Messianic meaning. Haggadoth (handbooks used at Passover Seders to guide families through the order of the ritual meal) focus on the Exodus of Israel from Egypt as well as the Exodus of humanity from sin and judgment through Yeshua the Messiah. Messianic Haggadoth compare the sacrificial role of the Passover lamb to the sacrificial role of the Messiah, and New Testament references to Yeshua’s celebration of Passover are highlighted. During Passover, Messianic Jews remove all leavened products from their homes and eat matzo (unleavened bread) in keeping with the Torah commandment. During this festival, Messianic Jews recall the words of the *shaliach* (apostle) Paul, “Don’t you know the saying, ‘It takes only a little *hametz* (leaven) to leaven a whole batch of dough?’ Get rid of the old *hametz*, so that you can be a new batch of dough, because in reality you are unleavened. For our *Pesach* (Passover) lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed. So let us celebrate the *Seder* not with leftover *hametz*, the *hametz* of wickedness and evil, but with the *matzah* of purity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:6–8 in the *Complete Jewish Bible* [CJB], a Messianic Jewish Bible translation). Easter Sunday is not celebrated in Messianic synagogues. The Messianic Jewish celebration of Passover emphasizes the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

At Messianic Jewish life cycle events, readings from the New Testament are almost always incorporated. In the *b’rit milah* (covenant of circumcision) ceremony, reference is made to Yeshua’s *b’rit milah* on the eighth day (Luke 2:21). At bar/bat mitzvahs, a Messianic rabbi will typically remind the community that when Yeshua was 12, he was brought to the Temple where he amazed Jerusalem’s teachers by the questions he asked (Luke 2:41–47). At Messianic Jewish weddings, marriage under the chuppah (canopy) is often concomitant with an exhortation to Messianic Jewish husbands to selflessly lay down their lives for their wives in the same way the Messiah laid down his life for his congregation (Ephesians 5:25). Messianic Jewish funerals incorporate readings from the New Testament and emphasize the resurrection/eternal life that comes through believing in Yeshua the Messiah.

A common misunderstanding about Messianic (Judeo-Christian) congregations is that they put on a veneer of religious Jewish practice in order to missionize Jews. Although this is largely true of Hebrew Christian missionary organizations such as Jews for Jesus Messianic synagogues regard Torah observance as a matter of covenant responsibility and participate in their traditional Jewish heritage independent of their *kiruv* (outreach) efforts. Messianic congregations are committed to Jewish continuity because they believe God is committed to Jewish continuity. Contemporary Messianic rabbis, like their mainstream counterparts, recognize the dangers of assimilation and labor to convey Jewish identity to the next generation of Messianic Jewish families.

Messianic Jewish use of Hebrew expressions (even for New Testament terms) is in keeping with this spirit of resisting assimilation pressures in order to preserve Jewish identity. Jesus and the *shlichim* (apostles) were first-century Jews who taught

in Hebrew. New Testament teaching was originally Hebraic. Messianic synagogues, therefore, see the use of Hebraic New Covenant terminology, such as the name “Yeshua” instead of “Jesus,” as the restoration of something that is historically accurate. It links Messianic Jewish families to their first-century roots. In her study of Messianic Judaism, Shoshanah Feher observed that “restoring the original” is a central focus of Messianic (Judeo-Christian) congregations:

Believers use the early church as a governing metaphor to reconcile Jewish and Christian symbols and to create a sense of historical community. Messianic Judaism has combed the past in order to create a new form of tradition . . . They make use of early texts, reading the Gospels and other first-century works, as well as tracing Jewish Christians through the centuries, in order to establish a symbolic social cohesion with roots in antiquity . . . Messianic Jews use ritual to create a sense of continuity. (Feher 1998, 112)

Additionally, like Reform and Reconstructionist communities in the Diaspora, Messianic synagogues engage in ritual formation by inculcating Jewish traditions with New Covenant meaning to express their distinct values:

Messianics are not the only ones to legitimate their Jewishness with religious ritual. Because ethnicity has been wrapped up in a religious container, one of the only ways to express Jewish ethnicity is through religious language . . . This would explain the use of Jewish ritual by groups who transform the meaning of the very rituals they use. The presence of the ritual confirms the Jewish ethnic orientation of the group, but the original meaning of the ritual has been altered to express the core values, not of traditional Judaism, but of the group utilizing the ritual . . . Liberal Jewish seders regularly transform the meaning of the traditional service from emphasizing the saving acts of God to the courage of humanity, as in the Reconstructionist Haggadah, which sharply elevates the role of humanity in the Passover story so too when Messianic believers sought to express ethnic continuity, they chose to infuse forms of Jewish life with new, Christological meaning. (Harris-Shapiro 1999, 174–175)

Many intermarried couples are drawn to Messianic synagogues because the Jewish-Christian gap is bridged (Cohn-Sherbok 2000, xii). Intermarriage tends to blur the traditional boundaries between Judaism and Christianity within the average family so that a quasi-Messianic Jewish religious expression naturally arises. Intermarried couples find common ground in Messianic synagogues. Children of intermarriage find a home where they can integrate their identities (Rudolph 2003, 56–59, 111–114). Messianic synagogues challenge the “law of excluded middle” by asserting that children of Jewish-Christian intermarriage can be simultaneously Jewish and believers in Jesus. For these reasons, Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities are a very attractive option for intermarried couples and their children.

Today there are between 400 and 500 Messianic synagogues in the Jewish Diaspora. Rabbinic ordination is conferred primarily through two international umbrella organizations: the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations and the International Association of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues. In addition to Messianic synagogues, there are established Messianic Jewish seminaries,

Messianic day schools, Hebrew schools, and summer camps. There are Messianic Halachic councils, mohels (covenant surgeons), and benevolence organizations that work directly with the Israeli Knesset (national parliament). The Messianic (Judeo-Christian) community is one of the fastest-growing segments of the contemporary Jewish Diaspora.

### Judeo-Christian Communities as an Internal Church Lobby

Diaspora Jewish leaders have long viewed Messianic (Judeo-Christian) synagogues as a threat to Jewish survival. But a compelling case can be made that Messianic synagogues are the most effective resource Diaspora Jewish communities have to influence Christians toward a love for Jews and Judaism, which indirectly reinforces Jewish continuity. Messianic Jews are regularly invited to teach seminars in the local church about the history of Christian anti-Semitism and the Jewish roots of Christianity. They impress on Christians that Jesus and the apostles were Torah-observant Jews who remained faithful to their people. They remind Christians of the Abrahamic promise that those who bless Israel will be blessed. Messianic synagogues are arguably Diaspora Judaism's front line of defense against church policies that arise from punitive and structural supersessionism. Because Messianic Jews are de facto members of Diaspora Jewish communities and members of the worldwide body of Jesus believers, they have influence and connections in places where non-Christian Jews lack clout. Loyal to the Jewish people and committed to Jewish causes (unlike Jewish converts to Christianity in the Middle Ages), Messianic Jews are the Jewish lobby within the church. Is it not in the interests of Diaspora Judaism to have a Jewish voice within the church? Christian recognition of the validity of Jewish existence within the church paves the way for Christian recognition of the validity of Jewish existence outside the church. Diaspora Jewish communities strengthen their voice within the church when they validate Messianic (Judeo-Christian) synagogues in their midst and weaken their voice within the church when they invalidate Messianic Jewish existence. Members of the Israeli Knesset have begun to work openly with National Messianic Jewish organizations in the recognition that Messianic Jews are a pro-Israel lobby within the church (e.g., the 2006 Knesset Project of the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations). A day will come when Diaspora Jewish leaders will similarly recognize that Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities uniquely serve *kol Yisrael* (all Israel) as the Jewish lobby within the church.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. 2000. *Messianic Judaism*. London: Cassell.
- Feher, Shoshanah. 1998. *Passing over Easter: Constructing the Boundaries of Messianic Judaism*. London: AltaMira.
- Harris-Shapiro, Carol. 1999. *Messianic Judaism: A Rabbi's Journal through Religious Change in America*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Kinzer, Mark. 2001. *The Nature of Messianic Judaism: Judaism as Genus, Messianic as Species*. West Hartford, CT: Hashivenu Archives.

- Kollontai, Pauline. 2004. "Messianic Jews and Jewish Identity." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3 (2): 195–205.
- Kollontai, Pauline. 2006. "Between Judaism and Christianity: The Case of Messianic Jews." *Journal of Religion and Society* 8. <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2006/2006-6.html>.
- Rudolph, David J. 2003. *Growing Your Olive Tree Marriage: A Guide for Couples from Two Traditions*. Baltimore: Lederer Books.

## Jewish–Islamic Mutual Influences

*Esperanza Alfonso*

---

By the time of the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, the Jews had long been a people in Diaspora. In the 620s and 630s, the Jewish communities living on Arabian soil were firsthand witnesses to Muhammad's activities and to the early success of his supporters. After the Prophet's death in 632, the Islamic conquests would bring about a large-scale encounter between Jews and Muslims. In fact, within a few decades, and as a result of the remarkably speedy success of the Muslim armies far beyond the limits of the former Persian and Byzantine empires, about 90 percent of the Jewish communities in the world, including the most renowned cultural centers in Iraq and Palestine, found themselves under Islamic rule. Since its inception in the early 19th century, critical comparative scholarship in the fields of religion and culture has considered the Judeo-Islamic interaction to be one of the most fascinating instances of cross-cultural fertilization in premodern times.

Given its highly speculative nature, the inquiry into religious and cultural influences between Jews and Muslims is always elusive and at times controversial. Certainly this holds true in the case of the Judeo-Islamic encounter. In matters of religion, today's traditional Muslim scholars, for instance, look at the Koran as containing the original, authentic and uncreated divine revelation, regardless of the temporal precedence of the Bible. In their view, the question of influence is hardly meaningful. With respect to the modern critical study of religion and culture, the difficulty lies, on the one hand, in the scarcity of sources at the scholar's disposal and the quandary posed by those that are extant. In this regard, the problem is particularly acute for the formative period of Islam, as only snippets of information have come down to us from the first century after Muhammad's death. Moreover, authors of early materials, both Jewish and Muslim, were not historically minded and rarely concerned themselves with issues of religious or literary origins.

On the other hand, the difficulty in assessing religious and cultural influences between two or more groups relates to the scholarly understanding of the concept of influence itself. Beginning with Abraham Geiger, 19th-century Western scholars interested in the Judeo-Islamic world put forth a paradigm based on the ideas of "debtor" and "creditor" and the notion of direct influence from Judaism to Islam and vice versa. A first phase was customarily established in which Judaism was said to have exerted a strong influence on the emerging Islamic faith and culture.

After this early period of roughly 200 years, the direction of influence was deemed to have been reversed, as Judaism and Jewish culture fell under the influence of Islam. Without radically challenging this early model, and on the basis of the rich material found in the Cairo Geniza by the mid-20th century, S. D. Goitein began to conceive the Judeo-Islamic relationship in terms of parallels rather than influences. In his magnum opus, *A Mediterranean Society*, as well as in the numerous books and articles he published from the 1960s onward, Goitein used a term borrowed from biology, “symbiosis,” to describe the distinctive interaction taking place between Judaism and Islam, particularly in its classical period (the 11th to 13th centuries). Although originally used by Goitein in the context of law, the concept of symbiosis, denoting a far-reaching interpenetration between Jewish and Islamic cultures, has proven to be greatly influential in a wide range of comparative fields and to a large extent has not yet been superseded. Today, most scholars engaging in the comparative analysis of the two cultures at hand have moved away from the “borrowing-lending” paradigm. The methods prevalent in literary and historical criticism have contributed to a new understanding of how cross-cultural contact works and have brought fresh insights in many areas. In recent years, the impact of postmodernism in various disciplines has even led to overt questioning of the validity and usefulness of the comparative method itself.

Crucial to the Judeo-Islamic cross-cultural study since its beginnings, the issue of the formative period of Islam remains one of passionate scholarly debate. This interest is not unwarranted, as the contacts Muhammad maintained with Arabian Jews and the latter’s response to the Prophet’s mission actually set the terms for all future interaction between Judaism and Islam. The genesis of the Koran’s contents is to be framed within this context. Until the 1980s, studies abounded that sought to trace many characters, motifs, and themes in the Koranic and early Islamic traditions back to the Bible. The general view was that later materials clearly were indebted to earlier sources, and thus were less original. In the late 20th century, however, attention shifted from the identification of the underlying biblical sources to the specific Koranic development of and engagement with material that was also part of the Bible. Marilyn R. Waldman’s work on the *Sūrat Yūsuf*, for instance, took in this new approach. The Koranic story of Yūsuf was already known from the Bible. However, in spite of the common plot, Waldman argued that the two stories, biblical and Koranic, were different in style, used different theological and moral concepts, and addressed different audiences (Waldman 1985). Similarly, in a study of Moses as a character both in the Bible and the Koran, David Halperin claimed that divergences in the Koranic account might be well due not to the misunderstanding of the biblical source or to the Islamization of the biblical material, but to a particularly good understanding of it (Halperin 1995). Along the same lines, in his studies on the cycle of the Abraham-Ishmael legends, Reuven Firestone demonstrates that, in spite of the fact that the Koranic story has a precedent in the biblical account, it has a uniquely Islamic character (Firestone 1990). Furthermore, in the episode of the binding of Isaac, Firestone even suggests that the Koran might actually retain ancient material preserved in the isolated environment of the Arabian Peninsula, hence before the biblical account (Firestone 2000).

The question of origins notwithstanding, the fact that Islam, as a political system, created radically new conditions for Jewish economic, social, and intellectual development is undisputed. The new societal framework brought about by Islam was open enough to include a wide range of ethnic groups; moreover, the status of *dhimma* conferred upon Jews, Christians, and other “scriptural” religious minorities guaranteed them protection and stability while in Islamic territory. The rapid adoption of Arabic by the Jews of Islamic lands was crucial in facilitating communication throughout the Diaspora. Arabic united a wide range of Jewish communities culturally and gave their elites full access to a much larger intellectual world (Wasserstein 2001, 55–56). By the early 10th century, the centralized Jewish cultural hubs in Iraq and the Land of Israel began a progressive and irreversible decline, but new vibrant centers were being established in the East, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, religious and cultural exchange between Jewish and Islamic societies continued to increase.

It has been argued that Jewish society in Islamic territory, even before the 10th century, was highly pluralistic. Thus, mainstream rabbinic Judaism, as envisioned by the rabbis in the academies of Iraq and the Land of Israel, was only one of several contending and coexisting Judaisms. Likewise, Sunni Islam was only one among several possible Islams. Many scholars concur in stressing that it was first and foremost within a sectarian atmosphere that contacts and cultural exchanges between Islam and Judaism took place. In the late 1970s, John Wansbrough pioneered the hypothesis that Islam emerged within a sectarian Jewish milieu (Wansbrough 1978). Conversely, Islam is thought to have been instrumental in the rise of



This Spanish synagogue in Prague demonstrates Islamic architectural influences. (Robert Lerich)

Karaism, a sectarian Jewish group that emerged by the mid-eighth century in Iraq and Persia. Although some scholars have understood the Karaites to be the continuation of Second Temple Jewish tendencies, the fact remains that they emerged in a specifically Islamic context and that Islam had a crucial impact on their laws and practices, namely, the change in calendar, the ritual of fasting, and the custom of facing a *qibla* directed toward Jerusalem while in prayer, to cite only a few examples (Lasker 1989). Furthermore, particular closeness has been observed between Karaites and Ismailis, an offshoot of the Shia. In a similar vein, Steven Wasserstrom has argued for a particular proximity between the Isawiyya, a sectarian Jewish group born in ninth-century Iraq and Persia, and the Shia. He contends that Shiite authors were biblicizing in their attitude toward the past, while Jewish authors often portrayed Alī and his followers in a positive way (Wasserstrom 1984). This affinity between sectarian groups in both Judaism and Islam led Wasserstrom to develop Goitein's idea of symbiosis a step further. Borrowing a metaphor from biology, as Goitein did, Wasserstrom speaks of "co-evolution," a model in which changes in species A prepare the field for the natural selection of changes in species B and vice versa. Both religions, in his view, could only define themselves in contrast to each other (Wasserstrom 1995, 10–11).

Within the framework of the comparative study of religion, but moving to a later period, Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, has also proven to have played a seminal role in the development of Jewish spirituality between the 13th and 15th centuries. The work of medieval classical Jewish authors, such as Bahya ibn Paqudah (1040?–1110?), Judah Halevi (ca. 1070–1141), and Abraham Maimonides (1186–1237) has long been studied in the context of a Sufi intellectual background. Moreover, Sufi Jewish circles were well known in North Africa, Egypt, and Palestine until at least the 15th century. As in many other fields, current studies do not seek to identify direct Sufi influences on medieval Judaism, but rather they try to reconstruct how the medieval Jewish religious sensibility developed in Sufi terms and within a Sufi atmosphere, that is, how Sufi language was used to express unmistakably Jewish content (Lobel 2000). Particularly noteworthy in this field is the specifically Shiite and Ismailis origin of concepts found in medieval Jewish sources, such as Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* (Pines 1980).

Both elements, sectarianism and mysticism, come together in the common interest shared by Jews and Muslims in eschatology and messianic speculation throughout the medieval period. The idea that the concept of redemption was foreign to early Islam, and that it only emerged in later times as a result of contact with Jews and Christians, has long been questioned. In a highly controversial work written in late 1970s, which further elaborates on Wansbrough's thesis, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook claim Islam has been messianic from its earliest times. Likewise, it is known that the Islamic conquest stirred up messianic hopes among the Jews, who predicted Muhammad and his followers would bring about the end of their exile. Political events, such as the Crusades, or the arrival of the Almohads to the Iberian Peninsula, periodically stirred up messianic anxiety among Jews and Muslims (as well as Christians). Hence, it was common for members of the three communities to exchange predictions and calculations for the purportedly imminent advent of the end-times.

Also related to the study of Islam and Judaism as religious traditions, the field of comparative law, traditionally neglected, has received a good deal of attention in recent years. As Gideon Libson explains in the most comprehensive study on Jewish and Islamic custom to date, scholarly attention has focused on the sources of law and the relationships between law and society (Libson 2003, 1–15). Libson rightly points out that Islamic law did not develop in the Arabian Peninsula but in second- and third-century Iraq, which places the Judeo-Islamic encounter closer to the center of Jewish culture, where it was subject to a greater degree of interaction. As in the aforementioned areas, parallel development, indirect influence, and common influence from a third source are also to be taken into consideration in this particular field of study (Libson 2003, 1–15).

Finally, and equally important, the encounter between the Jewish and Islamic civilizations took place in the context of literature and intellectual life. Here again, methodologies of study have changed the perspective on Judeo-Islamic culture in recent years. The initial focus of historians of Jewish literature had been on the literary text itself. In this regard, the adoption of Arabic for literary purposes among the Jews and their use of almost all Islamic literary genres was typically presented as a clear result of Arabo-Islamic influence; similarly, the use of Hebrew for poetry, the rejection of certain literary models, and the content of many works was seen as a sign of reaction, exhibiting a polemical intent. Among the many scholarly statements that have challenged this perspective in recent years, Rina Drory's work is worth noting, as she advocates the study of literature not on the basis of individual literary pieces but as a cultural institution. Instead of tracing specific motifs and literary elements to a given Judeo-Islamic source, as had long been customary, Drory reconstructs how and why the hierarchy of literary genres prevalent in the Judeo-Islamic context was introduced in medieval Jewish literature. It is her contention that Karaites were actually the first to be conversant with and to adapt the Arabic tradition, always in a selective way. Beginning with Sa'adia, the 10th-century gaon of Sura, Rabbinite authors soon followed suit. Drory presents this adoption of Arabo-Islamic literary practice as a solution to internal problems in both Karaite and Rabbinite Jewish cultures and not as a desire to imitate it or to react against it (Drory 2000). Along the same lines, within the specific context of the Medieval Iberian Peninsula, where contact with Arabic literature brought about the so-called golden age of medieval Hebrew literature, Ross Brann has argued that one cannot think of the Judeo-Islamic encounter as the meeting of two separate cultures, but instead one must see it as one in which the participants are members of a shared cultural experience (Brann 1991). In Iberia, Jewish authors adapted the most notable elements of Islamic culture, such as the use of the Koran in poetry and the idea of *fasāhā* or eloquence, as a literary standard, to rehabilitate Jewish literature and bring it to its highest degree of excellence.

Medieval sources provide evidence for Jews studying poetry with Arabs, for Muslims consulting rabbis on legal issues, and for shared study sessions open to Muslims, Jews, Christians, and other religious groups, where the only requirement was to appeal exclusively to reason (Kraemer 1992). It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that although Islam and Judaism might have been two separate yet

interconnected religions, Muslims and Jews were active participants in a single common culture. The intellectual pursuits of Jewish scholars were determined largely by the Islamic milieu in which they lived. There is no doubt that these scholars' interest in the universal inquiries central to Greek thought and their fascination with natural sciences and medicine were shared by those of their Muslim (and Christian) peers. It must be emphasized, however, that engagement with the Bible, Rabbinic tradition, theology, and Jewish law was likewise a result of the importance of these categories of study within the Islamic intellectual sphere. Although at some points in history voices spoke out against the pursuit of certain disciplines considered to favor conversion, on the whole medieval Jews were able to use the cultural elements prevalent in the society in which they lived for the benefit of their own distinctive identity.

### Selected Bibliography

- Brann, Ross. 1991. *The Compunctious Poet: Cultural Ambiguity and Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Crone, Patricia, and Michael Cook. 1977. *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Drory, Rina. 2000. *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and Its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Firestone, Reuven. 1990. *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Firestone, Reuven. 2000. "Comparative Studies in Bible and Qur'an: A Fresh Look at Genesis 22 in Light of Sura 37." In *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication, and Interaction; Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, edited by Benjamin H. Hary et al., 169–184. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Goitein, S. D. 1967–1993. *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. 6 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Halperin, David. 1995. "The Hidden Made Manifest: Muslim Traditions and the 'Latent Content' of Biblical and Rabbinic Stories." In *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, edited by David P. Wright et al., 581–594. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- Kraemer, Joel L. 1992. "The Andalusian Mystic Ibn Hūd and the Conversion of Jews." In *Israel Oriental Studies*. Vol. 12, edited by Joel L. Kraemer, 59–73. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Lasker, Daniel L. 1989. "Islamic Influences on Karaite Origins." In *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Tradition*, vol. 2, edited by William M. Brinner and Stephen D. Ricks, 23–47. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.
- Libson, Gideon. 2003. *Jewish and Islamic Law: A Comparative Study of Custom during the Geonic Period*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lobel, Diana. 2000. *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Juda Ha-Levi's Kuzari*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Pines, Shlomo. 1980. "Shelomoh Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*." *JSAI* 2: 165–251.
- Waldman, Marilyn R. 1985. "New Approaches to 'Biblical' Materials in the Qur'an." *MW* 75, 1: 1–16.
- Wansbrough, John. 1978. *The Sectarian Milieu: Contents and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Wasserstein, David J. 2001. "Islamization and the Conversion of the Jews." In *Islamic Conversions: Religious Identities in Mediterranean Islam*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal, 49–60. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose.
- Wasserstrom, Steven M. 1994. "'The Šī'īs Are the Jews of Our Community': An Interreligious Comparison within Sunni Thought." In *Israel Oriental Studies*. Vol. 14, *Concepts of Other in Near Eastern Religions*, edited by Ilai Alon, Ithamar Gruenwald, and Itamar Singer, 297–324. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Wasserstrom, Steven M. 1995. *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

## The Widespread Phenomena of Marranism and Hidden Jews

*Gloria Mound*

---

Although largely discounted by historians, during the 19th and early 20th centuries there were numerous reports from travelers finding crypto-Jewish practices. This period followed the 17th and 18th centuries, which had seen the arrival in European Sephardi centers—such as Amsterdam, Livorno (Leghorn), and London—of formerly secret Jews applying to Jewish communities to reclaim their heritage. This occurred in numerous places around the world, such as islands of the Caribbean and Brazil during Dutch rule (1630–1654). This was the origin of the large Marrano presence there today. Secret Jews from Madeira and the Canary Islands started the sugar cane industry that was so long an important segment of its economy. In places like Jamaica, Curaçao, the Bahamas, and New York, these crypto-Jews sought to show that in spite of great dangers Jews had taught their children at least some of the Laws of Moses, in every generation. They wanted their children to marry only those of a similar background. Since most of the recorded instances referred to sparsely populated areas, this led to an erroneous belief that such practices were rare. Even though Marranos-Anusim seem to have been great travelers with widespread commercial ties, they divulged little of the hidden Jewish life continuing in their homelands for fear of discovery by the Inquisition.

Soon after the State of Israel was established in 1948, a sizable devoted Jewish community became known in Meshed, Iran (Persia), when they applied to immigrate to Israel, they were initially refused entry. The Persian Jews thought they were backsliders who had converted to Islam and had no idea that their identity had been kept a secret and that they married only within their community. Meshed is close to Russia, and the Bukharan Jews did what they could to help those in Meshed. Eventually, the Israeli Rabbinate was forced to acknowledge their appeals to immigrate. The rabbis marveled at the level of religious observance among Meshed.

As more information from diverse places became available, it became clear that in many parts of the world there were groups of Jews who had maintained an organized Jewish life throughout the generations. The advent of easier travel, television, and the Internet led to the awakening of the outside world to the continued

existence of crypto-Judaism for more than 500 years in many isolated corners of the world. Many thousands of crypto-Jews have had the courage to break with the tradition of never speaking with strangers on the subject. Nevertheless, there is still much reluctance to speaking on the subject with outsiders, even if they are Jewish. They fear that doing so will lead to ostracism by friends and family.

Another factor has been the increasing interest in the subject of genealogy, the formation of Jewish genealogy societies throughout the world, and easier access to the topic on the Internet. Curiosity among those of Marranos-Anusim origin has been aroused. Many suspect they may have Jewish roots and are looking for confirmation. This is especially true among crypto-Jewish families who migrated and whose Jewish customs and traditions were no longer adhered to. Once such identity is established, there is usually a desire to know more about life in Israel.

One section of the converso community that is genealogically Jewish is the chueta of Majorca, in the Balearic Islands of Spain. In 1435, their ancestors were given an ultimatum: convert to Catholicism or depart the island. The majority left, most for North Africa; but 2,000, represented by 15 family names, decided to stay and convert. Nobody believed it was a sincere conversion and for the next 450 years no local priest would marry someone from a chueta family with a non-chueta. In the course of time, many of these conversos did become devout Catholics, but some continued their Jewish practices, many paying for it with their lives. Some converts escaped in the 16th and 17th centuries to safer locations in Europe like Salonika, Greece; Amsterdam; London; and Leghorn, Italy. Those who went to Salonika named their congregation after the place they came from. They held onto their identity and form of worship until the beginning of the 20th century. Jewish religious practices and customs continued in Majorca: 250 years after the forced conversion, in a garden on the outskirts of the capital, Palma de Majorca, the Inquisition found more than 200 chuetas conducting a Yom Kippur service on the correct day. Three of the organizers were burnt alive. Many years later, the editor of the New York *Daily Forward*, Ezriel Carlebach, who was in Palma on *Kol Nidre* night in 1930, witnessed such a secret service in the back room of a jeweler's shop in the Calle Plateria.

The chuetas, whether practicing Jews or Christians, were easily identified by their family names: Aguilo, Bonnin, Cortes, Forteza, Fuster, Marti, Miro, Pico, Pina, Pomar, Rey, Segura, Valls, and Vives. They were isolated by other Majorcans, thus remaining halachically Jewish, but half a century ago some intermarriages with Gentile families occurred.

If a stranger has an opportunity to speak to a Marrano, he or she will hear about the family's desire to keep the Sabbath and dietary laws. They also adhere to Sephardic naming customs: the eldest male child is named after the paternal grandfather and the first daughter is named after the paternal grandmother. The pattern is repeated for the second male and female children, who are named after the maternal grandparents. This naming custom was one of the last Judaic vestiges when little else that was Jewish remained. Another custom still practiced is that when sweeping a floor all the dust is swept toward the middle of the room. When asked why, throughout the Marrano Diaspora the answer is, "Out of respect for the mezuzah." If it is pointed out that the room has no mezuzah, one will be told that the mezuzah is within one's heart and mind. There are families where this custom is

maintained, but no mention of a mezuzah is made, and the practice is seen as a family custom. This happens when parents have not informed their children of their likely Jewish origins. Other customs are treated in a similar manner, but in varying degrees. Traditions upon a death in the family include washing the body, covering mirrors, and staying in the home for seven days, while relying on friends and neighbors to bring food. Other customs are the veneration of Saint Eulalia, who is seen as personifying the biblical Queen Esther, and celebrating the festival of Purim four weeks before Passover, a date determined by checking the calendar against the moon. Purim is not seen as a joyous occasion, but as a three-day fast copying what Queen Esther did. Marranos-Anusim go to great lengths to avoid attention to their secret way of life. Outwardly they observe the local religion, yet underneath they try their utmost to conform to Jewish law. Fasting is used frequently because there is less chance of detection. If questioned, one could always excuse oneself from partaking of food by blaming an upset stomach. Another crypto-Jewish observance, now almost in disuse because today few people bake their own bread, was taking a piece of the baking dough and throwing it into the fire, usually accompanied by a blessing. In the Balearic Island of Ibiza, in case one was overheard by servants (the constant fear of secret Jews), the custom was to say "G-D bless the Jews, Moors, and Christians." Many went to great lengths to bake some kind of unleavened bread at Passover time, while in places like Belmonte, Portugal, where the baking was done and non-Jewish neighbors knew about the secret practices, the matzoth were not eaten on the first days of the festival for fear of being given away to the Inquisition. Today, Belmonte has an open Jewish life, a rabbi, and a synagogue; but in many villages on both sides of the nearby Spanish-Portuguese border, the majority of these practices continue and are still hidden from the outside world.

In many enclaves, young people often think of such rituals as being of family origin and only learn in later life of the Jewish connections. This situation is changing as young people study at universities, make new friends, and see open Jewish communities and Jewish student associations. What they thought were family customs turn out to be Jewish religious observances, leading them to question their ethnic origins.

For centuries it was believed crypto-Jewish settlers in Cuba and Puerto Rico had totally assimilated. It was accepted that the current Jewish community began at the end of the 19th century, with the Jewish influx from Salonika; but slowly in the recent years, more secret Jews, mostly young people who have left home for work or education, reacted as those in Iberia. They noticed similarities between Jewish customs in friends' homes and traditions within their own families, like family get-togethers on Friday nights, lighting of Sabbath candles, ways of naming children after grandparents, and mourning customs. Many young people began to question whether their family customs were Jewish in origin. Many of those who were not aware of their lineage, once informed, have come forward seeking to lead a Jewish life and applying to various Jewish organizations. It has emerged that there has been a continued Jewish existence and practice in nearly all the main Caribbean islands since the expulsion from Spain and Portugal. In addition to well-known

Jewish communities on the tourist routes, small towns and villages have been discovered recently in Cuba and Puerto Rico with active Jewish communities. Much of this information was provided by new immigrants to the United States, where many have joined the Jewish community and others have settled in Israel. In Puerto Rico, the local government was surprised to learn of this hitherto unknown Jewish history. Recently, a group of young people opened a successful Jewish Internet chat site after which they decided to hold an exhibition. Within days of its opening, the organizers realized this was just the beginning of a long-hidden history. Over a period of 30 years, even before being aware of their Jewish roots, people reported being informed by their parents at a very early age that they were *Isleneos* or, sometimes, *Nacion* or *Alcurnia*. There was pride in describing to their offspring that they had special links to the Canary Islands and that it was from there that their ancestors found an eventual haven in the New World. They explained why the children were expected to marry only among these people. The *Isleneos* had their own form of the Hispanic language, a mix of Spanish, Portuguese, and Ladino. They formed societies of people with crypto-Jewish origins in South America, New Mexico, the Caribbean, Cape Verde, Newfoundland, and New Orleans. The New Orleans branch sadly lost much of its documentation with the destruction of its museum during Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

With its many islands, Cape Verde, long under Portuguese domination, was an isolated enclave where Jewish practices still survive. The Islands of São Tomé and Príncipe were the scene of tragic events. In 1493, 2,000 Jewish children between the ages of 2 and 12 were taken from their parents and sent there from Portugal because their parents could not pay the taxes levied by the king. After one year it was reported that only 600 remained alive, as so many succumbed to local pestilences. Yet nearly 200 years later, the Lisbon Inquisition sent out a priest to investigate reports of Judaizing there, which he did find. However, he was chased away by the local inhabitants. Today, local people who know of their antecedents are found lighting candles on Friday nights and observing other customs of Jewish origin.

Recently, taking into account the habits of Abraham Lincoln, there is an investigation that has already established some exciting evidence to suggest that he was possibly of Marrano stock. As the years go by, research on this and allied subjects will increase, binding closer the Jewish remnants around the world.

### Selected Bibliography

- Braunstein, Baruch. 1952. *The Chuetas of Majorca*. New York: Ktav.
- Cesareni, David, and Gemma Romain, eds. 2006. *Jews & Port Cities 1590–1990*. London: Valentine Mitchell.
- Golden, Harry L., and Martin Rywell. 1950. *Jews in American History*. Charlotte, NC: Henry Lewis Martin.
- Hordes, Stanley M. 2005. *To the Ends of the Earth—A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies. Archives: Communication from Ron Rodriguez, Puerto Rico, February 13, 2005. Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England. Publications List. [www.casa-shalom.com](http://www.casa-shalom.com).
- Israel, Jonathan. 2002. *Diasporas within A Diaspora*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

- Lipski, John M. 1990. *The Language of the Isleneos*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Loker, Zvi. 1991. *Jews of the Caribbean*. Jerusalem: Misgav Yerusalym.
- Nastallah, Andrea K. 1998. "Crypto-Jewish Customs in Puerto Rico." *Llave Magazine*, March 1996. Reprinted in *Casa Shalom Members Journal* 1, no. 1 (1998).
- Vinas, Emanuel. 2003. "Communications from Rabbi Emanuel Vinas of New York." *Casa Shalom Members Journal* 5 (2).
- Vinas, Emanuel. 2005. "Communications from Rabbi Emanuel Vinas of New York." *Casa Shalom Members Journal* 7 (1).
- Wolf, Lucien. 1926. *Jews in the Canary Islands*. London: Jewish Historical Society of England.

## Brazilian Marranism

*Anita Waingort Novinsky*

*Translation by Mike Boyington*

The Marranos' story in Brazil begins in the Iberian Peninsula where, after having lived culturally and socially integrated for 15 centuries, Sephardic Jews were declared second-class citizens by monarchical decree and infidels by the all-powerful Catholic Church. Their expulsion from Spain in 1492, their forced conversion to Catholicism in Portugal a few years later in 1497, the establishment of the court of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in 1536, and the diabolical and gory persecution of Portuguese people of Jewish descent all turned the Sephardic Jews once more into a wandering people and scattered them to the four corners of the earth. For these Jews, their lives were drastically changed and their destiny altered forever: it was a new Diaspora.

Insecure and stigmatized in their home country, many of the converted Jews and their descendents, known as New Christians, conversos, or Marranos, found refuge in the Brazilian New World, which they called the Promised Land. The Marrano history in Brazil should be understood first within the colonial context, because the converted descendants of Sephardic Jews (*anussim* in Hebrew) who came to the New World searching for a better or different life that held the possibility of escaping Inquisitional persecution underwent a completely different experience from that of the New Christians who converted back to Judaism in Italy, France, Holland, North Africa, the Levant, and elsewhere around the world.

Having crossed the Atlantic to Portuguese America, the New Christians rebuilt their lives within a radically different environment with other people who were also starting over. They transferred their economic techniques, commercial experiences, customs, and beliefs to a welcoming America, which they gratefully embraced. And today, with new research published in the past few years about the New Christians in Portuguese America, it is clear that they must be included among the builders of Brazil.

Brazil represents a real laboratory for Marrano studies. In Brazil the Marranos continued to follow the rituals and recount the sufferings of their long-established

Jewish religion. They transmitted their understanding from one generation to another over three centuries. Recent discoveries show that Jewish practices are even followed among Brazilians today whose ancestors established settlements in the interior jungles, often without knowing their origin. Today, in large part because of modern communication and information available on the Internet, a Brazilian movement is developing: a return to the Marranos' Jewish roots. Though anthropological interest in families with Jewish customs in Rio Grande do Norte and Pernambuco contributed to knowledge about and created interest in the subject, much research remains to be done in other states of Brazil.

For 285 years, Portugal refused to entertain any departure from Catholic Church dogma. In fact, the Holy Office of the Inquisition was created by the king of Portugal, D. Joao III, uniquely and exclusively because of the "Jewish question." Accused of being false Christians and suspected of following the customs of the Jewish religion, every converso was at least potentially a criminal (a heretic). Practically speaking, this meant that any practice passed down through generations, even if it only pertained to domestic rituals and ceremonies, was enough to offer as evidence for the heinous crime of heresy.

The Holy Office was the grandest and most extensive bureaucracy of Portugal, but it had only one revenue source to finance its operations, which included hundreds of agents: confiscation. The Holy Office of the Inquisition supported its bureaucracy with the property of New Christians accused of Judaism. The Tribunal could only survive if there was a constant supply of victims. When a particular heresy diminished it had to be reinvented. Like modern totalitarian regimes (and even some democracies) the Inquisition had to create an enemy to legitimize and justify the system. The agents of the Inquisition were the Gestapo spies of the time. They operated throughout the Portuguese Empire—India, the Azores, and America—encouraging friends, neighbors, and business associates to bear witness against this "enemy within." Often the testimony was driven by jealousy and other personal considerations, and equally often, it was false. Not only was it dangerous to be a crypto-Jew, it was equally dangerous to be in any family that had former practitioners of Judaism who truly converted to Christianity.

Portugal also passed legislation that excluded Portuguese citizens with Jewish ancestors from all official (and thus, honorable) positions, and prohibited them from even having a superior education. Practically speaking, however, the legislation was inefficient because it only worked when there was sufficient interest to apply it. Often positions went to Jews both unknowingly and knowingly because particular applicants were preferred by those in authority. Sermons from the pulpit were the most influential channel through which the Portuguese people got this deeply anti-Semitic message. And during the Acts of Faith—celebrated mass spectacles that were attended not only by kings and the rest of the aristocracy but also by nearly the entire population—everyone turned out to see fellow citizens punished for a particular heresy. The heresy was being Jewish, or at least someone at some point in a family's history had been Jewish.

Historically, the Jews were the only people for whom a special court was created to investigate and punish their behavior and their ideas—and this court lasted

three centuries. The persecution of the New Christians was an anti-Semitic program. To find the heresy (the crime), the inquisitors ordered their agents to identify the “origins” of every suspected Portuguese citizen. Hitler went back five generations but the Inquisition searched birth and family records for the preceding seventh and eighth generations to identify Jews. If current descendents were not actual practitioners of Judaism, they were likely ones, which amounted to nearly the same thing in determination of guilt.

Laws were continuously promulgated forbidding New Christians to leave Portugal, but even so, clandestine immigration to Brazil was uninterrupted. The everyday risk of exposure was great, and once exposed, torture and death were imminent. Clearly, the Inquisition’s goal was extermination of Judaism; it was an early model for the Holocaust.

During the reign of the House of Hapsburg, the Inquisition reinforced its functioning and became more organized and systematic, and its discriminatory politics in general were transferred to Brazil, where it came to include many peoples of mixed heritage (another model for Hitlerism).

However, the Dutch invasion of the northeast of Brazil in 1630 changed the social and religious picture of the country and the life of the New Christians. Jews arrived from Holland with the Dutch and influenced Marranos to return to the open practice of Judaism.

The religious tolerance the Dutch granted to the Brazilian Jews gave them hope of liberty and restoration of their personal dignity. Many New Christians in northeast Brazil returned to Judaism, circumcised their children, and even became practicing Orthodox Jews. A school, synagogue, and cemetery were established by the Jews of Pernambuco. The Inquisition was forbidden to act in Brazil’s Dutch Territory (which at one time included all of northeast Brazil), but in the remainder of the country the Inquisition’s agents were active and continued arresting. And once arrested, their victims were returned to Portugal and imprisoned. There, they were judged and sentenced and, if not executed, given life in prison or sentenced to slave labor on Portuguese galleys. Sometimes in special circumstances they were exiled.

The New Christians, including those living farther south in Brazil, played a fundamental role in the interplay between Portugal and Brazilian economic and financial worlds. In a time when the contacts were difficult—time consuming and exorbitantly expensive—the New Christians established a stronghold as intermediaries where confidence and trust were paramount; and it was linked by the members of particular families—all New Christians and/or Jewish—spread throughout strategic ports and trade centers of Europe and in the Americas. An exhaustive study of the amount of wealth confiscated by the Inquisition from the New Christians is still lacking, but it was significant by any measure. Ironically, the Inquisition—which was initiated and supported by the country’s royal family—was responsible for the exodus of large numbers of its population, and this exodus decimated the economic foundation of the Portuguese Empire.

Research has found that the Marranos in Brazil were engaged in many different professions and occupations, and in a few they were in the majority. It appears that all physicians in Brazil’s early centuries were New Christians, although officially New

Christians were denied admittance to medical schools in Portugal. Other university-educated Marranos—writers, poets, lawyers, and well-educated businessmen—came to Brazil and represented the “learned class” in what was then a cultural wasteland. Their contribution to the cultural life of their new country was significant. However, the strongest attachment to Judaism in Brazil came from the lower middle class. In Rio de Janeiro, where the cultural level was much higher than in Paraíba, the Marranos were much less attached to religion of any kind.

In Brazil, as in Portugal, Marrano women were seen as the most dangerous element in the transmission of Judaism. The first crypto-Jewish women arrested for heresy in the 16th century were from Bahia, Brazil’s capital at the time. Their role was elemental in many respects, and it was for this reason that the majority of Brazilians arrested for heresy were women. In a world where most women were illiterate, Marrano women were mostly educated. Not only could they read and write, but they often played significant roles in their husbands’ businesses. They were knowledgeable in the affairs of their family and familiar with the outside world, and they passed on this knowledge to their offspring with accompanying opinions and criticisms.

The Portuguese literature of the time describes women in general as intellectually inferior to men, and the traditional portrayal of them as agents of Satan was common. However, a Portuguese chronicler who was usually representative of the official line, Duarte Nunes de Leão, in his work about the Kingdom of Portugal, dedicates three chapters of rapt description to the capacities of Portuguese women, writing about their achievements and courage and emphasizing their abilities in the arts and letters.

The Marranos drew their strength to keep together and to maintain their secret society from the home, and the home has always been the domain of women. The home was a vital factor and provided for the very survival of Judaism. From the family came the strongest force to revitalize Judaism. In their homes they followed religious ceremonies. Shabbat was the much cherished feast of the Marranos—and its practice one of the most serious crimes. They kept dietary laws and other rituals, and they observed Jewish holidays, especially Passover and Yom Kippur, which they called “the big day.”

During three centuries of the Inquisition, Jewish identity was transmitted by women relying on historical memory that they in turn transmitted to their children. These Brazilian Marrano women would have their memory reinforced by their mothers and other female relatives in Portugal or other countries from where they fled. By ship, letters would arrive from mothers and other relatives addressed to the New World. Inside the letters would be separate pieces of paper on which were written dates and events important for Jewish people to remember. “We were slaves in Egypt” one would say, and “There is only one God—the creator of the universe,” read another scrap received.

Without women’s participation, Marranism would have been impossible; because of women the numbers of the Inquisition’s victims were seriously reduced. In the first half of the 18th century, many Brazilian prisoners were women from Rio de Janeiro—167 women and 158 men. Once arrested, they were sent to Portugal. After

torture and forced confessions most of these women were sentenced to life in prison, or allowed to reside in a certain village from where they were brought periodically before the Tribunal to give a “signal of Presence.” They were also forced to wear the *sambenito*, which was a sack over their clothes embroidered with devils and flames. However, two of the Brazilian women’s crimes were considered so serious that they were burned at the stake. Of the whole country of Brazil, reprisals against Marranos were severe. A total of 544 people were accused of Judaism. In Parailba the Inquisition virtually eliminated an entire crypto-Jewish community, most of them women.

After converting to Christianity, Marranos did not become equal to Catholics, but instead emerged as new pariahs. Even when the Jews lived as a free community in medieval, pre-Inquisition times and enjoyed a privileged situation in relation to the rest of Europe, they remained “tolerated” guests. The fact that after their conversion they belonged neither as Jews nor as Christians, and considering that they were forbidden to leave Portugal and could therefore not return to their Jewish origins, produced a tremendous tension in the Portuguese of Jewish descent.

The Portuguese and Brazilian Marranos who were discriminated against from birth were psychologically affected by it. Intolerance in the Portuguese Empire was expressed at all societal levels; the Portuguese did not allow or accept the “different” and pushed the converted Portuguese to society’s margins. The Marranos were forced to build a world of their own—the world of the “Secret.” They were forced to live two lives: one external, in which all Catholic strictures were observed, and the other internal, private, where they followed the customs passed down from their ancestors.

“Marranism” was a phenomenon that expressed itself differently depending on where it was practiced. In Brazil it had specific characteristics, which changed further within Brazil, depending on the area. There was no unique behavior that was practiced everywhere in Brazil and considered part of every ceremony. Many different expressions of Marranism were found in Brazil and throughout the South American continent. However, even in the diversity of expression there are similarities. A particular practice may have changed—evolved—through the generations, but still it is not difficult to identify the ritual, the practice’s ancestor, so to speak, from which it sprang. In other words, over time, and without rabbinical schools and books that would have helped keep practices “pure,” variations multiplied.

Much has been written in recent years about Marranos and Marranism, much of it contradictory. Rather than shedding light on heretofore secrets, recent work has mostly led to confusion. The old polemic that asked whether the Marranos were really Jews no longer has much meaning to scholars in the field, at least not after new research revealed the real measure of the phenomenon and the many shapes of Marranism. Often, even if Marranos did not celebrate Jewish holidays or even if they were unbelievers, they were Jews.

What is now known is that although not all New Christians were Jews, all Marranos certainly were. And further, it can now be categorically stated that Marranism does not always mean someone who practices Judaism in secret. To many Marranos, Jewish practices do not equate with religious posture. Still, one thing remains and is the signifier of the whole phenomenon that unites them all. It is “The

secret society.” Real believers, atheists, and skeptics all belonged to the secret society that spread throughout the jungles and cities of colonial Brazil. What linked those different mentalities and several socioeconomic classes was their identity. They all together “did not belong” to the greater society. They went to church without believing. They confessed, lying, and at the Eucharist, they did not swallow. Their secret and their identity made them different, at least to themselves—but in the secret societies they referred to themselves as “us,” and in these societies they belonged.

The term “Marrano” is today part of a political and religious debate in Israel and throughout the Diaspora. Psychologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and psychoanalysts are paying attention to the Marrano dual personality. Edgar Morin, Richard Popkin, Miguel Abensour, Jacques Derrida, Antonio Damasio, and Jean Pierre Winter have all tried to interpret the psychological consequences produced by the ambiguous life, the dual personality, and the Marranos’ living their lives as pariahs.

A Marrano lived in constant turmoil with this dual identity. The main society in which Marranos made their way discriminated against them and excluded them when it could. But the secret side of society welcomed the Marranos, and it was only in this secret society that the Marranos felt a sense of belonging. This ever-present ambiguity captured Marranos in a vortex of two-world uncertainty: the Christian and the Jewish. The Marranos swam in a sea of *fluctuatio animi*, so well characterized by Spinoza (*Ethics III*). Jean Pierre Winter gives us an apt diagnosis of the Marrano when he writes that Jews not being tolerated for what they were had to pretend to be what they were not in order to preserve what they believed they were. This gave to the Marrano experience an extraordinary actuality. Philosophers, psychoanalysts, and anthropologists found that traces of the Marranos’ “being,” “ideas,” and “conflicts” can be found among their descendents even today. The spirit of Marranism can be found in Montaigne, Spinoza, Tirso de Molina, and even Freud. With new research and new interpretations of previous studies of Marranism, today researchers can better understand the psychological consequences of the tragic Inquisitional period. The Inquisition forced Portuguese and Brazilian people of Jewish descent to live divided, always pretending, lying, changing family names, and using word play with the Inquisition and with nearly everyone they encountered in their day-to-day lives.

Reality could not be shown as it was, but as the Marranos pretended it was. The Marranos never exactly knew what to want or even what to say, especially in the Inquisition’s interrogation process. The face of the inquisitors was where the Marranos took their cue. Sometimes they confessed and sometimes they refused or remained silent. Sometimes after confessing, a Marrano would deny the confession. The Marranos did not know which direction to take—because any option could bring death.

Until recently, neither Brazilian nor Portuguese Marranism has been studied from philosophical and psychoanalytical perspectives. However, with new and emerging research about Brazilian Marranism, researchers understand that because the Marranos could not assume their full and substantial identity they were thrown into a state of alienation. It was only by subverting their true and full self

that they could function in a world where centuries had taught them that there was no place for Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

- Kaysersling, Meyer. 1971. *História dos Judeus em Portugal*. Translated from the German by Gabriele Borchardt Corrêa da Silva and Anita Novinsky, with an introduction and notes by Anita Novinsky. São Paulo: Editora Pioneira.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1972. "A Historical Bias: The New Christian Collaboration with the Dutch Invaders of Brazil (17th century)." In *Proceedings of the V World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. II, 141–154. Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1982. "Some Theoretical Considerations about the New Christians Problem." In *Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage*, edited by Issachar Ben-Ami. Jerusalem: Magness Press.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1987. "Jewish Roots of Brazil." In *Jewish Presence in Latin America*, edited by Judith Laiken Elkin and Gilbert W. Merckx, 33–44. Boston: Allen A. Unwen.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1989. "Sephardim in Brazil: The New Christians." In *The Western Sephardi*, vol. II, edited by Richard Barnett and Walter Schwab, 431–444. Grennton, UK: Gibraltar Books.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1992. *Cristãos Novos na Bahia*. 2nd ed. São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1992. "Father Antonio Vieira, the Inquisition and the Jews." In *The Frank Talmadge Memorial Album Jewish History*, vol 1, edited by Ephraim Karnafogel, 151–162. Haifa: Barry Walfish.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1992. "Les Marranes, le Judaïsme Laique dans le Nouveau Monde." *Panoramic-Juifs Laiques. Du Religieux Vers le Cultural* 7: 92–96.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1993. "Nouveau-Chrétiens et Juifs Sefarades au Brésil." In *Les Juifs D'Espagne-Histoire d' une Diáspora*, edited by Michel Abitbol and Henry Méchoulan, 653–672. Paris: Liana Levi.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1996. "An Account of the Cruelties Exercised by the Inquisition in Portugal." In *Found It at the John Carter Brown Library*, edited by Hans Staden, 82–91. Providence, RI: Scholars and Sources.
- Novinsky, Anita. 2000. "A Critical Approach to the Historiography of the Marranos in the Light of New Documents." In *Studies of the History of Portuguese Jews*, edited by Israel J. Katz and Mitchell M. Serels, 107–118. New York: American Society of Sephardic Studies.
- Novinsky, Anita. 2001. "Marranos and the Inquisition: On the Gold Route in Minas Gerais." In *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450–1800*, European Expansion & Global Interaction, vol. 2, edited by Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, 215–241. New York: Berghan Books.
- Novinsky, Anita. 2001. "Marranos and Marranism. A New Approach." *Journal of the World Union of Jewish Studies* 40: 5–20.
- Novinsky, Anita. 2002. *Inquisição, Prisioneiros do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Expressão e Cultura.

# Languages of the Diaspora

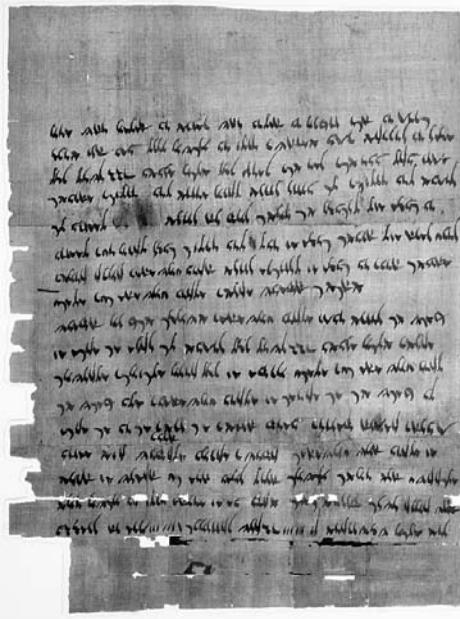
## Characteristics of Jewish Languages

*David M. Bunis*

---

Before the modern era, Jewish languages arose wherever Jewish groups adopted for their everyday use a language spoken by co-territorial non-Jews. In Europe, Jews developed distinctive varieties of Romance, Germanic, and Slavic languages; in the Near East, Middle East, and North Africa, they evolved unique varieties of Aramaic, Greek, Persian, Arabic, Romance languages, Berber, Turkish, Georgian, and others. In many instances, the association of these distinctive languages with their Jewish speakers led them to be called “the Jewish language” by Jews and non-Jews alike. For example, the language of Eastern European Ashkenazim was known as *Yiddish* among its native speakers and as *Żidowski* among Poles; the language of the Sephardim of the former Ottoman Empire, today often known as “Judeo-Spanish” or “Ladino,” was traditionally called *Djudézmo* or *Djidyó* among native speakers and *Yahudice* among Turks. In one form or another, some Jewish languages, such as Jewish Aramaic and Jewish Greek, have been spoken since antiquity, while others, for example Yiddish, Judezmo, and Jewish Arabic, came into existence in the Middle Ages or later. At their height some Jewish languages had impressive numbers of speakers: before World War II several million Jews spoke Yiddish, over a million spoke varieties of Judeo-Arabic, and half a million spoke Judezmo. All three of these languages continue to survive. Other Jewish languages had more modest speech communities; some of them have disappeared, and others are on the verge of extinction.

While incorporating many features of the source languages, the Jewish correlates tend to differ from them in several respects and, as a group, to share certain common features. One reason for this is that, wherever they went, Jews established their own communities, retained a distinct religious and ethnic identity, and maintained at least partial legal autonomy in religious matters. Since ancient times, a key role in the propagation and preservation of the distinctive Jewish religion and lifestyle has been played by Hebrew and, to a lesser extent, Aramaic, the oldest Jewish languages. Sacred texts and formal prayers were read in Hebrew, and correspondence was often maintained in Hebrew, thus necessitating literacy in Hebrew among the learned. The Hebrew alphabet was traditionally used to write Jewish languages as well. Because of their centrality in discussions connected with Jewish civilization, Hebrew roots, words, expressions, and even grammatical elements were incorporated within everyday Jewish language speech and writing, and especially in the language of rabbinical scholars. For example, the annual preoccupation with the laws governing Passover led to the borrowing in Jewish languages of the Hebrew verbal root *b-d-q* “to verify, search,” reflected as Yiddish *bátkenen*, Judezmo *badkár*, and Judeo-Arabic *bdag*, all meaning “to search” (especially for leavened food before Passover). All three verbs illustrate the “fusion” nature of Jewish languages, which synthesize elements from diverse stock languages into a unique new whole.



Papyrus document in Aramaic, dated July 3, 449 BCE, found on Elephantine Island in Egypt. (Brooklyn Museum/Corbis)

In these three verbs, the base or root belongs to the Hebrew component, and the suffixes or verbalizing pattern derive from the principal components of the languages: Germanic in Yiddish, Hispanic in Judezmo, and Arabic in Judeo-Arabic. Despite many parallels, there are numerous divergences in the Hebrew components of Jewish languages, reflecting differences in the traditional pronunciation of Hebrew among the diverse Jewish subcultures, preferences for different grammatical forms, lexical items and their meanings, the influence of certain Hebrew sources over others, and the relative extent of the impact of Hebrew on the various Jewish languages.

Another factor explaining differences between Jewish languages and their non-Jewish correlates is the divergent history of their speakers. For example, by the 11th century, when Jews from Italy and France migrated to Germanic lands and began to speak what was to become Yiddish, Germans had already resided there for centuries. Although adopting many elements from local German dialects, the Jews retained some words from their historical pre-languages, medieval Jewish Italian, and Jewish French, such as *béntshn*, “to say the grace after meals,” and *léyenen*, “to read from the Torah.” When the Moors conquered Spain in 711, Jewish Ibero-Romance speakers adopted a judaized form of Arabic. As Spanish Christians retook Spain during the Reconquista, the Jews again returned to Ibero-Romance; but they retained some distinctive Judeo-Arabisms, including *alhád*, “Sunday” (literally, “first day”), which they found more acceptable than the Spanish *domingo*, known by them to derive from the Latin *dominica dies*, “Lord’s day,” an allusion to Jesus and thus incompatible with Jewish belief. To denote “Torah study,” the Jews of Spain and other Romance lands used reflexes of *meletáō*, “to contemplate,” preserved from the Jewish Greek their ancestors had used in the Roman Empire. Derived verbs such as the Judezmo *meldár*, the Judeo-French *miaudér*, and the Judeo-Italian *meletáre* stood

in opposition to Romance reflexes of Latin *legere*, such as Old and Middle Judezmo *leér*, which denoted “reading” in general. This opposition did not exist in the non-Jewish correlates. In modern Judezmo, *leér* was abandoned entirely, and the distinctive *meldár* was used for “reading” of any kind.

In addition to elements retained from their pre-languages, Jewish language speakers preserved some elements once shared by Jewish and Gentile correlate languages, which eventually became obsolete in the latter; for example, the Judezmo *solómbra*, or “shadow,” was supplanted in Castilian by *sombra*. But Jewish languages were often innovative as well: for instance, compared with Castilian, Judezmo exhibited novel changes in its sound system (compare the Castilian *tardar*, “to delay,” and *suegro*, “father-in-law,” with the synonymous Judezmo *tadrár* and *s-hwéyro/sfwéyro*), its grammatical system (cf. Castilian *tardé* vs. Judezmo *tadrí* for “I delayed”), and its syntax (e.g., the Castilian *su madre* [*de ellos*] vs. the Judezmo *sus madre* for “their mother”). Jewish language speakers coined new words that did not exist in the non-Jewish correlates, such as the Judezmo *konsográr*, “to become related through marriage” (cf. Spanish *con*, “with,” + *suegro*, “father-in-law”). Jews borrowed material from the non-Jewish correlates selectively, so that some words and grammatical elements that were limited to a particular region in the non-Jewish correlate came to enjoy much wider use among Jews. For example, the widely distributed Yiddish diminutizing/plural suffix *-ekh*, as in *kínderlekh*, “children,” corresponds to a German suffix whose use was restricted to a part of Bavaria. Historical events and social change sometimes affected Jewish and non-Jewish correlate languages differently, as when an influx of Arab Bedouin in Baghdad prompted native Muslim residents to accommodate to features of Bedouin speech, but it did not have the same effect on native Jewish Arabic speakers. It is possible that in many such instances Jews used distinctiveness of language as a strategy meant to ensure the maintenance of religious, social, and cultural boundaries between themselves and members of neighboring societies who spoke a similar language. If so, they would have intentionally maximized the differences between their own language and its non-Jewish correlate as a form of negative accommodation to the surrounding culture, in order to preserve their own “nationhood.”

Through their own choice or by force, speakers of Jewish languages occasionally left the locales in which their languages had arisen, and they continued to use them in new settings. Contact with new peoples and languages led to mutual linguistic and cultural borrowing. Yiddish was enriched through contact with Slavic languages in Eastern Europe, just as Judezmo benefited from interaction with Turkish speakers in the Ottoman regions. Borrowings naturally included names for local flora, fauna, and elements of material culture. Some of the latter came to play an integral role in local Jewish culture, such as the *borrekíta* or “small filled pastry” (cf. Turkish *börek* + Spanish diminutive *-ita*) and the *blínts(e)* or “filled crêpe” (cf. Russian *blin*, Ukrainian *mlyntsi*) associated among Judezmo speakers and Yiddish speakers, respectively, with Jewish festival cuisine. But many borrowings were of a more abstract, often affective nature, for example, the Yiddish verb *zháleven*, meaning “to stint, begrudge” (cf. Slavic analogues such as Polish *zátować*, Russian *zhalovaty* + German-origin verbalizing *-en*), and the Judezmo verb *ezvacheárse*,

meaning “to give up” (cf. negativizing Judezmo *ez-* [Spanish *des-*] + Turkish *vazgeç-* + Judezmo/Spanish verbalizing *-ear* + reflexive *-se*). The deep-level incorporation of local linguistic material is illustrated in the borrowing of suffixes such as the synonymous agent-forming *-nik* in Yiddish (cf. Polish *-nik*) and *-djí* in Judezmo (Turkish *-ci*). These are illustrated in the Yiddish *khnífenik* and Judezmo *hanupadjí*, both meaning “flatterer, hypocrite” and deriving from Hebrew words meaning “flattery” (*ḥanifa* [Ashkenazi *khnife*], *ḥanupa*). In many areas where Jews and Gentiles interacted, some non-Jews acquired knowledge of the local Jewish language. This resulted in borrowings into the language of the host society, such as the Turkish *haham*, meaning “rabbi,” and *havra*, meaning “synagogue; (fig.) noisy place,” reflecting the Hebrew words *ḥakham*, or “wise man, scholar,” and *ḥevra*, or “organization,” as pronounced thus and used in those senses in Judezmo.

In their places of origin, and especially when transplanted to new locales, Jewish languages often had dialect geographies distinct from those of the non-Jewish correlates. Yiddish existed in three main varieties: Eastern and Central Yiddish, spoken in Slavic territory, and Western Yiddish, retained in German-speaking areas. The unique Hispanic varieties used by the Sephardim in the modern era may be divided into the Eastern or former Ottoman dialects, and the Central, or European, dialects (mainly of Italy and Austria), where the language was often called *Djudezmo*; and the Western or North African dialects, where speakers called their language *Ḥakitía*. In the case of both Yiddish and Judezmo/Ḥakitía, each major dialect region was subdivided into smaller ones, with distinctive phonology, grammar, lexicon, syntax, and semantic systems. In Eastern and Central Yiddish the influence of Slavic was pronounced, while in Western Yiddish it was absent. In Eastern Judezmo there was considerable influence from Turkish, whereas *Ḥakitía* underwent enrichment through borrowing from North African Arabic. None of the Yiddish or Judezmo/Ḥakitía dialects bore an exact resemblance to any of the regional dialects of German or Yiddish.

In addition to the more ordinary forms of Jewish languages used in everyday speech and writing, several special varieties developed. Jewish education traditionally focused on Hebrew and Aramaic texts such as the Bible and Talmud, and children were taught to translate portions of them with extreme literality, preserving the original word order, using archaic vocabulary, and avoiding Hebrew-Aramaisms. This sacred-translation variety was known as *Taytsh* among Yiddish speakers, *Ladino* among Judezmo speakers, and *Sharḥ* among Judeo-Arabic speakers. A typical example is the Ladino translation of the phrase introducing the ethics of the Fathers: *Tódo Yisraél ay a éyos páрте a el múnдо el vinyén* (literally, “All Israel there is to them part to the world the coming”), which is an archaizing calque translation of the Hebrew *Kol Yisra’el yesh la-hem ḥeleq le-’olam ha-ba*, that is, “All Israel has a share in the World-To-Come.”

Commercial and social interaction often brought Jews into contact with non-Jews, some of whom understood their language. In situations perceived as potentially dangerous or disadvantageous, Jews prevented Gentiles from understanding their language by using a secret variety. Known among Yiddish speakers as *loshn kóydesch* and among Judeo-Persian speakers as *lotoraí*, its core consisted of a larger

than usual percentage of Hebraisms, including many words not used in everyday speech. In addition to Hebrew words designating prices and names and qualities of merchandise, such varieties incorporated warnings such as the following used in Yiddish: “*Daber nit, vayl der orl is meyvn kol dibur*,” or “Don’t speak, because the Gentile understands every word” (compare the Ashkenazi Hebrew *dabeyr*, or “speak,” *oreyl*, or “Gentile,” and *meyvin kol dibur*, or “understands every word”).

The modern era brought heightened interaction between Jews and the host society, pressure on the Jews to integrate within it, and an increasing desire on the part of Jews to do so. Among the linguistic results of the ensuing assimilation were the writing of Jewish languages in non-Jewish alphabets; more intensive borrowing from the local languages, and from prestigious international languages such as French, Italian, and English; code-switching between Jewish and non-Jewish languages; a growing tendency to perceive Jewish languages as “jargons” and “Judeo” languages; and eventually a serious decline in their use.

Recognizing the danger of the imminent extinction of these cultural treasures, which reflect the unique intellectual and social development of Jewish communities in the Diaspora over the past centuries, community members as well as academicians in many parts of the world are now engaged in an urgent campaign to document, research, and teach Jewish languages to ensure their preservation for future generations.

### Selected Bibliography

- Alvarez-Pereyre, Frank, and Jean Baumgarten, eds. 2003. *Linguistique des langues juives et linguistique générale*. Paris: CNRS.
- Bar-Asher, Moshe, ed. 1988. *Studies in Jewish Languages*. Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim.
- Fishman, Joshua, ed. 1981. *The Sociology of Jewish Languages*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Fishman, Joshua, ed. 1985. *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages*, Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Morag, Shelomo, Moshe Bar-Asher, and Maria Mayer-Modena, eds. 1999. *Vena Hebraica in Judaeorum Linguis: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Hebrew and Aramaic Elements in Jewish Languages*, Milan: Università degli Studi di Milano.
- Paper, Herbert H., ed. 1978. *Jewish Languages: Theme and Variations*, Cambridge, UK: Association for Jewish Studies.

## Varieties of Diaspora Languages

*John Myhill*

---

Jews living in the Diaspora have spoken a great variety of languages, which they initially learned through contact with non-Jews speaking these languages. The earliest Diaspora languages for which there are records of Jews having switched to speaking were Aramaic, particularly among Babylonian Jews who were exiled after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, and Greek, particularly in Egypt

even before Alexander conquered the homeland in 332 BCE. Since then, Jewish communities have frequently switched their spoken languages, adopting the language of new conquerors of the areas they have lived in or the dominant group in areas to which they have moved. Thus, for example, Jews in the Middle East generally switched from speaking Aramaic to speaking Arabic/Judeo-Arabic in the 200 years after the Arab conquests in the seventh century; Jews in Ashkenaz—today associated with Germany—switched from speaking a Jewish version of either a Romance language, a Slavic language, or Aramaic to speaking German/Yiddish (there is some controversy over this matter) around the 11th century; and Jews on the Iberian Peninsula switched from speaking a version of Arabic to speaking a version of Spanish in the course of the Reconquest of the Peninsula by the Romance-speaking Christians, particularly between the 12th and 14th centuries. In modern times, immigrant Jewish communities have generally adopted the spoken language of the countries to which they have moved (e.g., English or French)—with varying degrees of distinctiveness from Gentile usage—in the generation after their arrival.

But while one may say that Jews have frequently switched to speaking new languages that they learned from neighboring non-Jews, there has been considerable variation in the extent to which Jewish individuals and groups have spoken the same language in the same way as non-Jewish individuals and groups. Some American Jews today, for example, speak English with no distinctive Jewish characteristics, but others sprinkle their English speech with words and grammatical structures that are identifiably “Jewish,” borrowed from Hebrew, Yiddish, or Aramaic. Through history, however, there have been many cases in which Jews have spoken in a much more distinctive way. For example, this is true of Yiddish itself, which can be understood as being a “kind of German” albeit with a large number of features distinguishing it from the German of non-Jews, including many borrowings not only from Hebrew and Aramaic but also from other languages, particularly Slavic, and even features of grammar and pronunciation—or at least combinations of features—that are not found in the usage of non-Jews.

It has become increasingly common in recent times to refer to particular distinctive Jewish speech forms as being languages, “Jewish languages,” in their own right rather than as dialects of non-Jewish languages; thus, for example, Yiddish is today more or less universally considered to be an autonomous language rather than “bad German,” as it used to be. This trend toward recognizing distinctive Jewish languages can be traced at least to the second half of the 19th century, but it did not really become a mainstream view until after the World War II. In some cases, hyphenated names such as “Judeo-Spanish” or “Judeo-Arabic” are used, suggesting some degree of autonomy from the non-Jewish language while at the same time acknowledging the relationship between the two; on the other hand, the same linguistic entities may be referred to with entirely distinctive names (e.g., Judeo-Spanish is often referred to as “Ladino”). Of course, even for cases in which there were Jews who spoke a version radically different from that of Gentiles, there were often other Jews who clearly spoke the Gentile version of the language (e.g., German as opposed to Yiddish), and in individual cases it was not always clear whether a given person at a given time was speaking the Jewish version or the Gentile version, because the

borderline between the two—as with any two closely related languages—was not really clear; nevertheless, in modern times at least, a distinction has in principle been made. On the other hand, it is generally perceived that Jews today do not speak, for example, English, Russian, or Hungarian today in a sufficiently distinctive fashion to warrant speaking of “Judeo-English,” “Judeo-Russian,” or “Judeo-Hungarian.”

Jewish languages have most obviously been distinctive in terms of borrowings from other Jewish languages and using the Hebrew-Aramaic alphabet, and there have been debates about whether either or both of these features are necessary or sufficient conditions for something to be considered to be a Jewish language. But in many cases there have also been systematic and general differences in grammar and pronunciation between Jewish and non-Jewish versions of a language; it must be said that these differences have been more systematic and general in some cases than others, but on the other hand the same arguments can be made about distinctions between non-Jewish languages such as Russian and Ukrainian, or Norwegian and Swedish, if these terms are understood to refer to the languages in general rather than only the standard form of the language.

The basic idea of the concept of a Jewish language of the Diaspora, then, is that it should be distinctive from the non-Jewish language to which it is related. But a deeper analysis shows that the situation is more complicated—and more interesting—than this. There is no clear and universal understanding of how distinctive two speech forms must be in order to be considered to be two different languages rather than two varieties of the same language; this is determined in each case by social and political factors. Thus, for example, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish are considered to be distinctive languages, even though they are mutually intelligible, and the same is true of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarussian; on the other hand, many dialects of Arabic are not mutually intelligible, and the same is true of Italian and German (even excluding Yiddish). Where there is linguistic similarity, the answer to the question of whether related speech forms are considered to be different languages or dialects of the same language is determined in each individual case according to individual factors not directly related to language, so that while it is certainly true that Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, and Judeo-Arabic are more distinctive from the corresponding Gentile speech forms of these languages than are the Jewish versions of English, Russian, and Hungarian, it would nevertheless be theoretically possible not to acknowledge this difference in distinctiveness in terms of nomenclature, that is, to consider the former (as well as the latter) to be versions of non-Jewish languages rather than distinctive languages in their own right, or alternatively to consider the latter (as well as the former) to be distinctive languages in spite of the fact that they are only minimally distinctive.

With this understanding in mind, it can be said that in modern times—just as Ukrainian and Belarussian have been conceptualized as being distinct from Russian, and Norwegian has been conceptualized as distinct from Danish and Swedish—Jews have conceptualized, for example, Yiddish as being distinct from German. This does not mean, of course, that the terms “Ukrainian,” “Belarussian,” “Norwegian,” and “Yiddish” were not used before modern times, but they were not used systematically as part of a conscious ideology of distinctiveness as they are today.



Poster for a Yiddish theatrical performance of *The Treasure*, about 1930. (Library of Congress)

One may identify two important factors that led Jews in modern times to develop the idea that the Diaspora languages they spoke were—at least when they differed noticeably from Gentile languages—distinctive “Jewish languages” rather than merely dialects of Gentile languages. The first factor was the influence of non-Jewish European nationalist movements that began to sweep Europe in the late 18th century, initially associated with the writings of J.G. Herder, relating language—particularly spoken language—to individual and national identity. For groups such as Ukrainians and Norwegians, this was an important factor in the development of a conception of national identity, and this ultimately culminated in the establishment of independent nation-states; for Jews, on the other hand, who already had a concept of national identity, this same ideology relating language to national identity resulted rather in adopting the idea that whatever Jews spoke should—wherever linguistically plausible—be considered to be distinctive “Jewish languages,” and this was not associated with the establishment of a territorial nation-state but rather with generally reinforcing the idea of Jewish distinctiveness. This kind of thinking was particularly influential among the Jewish intellectuals who had had more contact with, and had been influenced more strongly by, the thinking of non-Jews, who were correspondingly generally less enthusiastic about the traditional criteria of Jewish identity based on religion and personal ancestry.

The second factor supporting the reconceptualization of Jewish versions as being distinctive Jewish languages has really been specific to Yiddish and Judeo-Arabic in particular and has been associated with a radical psychological and physical

separation between Jewish and non-Jewish speakers of what might have been considered to be a single language—that is, Germans and Arabs—so that Jews in general (even the average person who does not think about such matters much) have felt a need to claim and believe that whatever he or she speaks is not that particular Gentile language; in other words, it is not German or Arabic, but rather something distinctively Jewish.

If one considers the first factor, it must be acknowledged that the case of Jewish languages is different from that of Norwegian and Ukrainian, for example, because Jews are also distinguished by their religious affiliation from those groups whose speech is similar, whereas this is not true for Norwegians (*vis-à-vis* Swedes) and (most) Ukrainians (*vis-à-vis* Russians). But Jewish languages are still not unique in this regard. Thus, for example, Serbian and Croatian are minimally distinctive at the spoken level, but they are understood to be different languages particularly because Serbs are Orthodox and Croats are Catholics; the same is true of (Hindu) Hindi versus (Muslim) Urdu. For the same reason, the Catholic Maltese consider their language, which could on linguistic grounds be considered to be a dialect of Arabic, to be a separate language in its own right, because Arabic is generally associated with Muslims, particularly in the area close to Malta. In each of these cases, as with Jewish languages, religious distinctiveness motivates a feeling of linguistic distinctiveness, and this is particularly supported by distinctive patterns of borrowing learned vocabulary; thus, Jewish languages borrow this vocabulary from Hebrew and Aramaic, Serbian borrows it from Greek and Old Church Slavonic, Croatian borrows it from Latin, Hindi borrows it from Sanskrit, Urdu borrows this it Persian and Arabic, and so on. Another feature supporting the distinctiveness of Jewish languages is the fact that they are written with a distinctive script, the same alphabet, with some modifications, that is used to write Hebrew, but here, too, the situation is parallel to that of Serbian (written with the Cyrillic script) versus Croatian (written with the Latin script), for example, as well as the other cases of this type that were mentioned previously, and in any case even if people write their version with a distinctive script, this does not necessarily mean they consider it to be a full-fledged distinctive language; after all, in premodern times, Jews used the Hebrew-Aramaic alphabet to write whatever languages they spoke, but nevertheless they only understood Hebrew and Aramaic to be fully legitimate languages.

Scholars motivated by this first factor have conducted a considerable amount of research on distinctive Jewish forms that have come to be considered distinctive Jewish languages. As with corresponding studies of non-Jewish languages, the research provides much of the material used to demonstrate linguistic distinctiveness. Given that the assumption of such research is that any distinctive Jewish linguistic usage must be a distinctive Jewish language, it is not clear exactly where to objectively draw a line regarding how distinct something must be before it can be considered a distinct language; it is not possible to give a straightforward, exhaustive, and definitive list of Jewish languages that can be considered to represent objective fact. This said, for the purpose of exemplification, note that Weinreich (1973) lists (Judeo-)Arabic, Aramaic, French, Georgian, Greek, Italian, Karaite, Krimchak, Latin,

Persian, Provençal, Slavic, Spanish, Tadjik, Tat, and Yiddish as Jewish languages, and Levi (1979) adds Berber and Kurdish but leaves out Karaite, Latin, and Tadjik. Such lists are periodically expanded as new studies are done resulting in new “Jewish languages” being “discovered.”

Turning now to the second motivation for considering Jewish linguistic usages to be distinctive, this has obviously been most powerful in the case of Yiddish, for two reasons. First of all, the Holocaust resulted in an overwhelming feeling among Jews that Jews and Germans had to be distinguished from each other in terms of identity, and the linguistic reflex of this was that there was an irresistible psychological urge to deny that Jews spoke German when there was any linguistic justification for this distinction at all, and this meant that the earlier feeling that Yiddish was “bad German”—or indeed German at all—came to be unacceptable to anyone (at the same time, of course, it could not be denied that some Jews really did simply speak German). Second, whereas before the Holocaust Yiddish speakers in Eastern Europe and Christian speakers of German in Eastern Europe shared many aspects of their linguistic usage, and the Eastern Germans far outnumbered the Jews, so that geographically it would have been reasonable to consider Yiddish to be a dialect of Eastern German, this situation changed radically during the Holocaust and in the aftermath of World War II, as almost all of the Yiddish speakers were exterminated or fled and almost all of the Eastern German speakers were expelled or fled to the West, so that Yiddish and German were literally geographically separated from each other for the first time. The resulting feeling that Yiddish is a language distinct from German has come from the Jewish community itself rather than Gentile thinking, and it is therefore much stronger and more widespread than the generalized belief in the existence of distinctive Jewish languages described previously; thus, although scientifically impeccable arguments for the legitimacy and autonomy of Yiddish had been advanced by Jewish intellectuals since the second half of the 19th century, it was only after the Holocaust that Jews in general came to more or less universally accept these arguments. Beyond this even, particularly as a consequence of its association with the Holocaust, many Jews have now come to see Yiddish as being not only a distinctive language but also as having a sort of special metaphysical status such as Jews had previously reserved for Hebrew and Aramaic; as noted by Roskies (1997, 26–27), “For the offspring of East European Jewry, the shtetl has become a kind of sacred space, sanctioned by the blood of the martyrs. In this scheme, Yiddish becomes a strictly liturgical medium, a language of lamentation.”

One observes the same general sort of thinking about Judeo-Arabic. Because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and because this conflict and the associated rise of Zionism caused almost all Jewish speakers of Arabic (more than 800,000 of them) to leave the Arab-dominated territories, a similar psychological and physical separation has developed between Jewish and Arab identity, so that, for example, Israeli Jews from Morocco will refer to their spoken language as *marokai* (Moroccan) rather than *aravit*; as in the case of Yiddish, this is felt in the Jewish community in general (although not nearly as strongly, to be sure, as in the case of Yiddish), and not just among Jewish language enthusiasts.

The study of Jewish languages has thus come to be an important part of Jewish studies and a topic of interest to both researchers and consumers of Jewish culture. Writings in this area can be as popular as books written in praise of Yiddish or as sophisticated and esoteric as scholarly articles—which sometimes cannot be understood very easily by nonacademics or even nonspecialists—proposing, for example, new etymologies for previously mysterious words in Jewish languages. This phenomenon of interest in and documentation of Jewish languages should be understood as another way Jews have developed to be simultaneously Jewish and modern, along with Zionism, Reform Judaism, Modern Orthodoxy, and so on. Because the idea of Jewish languages emphasizes linguistic aspects of Jewish distinctiveness, it correspondingly downplays, in a relative sense at least, other forms of Jewish distinctiveness that might be considered important—such as territorial nationalism, religious identity and observance, and ancestry. It is thus naturally more popular among Jews who are concerned with Jewish distinctiveness but less enthusiastic about both Zionism and religion, although of course this is only a general pattern. Aside from this, the study of Jewish languages is ideal for Jews who are intellectually interested in academic linguistics of one type or another and at the same time want to express their Jewishness through their research.

The closest parallel to Jewish languages is found in groups who, like Jews, are simultaneously an ethnic/ancestral group and a religious group and who have partially or entirely lost their ancestral/sacred language as a spoken language, for example, Armenians, Greeks, Copts, Maronites, Assyrians, and Sikhs. Some of these groups have used their own distinctive alphabets to write languages that were originally foreign to them but that they eventually came to speak natively; for example, Armenians and Greeks wrote their version of Turkish in the Armenian and Greek script, and Maronites wrote their version of Arabic in the Syriac script. Such usages were essentially parallel to Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish for Jews. Even for groups that have not literally written down such languages, an argument could presumably be made that they were distinctive languages, based on such factors as distinctive patterns of borrowing from sacred languages. In practice, however, members of these groups do not appear to be nearly as interested as Jews have been in consciously constructing these to be separate languages. To a certain extent this can be attributed to the fact that Jews have had much more intimate contact with the European (particularly Eastern European) culture, which developed the idea that spoken language is an important marker of national identity, but there is no question that this idea also appealed to something indigenous in Jewish thinking.

Aramaic has been perceived as different from other Diaspora languages in that Jews have always regarded it as being a real language (traditionally even a sacred language). Small sections of the Bible are in Aramaic, as is most of the Talmud, many prayers, including Kaddish and Kol Nidre, and the *Zohar*. In fact, Jews traditionally regarded Aramaic rather than Hebrew as being the real language of scholarship, in the sense that, in theory at least, everyone, or at least every male, knew Hebrew to some extent, whereas knowledge of Aramaic was specifically associated with the intellectual elite. This special status may be attributed to the fact that Aramaic was, in effect, the first Diaspora language, so that all Jews have Aramaic-speaking

ancestors (the Greek-speaking Jewish community of Egypt having disappeared into history), so that its special status does not threaten Jewish unity, in relation to which Aramaic was the general (though not universal) spoken language of the Levant and Babylonia between the sixth century BCE and the seventh century CE when Jewish identity was developed. Correspondingly, there has not been so much effort devoted in modern times to demonstrating that Judeo-Aramaic is or ever was a distinctive Jewish language.

Although Hebrew and Aramaic have obviously been the preferred language historically for writing from the point of view of religion, scholarship, and addressing general Jewish audiences, Jews have also written in other Jewish languages. The most obvious motivation for this was to reach readers who did not know Hebrew or Aramaic; it is, of course, generally easier, and requires much less education, to read in one's native language than in a foreign language. Writings in Diaspora languages were often (though by no means always) directed largely at women, because they received minimal instruction in Hebrew and Aramaic. Diaspora languages served as the medium for Bible translations, midrashim, philosophy, Hebrew grammar, popular manuals explaining Jewish law, in some cases (particularly Judeo-Arabic) science and mathematics, and, in modern times, literature and newspapers, particularly in Yiddish but also in Judeo-Spanish. Indeed, the 19th and 20th centuries saw a flowering of Yiddish literature impressive both in quantity and quality, including the writings of Shalom Aleichem, Mendele Moykher Sforim, Y. L. Peretz, and Isaac Bashevis Singer. In sanctioning Bible translations into vernacular languages, Jews chose a middle ground between the approach of Catholics and Muslims and that of Protestants. On the one hand, by allowing and actively circulating vernacular Bible translations, Jewish religious authorities, unlike those of Catholics and Muslims, supported the idea that the masses should basically understand the word of God; on the other hand, unlike Protestant Bible translations such as the English King James Bible and Luther's German translation of the Bible, Jewish Bible translations in languages other than Hebrew and Aramaic were never seen to have any inherent sanctity of their own—it was always understood that their sole purpose was to convey the basic message of the original text, and it was always recognized that the translation was necessarily deficient. Thus, it was written in Sofrim 1:7 that the day the Torah was translated into Greek “was as grievous as the day the [Golden] Calf was made, for the Torah could not be translated properly.” Yet the same religious authorities who would support such a statement would also unambiguously support making and circulating such a vernacular Bible translation; this profound—and yet realistic—ambivalence can be said to characterize premodern Jewish attitudes toward their own vernacular languages in the Diaspora.

As noted, Jews characteristically switch to speaking the language of non-Jews around them in one form or another, but in fact this does not necessarily happen very quickly. The most striking exception was the maintenance of Judeo-Spanish in the Ottoman Empire after the Expulsion in 1492 until the 20th century, but one might include in the same general category the maintenance of Yiddish in Eastern Europe when Jews were surrounded by speakers of non-Germanic languages (although, as already noted, there were also large numbers of Christian Germans in

the general area at the time), the maintenance of Judeo-Persian in the Caucasus, and so on. It is indeed an interesting historical question why some Jewish communities have quickly adopted the language, or at least a version of the language, of their Gentile neighbors whereas others have maintained distinctive languages (even if they are not entirely distinctive) for longer. Thus far, however, this has not been the object of systematic comparative research.

In recent times, Jews everywhere have been switching to speaking the official languages of the countries they live in as their mother tongues and primary languages—including switching to Hebrew in Israel—and this means the children of native speakers of Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, and Judeo-Arabic, for example, have been switching to speaking Hebrew, English, Turkish, French, Russian, and other languages. A fascinating aspect of the phenomenon of interest in Jewish languages is that these forms are coming to be recognized as languages at exactly the same time they are dying as spoken languages; a hundred years ago, these speech forms were not generally understood to be distinctive languages, so they could not have been understood to be dying in the same sense, but now it seems that they are being reconceptualized as languages specifically so they can be understood to be dying. And yet this is in a way consistent with what happened historically concerning Hebrew, the prototypical Jewish language: Jews only began to treat it as a real language—in premodern terminology a sacred language—when it came under imminent threat of extinction in the wake of the Babylonian Conquest, which introduced Aramaic as the dominant language in the area. It appears that Jews (in striking distinction to Europeans other than Greeks) value languages as symbols of their identity most highly when these languages are endangered or dead, whereas everyday spoken languages that are in no danger of disappearing are to a significant extent taken for granted.

One striking exception to this pattern, however, is Yiddish in the Ultra-Orthodox communities of the Diaspora. In most of these communities, Yiddish is surviving as the general everyday language of the community, even among the youngest speakers and even when the community is surrounded by speakers of other languages; the language seems to serve as a marker of not only Jewish identity but more specifically Ultra-Orthodox identity—in the minds of its speakers, authentic Jewish identity. In Israel, on the other hand, even the Ultra-Orthodox are generally switching to Hebrew—after all, one can argue that English, French, or Flemish is not a suitable language for “real Jews” to speak, but it is much more difficult to claim that “real Jews” should not speak Hebrew. Yet even this is not impossible, as there are Ultra-Orthodox in Israel, in particular the anti-Zionist *naturei karta*, who continue to speak Yiddish as their everyday language and believe modern Hebrew is not a legitimate language.

The general consensus of opinion among researchers in Jewish languages is that Jews have stopped creating distinctive languages in the past few hundred years as their contacts with non-Jews have become more extensive. One objective indication of this is that Jews have not recently been writing new languages with the Hebrew-Aramaic alphabet, as they used to (although this in itself is a phenomenon that needs to be explained). On the other hand, it is also possible to set the

bar for distinctiveness lower and investigate in much greater detail how Jews are continuing to use language differently from non-Jews, for example, by looking at the characteristics of the English of Jews—not only borrowings from Hebrew and Yiddish but also pronunciations and grammatical structures—that are particularly associated with Jews, even if this is only in terms of quantitative frequency of usage; in some cases Jews, or at least some Jews, are aware of these differences and even talk about them, while in others they are below the level of consciousness, but either way they are manifestations of Jewish distinctiveness. There has been some research of this type in recent years, and it is quite possible this will be more significant in the future, because this is after all the same general idea that has motivated a general interest in Jewish languages in modern times: Jews are a distinctive people and therefore must be using language differently, and research demonstrating that Jews use language—any language—distinctively at the same time necessarily supports the idea of Jewish distinctiveness.

### Selected Bibliography

- Blau, Joshua. 1999. *The Emergence and Linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic: A study of the Origins of Neo-Arabic and Middle Arabic*. Jerusalem: Ben-Tsvi Institute.
- Fishman, Joshua. 1981. *Never Say Die! A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters*. The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton.
- Harris, Tracy K. 1994. *Death of a Language: The History of Judeo-Spanish*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.
- Myhill, John. 2004. *Language in Jewish Society: Towards a New Understanding*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Weinreich, Max. 1980. *History of the Yiddish Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Judeo-Spanish in the Turkish Social Context

*Mary Altabev*

---

Judeo-Spanish is the language Spanish Jews brought to the Ottoman Empire during the 15th and 16th century after the Spanish Inquisition started a gradual mass emigration of the oppressed Jews toward the most accessible places like Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands, France, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. Within the Ottoman Empire, Judeo-Spanish was passed on to their descendants and is estimated to have been the group's vernacular until the early 20th century. Part of this group continues to live in the present-day Turkish Republic that replaced the Ottoman Empire in 1923. Today, of the 400,000 Sephardic Jews worldwide, approximately 25,000 live in Istanbul, and a couple of thousand in other parts of Turkey.

According to the figures given by different sources (Cohen 1973; Kastoryano 1992; Sephiha 1977) the Turkish Jewish population has steadily declined from the first official census in 1927. The reasons for the demographic decline after the establishment

Turkey's chief rabbi, Izak Haleva, gives a speech at Neve Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul on October 11, 2004. The Jewish community in Istanbul has the highest number of Jewish residents of any Muslim nation. (Fatih Saribas/Reuters/Corbis)



of the Turkish Republic vary from the isolated, occasional outbreaks of violence in Turkey to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. In addition to emigration from Turkey there was also a movement within the country's boundaries in which the remaining small Jewish communities converged toward Istanbul. Istanbul is estimated to have between 10 and 12 million inhabitants. Among these the Armenians, the Greek-Orthodox, and the Jews are the main religious minority communities.

Other than the synagogues, the Jewish community in Istanbul supports various charitable organizations. Most of these organizations are attached to the chief rabbinate in Istanbul, with the chief rabbi as the official representative of the Turkish Jewish community as a whole. The elected chief rabbi, assisted by the beth din, the Judaic court, supervises the religious and lay council.

The community supports three Jewish schools: one primary, one high school, and a new complex including the whole spectrum from primary to high school, which opened in 1994. Apart from secular education, the *Mahzake Tora*, the religious Sunday school, provides religious teaching for the community's youngsters.

Six social clubs (with an estimated 2,500 young members in 1996) provide the cultural activities for the Turkish Jewish community in Istanbul. In the past few years, they have become the principal source of Sephardic cultural activities, such as Sephardic music evenings, Judeo-Spanish theatre, and so on. They attract the young generation through their organization of activities directed especially toward them. The weekly newspaper *Şalom*, with two pages in Judeo-Spanish, is the community's only surviving publication.

Similar to other low-prestige languages, Judeo-Spanish has been and is still called by various names, depending on the preferences of the speakers and the fashion of

the day. This study encountered the use of *Ispanyolca* (which is the Turkish counterpart of [E]Spanyol, *Judeo-Espanyol*, Ladino, *Musevice*, Judezmo, *Sefaradca*, and *Yahudice*). As none of the interviews were conducted in Judeo-Spanish, *Djudyo* did not appear in the count, but during observed Judeo-Spanish conversations, the language has been referred to as *Djudyo*, “Jew” or “Jewish,” or *la lingua muestra*, “our language.” In addition to that, *Bizim Ispanyolca*, meaning “our Spanish” was used for explanatory purposes, that is, so that it would not be confused with modern standard Spanish.

It is generally accepted that the vernacular, Judeo-Spanish, stems from medieval Spanish with the addition of Hebrew loanwords and several lexical items and grammatical components from local languages encountered along its historical journey to its current form. Some prefer to describe it as a bastardized language, a distortion, a jargon, a mixture. This history is paralleled by that of other Jewish languages, in particular, Yiddish (Bunis 1981). However, the approach of this study was to consider Judeo-Spanish as an independent language in its own right.

Until the past few decades, Judeo-Spanish was written in its own specific writing system called *rashi*, which is a “script developed from square Hebrew characters and named after the acronym for Rabbi Selomo Itshaki (1040–1105)” (Saul 1983). Bunis adds that while *rashi* was used for printing, the handwritten cursive script was called *soletreo* (Bunis 1982). Nowadays in Turkey, as in other places where Judeo-Spanish is printed, Judeo-Spanish publications use the Roman alphabet but follow different orthographic rules.

With the establishment of the French Alliance schools (1860) Judeo-Spanish became the language predominantly spoken at home and by the uneducated. The loss of Judeo-Spanish’s prestige was reinforced by the symbolic function of the national unifying element attributed to the national language. By the late 1950s, when the prevailing slogan advertised in public places was “Citizen, speak Turkish!” minority languages had retreated to the private domain of the home. As a result the limited use of the language started to cause deterioration of its structure and lexicon.

In the present day, Istanbul Jews still generally believe they speak a bastardized Judeo-Spanish. This study suggested that Judeo-Spanish speakers were and still are affected by external and internal economic, sociopolitical pressures and demographic changes. That is, there is a two-way pressure. From one direction the speakers are motivated to give up the use of Judeo-Spanish because of their fear of being discriminated against by the dominant majority on the basis that it is not the national language. They believe use of Judeo-Spanish would be taken to be indicative of the users’ disloyalty/foreignness and thus would become an obstacle in their socioeconomic advancement. From another direction, that is, their own community members, the speakers are driven not to use Judeo-Spanish because of its negative social image.

This study’s main contention is that the apparent decline of Judeo-Spanish is related to the Turkish Jewish identification with the language. In other words, for various reasons, Judeo-Spanish as the binding agent of the community has been overtaken or replaced by other identity components, such as religion, peoplehood,

or nationhood. Its function as an identity marker, on the other hand, is replaced by its being a way of speaking differently.

However, although academic research has predicted Judeo-Spanish's inevitable demise throughout the past half century, the speakers themselves seemed to disagree and continued to use it, and are still using the language (see Gerşon 1986), or as some would prefer to say, what is left of it. Whatever the case, Judeo-Spanish is currently used in Istanbul, although the speakers are almost exclusively over the age of 30. If one considers that the predictions of Judeo-Spanish's death started in the 1930s, and that in each case, the primary signpost appeared to be that none of the new generation is using it or can use it fluently, it is interesting that the nonfluent young generation of each of those studies, over a period of almost 70 years, used Judeo-Spanish, and in some cases, has even transmitted it—although there is an ongoing dispute about the quality of what is being transmitted.

Although most of the revival activities are based in Israel or Spain, a parallel movement is observed in the local Turkish Jewish community and press. Mainly the activities of the Jewish social clubs in the form of cultural evenings, concerts, and plays focusing on Judeo-Spanish are increasingly well attended. As to the community newspaper *Şalom*, it has survived since 1947 with two of its pages published in Judeo-Spanish.

Some of the reasons for Judeo-Spanish's survival in Turkey can perhaps be attributed to the fact that there is no strong standard Spanish competition as in the case of the U.S. study (Harris 1994). It is a language acquired with no apparent effort and has its practical uses, such as communication with other Spanish speakers all over the world. Additionally, it is presented as a language backed up by a state (in this case expectations are that it would be two states: Israel and Spain), thus displacing Judeo-Spanish from the marginal minority-language status.

Another possibility this study suggested is that rather than or at the same time as a Judeo-Spanish revival, an important linguistic change is taking place among the Turkish Jews. Inasmuch as the group has other linguistic means to mark and signal its identity—in other words, speaking differently—it is possible that we are witnessing the birth of another Jewish language, where in Bunis's terms Judeo-Spanish would be the prelanguage and Turkish the major determinant (Bunis 1981). That is, while Judeo-Spanish is surviving in the current Turkish Jewish context, at the same time it is branching out, and one of the branches is mutating into another language.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bunis, D. M. 1981. "A Comparative Linguistic Analysis of Judezmo and Yiddish." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 30: 49–70.
- Bunis, D. M. 1982. "Types of Nonregional Variation in Early Modern Eastern Spoken Judezmo." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 37: 41–70.
- Cohen, H. J. 1973. *The Jews of the Middle-East. 1860–1972*. Jerusalem: Israel University Press.
- Gerşon, K. 1986. "The Relationship of Language, Ethnicity and Ethnic Group Identity. A Case: Judeo-Spanish." MA diss. Faculty of Letters, Department of Linguistic Science, Reading University.
- Harris, T. K. 1994. *Death of a Language. The History of Judeo-Spanish*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.

- Kastoryano, R. 1992. "From *Millet* to Community: The Jews of Istanbul." In *Ottoman and Turkish Jewry, Community and Leadership*, edited by A. Rodrigue, 253–277. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Saul, M. 1983. "The Mother Tongue of the Polyglot: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism among the Sepharadim of Istanbul." *Anthropological Linguistics* 25 (3): 326–358.
- Séphiha, H. V. 1977. *L'Agonie des judéo-espagnols*. Paris: Editions Entente.

## Two-Tiered Relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars, and the Kiev-Polessian Dialect

*Paul Wexler*

---

Most students of comparative Jewish linguistics assume that the Jewish languages were invented by Jews (Birnbaum 1944; Fishman 1991; Alvarez-Péreyre and Baumgarten 2003; Myhill 2004). A minority view is found in Wexler (2002; 2006, preface) who proposes that the comparative study of Jewish languages suggests that the primary creators of the structurally most distinctive Jewish languages were not Jews but "converts" to the Jewish community. Examples are Yiddish, or the "relexifications" of the Bible in many Jewish speech communities for a population not fluent in Hebrew. Historically, the absence of a sizable number of proselytes is usually matched by the absence of a Judaized language that differs substantially from co-territorial non-Jewish speech. Judaized ethnolects of non-Jewish languages, which indeed owe their genesis primarily to the efforts of Jews themselves, are only minimally distinct from their cognate non-Jewish source languages (e.g., Judaized Romance, German [as opposed to Yiddish], Arabic, Chinese, Greek)—and essentially only in the lexicon.

Relexification entails the retention of one's original grammar, phonology, and phonotactics while replacing most of the native lexicon with foreign "phonetic strings"—that is, bare forms whose semantic and syntactic behavior are determined by the original grammar of the speaker. In Wexler's view, Yiddish is not a Germanic language but rather a Slavic language whose vocabulary was first largely "relexified" to High German. He speculated that Jews (primarily of Slavo-Turkic proselyte origin) speaking Sorbian between the 9th and 12th centuries in the Slavo-German lands resisted the pressure to switch fully to German language and religion (Christianity) that resulted from the migration of the Germans into the largely Sorbian lands. While most of the Slavs eventually shifted from a pagan Slavic to a Christian German identity, the indigenous Jews (mainly of non-Jewish Slavic origin) made only a partial language shift to German. Relexification was also carried out at about the same time and later by the Slavic-speaking descendants of the Judaized Khazars, first in Central Europe and then in the present-day north Ukraine and southern Belarus.

The motivation for carrying out relexification is always identificatory—never communicative. It stands to reason that new converts to Judaism would have had a strong motivation to create a new linguistic analogue to match their newly acquired religious identity. Sorbs were motivated to convert (and then to relexify their language) because of the need to avoid being sold into slavery by Germans and Vikings; in Eastern Europe, Judaism was spread by the need of the Khazar ruling classes to maintain neutrality vis-à-vis the Muslim caliphate and the Byzantine Empire and by their desire to participate in the international trade controlled then largely by Jews (on relexification, see Lefebvre 1986 and Wexler 2002).

To posit relexification in the genesis of a Judaized language is tantamount to suggesting that the speech community expanded primarily thanks to the accretion of significant numbers of converts. Because ethnic Jews were probably not in need of a new identification, they would not have needed to create radically distinct Judaized analogues of co-territorial or contiguous non-Jewish languages. Because the number of converts to Judaism in Jewish communities before 1200 was usually greater than that of the “original” Jews, there is the strong likelihood that the latter will espouse the Jewish language as their own.

If conversion to Judaism is the major factor behind the growth of Jewish communities outside Palestine, and if converts are the groups most likely to create maximally distinctive Judaized languages by retaining the groups’ original grammars, then the concept of a Jewish Diaspora created by enforced or voluntary migration out of Palestine (e.g., after 70 CE) is unjustified. The spread of religious ideas does not require the resettlement of a large population of practitioners or missionaries of those ideas.

It is widely assumed that the Ashkenazic Jewish immigrants from the Germano-Slavic lands to Eastern Europe vastly outnumbered the indigenous East Slavic-speaking Jews, but the facts of Yiddish suggest a Slavic-speaking majority there. The Slavo-Turks who, with a tiny Palestinian Jewish population, formed the Ashkenazic Jews have committed no less than six acts of relexification over the past 12 centuries: five acts of relexification of a Slavic language (a–e) and one act of relexification of Old (Semitic) Hebrew (f) (stands for “became relexified to”): (a) Sorbian (Middle High German, Hebrew/Aramaic lexicon = Slavic Yiddish I [9th–12th centuries]); (b) Yiddish (Old Hebrew/Aramaic with new Yiddish Hebrew creations) = written Ashkenazic Hebrew (12th–19th centuries), a Slavic language with a predominantly Hebrew lexicon; (c) Kiev-Polessian (the ancestor of modern northern Ukrainian and southern Belarusian) (Yiddish, Middle High German, Hebrew/Aramaic lexicon = Slavic Yiddish II [9th?–15th century?]); (d) Yiddish (Old Hebrew [as in (b)] but without most Yiddish Hebraisms = spoken/written Modern Hebrew [late 19th century]), a Slavic language with a predominantly Hebrew lexicon; (e) Yiddish (Latinoid lexicon = Esperanto [late 19th century]), a Slavic language with a Latinoid lexicon (the founder of Esperanto, Ludwik Zamenhof, was a native speaker of Yiddish); and (f) Old Hebrew → Middle High German lexicon = literal Yiddish Bible “relexifications” (14th–18th centuries), unusual dialects of Old Semitic Hebrew grammar with a predominantly Germanic lexicon.

There are two central diagnostic tests for identifying prior relexification in a language. First, Yiddish is a relexification-based language because its grammar

and phonology are derived predominantly from a single source, Slavic, while the bulk of the lexicon has a different source—about 75 percent is of High German origin. The remainder is split roughly between Hebraisms (including innovative pseudo-Hebraisms) and Slavisms—the latter being the sole native elements. Unfortunately, appreciation of these facts is often complicated because many contemporary dialects of Yiddish have been Germanized in the past two centuries (especially in areas where Yiddish speakers were also fluent in German, such as Latvian Kurland and Ukrainian Bukovyna), and most texts written by speakers of Slavic Yiddish before the early 19th century were in Judaized German (though with Yiddish features).

Second, a language is relexification-based if, by comparing the lexicons and derivational structures of the putative substratal and superstratal (lexifier) languages, it is possible to predict with high accuracy (i.e., to motivate *ex post facto*) which superstratal lexical elements will be compatible with the substratal grammar. In Yiddish, one can predict accurately which German components will be accepted and where in the lexicon Yiddish will have to use Hebraisms, a few unique Romanisms, and unrelexified Slavisms, as well as invent pseudo-Hebraisms (far more frequently than in any other non-Jewish language adopted and adapted by Jews). No other model of Yiddish genesis can make such predictions about the total lexicon.

This second test is extremely important because it shows that it could not have been the seven or eight centuries of contact with Slavic languages that allegedly caused German component loss and extreme concomitant Slavicization in Yiddish (indeed, Yiddish was never removed from contact with German in Central and Eastern Europe). Furthermore, Slavicization of an alleged Germanic Yiddish could never explain the broad recourse to Hebraisms. Interference with Slavic would have resulted in entirely haphazard, regional, and unpredictable Yiddish acquisition of Slavic lexicon; but this is not the case. It should also be pointed out that the Slavic imprint in Yiddish differs both quantitatively and qualitatively from that of other languages in contact with Slavic for seven or eight centuries that did not undergo relexification, such as colonial German and Karaite in Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland.

An analysis of the Yiddish language, Ashkenazic religion and folklore, and migrational history suggest that the original Ashkenazic Jews in the German lands are not primarily of French and Italian Jewish origin, as is commonly maintained. This is because, first, the alleged unique French components in Yiddish can more easily be derived from Friulan, Italian, and Balkan Romance—thus pointing to a Balkan conduit for the forebears of the Ashkenazic Jews (Wexler 1992). Second, there are almost no Jewish settlements in the center of France in the first millennium CE—only in the extreme south (Provence) and extreme north. However, the Balkans have more or less unbroken Jewish settlements—from Greece and Macedonia up to Roman Hungary. Third, positing the birth of Yiddish in the southwest German lands (the Rhineland) is impossible because no form of Yiddish ever shows any features of the local German dialects. Fourth, Balkan Jews (of Slavo-Turkic descent primarily) probably migrated to the East German lands along with non-Jewish

Slavs in the eighth century (note the similar name of the “Sorbs” in Germany and the “Serbs” in Yugoslavia). Thus, it is the Balkan-Caucasian Jews who spread westward within Europe, eventually reaching northern France. By the 13th century, Yiddish-speaking Jews began to migrate into the monolingual Slavic lands to the east. The fact that most of the oldest German Jewish cemeteries, ritual baths, religious centers, and synagogues are found in the southwest German lands need not detract from the hypothesis, because a modest Jewish presence in the early Middle Ages is also found in modern-day eastern Germany—the relative paucity of the latter (e.g., at Görlitz, alongside historic documentation of a Jewish presence), can be explained by the internecine wars between Germans and Slavs that ravaged eastern Germany after the eighth century and destroyed much historical testimony.

### Selected Bibliography

- Alvarez-Péreyre, Frank, and Jean Baumgarten, eds. 2003. *Linguistique des langues juives et linguistique générale* [The Linguistics of Jewish Languages and General Linguistics]. Paris: CNRS.
- Fishman, Joshua. 1991. “How Does Yiddish Differ?” In *Yiddish: Turning to Life*, 313–323. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Jacobs, Neil G. 2005. *Yiddish. A Linguistic Introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lefebvre, Claire. 1986. “Relexification in Creole Genesis Revisited: The Case of Haitian Creole.” In *Substrata Versus Universals in Creole Genesis*, edited by Pieter Muysken and Norbert S. H. Smith, 279–300. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Myhill, John. 2004. *Language in Jewish Society. Towards a New Understanding*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Wexler, Paul. 1981. “Jewish Interlinguistics: Facts and Conceptual Framework.” *Language* 57: 99–149.
- Wexler, Paul. 1992. *The Balkan Substratum of Yiddish*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz.
- Wexler, Paul. 2002. *Two-tiered Relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars and the Kiev-Polesian Dialect*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Wexler, Paul. 2006. *Jewish and Non-Jewish Creators of “Jewish” Languages. (With Special Attention to Judaized Arabic, Chinese, German, Greek, Portuguese, Slavic [Yiddish/Modern Hebrew], Spanish & Karaite & Old Semitic Hebrew [Ladino])*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz.

## A Perspective on Judeo-Ibero-Romance, Yiddish, and Rotwelsch

*Paul Wexler*

---

The title of this essay may come as a surprise, as no one before has ever suggested that Judeo-Ibero-Romance, Yiddish, and Rotwelsch (German slang lexicons, attested since the late 1300s; see Wolf 1956) have a set of common features sufficient to warrant their exclusive comparison. Although scholars have identified independent German and Jewish contacts with Romance and Judeo-Romance, respectively,

have identified an enormous Hebrew imprint in many variants of Rotwelsch, and have traced the diffusion of Hebraisms and Aramaisms from Yiddish into Rotwelsch (and from the latter to a host of other European slang lexicons), they have neglected the effect of Judaized Romance on Rotwelsch.

Yiddish is often said to contain a small Judeo-French and Judeo-Italian component (Weinreich 1973), though Wexler (1992) thinks the alleged unique French components in Yiddish are best derived from Friulan, Italian, and Balkan Romance—thus pointing to a Balkan conduit, among others, for the forebears of the Ashkenazic Jews. The Judeo-Latin legacy of Rotwelsch takes the form of a corpus of Gallicized Hebrew elements, borrowed from Judeo-French by the late 14th century, if not earlier.

An investigation of the Judeo-Romance component in Yiddish in a comparative Romance context suggests that this component is both substratal (mainly from Judeo-Italian and Balkan Romance at birth in the 9th and 10th centuries) and adstratal (from Judeo-French and Italian after the conception of Yiddish). A discussion of the Judeo-Romance imprint in Yiddish and Rotwelsch must, of course, include a discussion of the origin of Judeo-Ibero-Romance itself (see Wexler 1988, 1992).

A comparison of these three heirs to a Judeo-Latin legacy requires investigation of three major research topics: dating the Judeo-Ibero-Romance languages, ascertaining the role of Romance in the genesis of Yiddish and Judaized German, and studying the corpus and origin of the Judeo-French elements in Rotwelsch. This research promises five important benefits:

1. *For Judeo-Latin studies:* Given the paucity of Judeo-Latin textual and epigraphic materials, it is imperative to try to identify Judeo-Latin elements preserved in the Judeo-Romance daughter languages and in languages in contact with the latter.
2. *For the individual study of Judeo-Ibero-Romance, Yiddish, and Rotwelsch:* The facts of one language are often indispensable for elucidating facts of another, as when Yiddish enables researchers to expand the Judeo-Romance corpus or when Judeo-Ibero-Romance helps to identify possible Judeo-Latin Hebraisms (e.g., Yiddish *sheygets*, or “non-Jewish boy,” with intervocalic /g/ < Hebrew *shekets*, or “abomination,” shows French pronunciation habits) and Judeo-Romance elements in Yiddish. A comparative framework also enables researchers to determine which Judeo-Romance languages might derive from Judeo-Latin and which developed later in the individual Romance territories from the newly forming Romance languages.
3. *For Hebrew and Judeo-Aramaic linguistics:* A comparative study of Hebraisms and Aramaisms in the Judeo-Romance languages might elucidate the relative chronology of borrowing from those two languages and reconstruct the outlines of spoken Palestinian Hebrew and Aramaic. (The only other source of information about old spoken Semitic would be transcriptions in non-Jewish languages, e.g., Coptic, Greek. Like written or Classical Latin vis-à-vis Vulgar Latin, old written Hebrew was too distant from colloquial Hebrew to serve as a reliable reflection of the spoken language.)

4. *For Judeo-Greek studies:* Judeo-Romance languages often preserve the only testimony of individual Judeo-Greek components.
5. *For Jewish history:* Linguistic data often focus the attention of Jewish historians on new research topics in ways that nonlinguistic data rarely can.

Linguistic geography and bilingual dialectology of the co-territorial Jewish and non-Jewish cognate languages emerge as the two primary tools for ascertaining when and where Jewish languages crystallized and, in the case of Judeo-Ibero-Romance languages, for determining which of the latter languages might be direct outgrowths of Judeo-Latin speech, and which are probably the result of much later processes of Judaizing Romance languages. In exploring for the first time the Judeo-Latin legacy of a number of European Jewish languages as well as German slang, Wexler 1992 makes three major claims:

First, Judeo-Spanish (known natively in the Balkans as Judezmo, Judyo, Jidyó and as *Ḥakitía* in Morocco) and Ladino (Hebrew “relexified” to unspoken Ibero-Romance; see Lefebvre 1986 and Wexler 1996 for a definition of relexification) developed when Arabic-speaking Jews Judaized Castilian dialects between the 11th and 14th centuries. It appears that only the Judaized Ibero-Romance speech of the northeast of the Peninsula (e.g., Judeo-Catalan, and possibly also Judeo-Aragonese and Judeo-Provençal) might be direct continuations of the Judeo-Latin speech brought to the Peninsula by Roman (or Greek) Jewish colonizers (note the remains of a synagogue from around the sixth century with Judeo-Greek inscriptions at Elche, in Alicante Province, Spain).

Second, Yiddish was created uniquely in the bilingual Germano-Slavic southeast German lands on Judeo-Slavic, Judeo-Greek, and minor Judeo-Italian substrata (and possibly even Judeo-Turkic—in the form of Khazar—brought by Caucasian emigrants) by the 9th or 10th centuries, and *not* in the southwest German lands on combined Judeo-French and Judeo-Italian substrata, as is commonly maintained. Only in southwest German lands were some French components acquired by Judaized German, which did not contribute to the genesis of Yiddish. (Judaized German probably postdates the birth of Yiddish and became extinct in the 15th century.)

Third, it is shown for the first time that Rotwelsch studies are relevant for Judeo-Romance linguistics, given the existence of a Judeo-Romance component in some early German Rotwelsch (slang) lexicons. Jewish linguistic terms would be attractive to Rotwelsch because they would be unlikely to be understood broadly by the German population. In later Rotwelsch lists, dating from the 16th century to the present, one finds a plethora of Romani (Gypsy) loans for the same reason. Significantly, besides Hebrew, some Yiddish Slavicisms and any Germanisms that had unusual meanings in Yiddish not readily recognizable to Germans were also attractive to speakers of Rotwelsch. For example, two variants of Hebrew *qlfwt* /*klafot*/ “peels, barks” are usually said to be the source of Rotwelsch *klabot* (ca. 1450; see Wolf 1956) and *claffot* (1510; also Wolf) “cloth(ing)” (usually used in the singular). The Yiddish slang counterpart is *kluft* “clothing” (also attested in Rotwelsch of 1753; see Wolf). The source of *-ot* in the earliest two Rotwelsch forms is not Hebrew *-wt/-ot/*, as the plural suffix of Hebrew *qlf* /*klaf*/ is *-ym* /*-im*/ “parchment, playing card” (vs.

related Hebrew *qlph* /klipa/ “peel, bark, skin,” which does allow the plural suffix *-wt* /-ot/). Furthermore, Hebrew /-ot/ would have been pronounced as *-o(t)s* in a Judeo-French reading tradition of Hebrew (or *-es* in Yiddish). A more felicitous analysis would be to derive Rotwelsch *-ot* from (Judeo-) French diminutive *-ot*, and *klap-* and *claff-* from Hebrew /klaf/.

The co-territoriality that developed between different Jewish languages and culture areas produced very different kinds of results in the northern and southern peripheries of the Judeo-Romance territory. In the Iberian Peninsula, the historical language shifts led to the obsolescence of the earliest Judaized languages—Judeo-Catalan and Judeo-Arabic—and to the birth of new Judeo-Castilian and Judeo-Portuguese. The confrontation in the north and southeast of Europe between the newly Judaized German and Yiddish (of Slavic origin with a majority German lexical component)—and Judeo-French, Judeo-Italian, Judeo-Greek, and Judeo-Slavic speech led to the total extinction of all of the latter (unrelexified Judeo-Slavic survived in the East Slavic lands at least up to the 17th century), though a small sediment from all those languages was deposited in regional Yiddish and from Judeo-Romance in Rotwelsch.

Coincidentally, the de-Romanization of the Jews in the south German lands, their re-Romanization in Castile and Portugal, and the obsolescence of Judeo-Catalan and Judeo-French, all date from the 13th to 15th centuries. Thus, in a single historical period most of Judeo-Romance speech disappeared in the successor states of the Roman Empire, leaving perhaps Judeo-Italian (in some of its dialects?) as the sole surviving Judeo-Romance language with uninterrupted links to Judeo-Latin. The status of Judeo-French requires comment. If the northern French communities were in part derived from migrating German Jews, then the French used by the Jews could not be of Judeo-Latin origin; moreover, Judeo-French texts (from France and England both, up to about the 1300s), do not differ significantly from Christian dialects. Judeo-Provençal could conceivably have originally developed directly from Judeo-Latin, but there is no guarantee that the medieval and early modern variants of the language are direct continuations of an original, allegedly Latin-derived, Judeo-Provençal. In the German lands, Yiddish retained its original Judeo-Slavic grammar and sound system, while exchanging most of its vocabulary for German and Hebrew(-like) words.

Conversely, in the Iberian Peninsula, Christians remained more receptive to Arabic elements than the Iberian Jews. The paucity of Arabisms in Judeo-Spanish would be anticipated if Judeo-Arabic speakers first “relexified” their language to Spanish vocabulary, while keeping their grammar and sound system intact. Subsequently, in the emigration, the Sephardic Jews became speakers of “genuine” Spanish, which they minimally Judaized.

### Selected Bibliography

- Blondheim, David S. 1925. *Les parlers judéo-romans et la Vetus Latina* [Judeo-Romance speech and the *Vetus latina*]. Paris: É. Champion.
- Bunis, David M. 1981. *Sephardic Studies. A Research Bibliography Incorporating Judezmo Language, Literature and Folklore, and Historical Background*. New York: Garland.

- Bunis, David M. 1983. "Problems in Judezmo Linguistics." *Mediterranean Language Review* 1: 92–126.
- Jütte, Robert. 1988. *Abbild und soziale Wirklichkeit des Bettler- und Gaunertums zu Beginn der Neuzeit* [Reflection and Social Reality of Beggars and Thieves at the Beginning of the Modern Age]. Cologne, Germany: Böhlau.
- Kluge, Friedrich. 1901. *Rotwelsch. Quellen und Wortschatz der Gaunersprache und der verwandten Geheimsprachen* [Rotwelsch. Sources and Lexicon of Thieves' Language and Related Secret Languages]. Strasbourg, France: K. J. Trübner.
- Lefebvre, Claire. 1986. "Relexification in Creole Genesis Revisited: The Case of Haitian Creole." In *Substrata Versus Universals in Creole Genesis*, edited by Pieter Muysken and Norbert S. H. Smith, 279–300. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Weinreich, Max. 1973. *Gešixte fun der jidišer šprax* [A History of the Yiddish Language]. New York: YIVO, pp. 1–4.
- Wexler, Paul. 1977. "Ascertaining the Position of Judezmo within Ibero-Romance." *Vox romanica* 36: 162–195.
- Wexler, Paul. 1982. "Marrano Ibero-Romance: Classification and Research Tasks." *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 98: 59–108.
- Wexler, Paul. 1988. *Three Heirs to a Judeo-Latin legacy: Judeo-Ibero-Romance, Yiddish and Rotwelsch*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz.
- Wexler, Paul. 1989. *Judeo-Romance Linguistics. A Bibliography (Latin, Italo-, Gallo-, Ibero- and Rhaeto-Romance except Castilian)*. New York: Garland.
- Wexler, Paul. 1992. *The Balkan Substratum of Yiddish. A Reassessment of the Unique Romance and Greek Components*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz.
- Wexler, Paul. 1996. *The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic Jews*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Wolf, Sigmund A. 1956. *Wörterbuch des Rotwelschen* [Dictionary of German Slang]. Mannheim, Germany: Bibliographisches Institut.

## The Yiddish-German Irony

*Frank Heynick*

---

Up to the late Middle Ages, Jews in the Diaspora spoke as their native tongue the (or a) general language of the land where they lived. Few, if any, Jews grew up speaking a language that could be called particularly "Jewish." Hebrew, the holy language used predominantly in religious ritual, was no one's native tongue.

To the extent the Jewish community of any given land lived in cultural or sociological—as well as, of course, religious—separation from the Gentile population, there was a sociolinguistic tendency to incorporate some distinctive features into the "Gentile" languages they spoke, particularly loanwords from Hebrew (typically, but not exclusively, related to religious matters). Such was the case among the Jewish communities in the German Rhineland in the early centuries of the second millennium CE, who spoke the then-current Middle High German, flavored with a smattering of Hebrew words and in-groups idioms.

The slaughters perpetrated on the Rhineland Jewish communities by the Crusaders en route to the Holy Land in the 12th century, and by a panicked Gentile population during the visitations of the bubonic plague in the 14th century, drove many Rhenish Jews to seek refuge in Eastern Europe. But Germans—Christian and Jewish—were also lured eastward for trade and economic development. The term “German” in Eastern Europe came to be not just an ethnic designation but also a socioeconomic one, referring to a commercial class. This status was a powerful incentive for the transplanted German communities to maintain their language rather than adopt the local Slavic or other language as their native tongue.

The Jewish and Christian Germans involved in the economic colonization of Silesia (today western Poland) shared the same German language and probably also a common German national consciousness. In the farther eastern reaches, however, the situation was somewhat different. All living languages are in a continual, usually gradual, state of evolution. When groups of speakers of the same language are isolated from one another, their tongues tend to drift apart. So, as the Middle High German of Germany became (standardized) Modern High German, the Rhenish German of the Jews of Eastern Europe also evolved, to the extent that it merited its own name: Jüdisch-Deutsch (Jewish German) or simply Jüdisch or Yiddish. But in its syntax (sentence structure), morphology (word structure), and phonology (sound system), Yiddish remained thoroughly Germanic—in some, though not all, ways more conservative than the Standard German of Germany.

In its vocabulary, Yiddish adopted, apart from Hebrew words (often of a religious nature), occasional Slavic or other lexemes. However, Yiddish and Standard German speakers who knew only their own languages could carry on a conversation with a high degree of mutual intelligibility (indeed with greater intelligibility than between a monolingual speaker of Standard German and monolingual speakers of many of the dialects of Germany).

The German Enlightenment of the late 18th century, which had its impact on the cultured elite of Eastern European Jewry, lent new prestige to the Standard German of Germany. In the 19th century, not a few Jews abandoned Yiddish in favor of Standard German in their writing. The Yiddish literati who did not go this far were nevertheless consciously influenced by the style of Modern High German. When efforts were made to standardize Yiddish, which was spoken with some variations by Jewish communities in a dozen countries, Modern High German helped provide a model and helped Yiddish develop new learned and technical terms for the modern age.

Otto von Bismarck, who presided over the welding of the various German lands into a unified Second German Reich in 1871, and who served as its chancellor for two decades, viewed the Jews in Eastern Europe as natural allies of Germany and as an instrument for maintaining German preeminence on the continent, not least because of their Germanic language and their historical and cultural ties to Germany. A few decades later, the chancellor of a Third German Reich saw the situation with the Jews differently. And herein lies not just the unspeakable crime of the Shoah, but also the mind-boggling irony: that a fanatically nationalistic German

movement should have targeted for systematic annihilation the very people who had brought their old Germanic language to the eastern marches and the Russian steppes and had so faithfully maintained and nurtured it for centuries.

## Yiddish as a Diaspora Language and Its Future

*Dovid Katz*

---

The notion of Jewish Diaspora languages is an inherently loaded nationalist origin-type term that effectively crowns one language “native” and all others as implicitly “foreign.” The (retrospectively speaking) first Jewish language, biblical Hebrew, was in fact an intricate fusion between the imported Aramaic (of the Abrahamic clan) and the native Canaanite (of the Promised Land’s native inhabitants), along with some later admixtures from Egyptian, Persian, and other foreign sources. Still, if ancient Hebrew is regarded as the first and only native Jewish language for having arisen in ancient Israel, then Jewish Aramaic, the second major Jewish language, becomes at once its first Diaspora language (during and after the Babylonian Exile). Jewish Aramaic went on, of course, to become the prime Jewish vernacular in Palestine throughout the Second Temple period and beyond. If a Diaspora language is brought to the Holy Land, does it stay a Diaspora language? And what of a native language taken to a Diaspora where it develops far beyond its original “in-the-native-land” scope? The popular definitions are conceptually problematic.

Frequently, however, the term “Jewish Diaspora languages” is diplomatically reserved primarily for the European period in Jewish history, which started around a millennium ago, in contradistinction to *both* Hebrew and Aramaic, themselves closely related northwest Semitic dialects. The European Jewish Diaspora language category has come to include, among others: Laazic (Judeo-Italian), Knaanic (Judeo-Slavic), Yevanic (Judeo-Greek), and Zarphatic (Judeo-French). The first-cited “linguonym” in each case reflects the anthropologic method of looking through the eyes of the culture in question and avoiding the externalized (and often disparaging) hyphenated nomenclature imposed (by which logic Hebrew might have been “Israelo-Canaanite,” and is in fact called “Language of Canaan” in the Hebrew Bible itself, at Isaiah 19:18). Yiddish scholars Matisyohu Miesis (1885–1945), Solomon A. Birnbaum (1891–1989), and Max Weinreich (1894–1969) passionately championed the “internalized” conceptualization of all the Jewish languages, sometimes attempting to put them on a generally equal conceptual footing—though they are by no means equal by the empirical measures of number of speakers, geographic extent, duration in history, literary output, or structural and lexical differentiation from the major source language.

The two best-known European Jewish languages are Ladino (or Judezmo or “Judeo-Spanish”), the language of pre-expulsion Sephardic Jewry on the Iberian

Peninsula (and its progeny in various parts of Europe and northern Africa), and Yiddish, the language of Ashkenazic Jewry, which has been spoken by more Jews than all the other Jewish languages combined, and alone among the European Jewish languages is in the league of Hebrew and Aramaic in the realm of its qualitative and quantitative literary output (much of which remains to be studied).

Yiddish arose around a thousand years ago, among the (retrospectively speaking) first Ashkenazim, who came to inhabit the Rhine and Danube basins (linguistic evidence pointing more to the latter, more easterly region). The language combines—in a highly specific and intricate series of “fusion formulas”—the inherited Hebrew and Aramaic remnants the settlers brought with them with the majority component evolved from local urban dialects of German. From the start, Yiddish participated in an elaborate system of internal Jewish trilingualism. As the sole and universal vernacular, it stood in largely complementary distribution with the two classic languages that were studied, recited, and, importantly, also used for new literary works: the more prestigious Hebrew, used for biblical and legal commentaries and community correspondence, among others, and the still more prestigious Aramaic, used for major Talmudic and kabbalistic works.

Written Yiddish words are attested from the 11th century onward. The oldest dated Yiddish sentence is from 1272. In time, older Yiddish literature developed a “secular” branch, which included reworkings of medieval knightly European romances, such as the King Arthur cycle, into Yiddish, and significantly, the fusing of the European epic genre with Jewish material, perhaps best exemplified by the *Shmuel bukh* and *Mlokhim bukh*, based on the biblical books of Samuel and Kings. The synthesis of ancient Jewish content with contemporary European form is in a sense a metaphor for Yiddish generally. A pietistic and religious branch of Yiddish literature, which came to prominence in the 16th century, included works on morals and ethics and, eventually, complete Bible and prayer book translations, as well as original Yiddish prayers, particularly for women, that are known as *tkhines*.

From its original territory in central Europe, Yiddish expanded along with the migrations of the Ashkenazim, who fled medieval Christian massacres and expulsions (including the Crusades) on the original German-based territory. Colonies of Ashkenazim arose to the south (in Italy), the north (Holland), and, most significantly, in many parts of the Slavic and Baltic lands of Eastern Europe, which eventually came to constitute Ashkenaz II or Eastern Ashkenaz.

Within Eastern Yiddish, two major dialects of Yiddish developed: a northern (Lithuanian-Belorussian) dialect known as *Lítvish* (Northeastern Yiddish to linguists); and a southern (Polish-Ukrainian) variety sometimes called *Póylish* though it is itself markedly divided into a western (Polish-Galician-Hungarian) variety (Mideastern Yiddish) and an eastern (Ukrainian-Bessarabian-Rumanian) variety (Southeastern Yiddish).

In Eastern Europe during the later half of the history of the language, a prominent Slavic component joined the core Semitic + Germanic union that is universal to both Western and Eastern Yiddish. This gave added capacity for nuanced meanings; see, for example, neutral *víkhtik* (important) from Germanic, respectfully human referencing of *khóshev* (esteemed) from Hebrew, and humorous or sarcastic

*vázhne* from Slavic. It is not always possible to predict which historic source might contribute the unmarked or neutral form; see, for example, *póshet* (simple) from Hebrew versus *prost* (coarse or uncultured, of a person) versus German-derived *éynfakh* (simplistic), which is usually limited to journalistic usage. A *nar* (fool), from Germanic, can be anyone, but only a Jew can be a *típes* or *shóyte* (from Hebrew).

The older dialects of Western Yiddish faded away, from the 18th century, as western Ashkenazim were assimilating to German and other central European cultures. In Eastern Europe, by contrast, Yiddish expanded dramatically, both demographically and culturally. The language became central to the new Hasidic movement in Ukraine and beyond in the 18th century. Moreover, various offshoots of the Haskalah enlightenment movement began to develop a variegated and vast modern-genre literature in the language in the 19th century. High-level Yiddish fiction is traditionally dated to November 24, 1864, when Mendele Moykher Sforim (Sh. Y. Abramovitsh, ca. 1836–1917) began to publish, in installments, his first Yiddish novel. His satiric fiction was followed by the romanticism of Y. L. Peretz (1852–1915) and the humor of Shalom Aleichem (pseudonym of Sholem Rabinowitz, 1859–1916). The Mendele–Peretz–Aleichem trio became known as the “triumvirate” of classic modern Yiddish literature.

From the start of the 20th century, a network of modern cultural and educational institutions, a vibrant daily press, and an ever more sophisticated literature helped mark the status of Yiddish as one of the major languages in Jewish history. In addition to the output of thousands of authors, there was an overarching demography. On the eve of World War II, there were around 13 million Yiddish speakers in the world, split between the native territory of Eastern Europe and the immigration centers. There were leading centers of Yiddish culture in Poland and other East European countries, and until the Stalinist repressions, there was a considerable Soviet Yiddish literature, too. In the West, New York City became a major center of Yiddish literature, press, education, and theater. In 1978, Polish-born Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904–1991), who migrated to the United States in 1935, was awarded a Nobel Prize for literature.

Yiddish language and culture were decimated by the Holocaust; most of the 6 million victims were native speakers, and the Eastern Ashkenazic civilization was destroyed in its native lands. The suppression of Yiddish in the Land of (and during the early years of the State of) Israel, the violent Stalinist repressions in the Soviet Union, and massive voluntary abandonment in western countries in the course of assimilation to the dominant national cultures, led to predictions of the imminent death of the language by the late 20th century. These were only slightly mitigated by the rise, on the one hand, of symbolic and sentimental reattachment in the west (e.g., Leo Rosten’s *Joy of Yiddish* in 1968 in the United States), and on the other, by the development of serious study of Yiddish language and literature at leading universities in North America, Israel, and Europe in the waning years of the century.

By the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, the number of (by then elderly) Yiddish speakers who had come to maturity before World War II dropped to around half a million, and this number was quickly collapsing with the death of this last prewar generation. The advent of several thousand younger “Yiddish

enthusiasts” around the world, only several dozen of whom were capable of publishing extensive works in the language itself (rather than just work “about” Yiddish), could barely offset the devastating demographic loss of the last prewar generation.

The demographic surprise has come from Yiddish-speaking Haredim, and particularly Hasidim of the southern dynasties (including Satmar, Vizhnitz, Belz), among whom there were, by the midpoint of the first decade of the 21st century, over half a million Yiddish speakers of childbearing age internationally, ensuring the continuity of the vernacular language. Hasidim are producing a considerable Yiddish didactic and popular literature, and they publish a number of weekly newspapers. One of the largest-circulation Yiddish newspapers, the *Algemeyner zhurnal*, is edited by a prominent Lubavitch Hasidic family in Brooklyn (the Jacobsons), and it seeks to synthesize religious and secular material, in contrast to such publications as Satmar’s *Der yid*, which are strictly in-group. Given that Israeli Hebrew is not spoken by families that did not live in Israel per se, Yiddish is set to remain the world’s major (or only) Jewish Diaspora language, though only for sections of ultra-Orthodox Jewry, particularly its southern Eastern Europe origin Hasidic groups.

The historic layering of the language itself perhaps determines its status as a living linguistic repository of multiple “native” and “Diaspora” periods of Jewish history alike. Phrases such as *shíker vi Lot* (as drunk as Lot = very drunk; see Genesis 19, 31–36), *a Yeróvm ben Nevót* (a Jeroboam son of Nebat = an evil man) are among the many embedded expressions that hark back to the biblical period. A corpus of logical words comes from Aramaic of the Talmudic period, including such everyday items as *aváde* (definitely), *makhtéyse* (okay!) and *mistáme* (probably). Others are evocative of events in European Jewish history, for example, *shabsetsvínik* (believer in Sabbethai Zevi = someone who believes in something even after it’s apparent that it was a fraud), *m’zol em brénen un brótn* (even if he were burned and roasted = [he wouldn’t speak even if] burned and roasted [by the Inquisition]), *fun Méylekh Sobétski’s yorn* (from the years of King Sobieski [of Poland] = a very long time ago).

Beyond the synchronic linguistic embedding of millennia of Jewish history, the lexical and semantic structure per se of Yiddish is specifically Jewish at a cultural depth that transcends the language politician’s “native” versus “Diaspora” dichotomy. For example, *gest* (from Germanic) are any kind of guests; *órkhim* (from Hebrew) are (usually poor) Jewish guests welcomed for a Sabbath or holiday to one’s home or town; *ushpízin* (from Aramaic) are seven biblical figures, from Abraham to David, who visit the sukkah during the festival of *Súkes* (Sukkoth, Feast of Tabernacles) according to Jewish mystical tradition.

In contrast to modern Israeli Hebrew, Yiddish often retains the exclusively Judaic connotation of traditional terms, with “near-synonyms” from non-Hebraic roots being used for a corresponding general concept, for example, *bitókhñ* (optimism based on faith in God), *mitsráyim* (ancient, biblical-era Egypt), *ríshñ* (first day of a Jewish holiday), and *yad* (pointer for the Torah reading) versus the non-Hebraically derived words for “optimism” (*optimízm*), modern Egypt (*Egíptñ*), “first” (*érshter*), and “hand” (*hant*). Compare with the modern Hebrew *bitakhón* (“security”), *mitsráyim* (Egypt), *rishón* (“first”), and *yad* (“hand”).

In considering today's Jewish languages, it is prudent to keep in mind that modern Israeli Hebrew (*Ivrit*) has its roots in the work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and other East European revivers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and has been vastly affected by Yiddish and other European languages (in spite of many purist efforts to avoid this eventuality). Nearly all of Bialik's and Tchernichowsky's classic Hebrew poetry must be enjoyed with the Yiddish affected penultimate ("Diaspora") stress pattern (*miléyl*) of Yiddish and Yiddish-impacted Ashkenazic Hebrew. At the same time, Yiddish presents an uninterrupted chain of linguistic continuity that spans all of Jewish history. The essence of these two languages—Israeli Hebrew and Yiddish—can hardly be described, therefore, as "native" versus "Diaspora"; nevertheless, their functionality today and prognoses for the coming century do lead to a differentiation between the language of the State of Israel and the vernacular of traditionalist Hasidim. Outside the Yiddish-speaking Hasidic population, the remnant of Yiddish culture is more in a literary and cultural heritage than a viable future vernacular, though it is impossible to predict the directions future Hasidic Yiddish will take, particularly in the countries of the Diaspora.

### Selected Bibliography

- Birnbaum, Solomon A. 1942. "Jewish Languages." In *Essays in Honour of the Very Reb. Dr. J. H. Hertz*, edited by I. Epstein, E. Levine, and C. Roth, 51–67. London: Edward Goldston.
- Fishman, David E. 2005. *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Goldsmith, Emanuel S. 1997. *Modern Yiddish Culture. The Story of the Yiddish Language Movement*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Katz, Dovid. 1985. "Hebrew, Aramaic and the Rise of Yiddish." *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages*, edited by J. A. Fishman, 85–103. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Katz, Dovid. 2007. *Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish*, rev. ed. New York: Basic Books.
- Katz, Dovid. *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, S. V. "Yiddish." <http://www.yivo.org/downloads/Yiddish.pdf> (accessed April 2, 2008).
- Mieses, Matthias. 1915. *Die Entstehungsursache der jüdischen Dialekte*. Vienna: R. Löwit Verlag.
- Weinreich, Max. 2007. *History of the Yiddish Language*. Translated by Shlomo Noble with the assistance of Joshua A. Fishman. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

## The Integration of Yiddish into English

*Arnie Keogh*

---

From its beginnings, Yiddish has been the language of a minority culture, dispersed throughout Central Europe. Since the Holocaust, it has been the native language (*mame-loshn*) of an ever-smaller minority, yet its influence has been disproportionately great, particularly on the English language. And although it has been adopted

primarily as an idiomatic feature of American English, the widespread influence of the American language—through the economic and cultural power of American print, film, and electronic media—means Yiddish has become diffused through all of the world's English-speaking cultures. "Diffused" is the operative word here: like "Diaspora" (*dispersion*) it implies both "widespread" and "thinned out."

It is not only through American English that the influence of Yiddish has been felt. In Australia, for example, the word *cobber* (friend, mate) is derived from the Yiddish *khaver*, and *cop* (grab, as in "cop a little sleep") comes from the Yiddish *khap*. These and other Australian slang terms may have arrived with Jews transported as convicts from England in the 19th century.

Like all other languages, Yiddish functions to maintain the social and cultural solidarity of its speakers: it forms a linguistic barrier that separates the *us* within from the *them* without. But the barriers of language must be permeable, so that useful words and phrases may be imported from outside, and so that cultural goods may be exported to the wider world. Often, new words become naturalized. Speakers may be unaware of their foreignness; how many English speakers, for example, are aware that *pyjama* is a Hindi word, and *tycoon* a Chinese one?

Sometimes, though, imported words carry the flavor of the land of their origin. Or at least what the importers think of as that flavor. The Romans used Latin, for instance, for all kinds and levels of discourse. But modern English speakers use Latin phrases (*quid pro quo*, *mutatis mutandis*) as markers of learning, the language of lawyers and doctors. And French phrases (*je ne sais quoi*, *comme il faut*) represent the speaker's observance of the diplomatic language of nuance—to use another French term.

Part of the question here is: What are the cultural assumptions made by English speakers using Yiddish phrasing? What constitutes the "Jewishness" of this Jewish language? Michael Wex offers "complaint" in his recent book, *Born to Kvetch* (New York, 2005), and Leo Rosten, in *Hooray for Yiddish* (London, 1983), frequently uses the terms "scorn" and "sarcasm." But is it really bitter resentment that is at the heart of the cultural imagination of Yiddish?

In the early 1970s, a television commercial for a hot breakfast cereal showed a patrician George Washington seated at a colonial table to which his wife brings a pewter bowl containing, "Your breakfast, George." The American president dips his spoon in the bowl, lifts it to his Roman nose, and says, "Feh!"

The point of the ad is that Washington would—and the viewers should—prefer a cereal more to Jewish taste, that the advertiser's product has *tam*. Implicit in the ad is the poetic logic that Jews know what tastes good, that the ad's George Washington had Jewish taste and was "Jewish," and that the approximately 98 percent of non-Jewish Americans—the patriotic offspring of "the Father of his Country"—thus became, temporarily, metaphorically Jewish. "Feh," an expression of distaste, is an example of what linguists call "psycho-ostensives," words or phrases that serve as verbal emotional gestures, such as *oy*, *sha*, and *nu*, expressing, respectively, a groan of pleasure or pain, a demand for silence, and a nudge requesting the auditor to say or do something.

A number of Yiddish words are used untranslated in English, serving an emotional function for which there are no clear synonyms. Words like *shlep* (drag), *chutzpah* (effrontery), *mayvin* (expert), and *yenta* (busybody) have so entered the English language that their spelling seems to have become standardized, despite their nonconformity with official systems of transliteration.

Words prefixed with *sh-* are popularly used as markers of *yiddishkayt*: the salesman's *shpiel*, the comedian's *shtick*, the briber's *shmeer*, the unlucky *schlemiel*, and the stupid *shmuck*; the sounds let the hearers know that the speaker is "talking Jewish." And the *sh-* is used in invented comic rhymes, to sound Jewish: "fancy-shmancy," "Oedipus-Shmoedipus," and the like. Sometimes, to make the words look even more exotic, the prefix is spelled *sch-*.

Suffixes, too, like the *-nik* in *nudnik*, have been adapted for use in words like *beatnik* and *peacenik*; likewise, the diminutive *-ele* in *mamele* and *bubele* are appended when one wants a word to be an endearment.

In addition to such semantic importations, syntax—the arrangement of words in clauses and sentences—is another, perhaps more significant, penetration of Yiddish into English. Yiddish imperative constructions are imported into English: "Drop dead!" "Look who's talking!" and even "Live long and prosper," a usage of Leonard Nimoy's character Mr. Spock in *Star Trek*.

Interrogatives are an even more frequent direct borrowing from Yiddish. Repetition of a question to show that the answer is obvious: "Is he rich?" "Is he *rich*?" Repeating a statement as a question: "I'm depressed." "*You're* depressed?" Answering a question with a question: "What are you doing?" "What *should* I be doing?"

And then there is the direct translation of Yiddish syntactical peculiarities. Inversions of what would be normal word order in English are common in Yiddish, particularly the placement of the object before the subject: "Him I don't respect" sounds exotic to the ears of English speakers. Other Yiddish formations are also translated directly into English: "*Ikh vil du zolst koyfn . . .*" becomes "I want you should buy. . . ." "*Genug shoynt!*" is commonly heard as "Enough already" or "All right already." *Shoynt* (now) and *vider* (again) constructions are transported into English as Yiddishisms: *Shoynt vider mit di frages!* becomes, in English, "Again with the questions!"

Some of those who use Yiddish terms and structures in English use them consciously, choosing to sound Jewish, to claim Jewish identity, even if only for the moment, even if only ironically, and even if they are not Jews. I recall a non-Jewish friend complaining once, "We're living like *goyim*."

The Yiddish word can be used to make the complaint humorous. It may be that humor is the underlying cultural assumption about Yiddish, particularly among those for whom Yiddish is not a first language. Jews tell jokes, usually jokes about Jews. And they make wisecracks, expressions of complaint, scorn, or sarcasm—but the bitterness is more than tempered by laughter: "He's his own worst enemy" and "Not while I'm alive."

The humor in the use of Yiddish is very likely a defence, the means by which a minority people—frequently despised, often threatened—maintain solidarity, identity, and even superiority to their circumstances.

## Diaspora Influences on Modern Hebrew (“Israeli”)

*Ghilad Zuckermann*

---

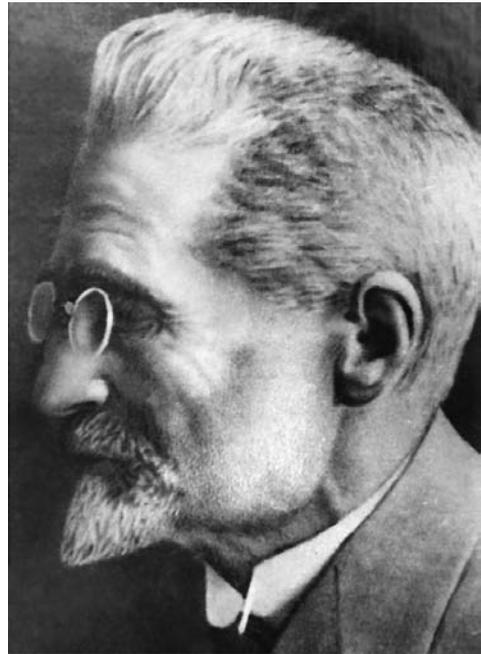
Hebrew was spoken by the Jewish people after the so-called conquest of Canaan (ca. 13th century BCE). It belonged to the Canaanite division of the northwestern branch of Semitic languages. After a gradual decline, it ceased to be spoken by the second century CE. The failed Bar-Kokhba Revolt against the Romans in Judea in 132–135 CE, in which hundreds of thousands of Jews were exterminated, marks the symbolic end of the period of spoken Hebrew. For more than 1,700 years thereafter, Hebrew was comatose. It served as a liturgical and literary language and occasionally as a *lingua franca* for Jews of the Diaspora, but not as a mother tongue.

Unlike Maskilic Hebrew (i.e., the Hebrew of the Haskalah), a literary language, Israeli (or Modern Hebrew) is a living mother tongue. Its formation was facilitated in Eretz Israel at the end of the 19th century by the most famous revival ideologue Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922, born Perelman), schoolteachers, and enthusiastic supporters. Ben-Yehuda’s son, Itamar Ben-Avi (1882–1943), is symbolically considered to have been the first native Israeli-speaker. He was born one year after Ben-Yehuda, a native Yiddish-speaker, conversant in Russian and French, arrived in Eretz Israel.

During the past century, Israeli has become the primary mode of communication in all domains of public and private life. Yet with the growing diversification of Israeli society, it has also come to highlight the very absence of a unitary civic culture among citizens who seem increasingly to share only their language. Israeli is currently one of the official languages—with Arabic and English—of the State of Israel. It is spoken to varying degrees of fluency by its 7 million citizens (as of 2006)—as a mother tongue by most Jews (whose total number exceeds 5.3 million), and as a second language by Muslims (Arabic speakers), Christians (e.g., Russian and Arabic speakers), Druze (Arabic speakers), and others. It is also spoken by some non-Israeli Palestinians, as well as by a few Diaspora Jews. (There are approximately 5,280,000 Jews in the United States, 494,000 in France, 372,000 in Canada, 298,000 in the United Kingdom, and 235,000 in Russia.)

The genetic classification of “Israeli,” the language that emerged in Palestine at the end of the 19th century, has preoccupied linguists since its genesis. The still prevalent, traditional view suggests that Israeli is Semitic: (Biblical/Mishnaic) Hebrew *revived*. The revisionist position defines Israeli as Indo-European: Yiddish relexified; in other words, Yiddish, the revivalists’ mother tongue, is the “substratum,” and Hebrew is only a “superstratum” providing the vocabulary (cf. Horvath and Wexler 1997). This author’s *mosaic* (rather than *Mosaic*) hypothesis is that “genetically modified” Israeli is a “semi-engineered” multilayered language, which is a Semito-European, or Eurasian, hybrid—that is, both Semitic (Afro-Asiatic) and (Indo-) European. It is based simultaneously on “sleeping beauty”/“walking dead” Hebrew, *máme lóshn* (mother tongue) Yiddish (both being primary contributors

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, credited as the founder and reviver of modern Hebrew. One of the first Zionists, he worked on the grammar and modernization of the language. His stubborn refusal to speak anything but Hebrew paved the way for it to gradually become a spoken language again. (Jewish Chronicle Ltd./HIP/The Image Works)



rather than “substrata”), and many other languages, such as Russian, Polish, German, Judaeo-Spanish (Ladino), Arabic, and English. Therefore, the term “Israeli” is far more appropriate than “Israeli Hebrew,” let alone “Modern Hebrew” or “Hebrew” *tout court*.

Almost all revivalists—for example, Ben-Yehuda—were native Yiddish speakers who wanted to speak Hebrew, with Semitic grammar and pronunciation, like Arabs. Ben-Yehuda would have been most content had Israelis spoken biblical Hebrew, which he (and many others) considered the “purest” form of Hebrew. The Sephardic pronunciation (e.g., with “more Semitic” consonants and word final stress) was preferred to the Ashkenazic one. Ben-Yehuda often attempted to base his neologisms on Semitic languages such as Arabic.

However, not only were the revivalists European, but their campaign itself was inspired by European—for example, Bulgarian—nationalism. At the time, although territory and language were at the heart of European nationalism, the Jews possessed neither a national territory nor a national language. Zionism could be considered a fascinating manifestation of European discourses channeled into the Holy Land—see George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

The revivalists could not avoid the Ashkenazic mind-set arising from their diasporic European cultural background. Their attempt to belie their (more recent) roots, negate diasporism (which was considered weak), and avoid hybridity (as reflected in the Slavonized, Romance/Semitic-substrate, Germanic Yiddish itself), failed.

One of the main problems facing revivalists was indeed that of Hebrew lexical voids, which were not semantic voids but cases in which purists tried to supplant unwelcome guest words, foreignisms, and loanwords. The revivalists attempted to

use mainly internal sources of lexical enrichment but were faced with a paucity of roots. They changed the meanings of obsolete Hebrew terms to fit the modern world. This infusion often entailed the secularization of religious terms.

Semantic secularizations often involved ideologically manipulative “lexical engineering,” as exemplified by deliberate, subversive mechanisms of extreme semantic shifting, pejoration, amelioration, trivialization, and allusion. This is the case of a camouflaged impact of the Diaspora as the neologizers were influenced by secular movements such as the Haskalah. An example of such transvaluation is בלורית. Mishnaic Hebrew [bIllokrit] is “Mohawk, an upright strip of hair that runs across the crown of the head from the forehead to the nape of the neck,” characteristic of the abominable pagan and not to be touched by the Jewish barber. But defying religious values, secular socialist Zionists use *blorit*, with the meaning “forelock, hair above the forehead,” which becomes one of the defining characteristics of the Sabra (native Israeli). Thus, the “new Jew” is ultimately a pagan!

From time to time it is alleged that Hebrew never died (e.g., Haramati 1992, 2000; Chomsky 1957, 218). It is true that, throughout its literary history, Hebrew was used as an occasional lingua franca. However, between the 2nd and 19th centuries it was no one’s mother tongue, and in the opinion of this author the development of a literary language is very different from that of a fully fledged native language.

That said, what makes the “genetics” of Israeli grammar so complex is the fact that the combination of Semitic and Indo-European influences is a phenomenon occurring already within the primary (and secondary) contributors to Israeli. Yiddish, a Germanic language with Romance, Hebrew, and Aramaic substrata (and with most dialects having undergone Slavonization), was shaped by Hebrew and Aramaic. On the other hand, Indo-European languages, such as Greek, played a role in pre-medieval Hebrews. Moreover, before the emergence of Israeli, Yiddish, and other European languages influenced medieval and Maskilic variants of Hebrew (see Glinert 1991), which, in turn, influenced Israeli (in tandem with the European contribution).

The distinction between forms and patterns is crucial, too. In the 1920s and 1930s, *gdud meginéy hasafá*, “the language defendants regiment” (see Shur 2000), whose motto was *ivri, dabér ivrit*, “Hebrew [i.e., Jew], speak Hebrew!” used to tear down signs written in “foreign” languages and disturb Yiddish theater gatherings. However, the members of this group did not look for Yiddish and Standard Average European patterns in the speech of the Israelis who did choose to speak “Hebrew.” (The term “Standard Average European” was first introduced by Whorf [1941, 25] and recently received more attention from Haspelmath [1998, 2001] and Bernini and Ramat [1996].)

This is, obviously, not to say that the revivalists, had they paid attention to patterns, would have managed to neutralize the impact of their mother tongues, which was often subconscious (hence the term “semi-engineered”). Although they have engaged in a campaign for linguistic purity, the language the revivalists “created” often mirrors the very cultural differences they sought to erase. The alleged victory

of Hebrew over Yiddish was, in fact, a Pyrrhic one. Victorious Hebrew is, after all, partly European at heart. Yiddish and Standard Average European survive beneath “osmotic” Israeli grammar.

### The Founder Principle

Had the revivalists been Arabic-speaking Jews (e.g., from Morocco), Israeli would have been a totally different language—both genetically and typologically, much more Semitic. The impact of the founder population on Israeli is incomparable with that of later immigrants. The following is how Zelinsky (1973, 13–14) describes the influence of first settlements, from the point of view of cultural geography:

Whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement, or an earlier population is dislodged by invaders, the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance to the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been [. . .] in terms of lasting impact, the activities of a few hundred, or even a few score, initial colonizers can mean much more for the cultural geography of a place than the contributions of tens of thousands of new immigrants generations later.

Harrison et al. (1988) discuss the “founder effect” in biology and human evolution, and Mufwene (2001) applies it as a creolistic tool to explain why the structural features of so-called creoles (which he regards as “normal languages” just like English) are largely predetermined by the characteristics of the languages spoken by the founder population, in other words, by the first colonists. It is proposed that the following Founder Principle in the context of Israeli: Yiddish is a primary contributor to Israeli because it was the mother tongue of the vast majority of revivalists and first pioneers in Eretz Israel at the crucial period of the beginning of Israeli.

The Founder Principle works because by the time later immigrations came to Israel, Israeli had already entrenched the fundamental parts of its grammar. Thus, Moroccan Jews arriving in Israel in the 1950s had to learn a fully fledged language (even though it often did not appear so to the Hebrew-obsessed language planners). Obviously, they initially developed their own variety of Israeli, but ultimately the influence of their mother tongue was relatively negligible. Wimsatt’s (1999a; 1999b) notion of “generative entrenchment” is of relevance here. As Mufwene puts it, “the oldest features have a greater chance of prevailing over some newer alternatives simply because they have acquired more and more carriers, hence more transmitters, with each additional generation of speakers” (2001, 29).

At the same time—and unlike anti-revivalist revisionists—the author suggests that lethargic liturgical Hebrew, too, fulfills the criteria of a primary contributor for the following reasons: (1) Despite millennia without native speakers, it persisted as a most important cultural, literary, and liturgical language throughout the generations; and (2) revivalists made a huge effort to revive it and were, in fact, partly successful.

### The Congruence Principle (Multiple Causation)

By and large, while Israeli phonetics, phonology and syntax are mostly European, its morphological forms and basic vocabulary are mainly—albeit not exclusively—Semitic. However, the author's research has demonstrated the Congruence Principle: If a feature exists in more than one contributing language, it is more likely to persist in the target language.

This principle is applicable to all languages and, indeed, to linguistic evolution in general. After all, every language is mixed to some extent (see Schuchardt 1884 and Hjelmslev 1938). For example, in the case of “phono-semantic matching” (Zuckermann 2003), a lexical item derives simultaneously from two (or more) sources that are (often serendipitously) phonetically and semantically similar. Such lexical accommodations are frequently concocted by language planners as a means of camouflaged borrowing.

The Congruence Principle is of particular importance, however, to new languages such as Israeli, that is, to linguistic *genesis*. Often the role of European languages in Israeli was not deliberate. Consider the Israeli expression *niyá lo khóshekh baenáim*, literally, “Darkness has been made in his eyes,” that is, “He saw blackness (after bad news),” a calque of Yiddish *siz im gevórñ, fíntst↔r in di óygn* “id.,” which, in turn, is traceable back to a Hebrew term meaning, literally, “His eyes became dark,” that is, “He saw blackness (after bad news).” The useful outcome is that Israeli has a historically related minimal pair, the Yiddish-descent phrase being of a lower register compared with *khashkhú enáv* (thus pronounced in Israeli). This is a marvelous manifestation of Israeli as a palimpsestic multilayered language.

The Congruence Principle can also be profitably used to allow for grammatical features of Israeli. Hebrew grammatical features, which—either serendipitously or due to an earlier Indo-European influence—were congruent with those of Standard Average European, Yiddish and other European languages were favored, and vice versa. This leads to the discussion of enhancement or reinforcement.

In *sui generis* Israeli the impact of Yiddish and Standard Average European is apparent in all the components of the language but usually in patterns rather than in forms. Moreover, Israeli demonstrates a unique and spectacular split between morphology and phonology. Whereas most Israeli Hebrew morphological forms, for example, discontinuously conjugated verbs, are Hebrew, the phonetics and phonology of Israeli—including these very forms—are European (see Zuckermann 2005). One of the reasons for overlooking this split is the axiom that morphology—rather than phonology—is the most important component in genetic classification. In fact, such a morpho-phonological split is not apparent in most languages of the world and is definitely rare in “genetic” languages. Israeli's “non-geneticness” makes it a hybrid language.

The study of Israeli offers a unique insight into the dynamics between language and culture in general and in particular into the role of language as a source of collective self-perception. When one revives a language, even at best one should expect to end up with a hybrid. Israeli is a “non-genetic” (cf. Thomason and Kaufman 1988), multilayered language, only partially engineered. Whatever one chooses to call it, one should acknowledge, and celebrate, its complexity.

**Selected Bibliography**

- Horvath, J., and P. Wexler, eds. 1997. *Relexification in Creole and Non-Creole Languages—With Special Attention to Haitian Creole, Modern Hebrew, Romani, and Rumanian*. Wiesbaden, Netherlands: Harrassowitz.
- Mufwene, S. S. 2001. *The Ecology of Language Evolution*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomason, S. G., and T. Kaufman. 1988. *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zelinsky, W. 1973. *The Cultural Geography of the United States: A Revised Edition*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Zuckermann, G. 2003. *Language Contact and Lexical Enrichment in Israeli Hebrew*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

# Music and Culture of the Diaspora

## Overview of Diaspora Jewish Music

*Marsha Bryan Edelman*

---

The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 586 BCE sent the city's residents into exile in Babylonia, which became the first Jewish community outside biblical Israel. Only when 120,000 Iraqi Jews immigrated to the modern State of Israel between 1949 and 1952 did their 2,500-year Diaspora experience come to an end. Interestingly, these Jews brought with them a musical tradition that ethnomusicologists consider the closest available representation of what Jewish music might have sounded like during the heyday of the Temple ritual. The Babylonians among whom they had lived sang songs and played instruments in a style that was consistent with the music the Israelites had adopted during their earliest days as an independent people. More important, these Jewish residents of the Middle East (including their Yemenite cousins, who are presumed to be an ancient offshoot of the original Babylonia community, as well as coreligionists who made their way to Syria and Lebanon) were isolated from later developments in Western music. Although one cannot suggest that the music of the Temple period did not undergo significant change during 2,500 years, that change was organic, an evolution born of oral transmission and inevitable alterations caused by omissions and subsequent recreations. The music of the Jews of Arab lands is not seen to have undergone fundamental departure from its earliest roots.

The destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple, in 70 CE, had two immediate effects on the evolution of Jewish music:

1. The loss of the Temple itself caused a cessation of the sacrificial ritual offered there, along with all of the musical ceremonies that attended it. The elaborate performances of the Temple choirs and orchestra were silenced.
2. The rabbinic response to this cataclysm was to declare a ban on public performance of music as a sign of the community's mourning for its lost religious center (not to mention its political autonomy). While the centuries saw an evolution of liturgical rites to take the places of sacrifices, the music that accompanied that new liturgy was circumscribed in the extreme.

Moreover, the inevitable outcome of this second dispersion of the Jews from their homeland—this to last for nearly two millennia—was the geographic isolation of Jewish communities from each other and the subsequent assimilation of local customs into the once-homogeneous fabric of Jewish life. This was to have a profound impact on Jewish musical practice.

Notwithstanding these rabbinic pronouncements, the people continued to make music. Mothers sang to their babies, workers sang songs of pride in their accomplishments, and life-cycle ceremonies were attended by songs of tradition and values. But the history of post-Temple Jewish music is both the story of the people's

attitudes toward the rabbis' decrees and the result of contact with other cultures encountered during dispersion in a wide variety of geographic locales. This essay will explore the emergence of Jewish music in the Diaspora as it underwent influence by local customs and some of the changing interpretations of the rabbinic edicts that resulted from these contacts.

### Traditional Music: Liturgical Rites

The most important change in religious practice in the Diaspora was the need to replace the Temple service. New liturgies retained the broad outlines of Temple practice, and in a remarkable display of theological unity in the face of geographic dispersion, Jewish prayer emerged with room for local variation and personal improvisation, but with clear consensus on basic texts and forms. The psalms continued to figure prominently in Jewish worship, and early synagogue song was characterized by simple chanting of these passages according to a form known as "psalmody." The psalms themselves were constructed primarily of parallel phrases, usually with equal numbers of stressed syllables. The basic form of psalmody called for a brief sequence of introductory pitches leading to a reciting note on which the bulk of the phrase was intoned, followed by a medial or final cadence. Small variations in each verse accommodated uneven numbers of unstressed syllables, providing the illusion of asymmetry, but in fact offering an easily learned pattern that could be quickly absorbed by a congregation with a new role in contributing to the service.

Over time, however, the chants themselves took on liturgical import, differentiating morning and evening services and distinguishing Sabbath and festival rituals from each other and from weekday forms. Particular scales and specific motives identified liturgical occasions, and fixed melodies alternated with improvised chants, which preserved the identifying markers for the rite. This *nusach* bore strong resemblance to the plainsong of the early Christian Church, but far exceeded it in its ability to accommodate variations in the length of phrases and in the patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. More important, the possibility that any learned male member of a community might lead the prayers allowed for a greater degree of variation and personal performance style than the church allowed. Furthermore, as the development of the liturgy proceeded, liturgical hymns called *piyutim* were added to the service. The oldest of these apparently conformed to the psalmodic pattern of parallel phrases with equal numbers of stressed syllables, but the varying lengths of actual verses required an elastic treatment of the melodies. In addition, the custom arose to allow prayer leaders to extemporaneously create their own liturgical insertions. This led to the emergence of a corps of *hazzanim* who were more musically adept than other potential prayer leaders, but who, from the start, were often regarded with contempt for their practice of unnecessarily elongating the services with displays of their liturgical and vocal virtuosity.

The same pattern of psalmodic introduction, essential core, and concluding tones that dominated liturgical singing characterized the communal reading of biblical text. Public reading of the Torah had been initiated during the time of the

Second Temple and remained an essential part of the worship service in the aftermath of the Temple's destruction. The patterns of the biblical phrases were transmitted through oral tradition and communicated by means of hand symbols called "chironomy." Attempts to develop a written notion for these phrases, and gradually a delineated tradition ascribing particular grammatical and musical importance to each word in the text, developed after the sixth century. This elaborated appreciation of the text, using *ta'amei mikra* (literally, "accents for reading") was canonized in the early 10th century by Aaron ben Moses ben Asher of Tiberias, and imposed on all of world Jewry, apparently displacing earlier systems that had been created in Babylonia and Palestine.

Other important changes to Jewish life, worship, and music were the result of the spread of Islam throughout the Near East during the eighth century. Jews living in the region experienced increased freedoms and greater interaction and integration with aspects of the general, secular culture. This brought a decline in the hegemony of the Eastern academies that had provided legal, liturgical, and musical leadership to the Jewish Diaspora. The Eastern communities themselves came under the increasing musical influence of the "great tradition" of Islam, and the two communities shared poetic and musical forms. Metrical texts entered Jewish liturgy, and metrical melodies to chant them soon followed. Moreover, inasmuch as Arab poetry had its influence on synagogue song, it was not surprising that the division between liturgical and secular song would soon blur.

This overlapping of secular and liturgical traditions had its parallel in the blurring between the lines of eastern and western Jewish communities. The Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula carried Eastern Jews to that region. With the Catholic conquest of Spain and Portugal some 300 years later, the Sephardic Jews of the Iberian Peninsula gradually lost affinity for the native Arab origins of their music in favor of the emerging Western music of Catholic Europe. All too soon, however, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 (and from Portugal five years later) dispersed the Sephardic community yet again, bringing northern exiles in contact with the music of Amsterdam and England, while southern exiles merged with disparate communities in the Balkans and North Africa.

Meanwhile, Ashkenazic liturgical tradition evolved largely independently of developments in the Near East and, for the most part, disengaged from the Sephardic music of Europe. Liturgical music was solidified in melodies and motives born in Germany between the 11th and 15th centuries. Ashkenazic *nusach* maintained an improvisatory character born in the psalmody of the ancient rituals, but it also admitted a body of fixed melodies known as "*MiSinai* Tunes" for the high esteem in which they were held by the community. These melodies were clearly a product of German musical practice in the Middle Ages, but their juxtaposition with core texts of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy gave them a veneer of awe and emotional association that became quickly entrenched in liturgical custom. The pronouncements of Rabbi Jacob Moellin (ca. 1360–1427), the Maharil, in favor of maintaining local musical practices were a stabilizing factor in the development of Ashkenazic custom, but continuing population migrations led to inevitable variations in practice. In particular, a significant division emerged between

the music of Jews from Western Europe and those who made their way further east to Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Russia. Western Ashkenazim tend to favor modes that adhere strongly to the major and minor tonalities of Western music; East European music is characterized by extensive usage of modes with unusual intervals and nonrecurring pitch patterns, evidencing influence from local Gypsy and other eastern communities.

### Popular Song

Liturgical necessity required the emergence of music to accompany synagogue practice. The same could not, in principle, be said for popular song, which appears to carry no ritual significance. Still, the rabbis could not stifle the human urge to sing. Traditional popular songs of the Jewish community reflect the same genres that exist in all folk cultures: songs of childhood and family relationships; songs of work and community; and songs of the cycle of life, from birth to love, marriage, and death. In what are perceived to be secular songs, though, the Jews often express strong ties to religious tradition and custom.

The Jews of the Oriental communities maintain separations between men and women in most aspects of life, and this includes music. Men's songs are usually in Hebrew (or Aramaic), and tend to be of a quasi-liturgical nature, often settings of liturgical texts or piyyutim (including zemirot, table songs traditionally sung at Sabbath meals). What appear to be love songs are typically settings from the Song of Songs, viewed by the rabbis as an allegory of the love between God and the Jewish people and expressive not only of religious devotion but also of the desire to be reunited with the beloved homeland in Israel. Men's songs are often sung according to the same liturgical modes used in the synagogue, and the elaborate delineation of prescribed modes for specific occasions (or in some communities, even for particular hours of the day) contributes to a rich repertoire.

Women's songs are typically in Judeo-Arabic and predictably focus more on women's roles at home. Songs of preparing the household for various Jewish holidays, or raising children to follow in the traditions of their families, are common. So, too, are songs of love and courtship, often including sarcastic depictions of the realities of married life, sung during weeklong wedding festivities for the benefit of naïve young brides who imagine a more idealized future. Women with particular singing ability are also designated as communal functionaries to preside as official "mourners," singing traditional dirges at funerals; or to sing quasi-liturgical songs of celebration at weddings and ritual circumcision ceremonies.

In addition to the same songs of ritual devotion sung by their Oriental brothers, Sephardic men have a unique genre of songs lauding biblical figures. The experience of living in Catholic Spain, where saints were extolled as virtuous role models, forced the Jews to elevate their own heroes well beyond the boundaries of rabbinic tradition, and the lives and personages of Abraham and Moses come in for special treatments.

Sephardic women sang songs in Ladino, a unique blending of 15th-century Spanish with Hebrew for words denoting Jewish communal functionaries, biblical



An elaborately decorated matzo from the Barcelona Haggadah of 1350, a prayer book used in celebrating Passover. (HIP/Art Resource, NY)

personalities, and traditional values like *hesed* (kindness) and luck (*mazal*). They, too, sang of the Jewish life cycle and the travails of raising children. Their love songs focused on romantic love, though, and were strongly influenced by the Spanish *romancas*. Sephardic singers also borrowed songs of Spanish history and tradition with no Jewish content at all, preserving them in spite of exile from their Spanish homes. Songs sung by Jews from Turkey to Morocco, sprinkled liberally with vocabulary in the local vernacular absorbed from their host cultures, tell of Castilian castles and wars declared by the kings of Barcelona. It is interesting to note that, for the most part, the Spanish exiles who relocated to northern regions preserved their liturgical songs but lost their secular songs to the sounds and substance of the majority culture, which was happy to assimilate them. The Jews who migrated to more southern countries, often with a sizable Muslim presence, were welcomed, but integrated less well, managing to preserve their repertoire into the 20th century. In the past century, much of this music has been notated and recorded for a posterity that has seen this community shrink because of major losses suffered during World War II and increasing assimilation by the relatively small communities who have not migrated to larger Jewish population centers in the United States or Israel.

Ashkenazic songs outside the quasi-liturgical realm of Sabbath table songs are typically in Yiddish, an amalgam of German and Hebrew. Here, too, the traditional separation of men and women is preserved: men sing ritual songs and women sing about the struggle to raise children or the longing for romantic love. Many Yiddish songs have no traditional Jewish content whatsoever and are tied to the Jewish community only by the uniquely Jewish language in which the songs are sung. In other Yiddish songs, though, the separation between ritual and secular life is blurred by the overlap between synagogue and popular music and by the convergence of

traditional Jewish values and mores with song lyrics that are ostensibly without religious content. So, for example, a song about the ubiquity of potatoes in the impoverished Eastern European diet quotes from the *lernsteiger*, the singsong chant of the yeshiva, while pointing out that rather than plain potatoes, as during the rest of the week, the special status of the Sabbath calls for a potato pudding to be served for festive meals.

A word needs to be said about the unique contribution of Hasidic philosophy and music to the repertoire of the Ashkenazic Jews. Drawing on Lurianic Kabbalah and other mystical writings, followers of Israel ben Eliezer (ca. 1700–1760), the *Ba'al Shem Tov* (Owner of the Good Name) credited with founding Hasidism, expounded on the need to return joy to Jewish life, and on the virtue of music as a means to achieve this joy, and through it, communion with the Divine. Rather than focusing exclusively on canonic texts, which were often beyond the capacity of the unschooled masses to understand, the Hasidim advocated the use of music to express sincere human emotion. The Hasidim recognized all melody as a reflection of the divine inspiration that sparked its creation, and so consciously borrowed existing songs, even from outside the Jewish community, for “elevation” to a higher status through devotion to God. They also offered the *nig'n*, a song without words, as the ultimate opportunity to express sentiments that went beyond words—or at least, beyond the capacity of the singer to articulate them. Reviled for their liberal tendencies by the rabbinic leadership of their day, which continued to eschew public performance of music (the so-called *mitnageddim*, opponents, were led by the Vilna Gaon, Eyliohu ben Schloyme Zalmen, 1720–1797), the Hasidim nevertheless encouraged the use of music and evolved a huge repertoire of songs that became popular throughout the Ashkenazic realm.

The Ashkenazic community also developed a theatrical tradition that did not emerge in either of the other Jewish Diasporas (although there is some evidence of isolated plays based on biblical themes being written in Ladino during the Middle Ages). Rabbinic tradition had been contemptuous of the theater and other frivolous entertainments introduced by the Greeks as immodest and inappropriate for a Jewish community with higher social mores and, until the 19th century, only occasional reenactments of the Purim story had challenged this position. Abraham Goldfaden (1840–1908) brought together the stand-up comedy provided by wedding entertainers, called *badhanim*; music of itinerant folk musicians, called *klezmerim* (who also performed primarily at weddings); and a sincere desire to educate the Jewish masses, to create the Yiddish theater. Most of his plays hung unlikely plots on the thinnest of historic or traditional premises, but they succeeded in contributing a new form of entertainment to the world of Jewish music. Goldfaden often reworked existing folk songs for use in his plays (a well-known lullaby of his time became the standard *Rozhkinkes Mit Mandlen* [Raisins and Almonds], from his 1880 play, *Shulamis*), but new pieces he wrote or commissioned often achieved long life outside the context of his plays. The so-called legitimate theater also spawned vaudeville-style variety shows whose songs, written expressly for stage performance, were often reborn on early 20th-century recordings and radio programs.

## Emancipation and Innovation

The emancipation of the Jews of France and Germany in the late 18th and early 19th centuries inspired dramatic changes in attitudes toward music. Increasing numbers of Jews became involved in the performance and composition of Western secular music, and rising Jewish attendance in the concert halls of Western Europe made the Jewish community aware of the dramatic gap between the “glorious” traditions of Western art music and the simple, circumscribed chants of Jewish ritual singing. Demand for liturgical reforms that would bring Judaism into the modern era included the abandonment of *nusach* as a relic of ancient times that could no longer be countenanced in the new era of enlightenment, and cantors trained in Western music replaced the traditional *hazan*. A brief period of musical anarchy was concluded with the composition of liturgical music for the entire calendar year by Salomon Sulzer (1804–1890) in Vienna, Louis Lewandowski (1821–1894) in Berlin, and Samuel Naumbourg (1815–1880) in Paris, whose music was quickly adopted by Jews throughout Western Europe and beyond. The addition of the organ and choral singing (paralleling musical activities in the Church) made its way to Eastern Europe as well, and while Jews there did not benefit formally from political emancipation or synagogue reforms, Western practices brought the new *chorshul* (choral synagogue) style to congregations in Galicia and Russia. In the wake of innovations in Western harmonic practices in the late 19th century, composers like Baruch Schorr (1823–1904), Nissan Blumenthal (1805–1903), Eliezer Gerovitsch (1844–1914), and David Nowakowsky (1841–1921) were now able to produce choral masterpieces that retained the flavor of traditional synagogue practices while pushing their congregations to adopt modern liturgical styles.

In the wake of nationalistic fervor sweeping through Europe at the end of the 19th century, a cadre of Jewish ethnographers undertook the documentation of folk traditions practiced by the Jews of Eastern Europe. Joel Engel (1868–1927) presented simple arrangements of several songs collected by some early expeditions to the Russian hinterlands in lecture-demonstrations in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The success of these early presentations led ultimately to the notion that art music reflective of the Jewish experience could appear on the concert stage. Die Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volksmusik (Society for Jewish Folk Music) worked first from the music uncovered by subsequent ethnographic excursions, but the group quickly progressed from arranging folk songs to writing new vocal and instrumental works inspired by the flavor of Jewish music and visions of Jewish life. In its brief tenure from 1908 to 1918, the society published 88 individual compositions and collections and created an audience for Jewish art music among both the unschooled Jewish masses and the concert-going (and often non-Jewish) intelligentsia. Joseph Achron (1886–1943), Lazare Saminsky (1882–1959), and Solomon Rosowsky (1878–1962), who figured prominently in the leadership of the society, contributed many works to the group’s catalogue and continued to make important contributions to Jewish music, both on the concert stage and in the synagogue, after they joined millions of their coreligionists who sought new challenges and opportunities in the golden land called America.

## Jewish Music in America

European Jewish immigrants to America brought their musical baggage with them to the New World. The first Jews arrived from Recife in 1654, bringing traditions from their original Dutch homeland, and for nearly 200 years, all American synagogues observed the northern Sephardic established in synagogues called Shearit Israel (New York, 1655), Yeshuat Israel (Newport, Rhode Island, 1658), Mikveh Israel (Savannah, Georgia, 1735, and Philadelphia, 1747), and Beth Elohim (Charleston, South Carolina, 1749). German Jews arriving in the mid-19th century incorporated new reforms into their Ashkenazic synagogues and soon adapted hymns in the style of American Protestant congregations to their liturgies. Cantors Alois Kaiser (1842–1908) and Edward Stark (1856–1913) were among the first to compose new music specifically for American synagogues, but they were joined in later years by composers more accustomed to writing for the concert stage; the early 20th century found Achron, Saminsky, and Rosowsky all contributing to synagogue liturgies, as did a host of others, including Lazar Weiner (1897–1982), Isadore Freed (1900–1960), and Heinrich Schalit (1886–1976).

Two million Eastern European Jews arriving between 1880 and 1920 brought the more traditional use of Ashkenazic *nusach* and ushered in a “Golden Age of *Hazzanut*” in which “star cantors,” often specially imported from Europe, used their vocal prowess to impress worshippers in the synagogue and even wider audiences on the concert stage. Cantors and choral directors wrote new music for these more traditional American synagogues, and they preserved their compositions in recordings that swelled the catalogues of secular producers like Columbia and RCA, which were eager to recruit sales from Jewish listeners.

This straddling of the line between liturgical and commercial ventures perpetuated the earlier ambiguous line between sacred and secular music in the folk music of Europe. But in the 20th century, Jewish immigrants faced new and greater threats to their musical traditions as the radio brought a rapidly changing world of American musical styles into their homes. Klezmerim accustomed to absorbing the music of the surrounding culture soon adopted the sounds of the Roaring Twenties, the Jazz Age, and the big bands. The “Odessa Bulgar” was transformed into “You Smile and the Angels Sing,” and Yiddish stage star Muni Weisenfreund was reborn as Hollywood star Paul Muni. Immigrants eager to be “real Americans” took pride in the accomplishments of musicians and performers who made their mark on secular stages. American synagogues continued to perpetuate all manner of European traditions, but Jewish secular music no longer bore any resemblance to liturgical rites.

In the mid-1960s, American Jewish music experienced yet another transition. In a repeat of European reforms a century earlier, Jewish leaders concerned with the abandonment of the synagogues blamed the music for not inspiring worshippers. Composers were commissioned to write all kinds of new music: some tapped Oriental and Hasidic sounds in an attempt to infuse seemingly tired Ashkenazic rituals with more exotic sounds from other Jewish traditions; others attempted to capture the contemporary vernacular with rock and roll services.

Ironically, similar attempts to create a contemporary Jewish musical vocabulary were achieving greater success outside the synagogue. Shlomo Carlebach (1925–1994) used his own neo-Hasidic music to tap the spiritual longings of American youth disaffected from Jewish traditions. Traditional Jews formed bands with names like the Rabbis' Sons and *Ruach* (Spirit), using American musical styles to set liturgical texts for use outside the synagogue, observing the traditional ban on the use of instruments in the synagogue, but reinventing the notion of a secular Jewish music that could live outside ritual practice. Another important moment arrived when Jewish composers created a new folk tradition, writing songs conveying Jewish history and values using American musical styles and a new Jewish vernacular: English.

The end of the 20th century saw once more a coming together of secular and liturgical customs and the reincarnation of traditional musics both within and outside the synagogue. Carlebach's melodies made their way into the synagogue, as did contrafacts from American and Israeli popular music. Composers who had once written Jewish rock music for concert settings began writing reverent tunes infused with both traditional *nusach* and a contemporary flavor—and many of these melodies were used in liturgical and popular venues with equal success. Yiddish klezmer music, once abandoned as the epitome of the Old World, was rediscovered and lovingly restored (though not without accretions that have pushed the envelope for what can be considered part of the traditional continuum). Most remarkably, the accessibility of world music has created interest in non-Ashkenazic Jewish music, incorporating the unfamiliar sounds of newly discovered Jews from Ethiopia and breathing new life into the music of the Sephardic and Oriental Diasporas.

### Selected Bibliography

- Edelman, Marsha Bryan. 2003. *Discovering Jewish Music*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Gradenwitz, Peter. 1996. *The Music of Israel: From the Biblical Era to Modern Times*. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press.
- Idelsohn, Abraham Z. 1929. *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Rothmuller, Aron Marko. 1967. *The Music of the Jews: An Historical Appreciation*. Cranbury, NJ: A. S. Barnes.
- Rubin, Emanuel, and John H. Baron. 2006. *Music in Jewish History and Culture*. Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press.

## Liturgical Music of Sephardi Jews

*Mark Kligman*

---

The diversity and uniqueness of Sephardic liturgical music is exemplified through its broad range of musical styles and integration into Jewish life. Originating in Spain and then dispersed around the Mediterranean, the musical styles of Sephardic

liturgical music evolved through an absorption, adaptation, and reaction to a variety of influences. Like other areas of Jewish culture (language, art, literature, food), music reflects the way Sephardic Jews were assimilated into their local culture.

## History

The 10th–12th centuries are referred to as the “Golden Age of Spain.” Under Muslim rule the Jews interacted with Christians and Muslims in free exchange, often referred to as the *Convivencia* (Coexistence). With Arab culture developing new forms of philosophy, logic, organization, grammar, and poetry, Jewish culture flourished with significant achievements in exegesis (Nachmonides, for example), philosophical works (such as those by Maimonides), and poetry (Ibn Ezra, Halevi, Ibn Gabriol). These accomplishments forever influenced Jewry. The Christian reconquest of Spain in the 13th–14th centuries led to increasing Jewish unrest. During this period, the Inquisition forced Jews to convert to Christianity or face death or, later, expulsion.

The expulsions led to Jews migrating to areas throughout the Mediterranean, Europe, the Balkans, and the Americas. Along the Mediterranean routes, Jews from Spain commingled with Jews in preexisting Jewish communities in North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), Greece, Egypt, and Syria. Along the route to the Balkans and Europe there were some existing Jewish communities, but often the new arrivals established new communities. The Jews who arrived in South America (Brazil), for example, established a new community.

The result is a network of communities connected through commerce in trade routes or caravan. Spanish Jews had a significant influence on the new locations of resettlement. The dispersion of Spanish Jewry led to various forms of retention of cultural and religious traditions. Therefore, a definition of Sephardic Jewry needs to account for this complexity. The generally accepted definition is Sephardic-designated Jews from the Iberian Peninsula and their descendants in various areas of relocation. With the reemergence of a significant Sephardic population in Israel and the growing sense of ethnic pride, many of these Jews have taken on the label of “Mizrachi” or “Eastern” Jews. The designation “Sephardi and Mizrachi” is an encompassing term to refer to this diverse population.

## Biblical Cantillation

The melodic practice of reciting the Bible is guided by the *ta'amim*, marking signs. These signs did not appear in the Torah scroll; they were codified by the family of Ben Asher in Tiberia in the 10th century. These markings, together with the diacritical marks and vowels, helped the reader prepare to chant the biblical text. The *ta'amim* thus served several functions: to aid in the proper pronunciation, syntax, and melodic recitation of the text.

Music scholars, on the practices of the cantillation of the Bible in the Sephardic and Mizrachi Jewish context today, defined five main musical traditions: Middle East (Iran, Bukhara, Kurdistan, Georgia, and northern Iraq), Southern Arabian Peninsula (Yemen), Near East (Turkey, Syria, central Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt), North

Africa (Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco Sephardi), and the Portuguese communities of Europe. The shape or meaning of the cantillation sign did not indicate an exact melody. The diversity of the Sephardic practice is evident in the different usage of the *ta'amim*. In the Middle East and southern Arabian traditions, the melodic rendering was a general formula that applied to the text. Some described this practice as "psalmody," whereby the initial intonation of a sentence of the Bible was raised. The melody stayed on a particular note (referred to as a recitation tone) and concluded with a recurring melodic phrase. The *ta'amim* in Middle East and southern Arabian traditions guided the general shape of the biblical verse, not a direct melodic phrase for each cantillation sign. The Near East tradition of the Levant was highly ornate and great emphasis was applied to some words of the text. The Sephardi and Portuguese practice of cantillation followed the Western tonal system. Melodically, it was clearly different from the Ashkenazic practice, but its function as a mosaic process of combining musical cells was the same.

### Piyyutim

A significant development in the early history of Jewish music at the end of the first millennia was the development of the piyyut (plural, piyyutim). The original intention of the piyyut was to enhance prayers. By the ninth century, prayers were formalized. The hazan repeated them out loud, followed by the congregation. As the desire for variety increased, piyyutim grew in their influence inside and outside the synagogue. A piyyut was a poetic Hebrew text closely tied to a religious concept and context. These new texts were sung and influenced music in Jewish life.

The creation of a piyyut and its application to the liturgy were interconnected. The practice of adapting melodies for piyyutim continued into the 20th century in many communities. It has remained a part of Mizrachi Jewish life today. Noted contributors to modern piyyutim were prominent members of their respective communities. Their work displayed continuity with the poetic and liturgical traditions of the past. Isaac Algazi (1889–1951) was born in Turkey and immigrated to South America in the 1930s. He recorded many liturgical melodies in the Turkish style as well as many piyyutim and Judeo-Spanish songs, thus encompassing a broad repertoire. Outside the Jewish context, he was well respected for his singing of the ghazel, a Turkish music genre. In Morocco, Rabbi David Buzaglo (d. 1975) was an expert in the Andalusian tradition. He was credited with keeping the Moroccan *bakkashot* tradition viable in Morocco and Israel, where he immigrated in 1965. He incorporated many contemporary Egyptian melodies into his piyyutim. In Israel, concerts of piyyutim singing were increasing. As these concerts were not held on Shabbat or a holiday, musical instruments could be added.

### Liturgy

Liturgical music served several functions in Sephardic synagogues. The hazan recited large portions of the prayers with a melodic pattern at a rapid pace. Other portions were highlighted musically. The Kaddish and *Kedusha* were emphasized

through congregational singing. The highlighting of liturgical passages between these phrases varied according to the community. Choral singing, two or more voices sung to pre-composed music, only appeared in the Sephardic traditions influenced by Western music in European locales. This was evident in the Spanish and Portuguese tradition, which had a rich heritage of many 19th- and 20th-century liturgical choral compositions. Choral singing was not practiced in Moroccan, *Edot hamizrah*, or Yemenite traditions.

Looking at liturgical practices in the context of geographic region clearly shows the influence of local music and culture on Jewish liturgical music. Jews from the Western Sephardic tradition (communities in Amsterdam, London, and the Americas) use Western music and hymn-like singing similar to other Christian traditions. North African Sephardic traditions use some melodies also found in the Western Sephardic tradition, but Western influence is mixed with the free nature of Andalusian music. Levant Sephardic traditions, as in Turkish, Syrian, and Egyptian Jewish communities, are influenced by Middle Eastern Arab musical styles.

Solo singing by the hazan is also a part of each tradition to highlight particular prayers. The style of the elaboration is an important liturgical expression for the hazan to move the congregation emotionally. This melodic elaboration follows the musical style of local culture. For example, in the North African Jewish communities the style is Andalusian, and in the Levant Sephardic tradition the Arab musical influences are heard with elaborations in an Arab mode, known as a *maqām*. Some hazanim were recorded on 78 rpm records, particularly Turkish cantors like Isaac Algazi. Although the Western Sephardic traditions are transmitted in printed editions and manuscripts, the North African, Levant, and Middle Eastern traditions are oral traditions. The only documentation of these oral traditions is in scholarly publications (the first significant publication is Idelsohn 1914–1933) and recordings; the National Sound Archives in Jerusalem has the largest collection.

Lively congregational singing was a key aspect of the Sephardic liturgy. Although many portions were recited by the hazan, as required by Jewish law, congregational participation was enthusiastic and joyful. Unlike the Ashkenazic practice, which intoned the last two to three lines of a liturgical text known as a *chatima*, Sephardic hazanim recited the entire liturgical text out loud. Congregants were allowed to join in the recitation; some did so in an undertone. The uniqueness of the Sephardic tradition was not only displayed by the melodies they used, but also by the liturgical performance practice itself, which combined active and passive participation from the congregation.

### Selected Bibliography

- Idelsohn, A. Z. 1914–1933. *Thesaurus of Hebrew and Oriental Melodies*. 10 vols. Repr. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1965. (Note: volumes 1–5 pertain to Sephardic and Mizrahi communities.)
- Idelsohn, A. Z. 1929. *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Kligman, Mark. 2003. "Music." In *The Jews in the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, edited by Reeva Simon, Michael Laskier, and Sara Reuger. New York: Columbia University Press. Includes compact disc with 27 musical tracks.

- Seroussi, Edwin. 1996. *Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue Music in Nineteenth-Century Reform Sources from Hamburg: Ancient Tradition in the Dawn of Modernity*. Yuval Monograph Series 11. Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Centre.
- Seroussi, Edwin. 1999. "The Liturgical Music of the Sephardic Jews: East and West." In *Proceedings of the Tenth British Conference on Judeo-Spanish Studies*, edited by Annette Benaim, 289–298. London: Queen Mary and Westfield College, Department of Hispanic Studies.
- Seroussi, Edwin, and John Tyrrell. 2001. "Jewish Music." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Vol. 13, 24–112. London: Macmillan.

## Liturgy and Music of Syrian Jews

*Mark Kligman*

---

Jews from Syria primarily resided in two cities: Aleppo and Damascus. Both cities are mentioned in the Bible: Aleppo, known in Hebrew as Aram-Zoba, appears in 2 Samuel 10:6 and 10:8 and Psalm 60:2; Damascus, known as Aram-Damasek, appears in 1 Chronicles 18:5 and 18:6. The name Aleppo was used by Italian merchants in the 14th and 15th centuries. Syrian Jews consider themselves to be Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jews influenced by Sephardic Jewry (Jews from Spain). Although Jews have lived in Syria since biblical times, the immigration of the Spanish Jewish exiles in the 15th century added to the community. During the Ottoman period, Aleppo was an important religious center. Jews in Syria lived in their own communities but interacted with Muslims and Christians as merchants and artisans. In the late 19th century, they left Syria and retained in various forms their liturgical and musical traditions, although in other aspects of their cultural and economic life they adapted to their new location.

Emigration for better financial opportunities began in the 1880s. Syrian Jews went to other Middle Eastern cities and Latin America, North America, and England. Brooklyn, New York, became an important center with more than 40,000 members of the community. Mexico City also has a significant population of Syrian Jews. In Israel, some synagogues practice the Syrian liturgical traditions, but most Syrian Jews in Israel have joined with other Middle Eastern Jews who call themselves *Yerushalmi-Sephardim* (Jerusalem Sephardic Jews).

Syrian liturgy, as well as other liturgies in general, makes use of a variety of texts, which encompass a range of styles and come from a variety of sources. These include biblical texts from the Hebrew Bible; rabbinic literature from the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud, compiled from the first to as late as the seventh century; and liturgical poetry (*piyyutim*) composed after the seventh century. Each of the three textual types uses different styles of Hebrew language, meter, and rhyme.

In general, two rites divide the history of Jewish liturgy: Ashkenazic and Sephardic. The major distinguishing features between the two rites entail small changes in the order of the prayers and the inclusion or exclusion of psalms and various liturgical poems. The statutory prayers of the two major rites are the same, with

slight differences in wording. The Sephardic rite, a development originally from Spain, influenced the local rites of the European and Middle Eastern communities that received an influx of Spanish Jews after the expulsion from Spain in the 16th century.

The liturgical and religious custom of Aleppo is known as *Minhag Aram-Tzoba* (the custom of Aleppo); the earliest compilation is *Machzor Aram-Tzoba*, published in Venice (1523–1527), a prayer book for the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (portions of the texts appear in Idelsohn 1923b, 33–38). Since the 16th century, the liturgy of Aleppo was significantly influenced by the rite of the Spanish Jewish exiles. Today the liturgical rite for Aleppo Syrians in Brooklyn is close to the Spanish and Portuguese rite with some local modifications. The traditions of the Jews from Damascus are very similar to those of Aleppo Jews: one point of difference, for instance, is the order of psalms in *Kabbalat Shabbat* (Friday Evening Service). In general, the liturgical text of Syrian Jews considers both the Aleppo and Damascus tradition, for the Sabbath service is synonymous with the Sephardic rite. There is more variation and use of local custom with High Holiday liturgy than there is with the Sabbath morning liturgy.

Liturgical music appears in two categories: paraliturgical and liturgical. Paraliturgical music is sung at life-cycle events, in the home during the Sabbath and holidays, and on occasion in the synagogue. Syrian liturgical music is in two genres *bakkashot* and *pizmonim*. Both are Hebrew poetic texts written mostly by Syrian rabbis; most of these liturgical songs are adaptations of preexisting Arab melodies to a newly created Hebrew text. The *bakkashot* texts are usually sung before Sabbath morning prayers, a practice still extant among a small number of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn and an active practice in Israel. The *pizmonim* singing occurs on a more regular basis in a variety of contexts during Sabbath meals, during the *sebet* (an informal gathering at home in the Sabbath afternoon), and at the *brit milah* (the ritual circumcision ceremony).

One hears in the sound of the liturgical music by Syrian cantors in the synagogue a fluid recitation in a *maqām*, Arab mode. The congregation enthusiastically responds saying the last two or three words of a portion of text and in other places chants with the cantor. One finds within Syrian liturgy parallels to the *murattal* and *mujawwad* style of Koranic recitation, as well as the improvisatory singing found in Arab vocal music and the interaction between the leader and listeners, or, in this context, the cantor and the congregation. Thus, a variety of Arab musical styles serve as a basis for Syrian liturgy. A guiding aspect in Arab music is the use of a different mode, a *maqām* (plural, *maqāmāt*). There are many *maqāmāt* in Arab music. The cantillation of the Bible is in a recitation melody based on melodic formula in *maqām siga*. Other portions of the prayers are sung in *maqām siga* but to different melodic formula. For Sabbath prayers, the musically elaborate section is the shaharit portion. For shaharit, a particular Syrian practice is the association of *maqām* to a biblical reading. For example, biblical readings that deal with happy events, like the Jews leaving Egypt, known as *parsha beshalach* (Exodus 13:17–17:16), are associated with *maqām ajam*. Melodies sung to the liturgy during the *Shacharit* prayers, on the week where this biblical portion is read, would be in *maqām ajam*. The next

week it would be a different *maqām*. Portions of the shaharit prayers are sung to preexisting Arab melodies that are acquired through first becoming *pizmonim*; other portions of the prayers are improvised where a cantor can modulate to a different *maqām*. Thus, the music in the liturgy is dynamic and significantly influenced by Arab musical culture.

Cantors learn the tradition by practice because transmission is oral. The music is not written. In Brooklyn, there are few cantors who were raised in the community; cantors raised in Israel come to Brooklyn to lead prayers in Syrian synagogues.

### Selected Bibliography

- Elazar, Daniel J. 1989. *The Other Jews: The Sephardim Today*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kligman, Mark. In press. *Maqam and Liturgy: Ritual, Music, and Aesthetics of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. 1998. *Let Jasmine Rain Down: Song and Remembrance among Syrian Jews*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zenner, Walter P. 2000. *A Global Community: The Jews from Aleppo, Syria*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

## Humor and Satire in Judeo-Spanish Song

*Judith R. Cohen*

---

Studies of Judeo-Spanish song often privilege the ballad (*romance*), with its links to medieval and Renaissance Spain and life and calendrical cycle genres. The approach is generally solemn, often lamenting the imminent death of the romance, while neglecting lighter genres. This essay examines humor, satire, and general lightheartedness, levity, and ludic elements in Judeo-Spanish song, based on the author's fieldwork. Four categories of levity are suggested: bawdy humor, merri-ment and joy, satire and parody, and miscellaneous.

### Bawdy Humor

For Moroccan Sephardic Jews, wedding songs, traditionally sung by women, often include bawdy humor. Fray Pedro, also known as Brother Peter, Paipero, and Fray Diogo in Spanish, is a lascivious priest who impregnates 120 "ladies" (i.e., nuns). In "La novia destrenza el pelo" (The Bride Lets Her Hair Down), erotic references progress from subtle to unambiguous: "Shawil bends over to put on his boots and his balls are visible." "Las prendas de Rahél" (Rahel's Gifts) pairs "your hair and my combs," "your eyes and my gaze," and, more recently, "your car and my engine," "your radio and my plug," and "your *dafina* (Sabbath casserole) and my eggs" (Martinez Ruiz 1963, 110–111). "Vivardueña," originally a common work song and singing

game, mimes agricultural tasks and can be seen as a metaphor for human fertility (Cohen 1990, lxxviii).

### Merriment and Joy

Light-hearted merriment accompanies many life and calendrical cycle songs. “La parida del hijo y de la hija” (Mothers of Male and Female Babies), from Morocco, is humorous, but at the expense of women. The mother of a boy receives treats, but the mother of a baby girl is given “skimpy sardines” and banished to the kitchen to “squabble with the neighbors.” The groom gets the sardines in “La Cena del despozado” (The Groom’s Dinner), and is told to “wait for love until morning, for there is no bed.” In a Salonican song, the groom teases his bride: “If your father doesn’t give me 1500 liras [monetary unit], I’ll replace you with raki.”

Several religious holidays are festive and joyous, and Purim, which celebrates the story of Esther, is an occasion that stipulates merrymaking. The narrative “Coplas de Purím” (Purim Verses) is sung with *risos y cantos y con gran plaser* (laughter, songs, and great pleasure). Masquerades and operettas are also part of the festivities.

### Satire and Parody

In Moroccan communities, the mere use of *haketia* (Moroccan Judeo-Spanish) invokes nostalgia, community identification, and often hilarity. The ballad “Raquel lastimosa” describes a potentially adulterous wife who resists temptation. Solly Lévy sings a parody about the misadventures of a Spanish bullfighter improbably versed in the art of Sephardic baking. Lévy also sings a popular Spanish song that as a boy he chanted with his friends to the melody of a liturgical chant and a political parody of the “Coplas de las flores” (Verses of the Flowers), in which each flower proclaims itself the most beautiful and the most suited to praise the Creator. A unique Canadian composition is “Avramico y Davico,” composed in Toronto by Tangier-born Jack Benlolo during the first wave of Moroccan Jewish immigration to Canada in the late 1950s. The words are amusing, but the real humor lies in Benlolo’s choice of melody: “Dominique” by “The Singing Nun,” which was popular when Benlolo composed his parody. “Jacob y Mazaltov” is a bawdy song based on culinary imagery: ovens and frying pans as metaphors for the female reproductive system (see Anahory-Librowicz and Cohen 1986). Bouena Sarfatty Garfinkle sang satires and parodies to foxtrot and tango tunes.

### Miscellaneous

The same song may be sung sadly, blandly, exuberantly, or otherwise, depending on circumstances. The ballad “Diego León,” sung by a group of elderly Moroccan women at a bingo game, lost its gently flowing rhythm, speeded up, and became progressively hilarious. Mercedes Bohbot sang the ballad “Landarico,” in which an adulterous queen is discovered by her royal husband. After singing it with classic

balladic restrained pathos, at the last line, “and so he cut out her tongue” she would break into a gleeful chuckle.

There are “trickster” tales in the *romancero*. In “El caballero burlado” (The Tricked Knight), a young woman parries the advances of a young man by saying she is a charcoal seller’s daughter (or the leprous king’s daughter) and brings bad luck; when they reach Paris she laughs and says she is really a princess. “Don Gato” (Sir Cat), well known in pan-Hispanic cultures, describes, in lugubrious detail, the funeral of Sir Cat, fatally injured in his pursuit of an alluring female. It is sung, with a different melody, as an *endecha* (lament) on the Fast of Av, and a saying warns that if you laugh on this solemn mourning day (*Tisha Be’Av*) you will weep on Rosh Hashanah.

These categories are not definitive, simply a convenient way of beginning to classify and describe a neglected aspect of Judeo-Spanish song. The ludic aspect serves to link everyday and spiritual life through musical bridges. Topical parodies reflect familiarity with the surrounding environment, which is essential for survival, as well as the ability to poke fun at oneself while maintaining pride in the community.

### Selected Bibliography

- Anahory-Librowicz, Oro, and Judith R. Cohen. 1986. “Modalidades expresivas de los cantos de boda judeo-españoles” [Expressive Modalities of Judeo-Spanish Wedding Songs]. *Revista de dialectología y tradiciones populares* 41:189–209.
- Cohen, Judith R. 1990. “Judeo-Spanish Songs in the Sephardic Communities of Montreal and Toronto.” PhD diss., Université de Montreal.
- Martinez Ruiz, J. 1963. “Poesia sefardi de caracter tradicional” [Traditional Sephardic Poetry]. *Archivum* 13: 79–215.

## Music and the Reconstruction of Iberian Crypto-Jewish Identity

*Judith R. Cohen*

---

In 1925, Samuel Schwartz published a book on the hidden Jews of Belmonte in Portugal, and shortly afterward Captain Artur de Barros Basto began his “rescue operation” (*obra de resgate*) setting in motion a series of events that changed their lives dramatically. Interest in the crypto-Jews has escalated, and with it misunderstandings related to their music and the music used in imagined Sephardic events in neighboring Spain.

### Classification of the Musical Repertoire of the Village Crypto-Jews

#### “Indigenous” Repertoire

This category includes prayer texts and Biblical ballads, the oldest genres. Typically, they are in Portuguese, are mostly recited rather than sung, and are mostly

performed and transmitted by women, who were in charge of much of ritual life. (See Schwarz 1925; Canelo 1985; Paulo 1969, 1985; and García 1993 for transcriptions.) The Biblical ballads are narrations of danger, rescue, and faith. The one ballad still actually sung, at Passover, is “The Crossing of the Red Sea.” Schwarz (1925, 93–94) includes the melody, which is the same as the current one. Though it is a common Western European–style melody, probably from the late 19th century, Schwarz describes it as “oriental and exotic,” concluding romantically that it “therefore dates back to very early times” (46–47). The song has become an identity marker of Portuguese crypto-Jews.

### Early 20th-Century Jewish Imparted/Acquired Songs

The first group of such songs dates from the early 20th century. The songs are auto-identified as traditional. For example, Belmonte Jews identify the narrative ballad “Judah and Tamar” as “ours.” Although they claim it has always been around, neither the text nor the simple dance tune seems older than the late 19th century. Barros Basto published the text in *Ha-Lapid* (1928, 10:7–8).

This group also includes Ladino and Hebrew songs. For example, a Portuguese version of the Israeli anthem *Hatikva*, was attributed by Barros Bastos’s daughter, Miriam Azancot, to her father, though in *Ha-Lapid* it is presented differently. In the late 1970s, an unpublished master’s thesis (Nabarro 1978) presented popular Ladino songs as having been collected, by herself, among crypto-Jews in Portugal; however, careful investigation subsequently showed that this was a fabrication. Otherwise, neither Ladino nor Hebrew is used except in recently acquired songs.

### Later 20th-Century Jewish Imparted/Acquired Songs

Since 1990, Belmonte has had visiting rabbis, and other Jewish visitors from abroad. Liturgical melodies and Israeli songs taught by them or left on recordings constitute another level of crypto-Jewish musical life, especially the popular Judeo-Spanish song “Cuando el rey Nimrod” (“Avraham avinu”).

### Shared Local Repertoire and Musical Preferences

One subgroup of these songs is seen as “Jewish” by Jews. The only local songs identified as “Jewish” by self-identified Jews are certain play party songs (*jogos de roda*). Their use was described by a Portuguese scholar as early as the 1920s (Vasconcelos 1958, 173).

Another subgroup of these songs is seen as Jewish by non-Jews. Songs from areas identified with Jewish history are sometimes erroneously presented as “Jewish” (Topa 1998, 91). There are two local ritual songs to which some local people attribute Jewish origins: the “Encomendação das Almas” (Blessing of the Souls), a solemn Easter song, and “The Twelve Words, or Two Tablets of Moses.” This is a cumulative chant sung in Spain as a Christmas song, but in Portugal it is sung as a deathbed ritual. Of its long history (Espinosa 1930), what is relevant here is its similarity to the Passover cumulative song “Ekhad mi yodea” (Who Knows One?), but with a mixture of Christian and Old Testament imagery.

A third subgroup of these songs has a shared repertoire not identified as Jewish. For example, the *Judeus* have a similar range of repertoire to that of their neighbors, even though in Belmonte some say they do not sing the songs of the *goios* (non-Jews).

### Musical Preferences

Several northeastern *Judeus* disdained songs of the *lavradores* (farmers); they themselves are mostly itinerant merchants in regional markets. Fado was often cited as a preference. Among those who had reconverted to Judaism, a preference was for “anything Jewish.” Some women shared a local fondness for old broadside ballads, which used to be circulated by *cegos* (itinerant blind singers) or mule drivers.

### Imagined Communities

In Spain, the small towns of Ribadavia and Hervás hold annual festivals featuring Jewish culture, though almost no Jews live there. Judeo-Spanish songs that local singers and festival organizers learned from recordings have entered their repertoire (Cohen 1999). There are ethical issues around turning a tragic stage of history into a tourist event, however. One may treat these and related developments as misleading, argue that it is simply reappropriation of a lost part of their own culture, or adopt the staunchly neutral standpoint of postmodernist anthropology seeing it as a new, valid, creative expression. Music whose history is unknown to many of the protagonists has become part of rewriting Iberian Jewish history.

### Selected Bibliography

- Canelo, David Augusto. 1985. *Os Últimos Judeus Secretos* [The Last Secret Jews]. Belmonte, Spain: Jornal de Belmonte.
- Cohen, Judith. 1999. “Constructing a Spanish Jewish Festival: Music and the Appropriation of Tradition.” *World of Music* 41 (3): 85–114
- Espinosa, Aurelio. 1930. “Origen oriental y desarrollo histórico del cuento de las doce palabras retorneadas” [Eastern origin and historical development of the tale of the twelve words repeated]. *Revista de Filología Española* 17: 390–413.
- García, María Antonieta. 1993. *Os Judeus de Belmonte* [The Jews of Belmonte]. Lisbon, Portugal: Universidade Nova.
- Nabarro, Margaret. 1978. “The Music of the Western European Sephardic Jews and the Portuguese Marranos: An Ethnomusicological Study.” MA thesis, University of South Africa.
- Paulo, Amílcar. 1969. *Romanceiro Criptojudáico: Subsídios para o estudo do folclore marrano* [Crypto-Jewish Ballads: Material for the Study of Marrano folklore]. Braganza, Portugal: Escola Tipografica.
- Paulo, Amílcar. 1985. *Os Judeus Secretos em Portugal* [The Secret Jews in Portugal]. Oporto, Portugal: Laberinto.
- Schwarz, Samuel, 1925. *Os Crisçãos-Novos em Portugal no Seculo XX* [The New Christians in Portugal]. Lisbon, Portugal: Universidade Nova.
- Topa, Abílio. 1998. “Galandum, Galandaina.” In *Festival Intercéltico*, edited by Mario Correia, 77–82. Oporto, Portugal: Discantus.
- Vasconcellos, José Leite de. 1958. *Etnografia Portuguesa* [Portuguese Ethnography]. Vol. 4. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional–Casa de Moeda.

# Contemporary Jewish Music in America

*Mark Kligman*

---

New Jewish music, from the late 1960s through the first decade of the 2000s, has grown significantly, raising intriguing questions of expressions of Jewishness, continuity with the past, change, and the creation of a new American Jewish sensibility. “Jewish music” can be defined as a self-conscious effort to express a message, idea, or sound that its creators, performers, and listeners consider to be Jewish. It is estimated that more than 2,000 recordings of Jewish music are currently available and that close to 250 records are released each year (Kligman 2001, 88). While not a recent phenomenon, the creation of new Jewish music is found throughout the Jewish community in a vast range of musical styles that represent a vehicle for the new generation of American Jews to express music with some connection to Judaism, while distinguishing itself from the immigrant generation. The immigration of Eastern European Jews to the United States from the 1880s to the 1930s shaped Jewish musical life in America. Their music included cantorial, Yiddish songs, Hasidic music, and the music of the Yiddish theater. The development of contemporary Jewish music in America saw the acceptance of new American styles and the incorporation or rejection of earlier forms of Jewish music. In both religious and nonreligious contexts, this new music represents various responses to the past and has become an integral part of Jewish life in America, interconnecting and shaping Jewish identity.

## Religious Contexts

In religious contexts new Jewish music illustrates the functional role of music in Jewish life in America. For the Orthodox community, their new Jewish music replaces the role of popular American culture. New recordings, concerts, and programs have become an integral part of Orthodoxy. For Reform Jews, their new Jewish music is closely connected to making liturgy and prayer accessible and interesting. New music in the Reform community, in large measure, has been driven by the folk music of summer camps. The Conservative movement displays traces of Orthodox and Reform community. Each religious community has a different need for music to express, enhance, or engage the Jewish life of its members.

One of the most interesting features of new popular music in the Orthodox community is the sheer volume, which represents at least half of all the music available. The Orthodox music industry, based predominantly in Brooklyn, has grown significantly over the past 25 years. This growth is attributed to the limited involvement and participation of right-wing members in secular culture. As a result, they have developed their own type of popular music whose sources include the Bible, liturgy, and a genre of English songs that deliver a powerful message of

faith and devotion. This new music satisfies the need for religiously appropriate entertainment, as other forms of amusement such as television, film, or theater are discouraged.

An important innovator was Shlomo Carlebach (1925–1994), who effectively linked folk music and Jewish music and is credited as the father of new Jewish music. Innovatively drawing from the European tradition and combining it with a new style, Carlebach provided a novel form of music consisting of two or three repeated sections to communicate a Jewish message.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the crucial feature of the new Jewish music was its detachment from the use of Eastern European musical modes, styles, and aesthetics. The 1970s ushered in a new influence in response to popular American music whose lyrics and musical experimentations were becoming more intertwined with that era's drug culture. Orthodox Jewish artists endeavored to convey a strong message and maintain a positive influence in their music. In the 1970s, Mordechai Ben David emerged as a performer, and in the 1980s, Avraham Fried. These two are prominent performers along with dozens of other performers and groups.

Music in the Reform community is a reaction to life in America, but the response it generates is different than that of the Orthodox community. For Reform Jews, the most significant Jewish experience in their lives is the synagogue, thus signaling the importance of its music. In the 1960s, musicians thought synagogue music was too formal and out of date, opting instead for folk and popular styles. However, this resulted in a mixed reaction from Reform cantors, who are the professional body of clergy responsible for music and prayer in synagogues.

In the 1970s, the style of synagogue music reflected the influence of Reform youth who were motivated to participate in prayer through their camp experiences. The musical aesthetic of folk singers like Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Tom Paxton, and James Taylor was much preferred because it was participatory and more current than European Jewish music. In the mid-1970s through the 1980s, those returning camp attendees called upon their Reform cantors, unfamiliar with the new camp music, to sing these new melodies. The reception of this musical change ranged from enthusiastic endorsement to disdain. Composer Sam Adler says supporters of communal singing were eager to blame low synagogue attendance on the music rather than seeing the decline in familiarity with and affinity to synagogue ritual life. Critical of this change in synagogue music, Adler sharply attacked the pseudo-Hasidic or Israeli tunes as "the trademark of the Jewish commercial sacred music norm" (Adler 1992, 297). Whereas the new folk-rock music does not make use of the Eastern European modal tradition, some elements, such as nigun singing, have become more commonplace, but are viewed as "pseudo-Jewish." Presently, the most influential performer and creator of New Reform liturgical music is Debbie Friedman.

New Jewish music in the Conservative movement shares similarities with both Orthodox and Reform. On one hand, new music recordings and concerts serve as a means of entertainment, much like in the Orthodox movement. On the other hand, even though Conservative Jews prefer worship that is relatively fixed and minimally changed, it is similar to Reform in that the younger generation wants to carry on its camp experiences and incorporate new music within the liturgy, even though the

synagogue is not committed to making any changes. Those campers who had experienced participatory prayer at Ramah camps sought to continue worshipping in this style with egalitarian services and the inclusion of communal song singing. This became the hallmark of the smaller and more intimate *chavurah minyanim*. Craig Taubman and the group Safam are two important exemplars of new Jewish music connected with Conservative Judaism.

### Nonreligious Contexts

Throughout the 20th century, the number of American Jews who have chosen not to affiliate with a synagogue has risen. Secular Yiddish and Israeli cultures became viable alternatives for those who wanted to be connected to Judaism through the cultural dimension of Jewish life without religious obligations. For others, art and music (performed in concert halls) provided the venues for expressing their Jewishness. Yiddish songs, Hebrew songs of Israel, and klezmer music satisfied the desire of those who wanted to be connected to Judaism but not through religion.

In the realm of symphonic music, late 19th- and early 20th-century composers sought to express nationalism in music. This was a conflict for European Jews who were struggling with a national identity. Ernest Bloch (1880–1959) drew upon his experiences as a Jew in his two seminal works, *Schelomo* (1915–1916) and *Avodath ha-Kodesh* (Sacred Service; 1930–1933). This established a model for other composers. Leonard Bernstein's (1918–1990) larger symphonic works incorporate "Jewishness" in some capacity: "*Jeremiah*," *Symphony No. 1* (written in 1942), uses cantillation motifs, while *Symphony No. 3* (1963), as well as the *Dybbuk* ballet of 1974, use the text of the Kaddish. His vocal works include *Hashkivevenu* (1945) and *Chicester Psalms* (1965), which are based on six psalm texts set in Hebrew. David Diamond (1915–2005) incorporates a free, modal, and expressive style in his compositions, which include *David Mourns for Absalom* for voice and piano and the orchestral work *Psalms* (1936). Among his more than 200 works are a dozen that express Jewishness. Among his last works is *Kaddish for Violoncello and Orchestra* (1987–1989). Composer Steve Reich, in his modern use of minimalism in music, incorporated cantillation in *Tehillim* (1981). For these composers, Jewishness is expressed individually not through novelty but through references to Jewish rituals that composers intend to be transcendent spirituality.

The klezmer music revival of the 1970s is a success in terms of reawakening interest in a traditional form of music and providing new contexts and venues for growth. The four revival bands of the 1970s are the Klezmerim, Kapelye, the Klezmer Conservatory Band, and the Andy Statman Klezmer Orchestra. Performers were accomplished musicians who sought to revive the music out of interest for their musical heritage and their interest in this music; some performers were non-Jews.

What separates klezmer performers from other performers in the religious community is their approach to Jewish music through the music itself, as a challenge to sharpen their virtuosic skills and deepen their understanding of another musical system. Klezmer music became a way to access a lost world. While veteran klezmer musicians trained some revival musicians, the younger musicians sought

to learn the style of the early 20th century through the recordings of clarinetists Dave Tarras and Naftule Brandwein. This led to the reissuing of older recordings of the repertoire on 78 rpm records, which became the staple repertoire of the revival bands. In the late 1980s, klezmer music took a turn as groups moved away from the revival approach of mainly performing the traditional repertoire to creating new music as well as combining it with pop, jazz, and many other styles. The four prominent klezmer bands today are the Klezmatics, Brave Old World, the Klezmer Conservatory Band, and Andy Statman.

Other areas of Jewish music have a small but loyal following. Sephardic music serves as an exotic style to Jews of Ashkenazic descent, but functions as a familiar style to those of Sephardic descent. The Ladino songs have created a devoted following due to active performers and groups such as Judy Frankel, Judith Cohen, Voice of the Turtle, and Alhambra, who incorporate a variety of distinct European and Middle Eastern styles in their music. A renewed interest in choral music can be attributed to the Zamir Chorale of Boston, which has influenced a resurgence of a cappella choirs in colleges throughout the country as well as the staging of a one-week choral festival in the Catskills. Another smaller musical community is the Jewish music corner of the New York avant-garde jazz style, whose growing popularity is pushing the boundaries of its local appeal. The recordings of the group Hassidic New Wave has drawn much interest, as evidenced by their performances at the Knitting Factory in downtown New York. Using stylized Hasidic and klezmer music, and placing it within the New York avant-garde jazz framework, Hassidic New Wave moves from pop, rock, jazz, blues, and new classical styles within a piece. Well-known American recording artists have also explored aspects of Jewish music, from Kenny G's *Jazz Service* (1986), Itzhak Perlman's *In the Fiddler's House* (1995), Mandy Patinkin's *Mamaloshen* (1997), and Barbra Steisand's recording of Max Janowski's "Avinu Malkeinu" on *Higher Ground* (1997). While some well-known artists draw upon their Jewish heritage, others have become prominent in the mainstream of American culture through their Jewish heritage. Matisyahu is a performer of reggae music drawing from his connection to the Lubaviteh Hasidic group. His recording *Youth* (2006) is on the Sony label.

Although synagogue attendance has dropped for all Jewish movements since the 1970s, the increase in new Jewish music indicates that expressions of Jewishness are found in new places. New Jewish music becomes a vehicle to be Jewish and to express Jewishness in diverse, complex, and new ways.

### Selected Bibliography

- Adler, Sam. 1992. "Sacred Music in a Secular Age." In *Sacred Sound and Social Change: Liturgical Music in Jewish and Christian Experience*, edited by Lawrence Hoffman and Janet Walton, 289–299. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Kligman, Mark. 2001. "Contemporary Jewish Music in America." *American Jewish Yearbook*. 101: 88–141.
- Rogovoy, Seth. 2000. *The Essential Klezmer: A Music Lover's Guide to Jewish Roots and Soul Music, from the Old World to the Jazz Age to the Downtown Avant-Garde*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

- Schleifer, Eliyahu. 1995. "Current Trends of Liturgical Music in the Ashkenazi Synagogue." *The World of Music* 37 (1): 59–72.
- Slobin, Mark. 2000. *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Slobin, Mark, ed. 2002. *American Klezmer: Its Roots and Offshoots*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Summit, Jeffrey. 2000. *Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

## Rescue and Virtual Preservation of Diaspora Cultural Heritage by the Center for Jewish Art

*Aliza Cohen-Mushlin*

---

The Center for Jewish Art is dedicated to the systematic and comprehensive survey and documentation of what remains of the Jewish visual culture in Israel and the Diaspora, from a coin to a synagogue and from ancient times to the present. The center is committed to researching this legacy for educational purposes and disseminating it through electronic media, publications, conferences, and various study programs for scholars, educators, curators, laypeople, and children.

The historic events of the 20th century, particularly the Holocaust, the Soviet regime, and waves of immigration, destroyed a large part of the Jewish visual heritage in the Diaspora. However in 1990, when the researchers of the Center for Jewish Art started a systematic documentation in the former Soviet Union, they were astounded to find the remnants of a great culture of bygone days: for example, silver ritual objects of exquisite workmanship hidden in crates in a former monastery in Kiev, ruined edifices of synagogues from the 16th century on, richly decorated tombstones from that time, and paintings and sculptures by renowned Jewish artists hidden in private collections, about to be sold and dispersed throughout the world.

This culture, developed by Jewish communities within the regions they lived in during many centuries, is now in great danger of being lost forever: many synagogue buildings are collapsing or being reconstructed and changed; abandoned cemeteries are being destroyed by natural forces and vandalism; ritual and fine art objects are being stolen or sold in bazaars and auction houses, torn from their cultural fabric.

It would be impossible to physically maintain and guard what is left of this rich culture. A painful choice has to be made subject to numerous criteria and involving high costs. However, an economically viable solution carried out by the Center for Jewish Art is the painstakingly systematic, region-by-region documentation of synagogue buildings, ritual and fine art objects, tombstones, and manuscripts and

their study in relation to the indigenous culture. The center carries out comprehensive surveys and documentation by photographing, measuring, describing, and researching the objects and the data is computerized (see the center's Web site: <http://cja.huji.ac.il/>).

This documentation has a twofold purpose:

1. To save by documentation and research, which is done in relation to the surrounding culture, the endangered Jewish visual heritage in Israel and the Diaspora, and to make the data available to everyone via the Internet; and
2. To strengthen Jewish identity through the study and dissemination of the visual culture in connection with the literary sources.

These sources constitute part of the science of Judaism, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which was started by a group of Jewish intellectuals during the 1810s and 1820s in Germany, and headed by Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), who outlined the program and scientific methods of this new discipline. It was to include the study of Judaism in all its manifestations: theology, religious worship, Jewish law, Hebrew literature, history, and Jewish ethics. However, Zunz failed to include the arts. Now, more than 150 years later, the science of Judaism, which Zunz and others instigated, is extended to include the visual heritage, thus adding a new and significant dimension to Jewish culture.

The study of Jewish visual art in Israel and the Diaspora, which began in the 20th century, was recognized as a specific discipline at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the 1960s through the efforts of Professor Bezalel Narkiss, Israel Prize laureate. Inspired by the Princeton Index of Christian Art, in 1969 Narkiss founded the Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art in order to define the particular features of the Jewish visual heritage within the regional cultures in which it flourished. The establishment of the Center for Jewish Art in 1979 started a systematic gathering of first-hand data on visual material in five fields: ancient and modern Jewish art; Hebrew illuminated manuscripts; ritual and ceremonial objects and the customs of their usage in different Jewish communities; and the architecture of synagogues, ritual baths (mikvahs), cemetery chapels, and tombstones. In addition to the *Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art*, from 1974 to 1998 the center also published 24 volumes of the journal *Jewish Art*, and from 1983 to 1999 it published 7 volumes of the journal *Rimonim* (in Hebrew).

The connection of the database of visual culture to Jewish literary sources is done by the team of researchers at the *Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art* (10 volumes have been published to date), the main research and educational venture of the Center for Jewish Art. Up to now, the index has amassed about a quarter of a million documents, with photographs of objects and architectural plans—the results of documentation in 40 countries. The relatively low costs of documentation, research, and computerization is due to the fact that this work is carried out by master's degree and doctoral students and architects at the center, with the cooperation of educational or governmental institutions in various countries.

Ritual objects are being documented in countries with dwindling Jewish communities and places where no Jewish communities exist, including North Africa,

the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, India, and central Asia. The knowledge on many such objects was saved by documentation before they disappeared without trace. The systematic documentation of Hebrew illuminated manuscripts usually takes place in museums and libraries, such as the British Library in London, the Royal Library in Copenhagen, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, the Austrian National Library in Vienna, and the Vatican Library. However, in recent years, special efforts have been made to document private collections before they are sold. The same is true for paintings and sculptures of modern Jewish artists documented in Israel and Eastern Europe, such as Marc Chagall, Abel Pann, Meir Akselrod, Vadim Siddur, Solomon Gershov, and Dimitry Lion. Ancient Jewish art, including coins, ossuaries, synagogues, and synagogue mosaics, was documented in Israel as well as in Albania, Macedonia, Jordan, and other countries. Endangered monuments, such as synagogues, Jewish houses containing synagogues, mikvahs, cemetery chapels, and tombstones, were documented in the Caucasus, Balkans, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and other places.

The center is in the process of mapping these structures, built up to 1950, throughout the Diaspora. The endangered buildings in places without Jewish communities are usually privately owned; in secondary use; or abandoned, dilapidated, or about to be reconstructed or demolished. It is estimated that about 3,600 such buildings are still standing in Europe, and perhaps 5,500 throughout the Diaspora. The numbers are a rough estimate, however, because each documentation expedition undertaken by the center brings surprises for better or worse.

The Department of Architectural History at the University of Braunschweig has been a close partner of the Center for Jewish Art since 1994. Under the supervision of Professor Harmen Thies and with the help of three postdoctoral students acting as instructors, more than 150 extant synagogues and other buildings have been documented in five German states. Some, destroyed in 1938, were reconstructed as wooden models. The minimal costs are due to a program that was integrated into the curriculum of more than 300 students, some from the Universities of Dresden and Weimar.

In order to continue the mutual work of the two institutions, a research unit called Beit Tfila (House of Prayer) was established, dedicated to the documentation and research of Jewish architecture in Europe. Through this program many European students become familiar with Jewish culture viewed as part of their own heritage (see the Web site: [www.bet-tfila.org](http://www.bet-tfila.org)). A similar program is being successfully carried out in Slovakia, organized by Dr. Maros Borsky, and in England, organized by Dr. Sharman Kadish. Both scholars were researchers at the Center for Jewish Art.

The Center for Jewish Art has also held symposia on Jewish art in 1987 (Catalonia, Spain), 1989 (Provence, France), 1991 (Piemonte, Italy), 1993 (Turkey), 1995 (Prague, Czech Republic), 1997 (Greece), 1998 (Israel), and 2000 (Alsace, France). In addition, on May 16–23, 1985, the organization held the First International Seminar on Jewish Art in Jerusalem. Subsequent seminars were held in 1988, covering synagogues, ritual objects, Hebrew illuminated manuscripts, modern Jewish artists, and Jewish museums; in 1991, covering the image of the Jew, education in and

through Jewish art, modern Jewish artists, and ceremonial art; in 1994, covering the Second Commandment in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic art; in 1996, covering the real and ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic art; and in 1999, covering the Bible in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic art.

Documenting and researching the buildings, ritual objects, manuscripts, and ancient and modern art of the Jewish communities in the Diaspora affords a glimpse into their rich cultural life and provides a strong foundation for the developing Israeli culture. Jewish visual heritage, like the science of Judaism, provides the material that enables researchers to gain insight into and appreciation of the values of the multifaceted Jewish culture. Through education, this knowledge will pass on from generation to generation.

### Selected Bibliography

- Amar, Ariella. 2003. "Synagogues and Ritual Artifacts." In *Morocco*, edited by Haim Saadoun, 273–288. Jewish Communities in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Amar, Ariella. 2005. "Synagogues and Ritual Artifacts." In *Tunisia*, edited by Haim Saadoun. Jewish Communities in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Amar, Ariella, and Ruth Jacoby, eds. 1998. *Ingathering of the Nations. Treasures of Jewish Art: Documenting an Endangered Legacy*. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.
- Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza. 1979. "Synagogue Floor Mosaic with Temple Facade and Implements; Bottom of a Cup with Torah Ark and Temple Implements; Fragments of Cup Bottom with Torah Ark and Temple Implements; Medallion with Menorah; Oil Lamp with Menorah; Oil Lamp with David and Goliath; Plaque Against the Evil Eye." In *Age of Spirituality, Late Antique and Early Christian Art*, edited by Kurt Weitzmann, 375–389. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza. 1983. *The Making of a Manuscript, The Worms Bible of 1148*, vol. 25. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz.
- Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza. 2001. "Cost-Efficient Virtual Preservation of Synagogues." In *Historic Cities and Sacred Sites: Cultural Roots for Urban Futures*, edited by I. Serageldin, E. Shluger, and J. Martin-Brown, 117–120. Washington, DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank, Oxford University Press.
- Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza. 2001. "Reconstructing the Past to Build the Future: Rescue and Preservation of Cultural Heritage." In *Culture in Sustainable Development*, edited by I. Serageldin and J. Martin-Brown, 72–77. Washington, DC: World Bank and UNESCO.
- Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza. 2003. "Scribes and Artists in Hebrew Manuscripts." In *Cathedral Workshops on Religious Arts and Crafts*, edited by C. Carlo-Stella, 327–332. Rome: Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.
- Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza. 2003. "Survey and Inventory of Jewish Sacred Property in Post-conflict Areas." *Museum International* 55 (2): 218.
- Cohen-Mushlin, Aliza. 2003. "Virtual Preservation of Minority Visual Culture: The Index of Jewish Art." In *Cathedral Workshops on Religious Arts and Crafts*, edited by C. Carlo-Stella, 117–120. Rome: Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.
- Feuchtwanger, Naomi, ed. 1984. *Ohel Moshe: The Synagogue and its Ritual Objects*, Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.
- Hanegbi, Zohar, and Yaniv Bracha. 1991. *Afghanistan: The Synagogue and the Jewish Home*. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.

- Jacoby, Ruth, and Talgam Rina. 1988. *Ancient Synagogues: Architectural Glossary*. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.
- Kravtsov, Sergey. 1994. "Synagogues of the Western Ukraine: State of Preservation and Exploration." *Visnyk: Periodical of The West Ukrainian Institute for Conservation* 2: 10–16.
- Kravtsov, Sergey. 1995. "Die Juden der Grenz—und Freihandelsstadt Brody" [in German]. *David*, March, 16–19.
- Kravtsov, Sergey. 1996. "Synagogues in Eastern Galicia." In *Treasures of Jewish Galicia: Judaica from the Museum of Ethnography and Craft*, edited by Sarah Harel Hoshen, 37–49. Tel Aviv: Beth Hatefutsoth.
- Kravtsov, Sergey. 1999. "Galician Towns of the 16th–17th Centuries (Composition and Symbolism)" [in Russian]. *Architekturnoye Nasledstvo* (Architectural Heritage) 43: 53–59.
- Kravtsov, Sergey. 2003. "Rekonstruierte Vergangenheit: die Synagoge von Leszniów im Model." *Judaica: Beiträge zum Verstehen des Judentum* 2: 98–110.
- Kravtsov, Sergey. 2005. "Juan Bautista Villalpando and Sacred Architecture in the Seventeenth Century." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 3: 312–339.
- Kravtsov, Sergey. 2005. "Gothic Survival in Synagogue Architecture of the 17th and 18th Centuries in Volhynia, Ruthenia and Podolia." *Architectura. Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Baukunst/Journal of the History of Architecture* 1: 69–94.
- Mellinkoff, Ruth. 1999. *Antisemitic Hate Signs in Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts from Medieval Germany*. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.
- Narkiss, Bezalel, and Aliza Cohen-Mushlin. 1985. *The Kennicott Bible*. London: Facsimile Editions.
- Narkiss, Bezalel, and Aliza Cohen-Mushlin. 1985. "Worms Mahsor." In *Worms Mahsor*, edited by M. Beit-Arie. Jerusalem: Vadus.
- Narkiss, Bezalel, Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, and Anat Cherikover. 1982. *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles*. Vol. I, *Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Rudolf, Anthony Rudo. 1995. "The Jewish Architecture." *Jewish Quarterly* Autumn, 60–62.
- Sabar, Shalom, ed. 1995. *Between Judaism and Islam in the Mirror of Art* [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.
- Wischnitzer, Rachel. 1990. *From Dura to Rembrandt*. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.
- The World Directory of Jewish Museums*. 1994. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.
- Yaniv, Bracha, Hanegbi Zohar, and Sabar Shalom, eds. 1988. *Hebrew Inscriptions and Their Translations*. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art.

## Jewish Contributions to the Arts

*Sylvia Barack Fishman*

---

### Jews as Active Participants in Modern Western Culture

This essay explores the developing role of Jews in Western Diaspora cultures in modern times; the contributions Jews made to literature, music, theater, film, and comedy; and the ways these changes reflect transformations in the attitudes of creative Jewish toward their own Jewishness. Although Jews in the arts may not appear, on the surface, to occupy the same monolithic status as the names of Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Albert Einstein (1879–1955),

and Karl Marx (1818–1883), Jewish writers, filmmakers, artists, and producers have profoundly influenced contemporary Western culture, especially that of the United States. They have articulated the values of their adopted societies and have arguably been the prime movers in producing cultural attitudes that embrace liberal Western Jewish values. In recent decades, many have turned their attention to Jewish history, culture, and concerns and have brought Jewish culture to both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. Because exhaustive discussions of these phenomena would require many volumes, this essay focuses on representative personalities and their contributions.

### **Jewish Entry into Western Artistic Activities**

Jews in many historical periods interacted with the cultures surrounding them. Jews contributed significantly to the cultural output of the countries they inhabited during those historical episodes when such contributions were possible. Moreover, from the earliest Jewish texts Jewish cultures were enriched by materials absorbed from external societies—and those materials were then profoundly transformed within the contemporaneous Judaic ethos. Poetic expressions and philosophical works of medieval Jews of the Iberian Peninsula, to take one oft-cited example, illustrate the brilliant potential of such cultural interchange. Nevertheless, until the modern period, boundaries between Jews and non-Jews were characteristically supported by both communities, limiting the extent of cultural exchange.

Boundaries began to erode in the 18th and 19th centuries, during the period of the political emancipation of the Jews, first in Western and then, incompletely, in Eastern Europe. A complex interaction between Jews and the non-Jewish majority began to define modern Diaspora Jewishness, especially in Western societies. Some Jewish artists and intellectuals applied modern concepts and techniques to Judaic materials and created a rich new array of poetry, fiction, theatrical and artistic works. The East European Haskalah especially nourished an intense, creative, and innovative Jewish outpouring among writers such as short story master Y. L. Peretz (1851–1915), powerful poet Hayim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934), the brilliant fiction humorist Shalom Aleichem (1859–1916), saga writer Sholem Asch (1880–1957), novelist Chaim Grade (1910–1982), and the Singer brothers—Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902–1991), best known for his incorporation of spiritualism and sexuality into his fiction about Jewish life, and I. J. Singer (1893–1944), whose family epics portray Jewish societal transformations. Beyond their deeply differentiated styles of writing, these writers created two secular literary approaches, competing preferences for Hebrew, reclaimed as a language for modern literary expression, versus Yiddish, as the language of the ordinary people.

Writers of the Haskalah had typically grown up in pious Jewish homes and had attended Orthodox schools and yeshivas (seminaries teaching the Talmud and other rabbinic texts). Deeply steeped in classic Jewish texts, they used their language, images, symbols, and themes in their secular writing, even when their work criticized Jewish societies. Moreover, the maskilim realized the shtetl society that had so long typified Eastern Europe was quickly disappearing, and some of their

work elegizes that disappearing world. Some of these authors, especially Shalom Aleichem and Isaac Bashevis Singer, achieved widespread recognition among non-Jewish and Jewish audiences.

Jews became prominent contributors to the cultures of many Western countries. However, prejudice remained, especially for Jews who aspired to careers in artistic and intellectual arenas. In European settings, many talented and ambitious 18th-, 19th-, and early 20th-century Jews saw that they could not progress in their chosen fields without being baptized into Christianity. Three famous examples speak volumes: All the children of Moses Mendelsohn, the great 17th-century pioneer of the German Haskalah, abandoned their father's enlightened Jewish learning and piety and converted to Christianity; Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) contributed his magnificent music to Western culture, not as a Jew, but as a Christian; and German poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) reportedly converted out of convenience, and is said to have declared the conversion of Jews like himself futile, because, “No Jew can believe in the divinity of any other Jew.” In contrast, Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), who began life as a Lithuanian Jew but became a famous art historian as an Episcopalian, earnestly referred to “our Puritan forebears.” Nevertheless, some converted artists created works that many see as being deeply informed by Jewish consciousness and concerns. Most Jewish artists did not convert from their hereditary faith, although many became completely secular. Westernizing Jewish writers and artists became part of polyglot bohemian artistic circles. Some of them formed lively, distinctly Jewish creative societies, organized around poetry and novels, theater, music, and eventually film. Warsaw, especially, became the epicenter of developing Jewish culture, and it was teeming with Jewish creativity of all kinds.

The flourishing Jewish artistic culture that incorporated both Jewish and secular expressions was destroyed along with the majority of Europe's Jews—more than a third of world Jewry—by the Nazi Holocaust. In the wake of that destruction, the majority of Diaspora Jewish contributions to modern culture flowed from the largest Diaspora community, which had been growing by leaps and bounds in the United States. The American Jewish population had increased from 300,000 in 1880 to 4,400,000 in 1930. Not surprisingly, among the millions of Jewish immigrants, creative artists of all kinds found their way to America's shores, and Jewish creativity developed there in unprecedented ways.

### **Portraying American Jewish Immigrant Realities**

In America, unlike many European settings, no one indigenous ethnoreligious group controlled society and cultural expressions. Baptism was not a required ticket to success, and accommodation with the external culture without formal conversion was commonplace. Nevertheless, except for those who used the immigrant experience as grist for their artistic mills, or those who were specifically interested in Yiddish or Hebrew cultural expressions, most American Jewish artists during the first half of the 20th century did not incorporate their Jewish antecedents in any obvious way. Exceptions were artists and producers who worked within venues designed exclusively for Jewish audiences in Yiddish-language theater,

films, literature, and other print materials. These American Yiddish-language materials are not within the purview of this essay, but they provided a fertile training ground. Jewish musicians, actors, and writers often developed their talents in Yiddish-speaking environments and then went on to fame in the wider world—often with less Jewish-sounding names.

Jewish materials in the late decades of the 19th century and the first few decades of the 20th century are found in the novels, theater, films, and music depicting the immigrant experience for a general, English-speaking audience. Socialist activist, journalist, and prolific author Abraham Cahan (1860–1951) described the trials of immigrant Jewish men and women coping with societal and familial disruptions, as did later authors Anzia Yeziarska (1885–1970), Daniel Fuchs (1909–1993), and Henry Roth (1906–1995), among others. Mary Antin (1881–1949) described the acculturation of immigrants in her book, *From Plotsk to Boston*. Not least, *The Jazz Singer*, the 1927 film that brought sound to the commercial screen, told the story of a cantor's son who runs away from home and from Judaic commitments to become a success on Broadway, complete with a beautiful and supportive non-Jewish girlfriend. Christian as well as Jewish Americans enjoyed these portrayals because so many of them had come from immigrant backgrounds and they could relate to the intergenerational struggles despite their differing ethnoreligious origins. These



Al Jolson performs in blackface in the motion picture *The Jazz Singer* (1927). (Library of Congress)

stories about immigrant Jews captured a critical chapter in Christian American social history as well.

## American Art by Jews—But Not about Jewishness—Before World War II

### Music, Theater, and Musical Theater

Except for immigrant stories, Jewish novelists more often wrote about ethnic groups other than Jewish families. Jews whose earliest memories included neighborhood synagogues with their liturgical cantorial music shaped the early 20th-century voice of American music. Many achieved world-class careers in music—without overtly referencing their Jewish backgrounds—in venues ranging from highbrow to lowbrow. Nevertheless, some listeners perceived Jewish-authored music as enriched behind the scenes by some indefinable Jewish emotionalism—perhaps akin to the later notion of musical soul. Both Irving Berlin's (1888–1989) 1927 biography and the words onscreen in the film *The Jazz Singer* (1927) refer to Jewish musician's "tear" in the voice or melody. Composer Aaron Copland's (1900–1990) music evoked Appalachia and the desert Southwest, but not the Jewish streets and synagogues where he learned his first musical notes. Nevertheless, in later years Copland himself evaluated his musical oeuvre as having been influenced by his Jewishness: the "passionate lyricism" and its "dramatic" and "intense" qualities meant it could not have been "written by a *goy* [non-Jew]." Berlin's musical ditties celebrated "white Christmas," the "Easter parade," and every non-Jewish festival in-between, but only in safely Jewish contexts did he refer to the calendar of the Jewish year that he experienced in his Lower East Side of New York origins, where his father was a part-time cantor. Berlin, like other Jewish artists, tended to portray a warm, jovial version of secularized Christian culture, rather than inflamed religious passions, and their artistic creations may have subtly lowered the barriers between American Jews and Christians. At the same time, some musical artists continued to produce Jewish materials for Jewish audiences. Making fun of themselves and other Jews who affected American backgrounds, Jewish musicians parodied other Jewish musicians in Jewish dialect pieces—"I want to be an Oy, Oy, Oyviator," "I'm a Yiddisher Cowboy," "I've got a mammy/ but she don't come from Alabammy"—that seemed threatening to more Americanized Jews of the time.

Jews entered mainstream show business through the New York theatrical scene early in the game. In the 1890s, economic hardships and the failure of many theaters opened the way for Jewish entrepreneurs, and six Jewish booking agents and producers formed the Theatrical Syndicate, which virtually monopolized show business nationally for decades and provided the model for the motion picture industry that would follow. Broadway, especially the genre of musical theater that developed in the 1920s and 1930s, attracted many Jewish writers, musicians, and producers. Indeed, some have argued that the American musical theater was to some extent a Jewish creation. Producers like Lee, Sam, and J. J. Shubert (*née* Levi [1871–1953], Shmuel [1878–1905], and Jacob Szemanski [1879–1963]) and David Merrick (originally Margulois, 1911–2000) controlled theater chains; Jerome Kern (1885–1945),

Richard Rodgers (1902–1979) and Oscar Hammerstein (1895–1960), Frank Loesser (1910–1969), Abe Burrows (1910–1985), George S. Kaufman (1889–1961), the Gershwin brothers, George (1898–1937) and Ira (1896–1983), and scores of other artists shaped the American theatrical and musical idiom. Jews provided not only talent, but also an ideology of ethnoreligious tolerance, repeatedly presented as an American value. The Broadway musicals' consumers also were disproportionately Jewish, perhaps up to half of a typical audience. Jewish creators and consumers supported inclusivity as an American characteristic.

These issues were of primary concern during this time period because of the increasing American nativist racism, a movement that sought to limit the numbers of “polluting” immigrants—including Jews—entering the United States. Academics, politicians, and other public personages urged immigration restrictions, ultimately successfully, as the gates of immigration were virtually closed to those defined as undesirable peoples in 1924. Jews who were accused of having ugly, indelible “race traits” created and responded to novels, plays, and music that preached the unity of all humankind. Beginning with Israel Zangwill's (1864–1926) 1908 drama, *The Melting Pot*, continuing with the powerful 1927 musical drama *Show Boat*, and reiterated in later musical theater successes such as *Finian's Rainbow* (1947), *South Pacific* (1949), and *West Side Story* (1957), among others, Jewish artists shone a spotlight on the irrationality of hating other races and religions. The male ingenue of *South Pacific* learns painfully that boundaries corrosively divide people one from the other, and that societies deliberately—and wrongly—promulgate vicious boundaries: “You've got to be carefully taught,” he sings sarcastically, “before you are six or seven or eight/to hate all the people your relatives hate.” Later, composers and librettists such as Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) and Stephen Sondheim (1930– ) continued the message, as Jewish music, theater, and musical theater promoted the creation of an America defined by the absence of racial and religious hatreds. In many ways they succeeded, as Americans absorbed the Jewish definition of a tolerant American culture.

Nonmusical playwrights also transformed Judaic materials into more universalistic formats before the American multiculturalist movement liberated them to access their Jewish backgrounds directly. While Clifford Odets (1906–1963), writing in the 1930s, was still creating some dramatic characters with identifiable Jewish names and characteristics, Arthur Miller (1915–2005) and Neil Simon (1927– ), to give just two examples, played down the Jewish antecedents of their characters in plays like *The Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*, *The Crucible*, *The Odd Couple*, and others. Although Miller claimed that he thought a lot about Jewish history when writing *The Crucible*, there is little in the play to indicate that preoccupation. It was not until the 1970s that Simon created his warm Jewish family plays, beginning with *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. A different America was needed before these artists felt comfortable dealing with memories that were closest to home. Not coincidentally, Jewish writing and films worked quietly to create that different America.

### Jews and the American Film Industry

Jews are often accused of controlling the American film industry. Neal Gabler famously suggested in his book *An Empire of their Own* that Jews did more than

David O. Selznick, film producer from the 1930s to the 1950s, is best known for producing *Gone with the Wind* (1939).  
(Library of Congress)



that—the “Jews invented Hollywood.” Many observers suggest that Jews got involved with film, as with other enterprises, because they saw an unmet need and moved in to fill the gap. Jews were associated with the developing motion picture industry from its beginnings in the nickelodeon theaters in the first decade of the 20th century, when moving pictures began to be shown by neighborhood entrepreneurs. For only five cents, at any time of the day, patrons of all ages and financial means could escape into a world of fantasy and entertainment—nickelodeons that featured not only the short films that were their official rationale but also songs, live acts, and sometimes amateur nights. These movie theaters caught on like wild-fire across America. By 1908, New York alone had more than 100 movie houses, most of them seating under 300 people, and most located in Jewish neighborhoods where “garment merchants turned exhibitors” like Marcus Loew (1870–1927), Adolph Zukor (1873–1976), and William Fox (1879–1952) had banded together to form the Moving Picture Exhibitors Association. Carl Laemmle (1867–1939), a German-Jewish immigrant who founded the Independent Motion Picture Company of America (IMP) began to produce and distribute his own moving pictures. Campaigns to rein in and control the “depravity” of these unsupervised environments were quick to follow, many of them smacking openly of anti-Semitism. One cartoon, for example, showed a grotesque Jewish caricatured peddler on a cart, distributing films; his wagon is labeled “independent junk wagon,” and his stubborn donkey is tagged “small exhibitor.” While non-Jewish (and often anti-Semitic) filmmakers, including Thomas Edison (1847–1931), D. W. Griffith (1878–1948), and Thomas Ince (1882–1924), operating in New York, were respectfully referred to in the press as inventors or pioneers, Jewish filmmakers, including the founders of the IMP along with Samuel Goldwyn (1882–1974), Jesse Lasky (1880–1958), and Louis B.

Mayer (1885–1957), who relocated their filmmaking to Southern California, were denigrated as uneducated, crude, vulgar autocrats.

These first Jewish filmmakers were joined by Harry (1881–1958) and Jack Warner (1892–1978), Harry Cohn (1891–1958), Irving Thalberg (1899–1936), and David O. Selznick (1902–1965) after the invention of talking pictures. As Jewish Hollywood was established, automobile magnate Henry Ford (1863–1947) had the 1905 Russian forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, translated into English, and Ford promulgated the charge that Jews were ruining the Christian youth of America through their control of popular entertainment, what the *Dearborn Independent* called, “the Jewish manipulation of the public mind.” Among other charges, Ford’s publications accused Jewish filmmakers of being motivated by communist sympathies—a charge that would recur periodically and would torment much of Jewish Hollywood decades later during the notorious Joseph McCarthy hearings for the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee. In an atmosphere of rising anti-Semitism, Jewish films promoted a melting pot philosophy from *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and *Abie’s Irish Rose* (1929) onward. In many Jewish works, marriage across cultural boundaries was an important symbol: the ability of minority groups to marry persons from mainstream culture was presented in many Jewish-authored novels, plays, and films as a litmus test of the prominence of true democratic egalitarianism. During these years, actual intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews was relatively low in general, but was most common among artists, intellectuals, and the most well-educated and ambitious Jews. In addition to intermarriage as an ideological motif in the attempt to create a more tolerant America, it was often possible—especially for men—to accelerate the process of acceptance by acquiring symbolic Christian status without converting by marrying Christian women from prominent families. Jewish movie moguls played down their Jewish origins in the 1930s and 1940s, running newsreels preceding films in public movie theaters prominently featuring themselves and their tall blond wives around the Christmas tree.

Overtly Jewish content virtually disappeared from films and other Jewish artistic output after the creation of movie codes that prohibited or severely restricted ethnic materials. After several groups jockeyed for power in the creation of such codes in the 1920s, Postmaster General Will Hays joined together with the Catholic Legion of Decency, which had been lobbying against the pernicious Jewish influence, to create and implement the 1930 motion picture codes. One historian wittily refers to motion pictures from the 1930s to the 1950s as “an industry largely financed by Protestant bankers, operated by Jewish studio executives, and policed by Catholic bureaucrats, all the while claiming to represent grass-roots America.” After Adolf Hitler became German chancellor in 1933, Germany fired all its Jewish filmmakers, demanding that American film offices in Germany do the same. In America, also, many prominent film companies were pressured not to articulate anti-Nazi sentiments. Catholic Hollywood reporter Joseph I. Breen, head of the Production Code Administration from 1934 on, saw the rising Nazis as useful in cleaning Hollywood from the influence of Jews, “the scum of the earth,” who “think of nothing but money-making and sexual indulgence.” When Warner Brothers’ 1937 film *The Life of Emile Zola* focused on French anti-Semitic persecution of Captain Alfred

Dreyfus—without ever uttering the words “Jew” or “anti-Semitism”—Breen nevertheless privately complained about the film’s “propaganda.” Some Hollywood figures formed the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League in 1936, and 58 individuals in the industry did petition for an anti-Nazi boycott in 1938, but Breen and others accused Jews of trying to drag America into a Jewish war as well as promoting communism. Nevertheless, some studios continued to promote anti-Nazi films, some dramas, some comic, which enjoyed box office success. Significantly, none of these films referred to Jews as victims of Nazi aggression. Even filmmakers who wished to emphasize Jewish stories were forced to do so through sleight of hand, rather than directly. The splendid director Ernst Lubitsch (1892–1947), for example, directed Jack Benny and Carole Lombard in a brilliant black comedy, *To Be or Not to Be* (1942), a film about the invading Nazis taking over a Warsaw theater, with scarcely a mention of the Jewish dimension—but Lubitsch points toward Jewish suffering by visually focusing on a Jewish actor’s nose.

Under these pressures, Jewish themes and concerns went underground and emerged only in a kind of code—movies featured other marginalized groups, tolerance was a cause célèbre (albeit seldom mentioning Jews), and the ability to repel savage enemies and to rise up and reinvent oneself despite unspeakable destruction was a frequent plot motif. Moviemakers often transformed into film the tolerance-promoting musicals of the Broadway stage, thus bringing the message of a more pluralistic America to screens in far-flung locales. Like their Broadway originals, these films trumpeted the wrongheadedness of prejudice against persons of African American or Polynesian—but never Jewish—backgrounds. Nevertheless, the transplantations of these messages of tolerance did not always fare well: The arguments of *South Pacific*, for example, so offended racists in the 1950s American South that some sought, unsuccessfully, to pass a law against lyrics promoting “an underlying philosophy inspired by Moscow” that provided “justification of interracial marriage.” The slur about these philosophies emanating from “Moscow” refers, of course, to the Jewishness of the creative artists, the putative socialistic leanings of such Jews, and hence their un-American nature.

Partially because of the combined pressure of the American motion picture codes and the Nazi determination to erase the influence of Jews in Western cultures, the visible presence of Jews in literature, film, and popular culture diminished in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. This virtual invisibility—while Jews were in fact enormously active in the creative and production aspects of all of these—was accomplished through shifts in emphasis, plot, settings, and especially names. Characters in novels, plays, and films frequently started their existence with what sociologists call “distinctive Jewish surnames,” but then those names were replaced with generic American names. Jews in the entertainment industry often changed their own names, or had their names changed by their agents or studios, in an attempt to not have their careers impeded by overt Jewish identity. Playwright and Jewish activist Ben Hecht (1894–1964), author of numerous prize-winning and popular screenplays, wrote in his nonfiction book, *A Guide for the Bedeviled* (1944), his disgust at “the almost complete disappearance of the Jew from American fiction, stage, radio and movies.”

It was not until the Allies were victorious in World War II that overtly Jewish materials began to emerge in films once again. The first films focused on anti-Jewish prejudice and its appalling results: In 1947, both *Gentleman's Agreement* and *Crossfire* spotlighted the irrationality and evils of anti-Semitism, a message Americans seemed ready to hear in the post-World War II years. A very pretty—but nonetheless moving for many—version of the *The Diary of Anne Frank* appeared in 1959. Both the Holocaust drama *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *Exodus*, a pro-Israel film based on Leon Uris's sprawling history of the Jewish experience in the Holocaust and the struggle for a Jewish state, were released in 1960. A grittier, more painful film, Sidney Lumet's (1924– ) *The Pawnbroker* brought the Holocaust and its psychological aftermath to the commercial screen in 1965. Hollywood's suppression of overt Jewishness had come to an end. A new era of open portrayals of Jews and Jewish themes had begun in film, television, and Jewishly particularistic literature as well.

### Jewish Performers in American Culture

Not only writers, musicians, and artists, but also comic and dramatic performers were disproportionately represented by Jews. Few took the path of the prolific, multit talented Molly Picon (1898–1992), who from an early age acted, sang, and danced for decades in Yiddish plays, musicals, and films, and later was also in demand in English-language commercial plays and films. Most performers who could find work on the nonsectarian stage and screen left Jewish venues behind. Some did not bother to change their names, but Paul Muni (1895–1967, Muni Weisenfreund), Judy Holliday (1922–1965, Judith Tuvim), and John Garfield (1913–1952, Jacob Julius Garfinkle) were among the many performers who began in Jewish environments and then went on to careers in the wider world with different, less Jewishly recognizable names. Although the general press ignored their Jewish origins, none of these particular performers downplayed their Jewishness, and Garfield was especially active on behalf of Israel and in diverse Jewish causes, appropriately playing the fearless Jewish soldier Dave Goldman in *Gentleman's Agreement*. Some, like Shelley Winters (1920–2006, Shirley Schrift), at first played generic young women's roles and then depicted older Jewish women as she got older (and as films featuring nagging Jewish mothers increased).

Although 20th-century American comedy was, in fact, a very Jewish influenced field, it followed the familiar pattern of other performance arts: During the immigration years, Jewishness was played for laughs, both within primarily Jewish environments and on the public stage. Jewish vaudeville and Catskill Mountain resorts and comedy shows trained scores of hopefuls who cut their comic teeth with Jewish audiences. Many produced satiric Jewish materials that might well be taken as anti-Semitic, had they not been created by Jews. However, by the middle of the 1930s, with the spillover impact of the motion picture codes and arguably anxiety about Nazis and anti-Semitism, overt Jewishness only seemed safe and appropriate in Jewish environments. With some notable exceptions, such as Gertrude Berg's (1899–1966) radio portrayal of the wise Jewish domestic matriarch Molly Goldberg, which was first aired in 1929 and ran through the American entertainment

industry's Jewless years, most comics who hoped to make a success in broader settings worried about appearing too Jewish, so they changed their names and dropped their Jewish inflections for their American careers. Although stars such as Jack Benny (1894–1974, Benjamin Kubelsky), George Burns (1896–1996, Nathan Birnbaum), Milton Berle (1908–2002, Mendel Berlinger), Eddie Cantor (1892–1964, Israel Iskowitz), Sophie Tucker (1884–1966, Sophie Kalish), Sid Caesar (1922– ), and Danny Kaye (1913–1987, David Daniel Kaminsky) all got their start on vaudeville stages, and some continued to occasionally indulge in insiders' Jewish humor for Jewish audiences, they became famous as American comics, and shaped American comedy. Fanny Brice (1891–1951, Fania Borach) discovered that Jewish accents and humor did not translate into new environments. Beginning in 1937, her radio audiences liked her nonethnic character, "Baby Snooks," much better than they did her Yiddish-accented previous characters. Jack Benny and Milton Berle, in particular, were known for their clean comedy, managing to be both inoffensive and very funny.

Even Groucho (1890–1977), Chico (1887–1961), and Harpo Marx (1888–1964) encoded their Jewishness, with Chico and Harpo taking on ethnic—but not Jewish—characteristics. In film after film, as the zany and clever little Marx Brothers outwitted their tall, wealthy, aristocratic—but stupid—antagonists, Jewish audiences were left to understand the Jewish triumphalist subtext, which was safely invisible to Christian audiences. Similarly, in Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows* (1950–1954), he took on personae of many foreign characters, none of them specifically Jewish. His skits often encoded Jewish materials or perspectives in ways that would only be visible to Jews. In one skit, for example, non-Jewish businessmen all order items such as bacon and raisin and hamhock sandwiches for lunch—unlikely pork-based combinations that reflect what Jews might imagine that non-Jews might eat. Many of these performers, however, perceived a Jewish dimension to their work. Comic actor Jerry Lewis (1926– , Joseph Levitch)—adored by the French for his slapstick visual comedy—saw himself as a comic crusader against villains and bullies.

It was not until the post-World War II years, when Jewishness was tentatively gaining visibility in various media, that particularly Jewish comic voices began to erupt as well. After a few, mostly positive, cinematic and television portrayals of Jews in the late 1940s and 1950s—including the familiar gentle humor of *The Goldbergs*, whose television incarnation aired from 1949 to 1956, and the melodic, earnestly didactic nostalgia of the stage version of *Fiddler on the Roof* in the 1960s—Lenny Bruce (1925–1966, Leonard Schneider) ruptured taboos in extended comic riffs on what defined "Jewish" and "goyish" styles. Peppered with obscenities and wide-ranging ethnic insults (and sometimes fueled by alcohol and drugs), Bruce's comedy—along with transgressive, sexually explicit novels by Henry Miller (1891–1980), Norman Mailer (1923–2007), and Joseph Heller (1923–1999)—transformed the public performance landscape.

Liberated as well by changing social and cultural trends that embraced multiculturalism rather than the melting pot, humorist filmmakers such as Woody Allen (1935– , Allen Stewart Konigsberg) and Mel Brooks (1926– , Melvin Kaminsky), as well as stand-up comics like Alan King (1927–2004, Irwin Alan Kniburg), Jackie

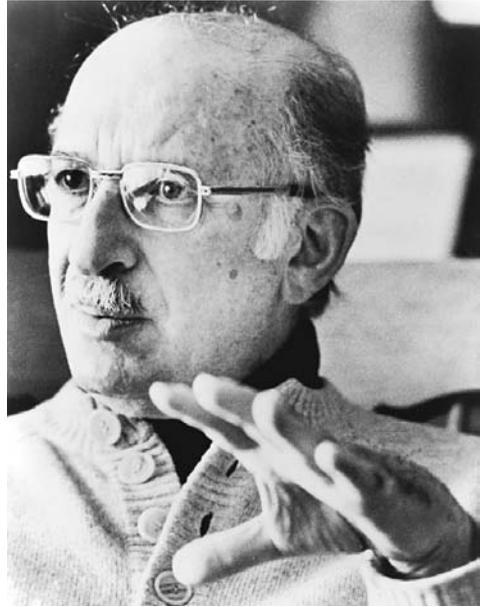
Mason (1931– , Yacov Moshe Moaza), Joan Rivers (1933– , Joan Sandra Molinsky), and others found that overtly (and sometimes abrasive) Jewish humor had become immensely salable, and they began including Jewish materials in their language, plots, and references in their comic routines. Gilda Radner (1946–1989) posed as “The Jewess in Jewish Jeans” in one of many memorable *Saturday Night Live* episodes that featured overtly Jewish humor and artists. They were followed by numerous younger comics who took the inclusion of Jewish references as a given, such as Jerry Seinfeld (1954– ), Larry David (1947– ), and Adam Sandler (1966– ). As a result, Yiddish words and Jewish life-cycle symbols and events became part of the American cultural heritage: television comedy plots featured the search for a mohel, the relationship between baptism and *mikveh*, and the creation of “Jewish” wine (just add a lot of sugar, according to the television comedy *Frasier*). Non-Jewish Americans began to routinely use words like chutzpah (nerve), schlep (drag), schlemiel (unsuccessful person), tchotchke (kitschy bric-a-brac), as well as saltier terms such as *tokhes* (rear end) and *putz* (penis), which had once been limited to Jewish environments. Long before the turn of the 21st century, Jewish comics had helped the cultural boundaries between American Jews and non-Jews to become porous indeed.

### Post–World War II Period: Focusing on Jewish Assimilation into the Bourgeoisie

In real life, repeated waves of Jewish immigrants to the United States had been acculturating enthusiastically virtually from their arrival on American shores. Although the millions of Jews who emigrated between the years of 1881 and 1924 arrived as measurably the poorest of all the European immigrant groups, Jews rose relatively quickly up socioeconomic ladders for several, interrelated reasons: they placed an inordinate emphasis on education; poured whatever earnings they achieved back into their fledgling businesses; and were unusually mobile, moving into increasingly more gentrified neighborhoods as they bettered their fortunes. As the Depression gave way to World War II and the postwar period, large numbers of American Jews had attained middle-class status.

Jewish determination to get ahead as members of the bourgeoisie and sometimes the haute bourgeoisie became the new subjects of American Jewish fiction, plays, and films in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Three American Jewish novelists rose to international fame and for a time seemed to be the primary writers on the American literary scene: Saul Bellow (1915–2005), Bernard Malamud (1914–1986), and Philip Roth (1933– ). Each of these writers, in very different ways, made use of their experiences growing up in Jewish neighborhoods, hearing the sounds of Jewish—and for Bellow Yiddish—conversations, absorbing the rhythms of American Jewish lifestyles. Their fictional works, while wide-ranging, reflected these rhythms. Bellow, an intensely intellectual, sometimes exuberantly humorous writer, was for decades the English-language novelist most widely translated into other languages. His *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* (1970), for example, chronicles the decline of Western civilization in America in the 1960s, tracing that decline all the way back to the French

Jewish American author Bernard Malamud is known for such works as *The Natural* and *The Assistant*. (Library of Congress)



romantic egalitarian ideals, while incorporating wild comic chases into the plot of the novel. Bellow labored in Jewish vineyards as well, coauthoring a much-reprinted translation of Yiddish stories. Malamud's stories often incorporated fantastical elements, magic and spiritualism that foreshadowed the later American fascination with these subjects; he also had a special interest in the relationships between Jews and persons of other racial and cultural backgrounds. One of his finest novels, *The Assistant* (1957), demonstrates his reverence for Jewish suffering because he believes it educates Jewish hearts to be more compassionate. Roth became a bridge figure between the Jewish literary world in the mid-20th century, the transformed Jewish literary scene in the post-1960s era, and the turn of the 21st century. His prolific output of short stories, novels, and essays continually evolved, incorporating new intellectual interests and changing times. Although his writing garnered angry criticism from Jewish and some literary critics, his genius was recognized in numerous prizes, beginning with Best American Short Stories (1956) and the National Book Award (1960), and culminating with a second National Book Award (1995), the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (1997), the Ambassador Book Award of the English-Speaking Union and the National Medal of Arts at the White House (1998), and the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 2002.

American Jewish cultural output—much of it savagely satirical—began to focus directly on Jewish characters, plots, and themes at just the moment when American Jews had become the exemplars of middle class mores. Filmmakers like Paul Mazursky (1930– ) made fun of pretentious middle-class Jews preoccupied by their possessions, devoted to their own self-gratification, and oblivious to the suffering of others or to deeper concerns in life. Portrayals of middle-class Jews were often divided by gender, with Jewish men and Jewish women exhibiting very different

characteristics. In novels and plays by Jerome Weidman (1913–1998) and Canada’s Mordecai Richler (1931–2001), to cite two of many examples, Jewish men are depicted as ruthlessly ambitious, immoral businessmen. Alternative caricatures of Jewish men depicted overly intellectual, fearful, and not very virile hysterics. Both of these stereotypes were common in 19th-century anti-Semitic non-Jewish materials, but in 20th-century American arts those depictions were almost always produced by Jewish artists themselves. Both the Jewish hustler and the wimp were unforgettably brought to the screen in Mel Brooks’s original comedy, *The Producers*, starring comic geniuses Zero Mostel (1915–1977) and Gene Wilder (1933– ). Indeed, the transition from Mostel’s hilarious but not specifically Jewish performance in the musical comedy film *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1966) only two years earlier, to the edgy, transgressive Jewish humor of *The Producers*, marks a shift in cultural paradigms.

Novelist Philip Roth pilloried the vacuousness of the American Jewish yearning for middle-class security, mocking the shallow disdain with which assimilated American Jews regarded more traditional European Jews in his 1959 story, “Eli the Fanatic.” For decades, however, Roth was far better known for his portrayals of Jewish men breaking free from Jewish bourgeois proprieties by embracing Christian women. Roth’s notorious novel, *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1968), suggested that rather than being a “Good, Responsible & Dutiful” Jewish son, the enterprising “Jewboy” could capture the interest of a beautiful “blond-haired Christian,” a woman who was “the legitimate resident and owner of this place.” Roth skewered his generation’s love-hate relationship with the non-Jewish world around them. On one hand, Christianity as a religious faith is described with unrelenting scorn. On the other hand, the absolute acceptance and ease in their world that Christians seem to enjoy seemed utterly appealing: “America is a *shikse* nestling under your arm whispering love love love love love.” The artistic image of the scrawny, anxious Jewish male was most indelibly fixed in 20th-century Western culture through the films of Woody Allen. A voracious consumer of film and literature, and a prolific writer of humorous and sometimes thoughtful explorations on cinematic and literary themes, Allen in the early 1960s played the inept and anxious schlemiel as a stand-up comic. His first comic films included few if any overtly Jewish materials. By the late 1970s, however, Allen’s skill as a satirist of the foibles of Jewish—and non-Jewish—families had been launched with the *Annie Hall* (1977), in which Allen, as neurotic Jew Alvy Singer, travels to Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, to encounter the healthy, bland American family—complete with “Jew-hater” grandmother and sociopath brother.

Portrayals of neurotic Jewish men were almost completely transformed into images of nervous but sweet and responsible men in television programs of the 1980s and 1990s. Created by Jewish male screenwriters, these male characters were almost universally portrayed with adoring Christian romantic partners. Jewish women characters, however, did not fare as well. Together, novelists Herman Wouk (1915– ) and Philip Roth and filmmaker Woody Allen fixed in the public imagination two negative stereotypical images of Jewish women: the overbearing Jewish mother and the spoiled Jewish daughter. In his 1955 novel, *Marjorie Morningstar*,

Wouk introduced readers to the Jewish daughter—the “Shirley”—as the ultimate bourgeois consumer who wants the “big diamond engagement ring, house in a good neighborhood, furniture, children, well-made clothes, furs.” In the hands of other writers and filmmakers, as well as popular culture and jokes, this spoiled and demanding Jewish girl became known as the “Jewish American princess,” the JAP. Across American college campuses, the so-called JAP jokes took on a sometimes vicious life of their own. Roth contributed domineering mother Sophie Portnoy, who shook a bread knife at son Alex to make him eat dinner and followed him to the toilet door demanding a report. Small wonder that Portnoy complained, “A Jewish man with parents alive . . . will remain a fifteen-year old boy until *they die!*” condemning not only his parents, but Jewish religious culture as well, requiring a “kosher and bloodless” existence, “self-control, sobriety, sanctions—this is the key to human life, saith all those endless dietary laws.” Woody Allen developed the Jewish mother’s power even further in “Oedipus Wrecks,” in the 1989 trilogy, *New York Stories*, where a Jewish mother’s pudgy face fills the sky to better control her son’s every move. The Jewish mother stereotype became ubiquitous in American culture, especially in television and film. In the numerous novels, films, and television programs that portrayed Jewish identity as a species of middle-class entitlement, with little attention on the richness of the Jewish cultural heritage, plots often focused on Jewish men saving their independent souls by escaping the clutches of Jewish mothers and daughters.

### After the 1960s: Exploring Jewish Particularism

World events and American social trends came together in the late 1960s and set the stage for a very different tone in Jewish artistic expression. The hegemony of white, Christian, middle-class American culture was disrupted by anti-Vietnam War protests and civil rights activism on behalf of African Americans and other minorities, both of which attracted many Jewish participants. Literature, film, music, television programs like *Roots*, and popular culture began to celebrate the efforts of ethnic minority groups to explore their own cultural heritages. As one wag put it, “When African Americans discovered that ‘Black is beautiful,’ Jews discovered that Jewish is reasonably attractive.” This impulse was dramatically reinforced by Jewish reactions to the 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel moved preemptively to protect itself against Arab armies massed at its border. Fearful of Israel’s vulnerability and joyous at its triumph over enemies, many American Jews developed a new interest in the Holocaust, Jewish history and texts, and Israel. The ethos was open to the work of two writers who helped to create a new Jewish artistic ecology. Spiritually focused Jewish fiction emerged in the 1960s with the translation from French into English of *Night*, a memoir by Transylvanian Jewish author Elie Wiesel (1928– ), whose stories captured the moral imagination of the Western reading world. Also influential were the surprisingly popular novels of Chaim Potok (1929–2002), which sympathetically depicted traditional Judaism in its various shades, from Hasidism to the careful liberalizations of Conservative Jewish scholars. Potok’s two early novels, *The Chosen* (1967) and *The Promise* (1969), brought information about traditional

Jewish beliefs, values, and lifestyles to broad reading audiences, created appetites for more such literature, and convinced publishers that materials of this kind could sell.

In the 1970s and 1980s, American Jewish writers produced a new, inward-turning genre of fiction exploring the individual Jew's connection to the Jewish people; to Jewish religion, culture, and tradition; and to the chain of Jewish history. Although sometimes witty, work by authors such as Cynthia Ozick (1928– ), Arthur Cohen (1928–1986), Mark Helprin (1947– ), Hugh Nissenson (1933– ), Rebecca Goldstein (1950– ), and others wrestled with weighty spiritual matters: Jewish conceptions of faith and redemption in a post-Holocaust world; the conflict between free will and predestination in light of Jewish belief and history; and the notion of the Jewish people as an *am segulah*, a chosen people. Ozick, widely recognized as a public Jewish intellectual, alternated the publication of novels and short story collections with brilliant essays that garnered a more unequivocal response than her fiction. After writing a series of novels, Goldstein eventually returned to her first love, philosophy, publishing an extremely well-received book, *Betraying Spinoza* (2006). Their writing nourished a new generation of young writers—many of them women, and many with intense religious backgrounds and/or interests: Allegra Goodman (1967– ), Naomi Ragen (1949– ), Jonathan Rosen (1963– ), and others have sold large quantities of novels dealing with specifically Jewish topics such as close-knit Orthodox Jews in the Catskill Mountains, the perils of life for women in ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities, and the personal struggles and spiritual life of a young Reform woman rabbi, respectively.

Performance art and films by American Jewish artists reflected this new confidence, daring, and inward glance, exploring nonstereotypical Jewish characters, settings, and plots. Internationally famous singer and filmmaker Barbra Streisand (1942– ) seemed engaged in a singular project of redeeming the cinematic image of Jewish women. In films like *Funny Girl* (1968), *The Way We Were* (1973), *Yentl* (1983), and *Prince of Tides* (1991), Streisand portrayed Jewish women as talented singers and comediennes, loving social activists, religious scholars, and committed healers—rather than the overstuffed mothers and spoiled brats more commonly depicted. Streisand made history by shortening neither her name nor her nose. Likewise, singer, actor, and performance artist Bette Midler (1945– )—acclaimed by fans as “the Divine Diva”—followed Streisand's lead in exhibiting, rather than playing down, her sassy mouth, her comic talents, her enterprise, and her intelligence—in short, her Jewishness.

Among the many carefully crafted and unconventional cinematic pictures of Jews that proliferated, director Joan Micklin Silver (1935– ) released both *Hester Street* (1974), a loving recreation of Cahan's novella, *Yekl*, and the romantic comedy *Crossing Delancey* (1988), which turned feminist platitudes on their heads and slyly recommended that Jewish women look for sweet men who pray in the synagogue. Harvey Fierstein's (1954– ) stunning stage play about a Jewish homosexual yearning to be a loving Jewish parent while earning a living as a drag queen singer, *Torch Song Trilogy*, was made into a powerful film (1988). Sephardic Jews in England—and the struggles of intelligent women without money—were the subjects of a British film, *The Governess* (1998). Orthodox Jews received detailed cinematic scrutiny that

was sometimes flattering, as in Sidney Lumet's *A Stranger Among Us* (1992), and sometimes uncomfortably critical, as in *A Price Above Rubies* (1998).

In an unanticipated development, Philip Roth's writing also took a new turn, and he emerged as one of the great informing talents of intensely Jewish writing. Beginning with his masterpiece, *The Counterlife* (1986), and continuing with *Operation Shylock* (1993) and subsequent novels, Roth moved beyond the sociological story of American assimilation and explored complex, multifaceted, pluralistic Jewish identity in Israel and the Diaspora. In addition, his novels increasingly featured risk-taking forays into postmodernist narrative forms that embody critical theories and ideas, modeling his discussions of Jewish identity into exemplars of literary theory. In *The Counterlife* and *Operation Shylock*, the question, "What defines a contemporary Jew?" is a central theme and a pivotal, critical point upon which each plot turns. Roth pointed the way to a new direction—the reimagining of the Jewish past—in *The Plot Against America*, which imagined what would have happened had America's Nazi sympathizers gained power.

### The New Wave: International Reimagining of the Jewish Past

As the 1990s gave way to a new millennium, Jews around the world encountered disheartening evidence of the ineradicability of anti-Semitism, often thinly disguised as anti-Zionism. As many Jews lost the optimistic belief that the existence of the State of Israel would solve the riddle of anti-Jewish hatred, and as the generation that had lived through and born witness to the Holocaust began to age and die, the role of the Diaspora in Jewish historical experience was reevaluated by writers in settings as diverse as the United States, the former Soviet Union, and Israel. American writers like Jonathan Safran Foer (1977– ) and Gary Shteyngart (1972– ) created postmodern fictive reflections on Jewish life and experience, to enthusiastic, nonsectarian critical response. Russian writers like Grigory Kanovich (1929– ) and others reimagined a Jewish life in European settings that they themselves had never experienced. A number of young writers who had grown up in the homes of Holocaust survivors contributed their own distinctive voices, among them Thane Rosenbaum and Melvin Jules Bukiet. Canadian Jewish writers David Bezmozgis (1973– ) and Pearl Abraham (1961– ) have produced novels about Diaspora travels and dislocations that are widely described as remarkable. The extraordinary Diaspora Jewish contribution to Western culture seems in no danger of abating, and reimaginings of the Jewish past have been characteristic of some young Israeli writers as well. Perhaps a greater convergence will emerge as part of this new chapter in Jewish creativity.

### Selected Bibliography

- Carr, Steven. 2001. *Hollywood and Antisemitism: A Cultural History up to World War II*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Desser, David, and Lester D. Friedman. 1993. *American Jewish Filmmakers: Traditions and Trends*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Gabler, Neal. 1988. *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*. New York: Crown.

- Hoberman, J., and Jeffrey Shandler. 2003. *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, Broadcasting*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Most, Andrea. 2004. *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Whitfield, Stephen. 1999. *In Search of American Jewish Culture*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England.
- Wirth-Nesher, Hana, and Michael P. Kramer, eds. 2003. *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wisse, Ruth. 2000. *The Modern Jewish Canon—A Journey through Language and Culture*. New York: The Free Press.
- Zurawik, David. 2003. *The Jews of Prime Time*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

# Women in the Diaspora

## The Jewish Diaspora and the Role of Women

*Judith R. Baskin*

---

Women, who constitute half of the Jewish people, have played essential roles in ensuring Jewish continuity through their domestic, economic, spiritual, and creative contributions. Their roles in various eras and locations of the Jewish Diaspora have been determined by the attitudes and legal traditions of rabbinic Judaism and the customs and practices of majority cultures.

### Rabbinic Judaism

The rabbinic sages apportioned separate spheres and responsibilities to women and men, locating female activities in the domestic realm, which included economic undertakings. This pattern was already established by late biblical times, as indicated by Proverbs 31:10–31, which describes the domestic, philanthropic, and entrepreneurial activities of the ideal wife. Rabbinic Judaism excluded women from significant participation in public worship, study of religious texts, and community leadership (Baskin 2002, 16–18).

Women who satisfied male expectations in their domestic roles were honored for enhancing the lives of their families and enabling male relatives to fulfill religious obligations. Women also traditionally observed a number of ritual regulations within the home, including preparing and serving food according to the rabbinic dietary laws (*kashruth*) and observing limitations on marital contact during and after the wife's menstrual period (*niddah*; Baskin 2002, 22–29, 70–73).

Rabbinic jurisprudence went beyond biblical precedents in ameliorating some of the difficulties women faced as a consequence of biblical legislation. New protections for women included the formulation of marriage contracts (*ketubbot*), which provided financial support in the event of divorce or widowhood, and permission for woman to petition a rabbinic tribunal to compel her husband to divorce her in specific circumstances. Nevertheless, according to the rabbinic foundations upon which all Diaspora communities rested, men expounded the divine rulings that affected women's lives. Women, the objects of these directives, had no standing to legislate for themselves or others (Baskin 2002, 89–93, 122–124).

### Impact of the Host Culture

Jewish societies in the Diaspora tended to adopt the language and dress of the host society and many of its social attitudes toward women. Certainly the patriarchal culture of rabbinic Judaism that flourished in Sassanian Babylonia conformed in

great part to wider Middle Eastern norms restricting women to domestic tasks and limiting their presence from centers of communal authority and prestige.

However, the Greek-speaking Diaspora of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds allowed some independent women significant communal participation. Although most Jewish women in this milieu lived their lives in the relative seclusion of the home, examinations of funerary and other inscriptions in Greek and Latin from the first century BCE to the sixth century CE describe women as “head of the synagogue,” “leader,” “elder,” “mother of the synagogue,” and “priestess,” indicating that some Jewish women assumed positions of leadership in the synagogue in these Diaspora communities (Brooten 1982). Some of these women may have been widows or otherwise independent, as they are rarely mentioned in conjunction with a male relative. Similarly, Philo of Alexandria (first century CE) relates that a small number of upper-class, well-educated Jewish women joined the contemplative monastic Therapeutic community, which was located outside Alexandria, Egypt (Kraemer 1992, 113–115, 123).

In the Muslim world of the Middle Ages, expectations for Jewish women were strongly influenced by Islamic norms. Although Jewish women of prosperous families were not literally isolated in women’s quarters, as were Muslim women of comparable social status, Jewish religious and community ideals dictated that women should remain at home as much as possible (Goitein 1978, 153–155). Polygyny was a feature not only of biblical and rabbinic practice but also of Muslim society; not surprisingly, many Jewish men in Muslim environments appear to have had more than one wife. Polygyny remained a feature of Jewish life in the Muslim world well into the 20th century.

In medieval and early modern Christian Europe, on the other hand, monogamy was the rule and women, as a group, were far more visible in daily social, economic, and religious life. An 11th-century takkanah (rabbinic amendment) forbidding polygyny for Jews in Christian countries is attributed to Rabbi Gershom ben Judah (ca. 960–1028). He is also credited with the pronouncement that no woman could be divorced against her will (Grossman 2004, 77–78). The high status of Jewish women in this Diaspora community is also indicated by their large dowries. In France and Germany between 1100 and 1500, Jewish women played a vital and often autonomous part in their family’s economic lives as merchants and money lenders. Surviving records indicate that women were responsible for one-third to one-half of all loans in northern France in the 13th and 14th centuries and in German and Austrian communities between 1350 and 1500. Because of their high tax contributions, some of these businesswomen gained administrative power as tax collectors and were elected officers in their Jewish community administrative council (*kehillah*), a most unusual honor for a woman and evidence of the power they had attained through their economic success.

Another indication of women’s economic influence in medieval and early modern Europe (Ashkenaz) was their voluntary assumption of religious practices from which they were exempt in rabbinic Judaism. Some rabbis permitted women to perform and to recite blessings over time-bound positive precepts, such as putting on tefillin (phylacteries); to count in the quorum of 10 people required to recite the



(d.1786), the founder of Haskalah in Central Europe, and others of his circle, expressed opposition to arranged marriages and advocated love matches. Haskalah also led to religious transformations that enhanced women's position and status. Reform Judaism emphasized equal religious education for girls and boys, including the introduction of a confirmation ceremony for young people of both sexes (bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah). Worship in the vernacular and the introduction of mixed seating in North America also made Reform Judaism attractive to many women (Kaplan 1991, 66–68).

However, acculturation differed for women and men in Central and Western Europe in the 19th and early 20th century. Confined to the domestic scene, restricted in their educational opportunities, and prevented from participating in the public realms of economic and civic life, most Jewish women had few contacts with the non-Jewish world. Rather, they were encouraged to cultivate a home-based Judaism in which spirituality was expressed in domestic activities. Emulation of Christian models of female philanthropy and religious activism inspired middle-class Jewish women to establish service and social welfare organizations in Germany, England, and North America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These included the Jüdischer Frauenbund in Germany (1904), the Union of Jewish Women in Great Britain (1902), the National Council of Jewish Women in the United States (1893), the Zionist organization Hadassah (1912), and synagogue sisterhoods (Kaplan 1991, 211–219; Hyman 1995, 40–41). Women also played important roles in founding and raising funds for religious schools, hospitals, and homes for the needy and aged.

Women were frequently in the forefront of the East European Haskalah movement of the late 19th century. Perhaps because girls and women in Eastern European Jewish society were already secularized by their active participation in public economic life, women became active in a wide range of political movements, including Zionism and the socialist Bund. These organizations offered women opportunities for activism and leadership unavailable in traditional Jewish society (Hyman 1995, 71–81). In this era of expanded female possibilities, some Jewish women began to pursue training in the professions or aspired to lives in the arts.

The ordination of women as rabbis, beginning in the 1970s, was also affected by larger cultural attitudes. Female rabbinical ordination was first seriously considered in late 19th-century Germany and the United States as a natural result of Reform Judaism's insistence on the equality of men and women. This discussion was part of a larger social debate as women began to gain access to higher education and other learned professions. However, it took the impact of the second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s on American Reform Judaism to finally open doors for women to the Rabbinate in a sustained and institutionalized way (Nadell 1998).

At the beginning of the 21st century, Jewish women in the Diaspora are a highly educated, professionalized group who are also successful and visible in creative endeavors. Actively Jewish, women constitute a majority of rabbinic students and congregational cantors outside the Orthodox community and are among the most active creators of new Jewish rituals, liturgy, and theology (Baskin 2004, 395–399).

### Selected Bibliography

- Baskin, Judith R. 2002. *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis/University Press of New England.
- Baskin, Judith R. 2004. "The Changing Role of the Woman." In *Modern Judaism: An Oxford Guide*, edited by Nicholas de Lange and Miri Freud-Kandel, 389–400. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Brooten, Bernadette. 1982. *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press.
- Goitein, Shlomo D. 1978. *The Family. A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Genizah*. Vol. 3. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grossman, Avraham. 2004. *Pious and Rebellious: Jewish Women in Medieval Europe*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.
- Hertz, Deborah. 1988. *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hyman, Paula E. 1995. *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Kaplan, Marion. 1991. *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kraemer, Ross S. 1992. *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Melammed, Renée L. 1998. "Sefardi Women in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods." In *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, 2nd ed., edited by Judith R. Baskin, 115–134. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Nadell, Pamela S. 1998. *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889–1985*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Weissler, Chava. 1998. *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women*. Boston: Beacon Press.

## Sephardi Women, Marriage, and Family: 16th–17th Centuries

*Ruth Lamdan*

---

After the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain (1492) and the hardships endured in its wake, Jewish society underwent unprecedented demographic, social, economic, and cultural transformations. Within a few decades, most of the exiles reached the Ottoman Empire, which was then at the peak of its power. Its provinces included communities in Asia, Anatolia, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and, from 1517, the Middle East: Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia. The Ottoman Empire opened its gates to the exiles almost unconditionally; Spanish and Portuguese exiles, as well as Jews from North Africa, Italy, and Central Europe (Ashkenazi), settled in these locations, joining the existing local Jewish congregations: the *Romanioths* in the Greek-speaking lands of the empire, and the *Must'arabs* in the Arabic-speaking

lands. Forced to reorganize institutionally, culturally, and socially, the newcomers gradually adapted not only to foreign customs but also to life within a Muslim society, where they were a tolerated minority (*dhimmis*).

The demographic upheaval gave rise to various Halachic (legal) and personal problems, many of which pertained to family and women's life: many Sephardi (Iberian) families were torn apart; children were taken away by force, died of hunger and illnesses, or were lost in the traumatic events. Questions concerning levirate marriage and divorce (*yibbum* and *halitzah*) became highly pertinent, especially when the husband's brother or brothers remained in Spain. Problems arose in cases where husbands disappeared without a trace, leaving their wives deserted (*agunot*), or when one spouse preferred to remain in Iberia. Societal conventions were broken, and fathers, dispossessed of all material assets, lost their traditional authority. Many inheritance-related questions were also brought to court. Rabbinical authorities and community leaders were forced to act flexibly and intelligently to preserve an organized sense of family life. During the first one or two decades of uncertainty, they still hoped for their converted brethren to leave Spain and Portugal and rejoin their Jewish families and were therefore reluctant to retroactively annul marriages and family ties. But as it became clear that this happened very rarely, the sages set about finding legal solutions for women whose marital status was not clear and could not remarry. They were also forced to consider the somewhat permissive spirit of the time, when women who were separated from their families, and, longing to rebuild their lives, remarried impetuously, or allowed themselves a freedom that would have been impossible under ordinary circumstances. They tried to prevent hastily arranged marriages, unsanctioned by the families and not preceded by an inquiry into the economic background and personal status of the groom (such as the possible existence of another wife or brother abroad). To protect women from charlatans who would take advantage of their loneliness and distress, only to desert them later, various marriage regulations were introduced in almost all Jewish communities. One of them strictly prohibited ceremonies of betrothal (*qidushin*) or marriage (*nisuin*) without the presence of at least 10 witnesses, including a rabbi or a community leader. This regulation served also as a safeguard—though not always brought to test—in cases of marriages contracted treacherously, in jest, or in a state of inebriation.

In post-Expulsion days, Jewish society, basically urban and living in overcrowded neighborhoods, had become considerably heterogeneous. The notion of the family institute as an instrument for continuing the Jewish people was firmly established. Both Iberian and non-Sephardi Jews were anxious to stabilize family life and return to the old traditions of prearranged engagements and marriage agreements, where economic and social considerations were predominant. Because intermarriages were quite common, they had to resolve Halachic differences by learning to comply with the diverging customs of the spouse. There were extensive connections between the Jewish centers in the Ottoman Empire, especially between Salonica—with a majority of Iberian Jews—and Istanbul—with a majority of Romaniot Jews. Both centers were marked by their large number of Jewish congregations and their eminent scholars and rabbinical authorities. In both centers, the

Jews enjoyed a period of affluence and prosperity in the 16th century. There was considerable cooperation, exchange of information, and mutual appreciation among scholars. One of the first problems they agreed to resolve concerned marriage gifts (*sivlonot*): in Istanbul, if a bride-to-be accepted any present from her betrothed groom, directly or through an agent, it was as legally binding as a wedding ceremony (*kidushin*), and she had to receive a bill of divorcement or she could not marry another man. This gave way to financial exploitation in cases when, for one reason or another, the betrothal had to be canceled. In Salonica, however, the exchange of gifts had no such severe implications. The numerous debates surrounding this issue were concluded with an understanding according to which, in all matters concerning *sivlonot* and *kidushin*, the rabbinical authorities were to follow the custom of the bride's district.

As the principle aim of marriage was to carry on the familial and national lineage, high expectations were imposed upon young newlyweds, especially of Sephardic origin. The woman was expected to conceive as soon as possible, and when she became pregnant she received prayers, blessings, and amulets wishing her easy delivery and, with no exception, a healthy male offspring. Jewish society expressed its preference for boys over girls in many contemporary sayings and folklore songs, and the birth of a male child was celebrated with great rejoicing. It had significant implications not only for the future of the family and the status of the mother, but also in legislation concerning the father's rights of inheriting his wife's fortune in case she predeceased him. A female child, on the other hand, was a cause of worry for her chastity and dowry expenses, and thus, the family's joy upon birth was very much restrained. Breast-feeding—by the mother or, in some wealthier families, by a wet nurse—was common for about two years. Usually girls received no formal education and were expected to learn only the Jewish laws that pertain to women. They were prepared for the role of a housewife by participating in household chores, joining the mother and other female relatives in cooking, needlework, and other women's tasks. Boys—regardless of socioeconomic status—started their regular education around the age of five, usually at a preliminary school (Talmud Torah) operated by the congregation to which the family belonged. There they learned the canonical Jewish sacred and Halachic literature. The father or grandfather was the dominant figures in a boy's life, as it was assumed boys should not spend too much time in female company. They then continued learning until the age of 13 or 14, when, according to their talents, it was decided whether they would join the father's profession, learn a craft, or go on to a yeshiva for higher studies to become a professional scholar.

Normally, the marrying off of a young couple involved intensive negotiations between the families. Virginity was a mandatory condition for the bride, as was a trade or scholar position for the groom. Moreover, social considerations were unavoidable in these negotiations. The financial arrangements were especially crucial: the dowry and its components, the gifts, and the couple's means of livelihood had to be previously contracted. Various other conditions were also stipulated in the prenuptial agreement to ensure the well-being of the bride and the rights of the family. A son's or a daughter's refusal to go through with the match was very rare,

and the more affluent and respectable a family was, the less say the children had in choosing a spouse. In line with the parents' intention to secure the economic future and well-being of their children and to preserve the family name, they tended to arrange marriages within the family and at a very early age. Girls were often married to their uncles on their father's side, or to their cousins, in order to secure the family's capital and in the hope that their kin would take good care of them. Minor girls were betrothed by their fathers (by *kidushin*, a legally binding commitment) even before they came of age, and usually began living with their husbands—occasionally much older than them—at the age of puberty. Boys were first married between the ages of 15 and 18. Betrothal and wedding parties, the most important days in a girl's life, were joyous and crowded events, both in Sephardi and Romaniot congregations. As most young couples began their marital life in the household of one of their parents (usually that of the husband) they were typically subject to constant meddling in their affairs from their elders. This had significant consequences, especially on the self-confidence of the young bride. A measure of independence could be attained only after the couple had children of their own, left the parent's house, and secured independent income.

This was not the case in second marriages of older couples, where both sides had greater experience, and the wife—being a widow or a divorcee—had already come into an amount of money or some property of her own and could thus set her own conditions. As a rule, multiple marriages were very common. Being a divorcee was not considered a hindrance in Jewish society, and widows as well as divorcees were anxious to remarry.

The pragmatic premarital arrangements surely did not presuppose romantic love as a priority. However, the many examples of partnership and appreciation between husbands and wives show that most couples led a harmonious life and shared mutual interests, respect, and love. Although Jewish legal sources (the Responsa literature), by their nature, intensify marital and family disputes and induce the exceptional rather than the normative, they also give surprising insights into the happier aspects of married life: couples who loved and trusted one another drew up property settlements in their lifetime, using technical loopholes so that the wife could inherit her husband, wives were appointed guardians of their husbands' property and children, and gifts were bestowed upon beloved wives and were formalized by legal deeds. All this caused considerable anxiety to potential heirs, who appealed to courts of law to cancel such wills and other legal prearrangements. As for marital conflicts, these are manifest in recorded disputes concerning petitions for divorce. Husbands referred mainly to the wife's infertility, illness, and/or her inability to minister to their needs and look after the household. Women's demands for divorce referred mainly to the husband's violation of his commitment to remain monogamous, impotency, violence, neglect or desertion, and the Halachic claim of *mi'us* (repulsion), which was always accepted when made by the husband, but not when raised by the wife. In Jewish law, a man's status in divorce cases is superior to that of his wife (see Mishnah, Yevamot, 14,1; T. Bavli, Gittin, 49b), so most petitions by men for divorce were granted, and—in spite of communal regulations and prenuptial stipulations—whenever women refused to accept a divorce, they either lost

their right to alimony, or their husbands were permitted to marry a second wife. Because a woman's motives for divorce were always treated with suspicion by the rabbis, men were never coerced to grant a bill of divorcement, though in some cases they were urged to do so.

Polygamy was fairly common in the 16th-century Levant because, notwithstanding previous conditions and bans, a husband—even an Ashkenazi—had the Halachic right to divorce his barren wife or to marry another if he so preferred. Having female slaves and servants in upper- and middle-class households was also a regular phenomenon, and sometimes they served as bedmates to their masters. Some women were strong enough to contest a rival female in the house and demand a divorce, separate quarters, or the dismissal of the servant. Some did not hesitate to apply to Gentile courts of law in marital matters. The majority, however, faced with a *fait accompli* and having no relatives or rabbis to support them, had to accept the situation.

It is difficult to evaluate the average family size in the 16th-century Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, a nuclear family is generally assumed to consist of five members, children included. Official registers, when they exist, relate to households, not to individuals. A high rate of infant mortality, caused by epidemics, cramped living quarters, and poor sanitary conditions, was somehow counterbalanced by the fact that many families, especially in the eastern lands of the Empire, were polygamous and possibly had more than three children. As a result of the continuing inflow of immigrants from Europe into the Ottoman Empire, Jewish neighborhoods were characterized by multistory buildings and a high population density. Privacy, by modern standards, was very rare. An entire family living in one room was nothing out of the ordinary. Prying neighbors were witnesses to any deviation from moral norms.

Because families lived in close quarters, intensive relations were maintained even among distant relatives in the extended family. Many marriage contracts (*ketubah*) stipulated that a couple would reside near the bride's family. Families who lived in different locations often formed not only marriage connections but also a network of common business and commercial relations. In a considerable number of cases the wife represented her husband in commercial deals, acting on his behalf when he went away on business or personal trips. In wool-industry centers such as Salonica, the Balkans, and Safed, women were partners to their husbands and specialized in crafts connected with this industry or in trade. In spite of various restrictions that required Jewish women to observe utmost chastity, in reality they were present in open markets and stores, and their involvement in the financial and commercial life of Jewish communities all around the Ottoman Empire was impressive—much higher than their Muslim counterparts.

### Selected Bibliography

- Lamdan, Ruth. 1996. "Child Marriage in Jewish Society in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Sixteenth Century." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 11 (1): 37–59.
- Lamdan, Ruth. 1998. "The Mercies of the Court: Jewish Women Seeking Divorce in Sixteenth Century Palestine, Syria and Egypt." *Nashim* 1: 51–69.

- Lamdan, Ruth. 2000. *A Separate People: Jewish Women in Palestine, Syria and Egypt in the 16th Century*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Lamdan, Ruth. 2005. "Communal Regulations as a Source for Jewish Women's Live in the Ottoman Empire." *The Muslim World* 95 (2): 249–263.
- Levi, Avigdor, ed. 1994. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press.
- Lewis, Bernard. 1984. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rozen, Minna. 1996. "The Life Cycle and the Significance of Old Age during the Ottoman Period." In *Daniel Carpi Jubilee Volume*, edited by Dina Porat, Anita Shapira, and Minna Rozen, 109–175. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University.
- Rozen, Minna. 1998. "Public Space and Private Space among the Jews of Istanbul in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *Turcica* 30: 331–345.
- Rozen, Minna. 2002. *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul, The Formative Years (1453–1566)*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Shmuelevitz, Arie. 1984. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Yuhasz, Esther, ed. 1990. *The Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire*. Jerusalem: The Israel Museum.

## Jewish Women in Central Europe: 19th–20th Centuries

*Dieter J. Hecht*

---

The lives of Jewish women reflect many of the political, economic, and religious transformations since the late 18th century in Central Europe (Germany and the Habsburg Empire). Jewish women shared the disadvantages of their sex and their people. The emancipation process of women (in general) and of Jews showed many similarities. Both were seen as second-class citizens. For Jews, the political emancipation led to changes in residence and occupation patterns, the educational system, and religious practice during the 19th century. Jewish women participated in these changes as Jews and benefited from them. As women, they enjoyed equal rights only in the 20th century. Jewish women contributed on various levels to Jewish and non-Jewish society. Along with Jewish men, they adopted bourgeois culture and became more acculturated; their religious attitudes diversified, stretching from Orthodox to secular. Some women even converted and intermarried. The many different ways in which these changes took place account for the enormous diversity of Jewish life. Jewish women entered European society but did not merge with it. Alongside the integration process, anti-Semitism continued to spread, varying only in intensity in the different parts of central Europe. At the end of World War I, Jewish women were confronted with another massive wave of anti-Semitism and pogroms; anti-Semitism culminated with the rise of national-socialism in Germany and the Shoah. In May 1945, after the liberation from national-socialism, Jewish communities were reconstructed, and Jewish women played a crucial role in this process. In political terms, most of Central Europe, except Austria and West

Germany, belonged to the communist eastern bloc until 1989. Under communist rule, Jewish activities were very limited. Only after 1989 was Jewish life fully restored in these countries.

In spite of the political and socioeconomic diversity of Jewish life in Central Europe, the main changes in the lives of Jewish women will be exemplified by three topics: education, family, and women's organizations. Within traditional Jewish society, the education of boys had priority for religious purposes. The education of girls was considered less important. In modern society, formal education constitutes the basis for participation in society. Therefore, most Jewish girls went to non-Jewish schools. However, the first Jewish girls' school was founded in Prague, in 1784, only two years after a public school was founded for Jewish boys. Until the first decades of the 19th century, state-run Jewish girls' schools spread over most parts of the Habsburg Empire and Germany. Besides the public schools, private girls' schools—Jewish and non-Jewish—opened during the 19th and 20th century. For example, Sarah Schnirer (1883–1935) founded the religious Beth Jacob School in Krakow, in 1917. The main focuses of Jewish and non-Jewish girls' schools were languages, music, and industrial training. In contrast, boys were sent to a yeshiva or gymnasium; the latter was the precondition for university studies. Higher education for girls was limited. Because of women's emancipation, by the end of the 19th century, an increasing number of young women attended a gymnasium for girls or wanted to study at universities. Jewish girls were overrepresented at institutions for higher education. These women came mostly from a bourgeois family background. The universities opened their gates very hesitatingly to women. Only after World War I were women successful in all fields. Jewish women belonged to the pioneers of higher education for women. The first woman to get her doctorate at the University



Elise Richter was a philologist of Viennese birth. She was the first woman to receive a doctorate at the University of Vienna, in 1901, and the first woman to receive a coveted teaching position there, in 1921. (Elga Kern, *Führende Frauen Europas*, 1928)

of Vienna, in 1901, and a *venia legendi* (teaching position), in 1921, was Elise Richter (1865–1943), who later died in Theresienstadt.

With a higher formal education Jewish women could establish themselves in prestigious occupations like teaching, medicine, or journalism. But most Jewish women found work in factories and small handcraft shops and as shop assistants. Concurrently with new occupational opportunities, Jewish women participated in language shifts. Until the 18th century, Yiddish was their common language at home. In the 19th century, German became the lingua franca and Yiddish flourished mainly in the eastern parts of the Habsburg Empire. Toward the end of the 19th century, territorial national languages like Hungarian, Polish, or Czech gradually replaced German and Yiddish. Changes in occupational and language patterns were connected to transformations in family structures, religious traditions, and the position of women. The traditional task of Jewish women was taking care of the family and earning a livelihood, while their husbands studied in the yeshiva. The bourgeois family concept of the 19th century limited the lives of Jewish and non-Jewish women to the private sphere, that is, around marriage and family. The public sphere was reserved for men. Theoretically, this concept applied even to working-class Jewish society. In practice, Jewish working-class women always had to work and to take care of their families. As a result of the women's rights movement, a new type of Jewish women appeared: a working woman independent of family obligations. However, Jewish women constantly had to struggle against discrimination as women and as Jews. Because the borders between Jewish and non-Jewish society were blurred from the Enlightenment onward, some Jewish women opted for intermarriage and conversion as a way of life.

Changes in religious traditions and socioeconomic transformations within general society enabled Jewish women to enter the public sphere. At first, only wealthy women like Fanny von Arnstein (1757–1818) in Vienna and Amalie Beer (1767–1854) in Berlin succeeded with their salons to attract Jewish and non-Jewish society as well as to promote Jewish affairs. In the second half of the 19th century, Jewish women from different social background followed their example. The main entry key for women into the public sphere was social welfare, because it was seen as compatible with family tasks. Jewish women engaged in Jewish and non-Jewish organizations and participated in various movements. One of the most influential organizations was the Jüdische Frauenbund (JFB) in Germany, founded by Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936) in 1904. The JFB served Jewish women as a platform for Jewish and general interests, for example, education for Jewish girls and orphans, the fight against anti-Semitism, suffrage for women, and the fight against white slavery. In the 1930s, the JFB had more than 50,000 members. As individuals, Jewish women played an important role in national and international organizations, too, including Rosika Schwimmer (1877–1948), who was one of the leading feminists in Budapest before World War I, and a leading member of the International League for Peace and Freedom. Nevertheless, most Jewish women were organized in social welfare organizations connected to their local synagogue.

A major challenge for Jewish women's activities in the Diaspora was the foundation of the political Zionist movement by Theodor Herzl. Right from the beginning,

it became highly attractive for women, because of its ideology of equality between the sexes. In 1898, the Zionist organization was the first national movement granted general franchise for women. In practice, however, women held only subordinated positions within Zionist organizations. Therefore, a special women's organization was needed to promote women's affairs, and in 1920, the WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organization) was founded in London. The main activities of WIZO were vocational training for and education of women, with special emphasis on agricultural pioneering, as well as care and education of children. In Central Europe, most Zionist women engaged in WIZO, less in other Zionist women's organizations like Mizrachi and Hadassah. During the Shoah, Jewish women's organizations were destroyed and most of their members murdered. Since the end of World War II, Jewish women's organizations were reestablished only gradually in Central Europe. A revival of Jewish women's activities can be seen after the emigration of Jews from Russia to Germany and Austria from the 1970s onward, and especially since the end of the communist regimes in the former eastern bloc in 1989. At the end of the 20th century, Jewish women held leading positions in Jewish and non-Jewish organizations.

### Selected Bibliography

- Berkowitz, Michael. 1995. "Transcending 'Tzimmes and Sweetness': Recovering the History of Zionist Women in Central and Western Europe 1897–1933." In *Active Voices: Women in Jewish Culture*, edited by Maurice Sacks, 41–62. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Freidenreich Pass, Harriet. 2002. *Jewish, Educated: The Lives of Central European University Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hertz, Deborah. 1988. *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hyman, Paula. 1995. *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Iggers, Wilma. 1995. *Women of Prague: Ethnic Diversity and Social Change from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books.
- Kaplan, Marion. 1979. *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany: The Campaigns of the Jüdischer Frauenbund 1904–1938*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Kaplan, Marion. 1991. *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class—Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rozenblit, Marsha. 2001. *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Wenger, Beth. 1990. "Radical Politics in a Reactionary Age: The Unmaking of Rosika Schwimmer, 1914–1930." *Journal of Women's History* 2: 66–99.

## Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany (1871–1918)

*Marion Kaplan*

---

Jewish women exerted a powerful influence on German-Jewish identity, serving as agents of modernization and tradition. They stood between two worlds, mixing contemporary German bourgeois practice and their Jewish heritage. They provided a balance between integration into the German majority and maintenance of Jewish identity.

While Jewish men entered the worlds of business and politics, Jewish women were central to the *Bildung*—the education and cultivation—of their families. *Bildung* had a twofold purpose: it served not only as Jews' entrée into cultured German bourgeois society, but it also became synonymous for many Jews with their Jewishness. A comfortable family life nurtured not only their integration but also more traditional religious attitudes and institutions.

The period between 1870 and 1918 was, for the great majority of German Jews, one of upward economic mobility and urbanization. The changes produced by an industrializing society affected family life. Women's work changed from helpmate to housewife, mother, and cultural connoisseur. In these roles, women allowed German bourgeois modes to penetrate familial relationships as well as their decor, and encouraged the display of Jewish acculturation. However, even as women helped prepare the family for the world by acculturating to bourgeois Protestant culture, they also maintained familial and Jewish traditions.

Women played a role in designing the tone and style, the way of life, and the identity of the bourgeoisie. Not only exemplary family lives but also cleanliness and orderliness were paramount virtues. These model homemakers decorated, polished, and ordered their homes incessantly. They also had other duties to fulfill in their endless campaign against dirt and disorder. They were the shapers and guardians of respectability in a group striving to be accepted by a Gentile, frequently anti-Semitic, bourgeoisie.

In addition, as mothers, Jewish women trained a Jewish bourgeoisie every bit as gendered and stylized as its Gentile counterpart. Traditionally kept from religious learning, women had acquainted themselves with secular culture. Their education, and the appreciation of German culture that they shared with their offspring, enhanced their family's status as much as their heavy furniture and tasteful salons. Further, the Jewish middle class, dependent on intellectual rather than manual skills, inculcated values of responsibility, dependability, and trustworthiness in its children. These children would likely live by their wits and temperament. Therefore, character formation and moral education were essential goals of good parenting (as well as signs of *Bildung*).

Jews had special issues to confront on their climb into the bourgeoisie. Convinced that their emancipation had been earned by their appreciation of German culture and etiquette, they continued to link the improvement of their status to

their own self-betterment, and believed it necessary to exhibit these ideas and behaviors in the family. Education and gentility, associated with quiet comportment, was a must. Gentility signified class to bourgeois Germans. To Jews, whose only entry into Germanness was through its bourgeoisie, gentility denoted class *and* Germanness.

Bourgeois Jewish women encouraged their children to enjoy the attributes of a cultured and physically active life. Women transmitted German (and other European) folk and fairy tales and literature. Many read the German classics aloud, adopting Schiller, Goethe, and Lessing for their general renown, and because they symbolized an Enlightenment tradition and *Bildung*. Women also subscribed to newspapers and periodicals, probably as much for the fashion and style they endorsed as for the news they conveyed. Furthermore, to play an instrument and have an appreciation for music in general were essential attributes of a bourgeois child's education, for which the mother was not only responsible, but often an active contributor.

Mothers promoted healthy bodies as well as minds. German Jews made walks and weekend hikes (replete with reminders about posture and demeanor) part of their repertoire. In addition, mothers saw to it that children took part in sporting and other activities, including swimming, ice skating, tennis, biking, and gymnastics. Jewish families may have been influenced by a general, growing emphasis on health and nationalism, but they also tried to counter the pale, unhealthy ghetto image that anti-Semites foisted upon them. In Imperial Germany, where health was equated with patriotism, Jews strained every muscle to achieve standards set by their society.

Although physical and educational activities dominated children's time, bourgeois respectability in its feminine and masculine varieties were omnipresent requirements. Mothers had to restrain their children from behavior attributed to Jewish children by anti-Semites. The latter depicted Eastern European Jewish children, but by implication all Jewish children, as noisy, dirty, undisciplined, and unmannerly—*ungebildet*, in other words. It is no wonder that in asserting their claim to German culture, Jews enforced “a modulation of tone, a lowering of the decibel level” upon themselves and their children.

As busily as women molded the bourgeois home and family, they also shaped a milieu that reinforced traditional religious sentiments. Jewish observance, more than that of other religions, took place in the home, in a familial setting. Here women impressed their offspring as much with their feelings about their religion and heritage as with their observance of religious forms. The informal transmission of Jewish practice—affective, ethnic, private, and personal, including foods, family, and hearth—was women's domain. Especially in rural areas, Jews—and particularly women—were conscious of the Jewish calendar and the tradition of certain rituals and foods on these days. In cities, too, all but a minority of families attempted to commemorate the major holidays, if only by a family reunion and traditional meal.

In fact, for many Jews, religion and family were one totality. For them, family provided the meaning religion once had. The family became the cornerstone of a more secular version of Judaism, visible testimony to the “embourgeoisement of

Jewish piety.” And, even as the family functioned to uphold religious traditions, religion functioned to affirm family connectedness. One woman wrote of the 1880s in Berlin: “Besides the ceremony of Friday nights there was a strict rule of family togetherness.” Just as families gathered to celebrate the holidays and Sabbath, these occasions also served to reaffirm the family.

Whether Jews maintained such rituals as a result of real spirituality, family traditions, communal custom, or a feeling of solidarity with other Jews is difficult to determine. Whatever the cause, participation in the updated rituals of their parents indicates their Jewish group identity. Furthermore, in the case of women, it was in some ways easier to consider oneself observant than in the case of men. They experienced less dissonance between religious practice and their daily routine. Moreover, because Judaism excluded women from many Jewish rituals, they had fewer positive commandments to fulfill. Obviously, there were women who gradually dropped the observance of most ritual, particularly second-generation urbanites. Nevertheless, the predominant role of the Jewish woman as housewife and mother provided both a richer sphere of activity and a more constricting boundary for women than for men, inhibiting the former more than the latter in assimilatory behavior. Conversion and intermarriage statistics consistently show Jewish men to have been the group far more prone to cut all ties with Judaism.

Jewish women remained enclosed in a small circle of Jewish friends and family. They took responsibility for family networks; for the care of grandparents and orphans; in short, for the moral and material support, the continuity and organization, of an often geographically dispersed family system. Naturally, small-town life helped maintain family connections, but even when heightened mobility tore these ties asunder, women in particular traveled to relatives for vacation, to help out, or to meet prospective marriage partners. Whereas boys left home for an apprenticeship or the university, girls left, temporarily, to maintain family connections.

The family circle provided a buffer between Jews and an often unfriendly society as well as an extra level of communality and sociability. As such, it insulated against complete assimilation. The predominant role of women in the home and family meant that Jewish women had less access to Gentile environments and less opportunity to meet non-Jews than Jewish men. While other factors played their parts in shaping women’s religious and ethnic identification in each era, it may be suggested that society reinforced women’s familial preoccupations, giving them the unique potential to maintain Jewish traditions.

In this period of social mobility, the role of women was essential to the creation of a German-Jewish bourgeoisie. Women transformed the home into the model German bourgeois household, contributing to the social position of Jews and to their sense of class and, hence, Germanness. A good *Haushalt* equaled a good “house” and, more importantly, a respectable middle-class family. Women passed on that side of *Bildung*, centered on character formation and moral education, which German Jews integrated into their understanding of the spirit of their Germanness *and* their Jewishness.

Coupling faith with domesticity, women helped their families acculturate while many continued to perform the rituals, cook special Jewish dishes, and think and

act in terms of Jewish life cycles, family and community networks, and the Jewish calendar. In the midst of a successful push toward acculturation, theirs was a holding action, as much to maintain tradition as to hold family and community together. As time went on, it was precisely the family and the community—including extended kin, friendship, charity, and cultural networks—rather than the strict observance of religious customs, which provided vehicles for Jewish identity in Germany.

### Selected Bibliography

- Aschheim, Steven. 1982. *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Kaplan, Marion. 1991. *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kaplan, Marion, ed. 2005. *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618–1945*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Meyer Loevinson, Johanna. 1947–1948. Unpublished Memoir. New York: Leo Baeck Institute.

## Jewish Women in Yemen

*Yael Katzir*

---

Jews had lived in Yemen, the mountainous, fundamentalist Muslim country located in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, for at least 1,700 years until their immigration to Israel in 1948. They were isolated for a thousand years from the rest of world Jewry. Most Yemenite Jews were rural, scattered within the Muslim population in hundreds of small villages throughout the Yemen highlands. However, part of the Yemenite Jewish population lived in towns.

### The World of Yemenite Jewish Men

A brief account of the world of Yemenite Jewish men is essential in order to understand the world of their women. Yemenite Jewish men were artisans who monopolized certain economic niches in Yemenite economy, such as silversmithing, coin minting, weaving, tailoring, and shoemaking, vocations that Muslims considered polluting. Men were also traders, moving around villages to sell their family products and, meanwhile, forming socioeconomic networks outside their kin group.

Yemenite Jewry transmitted all property, vocational skills, and formal Jewish religious tradition solely to the males. Yemenite Jews lived in patriarchal extended family households of three generations or more. Household male heads had absolute authority over their wives and children, including their married sons and their families.

All Yemenite Jewish men could read in Hebrew (although often they could not write). Men were “walking books” who recited continuously and knew by heart the

whole Old Testament. Fathers had personal responsibility to train their sons in both the Biblical tradition and craftsmanship and hence were their sons' masters and teachers. The spoken language in Yemenite Jewish homes was Yemenite Arabic.

Social life was marked by a high degree of segregation between the sexes. Men and women lived in separate cultural and activities worlds. Only men had access to the public political, economic, and religious domains. Yemenite Jewish men participated regularly in religious rituals, especially in the synagogue. Only men had access to the market. Men purchased all household supplies on the market, including clothes and accessories for the women.

### The World of Yemenite Jewish Women

The world of Yemenite Jewish women was confined to the domestic domain. Women were greatly subordinated to the men. Women had no access to the market and the synagogue. Rural women could walk through the village exhibiting a modest behavior, such as eyes lowered to the ground, and wearing a dress that fully covered the body. Urban women were more segregated and could walk in public only if accompanied by an older woman or a male family member. All women were illiterate and received no formal education. Women were informally trained in domestic tasks by their mothers or mothers-in-law.



Yemenite Jewish woman and girl in traditional dress, 1949. (Eldan David/Israeli Government Press Office)

Yemenite Jewish women neither inherited any property from their father or husband nor received any dowry. Upon marriage, a woman was exchanged for bride wealth, which was totally kept by her patrilineal kin. Women had almost no property and no independent income and could not work for a living. Thus, throughout their lives, Jewish women were totally dependent economically on their male kin by birth or by marriage. The Jewish *ketuba*, marriage contract, and women's jewelry and clothes provided women with some measure of economic security upon widowhood or divorce.

First marriages were always arranged. The bride often did not know her groom before the wedding. Mothers had a central role in the marriage arrangements for their children. Often, they chose the spouse for their child, and then their husbands performed the formal rituals of negotiations and agreements. Girls were married at the age of 9 to 12, and boys at age 13 to 18. Marriage consummation required public proof of virginity. Marriage consummation was delayed for the very young girls. The new wife moved into the husband's extended family household. *Polygyny*, multiple marriages to two or more wives, was legitimate among Yemenite Jews.

The position of a young bride in a new household was often precarious and humiliating until she produced offspring for the patrilineage. The daughter-in-law was always the stranger in the household. Folk stories abound about the poor bride exploited and abused physically and psychologically, especially by the wicked mother-in-law. In reality, however, the structure of extended family provided women with support as wives and mothers. Young women, who were often children upon marriage, formed strong bonds with their mother-in-law, who became their surrogate mother, instructing and helping them with child care and child rearing, guiding them in forming intimate relationships with their husband, and teaching them domestic tasks. Strong affectionate relationships of mutual help often developed in the sisters-in-law group.

Women gradually acquired great power within the household through their influence over their husbands and children. Women had a central role in their children's education. Typical of patriarchal societies, strong affective ties persisted within the matricentric, mother-centered group of the mother and her children and among siblings. Mothers were seen by both sons and daughters as a source of affection, warmth, support, and comfort. Men were very attached to their mother and often sided with her in conflicts with their young wife.

Census data show a low household stability in the Yemenite Jewish population. The death rate was extremely high, and young women often died giving birth. The high death rate of infants added to a woman's precarious position in the household because her status depended on the number of children especially, males. Divorce requests in Yemenite Jewish communities were easily granted to the men. A new widow or divorcee remarried as soon as possible. Consequently, two or three marriages for men and women were not uncommon. For a woman, remarriage usually meant moving into a new household, usually in a new village, while the remarried man remained at his original home. A woman was, thus, likely to move several times in her lifetime among families and villages, and each time she was forced to adjust anew. In second and third marriages, women actively manipulated their

environment or courted the potential husband to achieve a better relationship and socioeconomic status.

The daily routine of a woman started before sunrise. The woman would prepare a snack of cookies and hot goat's milk for her husband before he left for the morning prayer in the synagogue. All household chores were performed manually. Before daybreak a group of women would leave for the village outskirts to chop wood and carry it home on their head for heating and cooking. Women would then fetch water from the village well and carry the pots home on their head. Washing clothes was done by hand by the village spring. These were the places where the women met and chatted with other Jewish and Arab women. The daily routine also included long hours of grinding wheat and barley, cooking, house cleaning, and tending to the children and the animals. Toward noontime, the women would take a break and rest for a few hours, smoking nargilla, a water pipe, and chewing the mildly narcotic khat leaves. In the early evening hours, women visited family and friends.

Women had extensive friendship networks with other women expressed in mutual visiting, known as "women's visiting." The woman would pack a bundle of *ja'ala*, dried nuts and fruits, which she would bring as a gift. Women maintained close ties with their natal kin group through periodic visits. At the village springs, wells, and woods, Jewish and Arab women struck long-lasting friendships. These all-women social networks served as a crucial means of exchanging sociocultural and political information. Essential information about folk culture and potential brides and grooms was provided through these networks, and matchmaking deals were struck between women.

In contrast to their low social status and their meek and submissive public appearance, privately, Yemenite Jewish women were bright, shrewd, verbal, lively, and manipulative. Women's dress included pants embroidered at the ankles, worn underneath the dresses, head scarves, and silver jewelry. Women's bright eyes were emphasized by the black kohl eye liner, which originally served as a cure for eye infections. Women were considered specialists in folk medicine. Jewish women specialized in basket weaving and embroidery of the stripes that were attached to women's pants, which their husbands sold to female clients.

Jewish women loved to dance and sing. There was a pervasive oral tradition of folk songs and storytelling. Women accompanied their daily activities by singing songs, which they often composed. Songs were a mode of recounting daily news, storytelling, and providing political commentaries. Professional singers, accompanying themselves by drumming on large tin cans, were present in all social events.

### Selected Bibliography

- Druyan, Nitza. 2006. "Yemenite Jewish Women." *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies*, no. 11 (March).
- Eraqi Klorman, Bat Zion. 2006. *Yehudei Teiman: Historia, Khevra, Tarbut* [Yemenite Jews: History, Society, Culture], vol. 2. Jerusalem: Hauniversita Hapetukha [The Open University] and Yad Ben-Zvi.
- Gamliel, Nissin. B. 1974. *Ahavat Teiman: Hashira Ha'amamit Ha'teimanit. Shirat Nashim* [Arabic Love Songs of Yemenite Jewish Women]. Tel Aviv, Israel: Davar Press.

- Goitein, Shlomo D. 1955. "Portrait of a Yemenite Weavers' Village." *Jewish Social Studies* 17 (1): 3–26.
- Kafih, Joseph. 2002. *Halikhot Teiman: Khayei Hayehudim Be'Sana'a* [Jewish Life in Sana'a]. Jerusalem: Machon Ben-Zvi.
- Katzir, Yael. 1982. "Preservation of Jewish Ethnic Identity in Yemen: Segregation and Integration as Boundary Maintenance Mechanisms." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24 (2): 264–279.
- Katzir, Yael. 1983. "Yemenite Jewish Women in Israeli Rural Development: Female Power versus Male Authority." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 32 (1): 45–61.
- Ratzaby, Yehuda. 1978. *Yahadut Teiman* [Yemenite Jewry]. Tel Aviv: Israel Defence Forces.
- Saadon, Haiim, ed. 2002. *Teiman: Kehilot Israel Bamizrakh Bameot Hatesha'esre Veha'esrim* [Yemen: Jewish Communities in the East in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries]. Jerusalem: Machon Ben-Zvi and the Ministry of Education.
- Seri, Shalom, ed. 1993. *Bat Teiman: Olama shel Ha'isha Hayehudiya* [Daughter of Yemen: The World of Jewish Woman]. Tel Aviv: E'ele Batamar Press.

## Women and Egalitarianism in American Judaism

*Shaul Magid*

---

If Judaism's central focus in the 19th century was coming to terms with emancipation and the development of Zionism, and the first two-thirds of the 20th century in the Diaspora, especially in America, dealt with democracy and later the reverberations of the Holocaust. In the latter third of the 20th century, Jews in the Diaspora have been grappling with the question of feminism and gender. From the perspective of ritual and liturgy, this took the form of the debates regarding egalitarianism. The Reform movement in America decided on this matter quite early (ordaining women in 1972), followed by the Reconstructionist movement (ordaining women in 1977). Reform allowed women to pray together with men without a ritual separation, or *mehiza*, as early as the late 19th century. Conservative Judaism ordained its first woman rabbi in 1983 and at the same time began implementing egalitarian practices in its synagogues, schools, and summer camps. Opposed to Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism, Conservative Judaism views itself as bound by Halacha (Jewish law) and thus its decisions and policies must be validated by Halachic analysis. This has caused a rift in the Conservative movement resulting in majority and minority opinions on this issue. As a contemporary movement dedicated to pluralism (external and internal) the Conservative movement is predominately egalitarian, but nonegalitarian minyanim, or prayer quorums, still exist in some of its synagogues. For example, at present there is still a daily nonegalitarian minyan at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Conservative Judaism's academic center.

The basis of the Reform and Reconstructionist decisions are not identical. Reform Judaism does not see law as the central tenet of Jewish religiosity. Ritual and

liturgy are thus altered to conform to contemporary mores and sensibilities. Reconstructionist Judaism fashions itself as post-Halachic. By that it means it *does* view ritual as a central focus of its religiosity but *does not* see Halachic tradition as binding. Mordecai Kaplan's quip that "tradition has a voice but not a veto" captures this sentiment.

Orthodoxy generally views Halacha as binding and unalterable unless adequate precedent can be found in the sources of tradition for change. For more traditional Orthodox communities this question is not a pressing issue because its own social norms do not generally conform to egalitarian secular society. For Modern Orthodoxy, a community that prides itself on living comfortably in both religious and secular worlds, this issue has become more pressing in the past few decades. Modern Orthodoxy is committed to living according to what it determines are Halachic standards. Therefore, a change of this magnitude, one that not only affects synagogue worship but also its social structure more generally, is extremely precarious. To implement full egalitarianism (i.e., counting women in a minyan and fully integrating them in ritual and liturgical life) would require a radical alteration of their religious life. In Orthodoxy's view, the gender boundaries dictated by the Halachic system are not circumstantial and contextual but embody a deeper understanding of Judaism's original construction of society. On the other hand, Modern Orthodox women are becoming part of the secular workplace and assuming roles of power and influence in their communities due, in part, to their participation in secular higher education. Two other factors have contributed to the rise of feminism in Modern Orthodoxy. First, Modern Orthodox women are not marrying as young as their more traditional counterparts, resulting in a fairly novel social category in Modern Orthodoxy, the independent adult single woman. Second, the 20th century has produced household technology that has significantly expanded leisure time for women, even those with families. The combination of the single adolescent young Jewish woman and the easing of domestic life in postindustrial society initially resulted in women seeking educational opportunities outside the home. This phenomenon began in late 19th-century Europe and resulted in the founding of the Beit Ya'akov School for women by Sarah Schenirer in the 1920s, partly in response to the fact that young women were seeking secular education because of the lack of educational opportunities in their Jewish community.

Although this school revolutionized women's Jewish education, it was born in a highly traditional society and adhered to strict Halachic restrictions regarding its educational curriculum. For example, women were excluded from the study of Talmud, the central literary corpus of traditional Jewish life. The reason for excluding women from the study of Talmud is a complicated Halachic matter whose source lies in the Mishnah, the original text of Rabbinic Judaism. It was a prohibition that was almost uniformly maintained throughout premodern Jewish history. In the 1970s, Modern Orthodox seminaries for women began teaching women Talmud under the advice of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik of Boston who also taught at Yeshiva University in New York. Curiously, Soloveitchik never justified his position through any published Halachic response. The success of his innovation seemed largely due to his influence and charisma rather than the more conventional lifting of a ban via

jurisprudential means. In any event, by the end of the 20th century, the study of Talmud for women has become common in many Modern Orthodox circles. One consequence of opening Talmudic study to women is that it exposes them to the complexity of legal reasoning and, even unwittingly, invites them to participate in the Talmudic and legal process of adjudication. Partly as a result of this process, Modern Orthodox women began directly confronting rabbinic authorities about certain limitations of women's participation in religious practice. In the Diaspora, at least three organizations, The Jewish Orthodox Women's Feminist Alliance (JOFA), *Feminism and Orthodoxy*, and the Edah Community arose to deal, in part, with the desire for Orthodox women's participation in religious life. Although these institutions have contributed much to moving toward a kind of Orthodox "egalitarianism" they have not called for outright alteration of the Halachic limitations regarding women and prayer. Social roles—largely a matter of custom and not law—have been significantly altered, and new Orthodox communities, such as Shira Hadasha, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, and Darkei Noam in New York City, have arisen to offer women more participatory roles in synagogue life. Some communities have allowed woman to serve in quasi-rabbinic roles, and there are even some Orthodox women who have private ordination from Orthodox rabbis. Generally speaking, however, it is unlikely Modern Orthodoxy will implement full egalitarianism for at least two reasons: one theological and one sociological. Theologically, the issue of the roles of men and women in traditional Jewish society is not something limited to synagogue life but runs very deep in the traditional psyche regarding social mores, family, and the structure of marital relationships. Perhaps because modernity has made wide inroads into Modern Orthodox communities and its women now play leading roles in such areas as business, academia, medicine, and law, it has become more important that the sacred space of the home and the synagogue retain traditional structures. Sociologically, Modern Orthodoxy needs to retain distinct divisions between itself and Conservative Judaism, which stands on its immediate left. To become fully egalitarian would arguably erase a very important line of distinction. Orthodoxy has maintained that full egalitarianism cannot be justified through Halacha. To change directions on that position would seriously damage Modern Orthodoxy's claim to be the Diaspora Judaism that has most successfully incorporated the best of modernity without allowing modernity to undermine its beliefs and practices.

Egalitarianism is an example of the complicated calculations of Judaism in the Diaspora. How can a minority religion that lives deeply and freely in a host culture incorporate that host culture's values without having those values undermine its integrity and sacrality? Reform Judaism was born precisely in that nexus in 19th-century Germany and thus its very nature is formed not as a defense against secular values but an affirmation of them. Reconstructionist Judaism is a product of American democracy and begins revaluing the very theological foundations of the religion in light of American modernity, which liberates them from the confines of what they view is an outdated rendition of tradition and authority. Conservative Judaism stands in the middle, understanding that incorporating modern sensibilities will result in ritual and theological alterations, but believing such changes does not

undermine the authoritative voice of tradition. Modern Orthodoxy stands, in many ways, with Conservative Judaism, ideologically, but differs programmatically in that it is more willing to simply reject modern innovation if it is determined to be incompatible with their understanding of traditional authority. One essential difference between Modern Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, on this point, is that the constituency of the former largely shares the movement's commitments and agenda whereas the latter's constituency is largely less committed, less aware, or less interested in the movement's agenda. Gender politics in Judaism is moving into different phases. Modern Orthodoxy is on the verge of making significant, if incremental, changes to its understanding of women's roles in its society. Conservative Judaism is on the cusp of making its commitment to egalitarianism a paradigm for rethinking its position on homosexuality.

### Selected Bibliography

- Adler, Rachel. 1998. *Engendering Judaism*. Philadelphia: JPS.
- Davidman, Lynn, and Shelly Tenenbaum. 1994. *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hauptman, Judith. 1998. *Re-Reading the Rabbis*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Magid, Shaul. 2004. "Is Egalitarianism Heresy? Re-Thinking Gender on the Margins of Judaism." *Nashim* 8: 189–229.
- Plaskow, Judith. 1991. *Standing Again at Sinai*. San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco.
- Ross, Tamar. 2004. *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.
- Zloty, Shoshana. 1993. *And All Your Children Shall be Learned*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Press.

# Genetics, Medicine, and Genealogy

## Jewish Genetic Diseases

*Edwin H. Kolodny*

---

The Jewish people consist of various ethnic subgroups in whom until recently the gene pools remained distinct because of relative geographic isolation and a tradition of intrareligious and intracommunity marriage. Studies of the paternally derived Y chromosome show a genetic relatedness between Jews and the non-Jewish Middle Eastern population, suggesting a common Middle Eastern origin (Nebel et al. 2001). Gene mutations of an ancient origin are, therefore, more likely to be found in Jews of Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Oriental background as well as other Middle Eastern populations, whereas those that occurred after the dispersion by the Roman conquest of Jerusalem (70 CE) are more frequent among Ashkenazi Jews (AJs).

At least 20 specific gene loci are more frequent among AJs, but there are also genetic traits that are specific to either Sephardic or Oriental Jews. Richard Goodman was the first to catalog these in his monumental monograph published in 1979. In each case, the basis for the causative genetic defect is a founder mutation that expanded in a particular segment of the Jewish population because of a severe bottleneck in population size followed by rapid expansion from a limited member of families. Such conditions most favor genetic drift (random fluctuations of gene frequencies). There is no evidence for selective environmental conditions contributing to the increased frequency of specific genetic diseases among any of the Jewish populations (Risch et al. 2003).

The predilection for Tay-Sachs disease and its genetic predisposition among Jews of Eastern European origin has been well known for more than a century. The dramatic reduction in its incidence since the introduction of carrier screening programs among AJs in the 1970s stimulated interest in other genetic diseases among Jews. Although genetic diseases occur worldwide in all populations, the strong emphasis placed on health education and disease prevention by the Jewish community has encouraged the study of genetic diseases in Jews both in Israel and the Diaspora.

The inheritance pattern in most Jewish genetic diseases is autosomal recessive, that is, the abnormal trait is silent in carriers (heterozygotes), allowing 50 percent expression of the normal gene product, which is sufficient to prevent disease. However, in the mating of two heterozygotes, there is a 25 percent (one in four) chance that the abnormal trait will appear twice in any one offspring so that no functional gene product is produced. The incidence of such homozygotes in various Jewish populations is shown in Tables 1 and 2. It varies from 1 in 27 for nonclassical adrenal hyperplasia to 1 in 40,000 for Bloom syndrome.

In a few instances, the disease gene is dominant, but its expression is variable depending on disease penetrance. Examples are torsion dystonia and Usher's syndrome. Genes that predispose to breast and colon cancer are also variably penetrant,

**Table 1 Genetic Diseases in the Ashkenazi Jewish Population**

Disease	Inheritance Pattern	Incidence	Carrier Frequency
Adult polyglucosan body disease	AR	~40 reported cases	
Alpha-thalassemia	AR		1/13
Bloom syndrome	AR	1/40,000	1/110 (Polish Jews 1/37)
Breast cancer	AD with variable penetrance		1/40
Canavan disease	AR	1/6400	1/38-57
Colorectal cancer	AD with variable penetrance		APC 1/26-30 I1307K 1/13 (Russian, Polish, Romanian Jews)
Cystic fibrosis	AR	1/2500	1/23-29
Factor XI deficiency	AR	1/130	1/11
Familial dysautonomia	AR	1/3700	1/27 (Polish Jews 1/18)
Familial hypercholesterolemia	AD		1/56
Familial hyperinsulinism	AR		1/89
Familial Mediterranean fever	AR	1/200	1/5
Fanconi anemia (type C)	AR	1/32,000	1/89
Gaucher disease type 1	AR	1/900	1/15-19
Glycogen storage disease type 1a	AR	1/20,000	1/143
Inflammatory bowel disease	AD with variable penetrance		
Mucopolipidosis IV	AR	1/10,000	1/100-127
Myotonic dystrophy	Trinucleotide repeat expansion	1/20,000	
Niemann-Pick disease type A	AR	1/32,000	1/70-100
Nonclassical congenital adrenal hyperplasia	AR	1/27	1/3
Tay-Sachs disease	AR	1/3000	1/26-30
Torsion dystonia	AD with variable penetrance	1/2000	
Usher's syndrome	AR	3/100,000	R245X 1/100

AD = autosomal dominant; AR = autosomal recessive.

requiring other genetic alterations and/or environmental triggers before the cancer is manifest (Kedar-Barnes and Rozen 2004).

Age of onset and severity also vary widely. Signs of classical Tay-Sachs disease, Canavan disease, and Niemann-Pick disease type A appear in the first year, cause progressive neurodegeneration, and lead to death within a few years. Mucopolipidosis IV and familial dysautonomia also cause progressive central nervous system (CNS) disease in childhood. Progressive CNS disorders beginning in later decades,

**Table 2 Genetic Diseases in the Sephardic and Oriental Jewish Populations**

Disease	Inheritance Pattern	Incidence	Carrier Frequency
Alpha-thalassemia	AR		1/80 Kurdistan Jews 1/5 Yemenite Jews
Ataxia telangiectasia	AR		1/40 Moroccan Jews
Beta-thalassemia	AR		1/160 Kurdistan Jews
Breast cancer	AD with variable penetrance		1/40
Colorectal cancer	AD with variable penetrance		11307K 1/21 Yemenite Jews
Costeff syndrome	AR	~40 reported cases among Iraqi Jews	
Cystinuria	AR		1/25 Libyan Jews
Dubin-Johnson syndrome	AR		1/20 Iranian Jews
Factor VII deficiency	AR		1/40 Iranian Jews
Factor XI deficiency	AR	1/130	1/11
Familial Mediterranean fever	AR	1/200	1/4.5 North African Jews 1/2.5 Iraqi Jews 1/17 Iranian Jews
Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency	X-linked		1/4–6 Males
Glycogen storage disease type IIIa	AR	1/5400	1/35 North African Jews
Hereditary inclusion body myopathy	AR		
Myotonic dystrophy	Trinucleotide repeat expansion	1/2500 Yemenite Jews 1/5700 Sephardic & Oriental Jews	
Phenylketonuria	AR		1/35 Yemenite Jews

AD = autosomal dominant; AR = autosomal recessive.

such as late-onset Tay-Sachs disease and adult polyglucosan body disease, are also encountered. Other organs primarily affected are the hematopoietic system (blood), as in factor XI deficiency, alpha-thalassemia, Gaucher’s disease, and Fanconi’s anemia; muscle, as in glycogen storage disease types Ia and III, myotonic dystrophy, and hereditary inclusion body myopathy; and the gastrointestinal tract, as in inflammatory bowel disease. Gaucher’s disease has multiple systemic effects, as do cystic fibrosis, familial Mediterranean fever, and nonclassical congenital adrenal hyperplasia. Bloom and Fanconi’s syndromes predispose to malignancy in childhood, whereas several breast and colon cancer genes are silent until the later decades.

Screening for certain genetic traits, especially those transmitted as autosomal recessive disorders, can provide expanded reproductive options to couples who would otherwise not knowingly have affected offspring with serious progressive

childhood disease (ACOG Committee on Genetics 2004). One study that screened 2427 AJs for eight conditions found that one in seven were carriers of at least one of these traits (Strom et al. 2004). Furthermore, testing single men and women anonymously in the Dor Yeshorim program provides the Orthodox community with a means of avoiding the partnering of two carriers, without stigmatization. Testing for presymptomatic disease where there may be incomplete penetrance is fraught with ethical concerns, but it can facilitate early diagnosis and treatment through intensified disease surveillance. Of utmost importance is pre- and posttest education to ensure informed decision making and a full understanding of the possible outcomes and the actual results and their implications. The information gleaned may also be useful to other family members.

None of the Jewish genetic diseases can be cured but a few are easily treated, for example, Gaucher's disease and nonclassical congenital adrenal hyperplasia. Umbilical cord stem cell transplantation is an option in Fanconi's anemia, and gene therapy is being studied as a treatment for Canavan disease. The more common disorders and a few of the rare forms of genetic diseases in specific subgroups are shown in the tables, and are also described in alphabetical order in the sections that follow. The chromosomal localization of many of the genes mentioned are shown in parentheses.

### Alpha-Thalassemia

AJs have a high carrier frequency (7.9 percent) for alpha-thalassemia, even though they have not resided in the malaria belt where this gene disorder is common. Affected individuals have a microcytic hypochromic anemia, enlarged liver and spleen, mild jaundice, and sometimes bone changes. Nearly all Ashkenazi alpha-thalassemia carriers possess a single  $\alpha$ -globin gene deletion, alpha, supporting a founder effect.

### Bloom Syndrome

The molecular defect in this autosomal recessive disease in the Bloom syndrome gene ( $blm^{Ash}$  mutation) is present in 1 in 110 AJs, but has a higher frequency among Polish AJs (1:37). In the homozygous state, there is marked growth delay at birth, short stature, abnormalities of skin pigmentation aggravated by sun exposure, and immunodeficiency. Men are sterile and women have reduced fertility. As in Fanconi's anemia, there is increased chromosomal breakage and a greatly increased risk of malignancy over the normal risk.

### Breast Cancer

There is a recognized predisposition to breast cancer, and in 20–40 percent of familial cases it can be attributed to mutations in *BRCA1* (17q21) and *BRCA2* (13q12–13). Three founder mutations have been identified in AJs: 185delAG and 5382insC in *BRCA1* and 6174 delT in *BRCA2*. Their combined prevalence in AJs is 2–3 percent,

which is approximately 10 times that of all *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* mutations in the general U.S. population. The age of diagnosis in carriers is significantly lower than in noncarriers. Penetrance for these founder mutations by the ages of 40, 50, and 70 years are approximately 7 percent, 20 percent, and 40 percent, respectively.

These mutations also increase the risk for developing ovarian cancer. These are estimated to be 28–66 percent for a *BRCA1* mutation and 16–27 percent for a *BRCA2* mutation. The strongest predictor of mutation status is a previous diagnosis of breast or ovarian cancer or a family history of breast cancer before the age of 50 years. The *BRCA1* predisposition gene, 185delAG, present in 1 percent of the Ashkenazi population, is also prevalent in the Iraqi Jewish population at a rate similar to that for AJs, suggesting that this mutation emerged before the dispersion of the Jews around 70 CE.

### Canavan Disease

Canavan disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disease of brain white matter that begins within the first three months. Visual inattention, head lag, hypotonia, and developmental delay occur early, followed by macrocephaly (an enlarged head), hypertonia (increased muscle tone), feeding difficulties, and optic atrophy. On brain magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) there is a markedly abnormal signal throughout the central white matter, including the subcortical U-fibers, and *N*-acetylaspartic acid is elevated in a urine screen for organic acids. The disease is attributable to a deficiency of the enzyme aspartoacylase encoded by the *ASPA* gene on 17p13ter. Approximately 1 in 57 AJs are carriers of a mutation in this gene. The most common, A854C, accounts for 88 percent of mutant alleles in this population and is probably attributable to an ancestral AJ founder. A second mutation, C693A, accounts for the rest of the mutant AJ alleles. A third mutation, C914A, is common among non-Jewish patients but is not seen in the AJ carrier population. The American College of Medical Genetics and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology have recommended screening for Canavan disease mutations in AJ individuals and couples (ACOG Committee on Genetics 2004).

### Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in the United States and Canada. However, familial clustering has been noted in only about 15 percent of cases. These include familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) and hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (HNPCC). FAP is caused by mutations of the *APC* gene and HNPCC by mutations in mismatch repair genes (*MSH2*, *MLH1*, and *MSH6*). Two founder mutations have been traced to the Jewish population.

Among AJs, 6 percent carry the I1307K mutation in the *APC* gene. This increases the risk of developing colorectal cancer 1.5–2.0 fold. Israeli Jews immigrating to Israel from Russia, Poland, and Romania had an even higher carrier frequency, 7.7 percent, whereas for Israeli Jews from non-European countries the carrier frequency is 1.3 percent. The I1307K carrier frequency among Yemenites was ~4.7 percent.

Unaffected AJ controls have half the carrier frequency of patients with colorectal cancer, suggesting that the *APC* gene does indeed act as a colorectal cancer susceptibility gene. The age at diagnosis of colorectal cancer in carriers does not differ substantially from that of noncarriers. Both Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi Jews, as well as Arabs, carry the I1307K mutation. This points to an ancient origin for the mutation before the separation of the Jewish communities into the Diaspora, a conjecture born out by studies showing sharing of marker alleles on the mutant chromosome.

The *MSH2*\* 1906G→C mutation (also known as A636P) in the *MSH2* gene, on the other hand, represents quite the opposite situation. It is found only among Ashkenazim and is the rarest founder mutation identified, present in 0.22 percent of healthy AJs; it is significantly more frequent in colorectal cancer cases than in healthy controls. It arose relatively recently (approximately 10–20 generations ago) and predisposes to colorectal cancer at age 40 or earlier.

### **Costeff Optic Atrophy Syndrome (3-methylglutaconicaciduria type 3)**

This progressive neuroophthalmologic disorder occurs almost exclusively in Iraqi Jews. Optic atrophy occurs early in childhood followed later by spasticity, a movement disorder, and mild intellectual impairment. The increased urinary excretion of 3-methylglutaconic acid and 3-methylglutaric acid in these patients is due to a founder mutation (IVS1-1G→C) in the *OPA3* gene.

### **Cystic Fibrosis**

Cystic fibrosis is the most common genetic disease among whites that leads to premature death; it has a carrier frequency of 1/20 to 1/40, depending on the ethnic group. Among AJs, the carrier rate is approximately 1/23. This multisystem disease affects the epithelia of the respiratory tract, pancreas, intestine, male genital tract, hepatobiliary system, and sweat glands. Affected patients have chronic pulmonary disease, gastrointestinal and nutritional abnormalities, absence of sperm production, and salt loss. The disease is caused by mutations in the cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator (*CFTR*) gene (7q 31.2) in which more than 1,000 mutations have been found. Among Ashkenazim, five mutations account for 97 percent of the mutant alleles, but other Jewish populations have their own unique mutation spectrum. Studies in Israel suggest that a panel of 15 mutations should be used when screening married Jewish couples of mixed ethnic origin.

### **Factor XI Deficiency**

Factor XI deficiency (FXI) is an injury-related bleeding tendency characterized by low FXI coagulant activity. It affects 1 in a million in the general population, but among Jews, 1 in 11 are carriers and 1 in 130 are affected. The lowest levels of FXI clotting activity occur in individuals homozygous for the type II Glu117stop mutation, whereas the highest levels of activity are found in homozygotes with the

type III F283L mutation. Half of affected AJs are compound heterozygotes for the type II and III mutations and another quarter are homozygous for each, respectively. The type II mutation is prevalent in Iraqi Sephardic Jews and AJs, and thus is believed to have arisen in ancient times. The type III mutation is found predominantly in AJs, suggesting a much more recent origin. Haplotype analyses imply a founder effect for both mutations.

### Familial Dysautonomia

This autosomal recessive disease is also known as Riley-Day syndrome or hereditary sensory and autonomic neuropathy III. There is diminished tear production; absence of fungiform papillae on the tongue; lack of axon flare after intradermal histamine injection; abnormalities of swallowing, feeding, temperature, and blood pressure regulation; and insensitivity to pain sensation. A single mutation (IVS2+6T→C) in the *IKBKAP* gene (9q31) accounts for more than 99.5 percent of familial dysautonomia alleles (one of a series of possible alternative forms of a gene sequence) in AJs. The overall incidence of AJ carriers is 1:32, but among AJs of Polish descent it is 1:18. This mutation is believed to have arisen relatively recently, perhaps at the end of the 15th century. Another minor mutation, R696P, has been found in a few AJs. With improved medical care, many of these patients now survive into adult life.

### Familial Mediterranean Fever

Family Mediterranean fever (FMF) is characterized by recurrent self-limited episodes of fever and inflammation of serosal membranes, including peritonitis, pleuritis, and synovitis. A small number of patients develop amyloidosis. Daily colchicine treatment can prevent FMF attacks and the development of amyloidosis. Few common mutations in the Marenstrin-encoding fever gene (*MEFV*; 16p) account for most of the DNA variations in FMF patients. Those with the M694V mutation have a more severe course and are more likely to develop amyloidosis.

FMF is common in the Mediterranean area, especially among Armenians, Turks, Arabs, and Jews. It is most frequent among Jews of North African origin, but there is a high frequency of carriers among Jews of various ethnic groups: Iraqi, 39 percent; North African, 22 percent; Ashkenazi, 21 percent; and Iranian, 6 percent. Ashkenazi and Iranian Jews carry the E148Q mutation, which is associated with a milder phenotype, thus explaining the lower prevalence of FMF among these two ethnic groups.

### Fanconi's Anemia

Greater than 1 in 100 AJs are carriers of a mutation (IVS4+4A→T) in the *FANCC* gene, which causes Fanconi's anemia, a rare autosomal recessive disorder associated with short stature, a subnormal response to growth hormone stimulation, hypothyroidism, and in some, impaired glucose tolerance. Two-thirds have congenital

malformations. There is progressive bone marrow failure (90 percent by age 40) and tendency to leukemia and other malignancies (33 percent by age 40). A Fanconi-like syndrome with high rates of brain tumors, Wilms' tumor, and early onset leukemia may also occur in the presence of *BRCA2* mutations. Bone marrow or umbilical cord blood transplantation using stem cells from an human leukocyte antigen-matched family donor is the only proven treatment.

### Gaucher's Disease Type 1

This lysosomal storage disease can present at any age, most patients showing symptoms by age 20. It is due to reduced activity of glucocerebrosidase, the enzyme that degrades glucocerebroside. Lipid-filled macrophages accumulate in the reticulo-endothelial system resulting in an enlarged spleen and liver, thinning of bone, anemia, and low platelet count. Fatigue, easy bruising, nosebleeds, bone pain, and fractures are some of the secondary effects. Therapy with enzyme replacement and substrate reduction is available.

In the AJ population, four mutations account for more than 90 percent of the disease alleles: N370S, 84GG, L444P, and IVS2+1. Homozygotes for the N370S mutation generally have the mildest disease. The L444P mutation, when homozygous, will result in CNS manifestations characteristic of Gaucher's disease types 2 or 3. The carrier frequency in the AJ population is 1 in 15 to 1 in 19 individuals. Because some patients may remain asymptomatic well into adult life, homozygous-affected individuals are sometimes discovered in the course of carrier screening.

### Glycogen Storage Disease

Two disorders of glycogen metabolism appear more frequently in Ashkenazim than in the non-Jewish population: glycogen storage disease type 1a and adult polyglucosan body disease (APBD). GSD1a is caused by a deficiency of D-glucose-6-phosphatase, a key enzyme in the synthesis of glucose. This causes severe hypoglycemia in infants and children, which may lead to mental retardation. In young adults with the disease, seizures, tumors of the liver, and kidney failure occur. Most affected AJ subjects are homozygous for a single mutation, R83C, in the *GSD1a* gene, suggesting a founder effect. The frequency of this mutation in the AJ population is estimated to be 0.7 percent, which implies a disease prevalence among AJs of 1 in 20,000. This is five times that of the general white population.

APBD presents in the fifth decade, with slowly progressive gait difficulty, urinary incontinence, disturbance in coordination, and distal sensory neuropathy. The leg weakness progresses and memory dysfunction may develop. Large inclusions containing glycogen are found in peripheral nerves and in various parts of the brain and spinal cord. A deficiency in glycogen branching enzyme has been found in AJ cases associated with a single missense mutation (Y329S) in the *GBE* gene (chromosome 3). Glycogen branching enzyme deficiency has only rarely been detected in non-Jewish cases of APBD, and in such instances novel mutations have been described.

Another glycogen storage disease, type IIIa, is unusually frequent among North African Jews. Although the disease incidence in the United States is 1 in 100,000 births, in North African Jews in Israel its prevalence is 1 in 5,400. This disease is characterized by an enlarged liver, hypoglycemia, hyperlipidemia, short stature, and, to a variable degree, enlargement of the heart and muscle involvement. It is due to deficiency of the glycogen debranching enzyme, AGL, which together with phosphorylase is responsible for the breakdown of glycogen. A single founder mutation in *AGL*, 4455 delT, is present in 1 in 35 North African Jews and, in homozygous form, is responsible for the disease in this population.

### Hereditary Inclusion Body Myopathy

Hereditary inclusion body myopathy is a neuromuscular disorder that begins in young adults with preferential involvement of the muscles of the lower leg but sparing of the quadriceps muscle. Rimmed vacuoles and filamentous inclusions are found on pathological examination of muscle. Mutations in the gene for UDP-*N*-acetylglucosamine 2-epimerase/*N*-acetylmannosamine kinase (*GNE*, 9p12–13) have been identified in affected individuals. A single founder mutation, M712T, appears to be responsible for the clustering of this disease among Jews of Middle Eastern ancestry.

### Inflammatory Bowel Disease

The incidence of inflammatory bowel disease is two- to fourfold higher in AJs compared with non-Jewish whites. It is multifactorial, but there is evidence of strong genetic predisposition with a sibling risk of 35-fold for Crohn's disease (CD) and 15-fold for ulcerative colitis. Three allelic variants of the *IBDI* gene on 16q12 (*NOD 2/CARD15*) are associated with more than 50 percent of Jewish pediatric patients with CD and 37.5 percent in adults. In individuals with a double dose of the CD susceptibility gene, *NOD 2/CARD15*, the risk of developing CD increases to 20- to 40-fold. Other potential predisposing genes for CD are *IBD2*, *IBD3*, *IBD 4*, and *IBD 5*. Jews of middle-European origin have an excess risk relative to Jews of Polish/Russian origin. Non-AJs with CD carrying the gene for familial Mediterranean fever are more likely to have a stricturing disease pattern and extraintestinal disease manifestations of CD.

### Mucopolipidosis IV

Mucopolipidosis IV (MLIV) is a neurodegenerative lysosomal storage disease almost exclusively confined to the AJ population. Developmental delay and corneal opacification are noted within the first year. An affected child has receptive language and may be able to sign but is totally unable to speak. Weakness, hypotonia, and incoordination prevent the youngster from walking independently. Other findings include elevated blood gastrin, achlorhydria, and blood iron deficiency. Electron microscopy reveals multilamellar bodies in all cells, which on chemical analysis consist of phospholipids, gangliosides, neutral lipids, and mucopolysaccharides.

MLIV is caused by mutations in *MCOLN1* (19p1.2–1.3), the gene that encodes mucolipin 1, a cation channel protein involved in a late stage of prelysosomal trafficking of endosomes. The frequency of carriers of MLIV in the AJ population is 1 in 100, so that the predicted disease incidence is 1 in 10,000. The origin of the parents of most patients can be traced to the northern Poland/south Lithuania region. Two founder mutations, IVS3–2A→G (major) and 511del 6434 (minor), account for 95 percent of MLIV alleles in the AJ population.

### Myotonic Dystrophy

This common neuromuscular disease has a worldwide prevalence of 1 in 20,000. It is characterized in adults by myotonia (inability to easily relax muscles after a contraction), progressive muscle weakness, and wasting. In most patients, it is caused by an expansion mutation of the trinucleotide (CTG) in the *DMPK* gene (19q13.3). The prevalence among Ashkenazim is similar to that of other populations in the world but among Sephardic and Oriental Jews it is 3.5 times that of Ashkenazim. Yemenites have the highest prevalence, approximately eightfold higher than AJs. These differences are believed to be the result of a common ancestral premutation in the Sephardic/Oriental and Yemenite Jews causing a conversion to the unstable expanded (CTG)<sub>n</sub> in form of the *DMPK* gene.

### Niemann-Pick Disease Type A

Poor feeding, recurrent vomiting, and a protuberant abdomen are early signs of Niemann-Pick disease type A. A cherry-red spot may be observed in the macula of the eye. Psychomotor regression occurs by the age of one year. Lymph nodes and liver are enlarged, and respiratory difficulties ensue. There are vacuolated lymphocytes in peripheral blood, foam cells in the bone marrow, and a fine reticulated appearance of the lungs on chest x-ray. The child develops jaundice and ascites, loses weight, and generally dies before the age of three years.

The disease is due to a deficiency of the lysosomal enzyme acid sphingomyelinase (*ASM*; chr. 11). The major AJ mutations are delR608, fsP330, and L302P, with an overall carrier frequency in the AJ population of approximately 1 in 100. A milder variant, Niemann-Pick disease type B, is associated with relative sparing of the brain. There is enlargement of the liver and spleen, pulmonary infiltration, and in many patients a cherry-red spot in the macula. Half of the AJ patients with type B have at least one R496L *ASM* mutation.

### Nonclassical Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia

Congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) results from defective cortisol synthesis from cholesterol. Because of the impairment in cortical secretion, levels of adrenocorticotropic hormone rise, causing hyperplasia of the adrenal cortex. Nearly all cases of CAH are due to deficiency of 21-hydroxylase resulting in an accumulation of precursors that are shunted into the androgen pathway. Patients with the most

severe disease have salt-wasting because of impaired aldosterone synthesis. In the classical form, aldosterone is not affected. Both forms are associated with ambiguous genitalia in females.

In nonclassical CAH there is diminished 21-hydroxylase activity, but normal secretion of aldosterone, and females do not have ambiguous genitalia. However, postnatal androgen excess leads to advanced bone age, early pubic hair, precocious puberty, tall stature in childhood but short stature in adults, hirsutism, and frontal balding as well as polycystic ovaries and irregular menstrual periods in females and testicular adrenal rest tissue in males.

Nonclassical CAH is the most common of all autosomal recessive diseases, estimated to occur with a frequency of 1 in 100. It is especially prevalent among AJs in whom the carrier frequency is 1 in 3 and the disease frequency 1 in 27. Homozygosity of a single mutation in exon 7 (V281L) of the *CYP21A2* gene is responsible for half the cases and 36 percent of patients have compound heterozygosity of the exon 7 mutation and another more severe mutation. Early diagnosis is important, as signs and symptoms can be reversed by dexamethasone treatment.

### Tay-Sachs Disease

Tay-Sachs disease (TSD) is the best known of the Jewish genetic diseases, perhaps because of the success of worldwide TSD prevention programs aimed at preconception or prenatal testing of the at-risk population. An infant with Tay-Sachs disease appears clinically normal at birth but fails to reach the usual developmental milestones by the age of one year. The child startles easily, appears listless and hypertonic, and fails to follow objects visually. A cherry-red spot is seen in the macula on fundoscopic examination, and seizures develop. After one year of age, the child is blind, hypertonic, and progressively more lethargic, eventually becoming vegetative and requiring continuous nursing care. Progressive cachexia, dehydration, and aspiration pneumonia precede death, usually at four or five years of age.

This lysosomal storage disease is characterized by the accumulation within nerve cells of  $G_{M2}$ -ganglioside. The sphingoglycolipid requires a series of lysosomal glycosidases for its enzymatic hydrolysis. One of these, hexosaminidase A, is deficient leading to the  $G_{M2}$  storage. Two mutations in the *HEXA* gene (15q23–24) are responsible for nearly all AJ cases of classical infantile-onset TSD. These are a 1278insTATC mutation, which accounts for 75–80 percent of AJ mutations and an IVS 12+1 splice site mutation accounting for the remainder. Within the AJ population, the carrier frequency is 1 in 25 persons but disease prevalence in this population has been much reduced as a result of voluntary carrier screening programs.

A late-onset form of  $G_{M2}$ -gangliosidosis (LOTS) exists, which is also much more frequent in AJs than in the general population. It is characterized by poor coordination, tremor, and proximal muscle weakness, especially in the lower extremities. Half of the patients experience depression and frank psychosis. Cognition is generally preserved but because of progressive ataxia and frequent falls, patients become wheelchair dependent. Most patients with LOTS are compound heterozygotes who possess one G269S mutation in exon 7 of *HEXA* along with one of the two common

infantile AJ mutations. One in 40 AJ individuals found by enzyme analyses to be TSD carriers actually carry the G269S exon 7 mutation rather than one of the two common infantile mutations.

### Torsion Dystonia

Primary torsion dystonia usually begins in childhood or early adolescence with torsion spasms and postural abnormalities in one or more limbs. The abnormal movements may initially occur only with activity, are increased with stress, and disappear during sleep. Mean age of onset is about 10 years. The symptoms may remain focal or spread to include other limbs, but only rarely are the neck and cranial musculature involved. Approximately 90 percent of early-onset AJ cases are due to a single founder mutation in the *DYT1* gene located at 9q34. This mutation, a GAG deletion resulting in the loss of a glutamic acid residue from the protein torsin A, is a dominant trait present in 1 in 2,000 AJs, but it causes actual disease in only 30–40 percent of carriers. Another alteration in the *DYT1* gene, a polymorphism at amino acid residue 216, if present on the opposite allele, appears to protect carriers of the GAG deletion from overt disease. Partial relief of symptoms has been obtained with benzodiazepines and anticholinergic drugs as well as pallidotomy and thalamotomy.

### Usher's Syndrome

Approximately 1/1,000 children worldwide are hard of hearing, and of these a hereditary cause is found in 41–44 percent. In approximately half the cases of hereditary bilateral sensorineural hearing impairment among both AJs and Sephardic Jews, mutations are present in the connexin 26 (Cx26; *GJB2*) or connexin 30 (*GJB6*) genes. Mutations in *GJB2* have been found in approximately 1 in 20 AJs.

Of the deaf-blind population, which has a prevalence of 1/10,000 between ages 30 and 49, more than 50 percent are due to Usher's syndrome (US). The overall prevalence of US in AJs is 3/100,000. In addition to sensorineural hearing impairment, patients with US have vestibular dysfunction and progressive retinitis pigmentosa. The most severe form, USH1, is characterized by congenital profound deafness, prepubertal onset of retinitis pigmentosa, and abnormal vestibular function. Seven USH1 genes have been identified, of which a single alternation in the *PCDH15* gene (10 q11.2-q21), a R245X mutation, accounts for more than half of the USH1 cases. The carrier rate for this mutation in the AJ population is 1/100.

Another form, USH3, is characterized by delayed onset of the hearing loss, variable onset and severity of retinitis pigmentosa, and the occasional presence of vestibular dysfunction. A single gene locus (*USH3A*; 3q25) has been identified. Among AJs with US, 40 percent of cases are believed to result from homozygosity for a N48K mutation in this gene, suggesting a founder effect. The carrier frequency of the N48K mutation in the AJ population is on the order of 7/1,000. Together, this mutation and the R245X mutation of *PCDH15*, account for approximately 67 percent of cases of US in this population.

### Selected Bibliography

- ACOG Committee on Genetics. 2004. "Prenatal and Preconceptional Carrier Screening for Genetic Diseases in Individuals of Eastern European Jewish Descent." *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 104: 425–428.
- Goodman, Richard M. 1979. *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kedar-Barnes, I., and P. Rozen. 2004. "The Jewish People: Their Ethnic History, Genetic Disorders and Specific Cancer Susceptibility." *Familial Cancer* 3: 193–199.
- Nebel A., D. Filon, B. Brinkmann, P. P. Majumder, M. Faerman, and A. Oppenheim. 2001. "The Y Chromosome Pool of Jews as Part of the Genetic Landscape of the Middle East." *American Journal of Human Genetics* 69: 1095–1112.
- Risch N., H. Tang, H. Katzenstein, and J. Ekstein. 2003. "Geographic Distribution of Disease Mutations in the Ashkenazi Jewish Population Supports Genetic Drift over Selection." *American Journal of Human Genetics* 72: 812–822.
- Strom, C.M., B. Crossley, J. B. Redman, F. Quan, A. Buller, M. J. McGinniss, and W. Sun. 2004. "Molecular Screening for Diseases Frequent in Ashkenazi Jews: Lessons Learned from More Than 100,000 Tests Performed in a Commercial Laboratory." *Genetics in Medicine* 6: 145–152.

### Patient Resources

- Jewish Genetic Disease Consortium, e-mail: [info@JewishGeneticDiseases.org](mailto:info@JewishGeneticDiseases.org)
- Canavan Foundation, e-mail: [info@canavanfoundation.org](mailto:info@canavanfoundation.org)
- Dor Yeshorim Committee for Prevention of Jewish Genetic Diseases, Brooklyn, NY, telephone: 718-384-2332
- Dysautonomia Foundation, e-mail: [info@familialdysautonomia.org](mailto:info@familialdysautonomia.org)
- Dystonia Medical Research Foundation, e-mail: [dystonia@dystonia-foundation.org](mailto:dystonia@dystonia-foundation.org)
- Fanconi Anemia Research Fund, e-mail: [info@fanconi.org](mailto:info@fanconi.org)
- National Gaucher Foundation, e-mail: [robinbmd@aol.com](mailto:robinbmd@aol.com) or [rhonda@gaucherdisease.org](mailto:rhonda@gaucherdisease.org)
- National Tay-Sachs & Allied Diseases Association, e-mail: [info@ntsad.org](mailto:info@ntsad.org)

## Genetic Diseases and the Diaspora

### *Joel Zlotogora*

---

The relatively high frequency of genetic disorders among Jews is a well-known phenomenon. With the advances in molecular genetics of the past two decades, the molecular basis of most of the disorders relatively frequent in the different Jewish communities has been elucidated.

Some of the disorders found with a relatively high frequency among several of the Jewish communities, such as thalassemia, familial Mediterranean fever, or G6PD deficiency, are also frequent in the non-Jewish local populations among which these communities were living. The most probable explanation is the existence of a selective advantage for the carriers of these disorders, such as resistance to malaria for thalassemia and G6PD carriers. These disorders, however, represent exceptions, and in most cases the high frequency of the genetic diseases is limited to the Jewish community. The main factor that led to these observations was the isolation of the

**Table 3 Mendelian Disorders Relatively Frequent among Jews**

Disorder	Heterozygote Frequency
<b>Ashkenazi Jews</b>	
Abetalipoproteinemia	Rare
Adrenal hyperplasia III, nonclassical 21 OH deficiency	1:6
Bloom syndrome	1:94–112
Breast cancer (predisposition)	1:100
Ovarian cancer (predisposition)	1:75
Canavan disease	1:41–60
Colon cancer (predisposition)	1:14–1:20
Cystic fibrosis	1:25
Deafness	1:25
Dysautonomia, familial	1:30–36
Factor XI (PTA) deficiency	1:12
Familial Mediterranean fever	1:5–1:10
Fanconi's anemia	1:77–218
Gaucher's disease type I	1:7–18
Glycogenosis Ia	1:71
Glycogenosis IV (adult)	Rare
Glycogenosis VII phosphokinase deficiency, late-onset	Rare
Hermansky-Pudlak syndrome	1:235
Hypercholesterolemia, familial (Lithuanian Jews)	1:69
Lipoamide dehydrogenase deficiency	1:94
Maple syrup urine disease	1:113
Mucopolidosis IV	1:100–112
Nemaline myopathy	1:108
Niemann-Pick disease A	1:90
Pentosuria	1:35
Persistent hyperinsulinemic hypoglycemia of infancy	1:125–160
Tay-Sachs disease	1:25–30
Thalassemia, alpha	1:17
Torsion dystonia (idiopathic)	1:4,000
Usher's syndrome	1:72
<b>Jews from Morocco</b>	
Adrenal hyperplasia, 11 beta hydroxylase	1:30–1:128
Albinism, oculocutaneous	1:30
Ataxia telangiectasia	1:80
Color blindness, total (achromatopsia)	Unknown
Complement C7 deficiency	1:100
Cystinosis	1:100
Cerebrotendinous xanthomatosis	1:70
Dubin-Johnson syndrome	1:100
Factor VII	1:42
Familial Mediterranean fever	1:7
Fanconi's anemia	1:100

(continued)

**Table 3 (Continued)**

Disorder	Heterozygote Frequency
<b>Jews from Morocco (continued)</b>	
Glycogen storage disease III	1:35
Monilethrix	1:100
Tay-Sachs disease	1:110
<b>Jews from Tunisia</b>	
Brittle cornea syndrome	Unknown
Creutzfeld-Jakob disease	1:24,000
Factor V and VIII deficiency	Unknown
Familial Mediterranean fever	1:7
Leber's congenital amaurosis	Unknown
Fragile X syndrome	Unknown
Selective intestinal malabsorption vitamin B-12	Rare
Mucopolidosis III	Unknown
<b>Jews from Algeria</b>	
Distal spinal muscular atrophy	G526R
Familial Mediterranean fever	1:5
<b>Jews from Libya</b>	
Creutzfeld-Jakob disease	1:24,000
Cystinuria	1:25
Limb girdle muscular dystrophy	1:10
Familial Mediterranean fever	1:5
Megaencephalic leukoencephalopathy	1:50
<b>Jews from Iraq</b>	
Color blindness, total (achromatopsia)	Unknown
Factor XI deficiency (plasma thromboplastin antecedent deficiency)	1:30
Familial Mediterranean fever	1:15
G6PD deficiency	1:4 males
Type III 3-methylglutaconic aciduria	1:10
Microphthalmia/anophthalmia	Unknown
Monilethrix	1:100
Myasthenia gravis, infantile	Unknown
Pituitary dwarfism II (Laron)	Unknown
Pseudocholinesterase deficiency (E1)	1:11
Thrombasthenia (Glanzmann)	1:40
Xeroderma pigmentosum, unclassified	Unknown
<b>Jews from Iran</b>	
Color blindness, total (achromatopsia)	Unknown
Corticosterone methyl oxydase II def	1:30
Dubin-Johnson syndrome	1:20
Factor V and VIII deficiency	Unknown
Factor VII	1:40

(continued)

**Table 3 (Continued)**

Disorder	Heterozygote Frequency
<b>Jews from Iran (continued)</b>	
G6PD deficiency	1:7 males
Microphthalmia/anophthalmia	Unknown
Mitochondrial myopathy, sideroblastic anemia, and lactic acidosis	Unknown
Monilethrix	1:100
Myasthenia gravis, infantile	Unknown
Myoneurogastrointestinal encephalopathy	Unknown
Inclusion body myopathy	1:12
Pituitary dwarfism II (Laron)	Unknown
Polyglandular deficiency syndrome	1:50
Pseudocholinesterase deficiency (E1)	1:9
<b>Jews from Turkey</b>	
Familial Mediterranean fever	1:15
<b>Jews from Kurdistan</b>	
G6PD deficiency	1:1.6 male
Thalassemia, alpha	1:8
Thalassemia, beta	1:6
<b>Egypt (Karaites)</b>	
Huntington's disease	Unknown
Spinal muscular atrophy I	1:10
Frontoparietal polymicrogyria	Unknown
<b>Ethiopia</b>	
Neutropenia, chronic familial	1:3
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	
Oculopharyngeal muscular dystrophy	1:700

communities and mainly due to the rapid population expansion in the last centuries; many genetic diseases became relatively frequent in each of the different Jewish communities (Table 3). As expected for such a process, a single major mutation was found to be responsible for the high frequency of each of those diseases (founder effect). In most cases, the founder mutation is unique, specific for a single Jewish community. However, there are few examples in which the same mutation was found in more than one Jewish community. For instance, the mutation responsible for factor XI deficiency (F11, GLU117TER) is frequent among Ashkenazi Jews and Iraqi Jews. These communities diverged mainly during the 600 years that elapsed between the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, and it was demonstrated that the mutation probably first occurred around this period. The mutation responsible for a frequent myopathy among Iranian Jews (GNE, M712T) was also found among Jews

**Table 4 Mutations Prevalent among Jews That Are Also Found in Other Populations**

Mutation	Population
Bloom syndrome [BLM, 6-BP DEL/7-BP INS]	Ashkenazi Jews in Mexico, New Mexico, El Salvador
Albinism [TYR, G47D]	Jews from Morocco, Puerto Rico, Canary Islands
Creutzfeld-Jakob disease [PRNP, 200K]	Jews from Libya, Tunisia, Italy, Spain, Chile

from Iraq, Kurdistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Egypt, probably as a result of the migration of the Iranian Jews to those countries. As may have been expected, some of the so-called Jewish mutations have been also found in non-Jews (Table 4), mostly in populations with similar origins. For instance, the mutation causing albinism (TYR, G47D) occurs on the same haplotype in Moroccan Jewish persons as in persons from the Canary Islands and Puerto Rico, suggesting a common origin.

However, there are still several unexplained observations, one being the non-random distribution of the disorders that are frequent, such as the group of lysosomal diseases among the Ashkenazi Jews, and another being the existence of many disorders caused by more than one mutation (Table 5). The main explanations have been either a selective advantage to carriers or a founder effect and genetic drift. The possibility of a founder effect and a rapid expansion is the preferred explanation to most human geneticists.

**Table 5 Several Genetic Mutations in One Jewish Community**

Disorder	Location of Genetic Mutation
<b>Ashkenazi Jews</b>	
Canavan disease	ASPA [GLU285ALA]; [TYR231TER]
Factor XI (plasma thromboplastin antecedent) deficiency	F11 [GLU117TER]; [PHE283LEU]
Gaucher's disease type I	GBA [ASN370SER]; [84GG]; [LEU444PRO]; [IVS2DS, G-A, +1]
Lipoamide dehydrogenase deficiency	LAD [GLY229CYS]; [1-BP INS, TYR35TER]
Mucopolipidosis IV	MCOLN1 [IVS3-1A-G]; [del (EX1- EX7)]
Niemann-Pick disease A	SMPD1 [ARG496LEU]; [LEU302PRO]; [PRO330FS]
Persistent hyperinsulinemia hypoglycemia of infants (PHHI)	SUR [IVSAS, G-A, -9, EXON ALPHA DEL]; [3-BP DEL, PHE1388 DEL]
Tay-Sachs disease	HEXA [4-BP INS, EX11]; [IVS12DS, G-C, +1]; [GLY269SER]
Cystic fibrosis	CFTR [PHE508DEL]; [TRP1282TER]; [GLY542TER]; [ASN1303LYS]; [IVS19, C-T, +10]
<b>Jews from Morocco</b>	
Cerebrotendinous xanthomatosis	CYP27 [IVS4DS, G-A, +1]; [1-BP DEL, FS]
Tay-Sachs disease	HEXA
<b>Jews from Iraq</b>	
Thrombasthenia	GPIIIa [11 -BP DEL, EX 12]; [11.2 Kb DEL]

### Selected Bibliography

- Online Mendelian Inheritance in Man, OMIM. McKusick-Nathans Institute for Genetic Medicine, Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, MD) and National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Library of Medicine (Bethesda, MD). <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/omim/> (accessed April 4, 2008).
- Risch N., H. Tang, H. Katzenstein, and J. Ekstein. 2003. "Geographic Distribution of Disease Mutations in the Ashkenazi Jewish Population Supports Genetic Drift over Selection." *American Journal of Human Genetics* 72: 812–822.
- Zlotogora J., G. Bach, and A. Munnich. 2000. "The Molecular Basis of Mendelian Disorders among Jews." *Molecular Genetics and Metabolism* 69: 169–180.
- Zlotogora J., and G. Bach. 2003. "The Possibility for a Selection Process in the Ashkenazi Jewish Population." *American Journal of Human Genetics* 73: 438–440.

## Evolution of Jewish Genealogic Studies

*Sallyann Sack*

---

Genealogy has been part of Jewish history from the start. The book of Genesis lists 10 fully delineated generations from Adam to Noah. Two Torah portions begin with the word *toldot* (generations). The first is Noah (Genesis 6:9); the second simply is called *Toldot* and deals with Isaac (Genesis 25:19). Exodus 6:14 lists the founders of three tribes and their descendants. When individuals assigned tasks in the building of the Tabernacles in the desert are mentioned, their full lineage is given, for example, Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur of the tribe of Judah (Exodus 38:22). The book of Numbers, starting with the camping arrangement, provides a census (Numbers, chapters 1B3), and the book of Ruth ends with a listing of King David's ancestry (Ruth 4:18B22). Ezra (7:1B5) gives his lineage back to the High Priest Aaron, and Nehemiah (7:5) speaks of the genealogical registers of families who were the first to return from Babylonian exile

With the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the start of the Diaspora, one ceases to read about genealogies for several centuries. In the Middle Ages, rabbinic responsa literature frequently includes the lineages of the authors. Although leading, usually rabbinic, families often maintained traditions of their lineages, the practice was neither widespread nor organized.

The first known Jewish genealogy society was founded in Berlin in the 1930s by ophthalmologist Dr. Arthur Czellizer. The society and its members fell victim to the Nazis. A record exists of the founders of a Jewish genealogical society in Palestine in 1937, but nothing more is known of that group. For practical purposes, contemporary, organized Jewish genealogy may be said to have begun in 1977 with the publication of *Finding Our Fathers* by Dan Rottenberg, the first how-to Jewish genealogy book, followed 18 months later by a similar work, Arthur Kurzweil's *From Generation to Generation*. These books were the impetus for the inauguration, also in 1977, of *Toldot: The Journal of Jewish Genealogy* and the creation of the New York-based Jewish Genealogical Society, Incorporated (JGS). Subsequently, Rabbi

Malcolm Stern, long-time president of the JGS, earned the nickname of “father of Jewish genealogy” as he encouraged the formation of Jewish genealogical societies all across the United States.

In 1981, New York was the venue for the first of what has become an annual Jewish genealogical conferences organized by local Jewish genealogy societies and held in a different location every year. The Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Washington organized a genealogy conference in Jerusalem, the first conference outside the United States, thereby inaugurating the international presence of Jewish genealogy. The Israel Genealogical Society formed subsequent to the 1984 conference, and the Cercle de Généalogie Juive (the French Jewish Genealogical Society) organized in France in the same year.

*Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, a quarterly publication now in its 22nd year, appeared as a consequence of the 1984 conference. From its inception, *Avotaynu* served as the “voice of Jewish genealogy,” and today has the largest number of subscribers of any publication devoted exclusively to Jewish genealogy. It soon developed into a major publisher of Jewish genealogical reference books and, in 2004, the U.S. Association of Jewish Libraries awarded it a Body of Work Award for its efforts in developing the field of Jewish genealogy. *Avotaynu*'s biweekly e-zine *Nu? What's New?* was established in 2000. With its 7,000-plus subscribers, *Nu?* is the most-read Jewish genealogy e-zine on the Web.

The number of Jewish genealogical societies continued to grow all over the world, and in 1987 Rabbi Stern and others founded an umbrella organization, the Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (later, the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies [IAJGS]). Gary Mokotoff was elected its first president in 1988. The IAJGS assumed responsibility for determining the venue of the yearly conferences and in recent years has taken an increasingly active role in sponsoring them.

With the fall of the Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc allies early in the 1990s, Jewish genealogy established contacts with archives and archivists all over Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In 1994, the IAJGS established the practice of inviting foreign archivists to address its conferences. JewishGen.org, today the primary voice of Jewish genealogy on the Internet, burst on the genealogical scene in 1995 with a vigor that continues unabated. Today it hosts numerous special interest groups based primarily on country of interest and sponsors the creation of numerous genealogically relevant databases, all posted online for use free of charge. Genealogists all over the world communicate daily via the JewishGen digest. Its efforts are fueled primarily by volunteers.

From 1997 onward, the Jewish genealogical community became truly international. The annual conference was held in Paris, and the number of those pursuing their Sephardic roots began to steadily increase—researchers achieving some remarkable success despite lack of access to archival records in their mostly Muslim ancestral countries.

From its inception, organized Jewish genealogy has been characterized by intensive volunteer efforts that have created reference works, developed databases, and literally developed the field of Jewish genealogy. In the first few years of the

21st century, trends from avocation toward professionalization have begun to emerge. In 2003, JewishGen became an affiliate of the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York. In 2006, the International Institute of Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi Center (IIJG), affiliated with the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, opened its doors. The world's first academic research institute devoted exclusively to Jewish genealogy, the IIJG has two major missions: to conduct professional, academic research in Jewish genealogy and to bring about the establishment of endowed chairs of Jewish genealogy in universities with strong Jewish studies programs all over the world.

Today, thousands of enthusiasts pursue research into their family histories. Research projects increasingly involve collaborations with related disciplines and institutions. Holocaust studies hold a special place while DNA and migratory research look to become increasingly important. The IAJGS has 78 member societies located in Argentina, Australia, Canada, Europe, Israel, South Africa, and the United States. Study groups in Jewish genealogy exist in countries with small Jewish populations, such as New Zealand, and annual conferences attract upward of 2,000 attendees.

Increasingly, the pursuit of Jewish genealogy is moving beyond the realm of the hobbyist toward professionalization. Increasing numbers of individuals offer their research services for a fee; as nonsectarian Web sites charge for their service and their data, so also has JewishGen begun to offer some enhanced services to those who make substantial financial contributions, and the creation of the IIJG marks a substantial step toward making the pursuit a recognized academic discipline.

### **Selected Resources**

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies [IAJGS]: [www.iajgs.org](http://www.iajgs.org)

Jewish Genealogy Avotaynu: [www.avotayn.com](http://www.avotayn.com)

JewishGen: The Home of Jewish Genealogy. Museum of Jewish Heritage: [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org)

International Institute for Jewish Genealogy and Paul Jacobi Center: [www.iijg.org](http://www.iijg.org)

## **Jews, Diaspora, and Medicine**

*Frank Heynick*

---

For some 1,000 years and counting, medicine has been the preeminently Jewish profession. In modern times, the Jewish contribution to advances in all fields of medical science (as indexed, for example, by the number of Nobel Prizes awarded) has been phenomenal. But also in ages past, when treatment was largely theoretical, empirical, folkloric, and (by modern standards) pseudoscientific or irrational, Jewish doctors were among the most illustrious. At all levels, in fact, the Jewish community, usually less than one or two percent of any given country's population, typically supplied from one-sixth to one-half of all physicians. This has been so in remarkably varied societies and political systems, including those that were otherwise

generally unfriendly to Jews. The history of this preeminence involves not just science but also religion, economics, sociology, and psychology.

### **Jews Choose Medicine; Gentiles Choose Jewish Doctors**

The reasons for the millennium of Jewish preeminence in medicine in the Diaspora have been diverse and have varied according to era and locale. Rational medicine—whether based on Greco-Roman natural philosophy, as in ages past, or on recent developments in biology and biochemistry—requires intellect and literacy. This is true, of course, whether the physician be Jewish or Gentile. But whereas the Gentile population in past times was largely illiterate, the Jewish community, intelligent and multiliterate, traditionally produced far more than its share of excellent and even phenomenal students. Furthermore, Jews, in their centuries of wandering and with their international contacts, had resource to a wide range of medical writings: Talmudic, Greco-Roman, Arabic, and so forth.

Medicine has always been a financially attractive field, and the accumulation of individual and communal wealth has long been a Jewish concern. Also, physicians are well respected among people of all religions. This afforded the Jewish community in general some prestige and influence, especially when Jewish doctors (e.g., court physicians) served powerful leaders of the state and the church.

Judaism's attitude toward the human body and life in this world differed significantly from that of its daughter religions, Christianity and Islam, which generally viewed life on earth as a portal to eternal life in the hereafter. Christian ideology in particular, from Saint Augustine onward, was often permeated with a certain disdain for the corporal. Jewish thinking and ethics, by contrast, placed great emphasis on a person's temporal life and respect for the body and its functions.

Medical knowledge had the further advantage of portability. When the Jewish community was expelled from any country, Jewish physicians would find a ready market for their skills and expertise in a new land—the human body being basically the same everywhere.

The vast majority of the typical Jewish doctors' patients were not their coreligionists, but Gentiles, who eagerly sought their services. These especially included the wealthy and the powerful, often church authorities at the highest levels, despite repeated ecclesiastic prohibitions on Christians consulting Jewish physicians.

What made Jewish doctors so highly attractive to Gentile patients? The reasons partly coincided with those that made the medical profession attractive to Jews. Gentiles were aware of the comparatively high level of intellect and learning among the Jews, and they appreciated the Jewish respect for the body and the Jewish value for human life in this world. Sometimes a more mundane economic factor was also in play. Late medieval Gentile physicians accused their Jewish colleagues of, in the time-honored mercantile tradition, undercutting the going rate.

But part of the Gentiles' attraction to Jewish doctors was less rational, especially in ages past, when medicine was at best grounded in pseudoscientific theory and when folk remedies and superstition were widespread. Jews were often thought to have access to dark powers, of which a good Christian could not or should not

have knowledge, that might be drawn upon to effect a miracle cure. Also beyond the realm of the rational is the psychoanalytic explanation: the affect-laden image in the Gentile patient's mind of the Jew as moralistic Old Testament father figure and of the Jewish doctor as paternal herald of punishment for or (hopefully) relieve from the patient's misdeeds.

### **Biblical and Talmudic Background**

As with most prescientific medical systems, the Babylonian and Egyptian approach to illness in the ancient Middle East was a mix of supernatural causation and cures brought about by gods and malevolent and benevolent spirits, various magical and superstitious beliefs, medicaments and remedies discovered by trial and error, and empirical practical techniques.

With the appearance of Jews on the world stage in the second millennium BCE, the concept of the supernatural causation and cure of disease remained, but it was now (at least in principle) in the power of the One God. The great contribution of the biblical Jews to medicine was in the area of public health, most notably the anti-contagion measures in the Torah.

It was in the Diaspora, under the rabbinical system (many rabbis were in fact also physicians), that Jews began to be identified with medicine. The Talmud, although containing no specifically medical text, included hundreds of medical and health references and anatomical observations (particularly with reference to animals, in connection with kosher regulations).

### **The Islamic Era**

Jewish preeminence in medicine began around the dawn of the second millennium CE, when Islamic civilization was in its golden age. Although Mohammed had initially waged war against Jews, Islam evolved into a relatively tolerant social system after its aggressive expansion across an area ranging from Spain to present-day Pakistan. It was the respect for the learning of others by Islamic scholars (who were themselves usually not great innovators) that brought about the golden age.

In ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, philosophers and physicians—Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen—had established a rational medicine based on natural philosophy rather than on magic or the supernatural. But with the fall of the Roman Empire in the mid-fifth century CE, the ancient texts fell into disuse as Europe slid into the Dark Ages. This rational medicine was revived and expanded upon by the physicians in the Islamic world.

Most prominent of the many Jewish physicians of the Islamic era was Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon [1135–1204]). Driven from Spain as a child when an intolerant Islamic sect came to power, Maimonides went to North Africa and eventually settled in Cairo, where he served as chief physician to the caliph.

Authoring 10 medical books based largely on Greco-Roman doctrine, Maimonides expounded on subjects such as diet, poisons and antidotes, and medicaments (wisely urging moderation). As spiritual leader as well as physician, he wrote on

Maimonides was arguably the leading Jewish philosopher and intellectual of the Middle Ages. He codified the Talmud and wrote a number of works interpreting Jewish religion in rational terms in light of the Aristotelian philosophy, in vogue in his day. He was also one of the outstanding physicians of Egypt at the time. His thought and work are still studied and carry influence in contemporary Jewish life. (National Library of Medicine)



mental health and advocated a variation of Aristotle's golden mean. Maimonides' medical aphorisms formed a handy compendium for practicing physicians.

### European Reawakening

The waning of the golden age of Islamic civilization coincided with the emergence of Christian Europe from the Dark Ages into the High Middle Ages. With this came the transfer of philosophical and scientific knowledge, particularly medical, from the Islamic to the Christian world, largely via Jewish physicians as a result of the centuries-long Reconquista of Iberia by the Christians, the expulsion of all nonconverted Jews from Spain in 1492 (and soon from Portugal), and the persecution by the Inquisition of (nominal) converts.

Multilingual Jewish physicians, such as Judah ibn Tibbon, the "father of translators," carried the medical knowledge of Hippocrates and Galen, which had been elaborated upon, expanded, and systematized by the likes of Maimonides into Europe, especially southern France.

Beginning in the seventh century, Catholic church ordinances repeatedly restricted, or forbade outright under pain of excommunication, the consulting of Jewish physicians by the faithful. Nevertheless, Gentiles were so in awe of Jewish medical knowledge that various loopholes were found. Popes, bishops, kings, and princes regularly had Jewish court physicians. As for the general population, it has been estimated that Jews constituted half of all physicians in the late Middle Ages, although only about one in a hundred Europeans were Jewish.

Iberian Jews hounded by the Inquisition found a welcome in the Netherlands, a predominantly Protestant country in rebellion against their Catholic-Spanish Habsburg overlords. Iberian-Jewish doctors served the Dutch royal court and were central to the drama around the heresy accusations against philosopher Spinoza (1632–1677), who, although not a physician, made crucial contributions to psychology and to the mind-body debate.

## Modern Europe

The great scientific, artistic, and intellectual advances of the Renaissance and Enlightenment were taking place, somewhat ironically, at a time of increased ghettoization and intellectual isolation of the Jews in most Central and Western European countries (partly because of the policies of the rabbis). Fortunately, Jewish physicians, the only university-educated Jews, could serve as conduits to their communities of the developments in larger European society.

Europe's first universities, founded from the 11th century onward, were church institutions from which Jews were, in principle, excluded. (Jewish doctors, like most Christian physicians, learned medicine as apprentices to older practitioners.) But Padua in Italy regularly made exceptions for Jewish medical students. The Dutch universities, beginning with Leiden in the 16th century, were nondiscriminatory. In the 18th century, German universities began to allow Jews to matriculate in medicine. (Rabbis, for their part, were wary about letting young Jews be exposed to modern science and philosophy; but they granted dispensation for the study of medicine.)

Practical progress in medicine was painfully slow. The Greco-Roman doctrines, which although rationally based were generally fallacious, were superseded by new anatomical research (observations, postmortem dissections, experimentation) and advances in chemistry and physics. Various new medical theories were propounded, but these seldom resulted in effective treatments.

However, as the 19th century progressed, a veritable explosion of medical knowledge took place, particularly in the German-speaking lands, as researchers with their newly perfected microscopes focused on the subvisible world, and modern chemistry was applied to biology. Not by chance, this coincided with the gradual political emancipation of the Jews and their increasing participation in wider society. Whatever differences there had been between the Jewish and the Gentile practice of medicine largely disappeared in modern industrialized countries. (Folkloric practices continued, however, among “healers” in less advanced Jewish communities.) The contributions of Jewish medical men—increasingly assimilated, sometime irreligious or apostate—now reached new heights. Particularly noteworthy was the Jewish role in the triumph over pathogenic microorganisms, the scourges of humankind since time immemorial.

A great pioneer of the germ theory of communicable diseases was Jacob Henle (1809–1885) in Berlin, Heidelberg, and Göttingen. Rober Remak (1815–1865) in Berlin elucidated, among many other things, the concept of cell division (including microorganisms) and was instrumental in disproving the fallacy of spontaneous

genetation. Ferdinand Cohn (1828–1898), professor of botany in Breslau, pioneered the concept of specific etiology: that for any given infectious disease there is a specific strain of microorganism as its causative agent.

Arguably the greatest Jewish doctor of all time was the physician-chemist Paul Ehrlich (1854–1915). As professor in Berlin and Frankfurt, Ehrlich pioneered the field of immunology: the body's natural defense against pathogenic microorganisms and toxins. (For this he shared the Nobel Prize in 1908 with the Russian half-Jewish immunologist Eli Metchnikoff of the Pasteur Institute in Paris.) Ehrlich went on to tame the scourge of syphilis by creating Salvarsan ("safe arsenic"), the first rationally developed chemotherapeutic agent for any disease.

In Vienna, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) began by making important contributions to neurology, particularly to the study of aphasia. But he then went on to develop his revolutionary (nonphysiological) model of the mind, with emphasis on unconscious forces and the role of early childhood in personality development.

In the early decades of the 20th century, Karl Landsteiner (1868–1943) in Vienna established blood group classification (Nobel Prize 1930). During World War I, the Polish hematologist Ludwik Hirsfeld established the geographic distribution of these blood groups. (The Nazis later perverted their work to use against the Jews.) At Oxford during World War II, the German refugee chemist Ernst Boris Chain was instrumental in developing penicillin (Nobel Prize 1945).

For each of these European Jewish medical luminaries there were many others, too numerous to mention, making vital contributions to every field of medicine. Up to mid-century, 13 Nobel Prizes had been awarded to Jewish physicians, the majority of them European. Furthermore, the number of practicing Jewish physicians in all fields was wildly disproportionate. In Germany in the early 20th century, one-sixth of all physicians were drawn from a Jewish population of less than 1 percent. All that changed with the Holocaust, and with the rise of the United States as a medical superpower.

## The American Century

Records of Jewish doctors in the British American colonies date back to the 17th century. But notwithstanding some important discoveries, America's contributions to world medicine—whether by Gentiles or Jews—lagged far behind those of Europe up to the turn of the 20th century. This was largely because of the generally appalling state of U.S. medical schools, most of which were diploma mills.

The transformation of American medicine and medical education was largely due to the brothers Simon Flexner (1863–1946) and Abraham Flexner (1866–1959) of Louisville, Kentucky. Simon headed the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Science in New York, which focused on fundamental biomedical research, for three decades after its founding in 1901. In 1910, Abraham (a nonphysician educator) issued, under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation, the Flexner report, which resulted in the closing of most U.S. medical schools and the radical upgrading of the others, with higher admission standards and basic biomedical sciences in the curriculum. (Ironically, in the first half of the 20th century, the admission of eminently qualified Jewish students to most U.S. medical schools would be limited by a quota system.)

Among the several early 20th-century American-Jewish breakthroughs in medicine were the principles of manipulative biological engineering of German-born Jacques Loeb (1859–1924) at the Rockefeller Institute, and Austro-Hungarian-born Joseph Goldberger's (1874–1929) elucidation that the epidemiology of pellagra in the southern states was attributable to a vitamin deficiency and not to microbes.

The most historic American-Jewish contribution to medicine to date was that of the soil biologist Selman Waksman (1888–1973) at Rutgers University's Agricultural College. The Ukrainian-born Waksman was part of the wave of millions of East European Jews who were changing the face of American Jewry and American medicine. Streptomycin, the original antibiotic developed by Waksman from the exudes of *Actinomyces* soil microorganisms, proved devastatingly effective against the age-old scourges of tuberculosis and bubonic plague, and it won Waksman the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1952.

### Recent Developments and Future Trends

The second half of the 20th century saw the transition of American (and Western) medicine into an industry characterized by billion-dollar investments in high-tech facilities, predominantly involved with the chronic and complex health problems—cardiovascular disease, cancers, mental and psychosomatic afflictions, genetic defects, and geriatric care—of an advanced and prosperous society.

Presently, one in six or seven of all American medical doctors are Jewish, but this proportion is far greater at the top echelons of the profession. From 1952 to 2007, 40 Jewish MDs and PhDs—the great majority American, including several refugees and three women—have been awarded the Nobel in medicine/physiology. Their contributions have ranged from neurology to microbiology, cardiology, oncology, pharmacology, endocrinology, and beyond.

An apparent trend around the turn of the 21st century has been a decline in Jewish applicants to U.S. medical schools, presumably because of a certain socio-economic complacency and the somewhat diminished status of physicians in the evolving health care system. But, as noted, the reasons for Jewish identification with medicine are many and have varied through the ages. The 1,000-year tradition of medicine as the Jewish profession can be expected to continue strongly in the new millennium.

### Selected Bibliography

- Friedenwald, Harry. 1944. *Jews and Medicine: Essays*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.
- Heynick, Frank. 2002. *Jews and Medicine: An Epic Saga*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV.
- Preuss, Julius. 1911. *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine*. Translated from the German by Fred Rosner. Repr. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993.

# Freud, Judaism, and the Emergence of Psychoanalysis

*Frank Heynick*

---

As one of the most important Jewish thinkers of all time, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the originator of the psychoanalytic model of the mind and of the corresponding method of psychotherapy, influenced Western thought for most of the 20th century. He once asked with regard to psychoanalysis, “Why did it have to wait for an absolutely irreligious Jew?” This question was rather rhetorical, for Freud was well aware of how his particular intellect and personality and their Jewish component reacted with the mix of sociocultural, religious, political, and scientific currents in Vienna to produce and advance psychoanalysis.

## Background: Society, Politics, and Medicine in Vienna

In the second half of the 19th century, the Jews of Vienna experienced an escalation in their socioeconomic status, profiting from free trade across the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, industrialization, the benevolent protection of Emperor Francis Joseph, and a national government drawn largely from the middle class, which included Jewish ministers. However, stock market crashes and scandals led to a popular disillusionment and to a rise of Austro-Germanic nationalism and anti-Semitism. Karl Lueger, elected mayor of Vienna in 1895, was overtly hostile to Jews in his rhetoric, if not necessarily in his policies.

Although Vienna was continually fed by an influx of traditional *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews), the city had been a center of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), and was now a focus of modernism, to which Jews who were loosened from their traditional moorings (sometimes nominal converts to Christianity) were contributing mightily. Josef Popper-Lynkeus expounded the concept of aesthetic beauty and technology for its own sake; Ludwig Wittgenstein developed the philosophy of science called logical positivism; Arnold Schönberg began experimenting with “atonal” *Lieder*.

In the field of medicine, the latter decades of the 19th century were a time of breathtakingly rapid progress, particularly in the German-speaking countries of Europe, as the subvisible world of cells, microorganisms, and molecules revealed their secrets to microscopists and biochemists. In Vienna, as elsewhere, a wildly disproportionate number of doctors were Jewish, and they were contributing to advances in medicine and surgery. But in the new age of medical specialization, the prejudiced academic powers that be were channeling young Jewish doctors into more marginalized specialisms such as ophthalmology and dermatology—and psychiatry.

Yet if some Jewish doctors were being pushed into psychiatry, many others were drawn to it, for the Jews of late 19th century Vienna were facing mental pressures different from any in past Jewish history. For centuries, Diaspora Jewish physicians

and philosophers, such as Maimonides, had written on the means of attaining spiritual well-being, often in a sea of hostile humanity. Their compass was the age-old Jewish religious and cultural values. Now, however, Jews were being set adrift in an era of modernity that they themselves were doing so much to create.

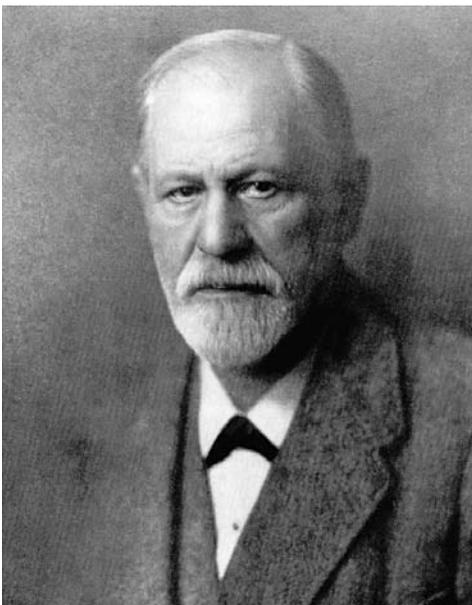
### Freud and Judaism

As a rationalist of the modern age, Freud, throughout his adult life, rejected all religion beliefs, even likening them to neuroses. But Freud strongly identified himself as a Jew, feeling an amorphous spiritual bond with the Jewish people. He proudly drew upon the Jewish rational tradition, exemplified by the likes of Spinoza, which he credited for the freedom of thought that allowed him to develop psychoanalysis. He furthermore expressed admiration for the moral teachings of Judaism, and saw psychoanalysis as facilitating the channeling of instinctual drives for the work of civilization.

Freud also repeatedly identified himself as culturally Germanic. However, the rise of anti-Semitism served only to strengthen his identification with the Jewish people. He consistently opposed conversion, seeing it as inherently dishonest. Freud furthermore credited his Jewish spirit of not conforming to the majority with providing him with the fortitude to overcome the medical establishment's strong opposition to his theories.

### Freud's Development of Psychoanalysis

Freud studied medicine at the University of Vienna, specializing in psychiatry-neurology. (His middle-class merchant father had moved the family from Freiberg, today Pribor, Czech Republic, when Sigmund was three years old.) In the new era of



Sigmund Freud devised the therapy for mental disorders known as psychoanalysis, which involves uncovering repressed psychological traumas so that the patient can confront and overcome them. Although the specifics of many of his theories no longer command the wide acceptance they once did, the general framework for psychotherapy that he created has exercised an enormous influence on the theory and practice of psychology. (Library of Congress)

rapid advances in anatomical research, cellular biology, and biochemistry, young Dr. Freud was first attracted to the neurological side of the field. Among his important contributions was his study of aphasia—major disruptions of language due to gross physical trauma or stroke.

But in the 1890s, Freud was increasingly drawn to more subtle language disturbances, such as slips of the tongue, and was particularly intrigued by the strange features of dreams, which he regarded as a language of sorts. Through analysis of speech and dreams, and retrieval of memories of early childhood, Freud developed his model of the mind.

Freud theorized that the thinking of infants and young children operates according to a set of primary processes that are governed by such nongrammatical features as displacements, condensations, and reversals. With the acquisition of verbal language, the primary processes are superseded as the conscious manner of functioning by the secondary processes, which operate by the rules of grammar and logic. The primary processes, however, are not banished from the mind, for they remain the manner of functioning of the unconscious.

Essential in Freud's theory of psychopathology was the belief that the unconscious part of the adult mind is the repository not only of an infantile-childlike mode of thinking but also of a thought *content* derived from the early years of life. This includes unsocialized instinctual drives, jealousies, traumas, and the like, particularly of a sexual nature: the Oedipus complex in boys and the Electra complex in girls. Such unconscious complexes are at the root of adult neuroses: personality disturbances, maladaptive interpersonal relations, mood disorders, phobias, obsessions, and fixations.

Freud's therapeutic treatment involved shedding light on the unconscious complexes and thereby neutralizing their influence. Access to the unconscious by the conscious mind is blocked by the psychological agency that Freud termed the "censor." But indications of the unconscious content of the psyche are revealed by primary-process interference with everyday speech (Freudian slips such as unintended word substitutions and neologisms) and—more dramatically because the censor is less on guard at night—by the primary-process features of dreams (such as symbol substitutions and composite images). Free-associating by a patient to these elements under guidance of an analyst serves to further reveal the unconscious complexes and retrieve crucial memories from early childhood.

Various cultural and artistic works—paintings, sculptures, literature, myths, fairy tales, humor, theater, and cinema—are theoretically likewise products of an interplay of the unconscious and conscious regions of the mind. Freud and his disciples applied his theory to analyze these as well.

### Psychoanalysis and Jewishness

There is nothing particularly Jewish in psychoanalytic theory as outlined here, except that Freud proudly drew upon the rationalist strain of Judaism. (It is questionable whether he may also have been influenced by Hasidic and Talmudic views on dreams and their interpretation.) Freud's patients were, like Freud himself, largely

middle-class Jews; however, he considered his discoveries to be applicable to the human condition in general.

Noteworthy is that Freud's fascination with dreams was clearly enhanced by Jewish conflicts and concerns on a societal level. Several of his dreams and their analysis, which are presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, involved matters of academic barriers, assimilation, and the temptations of (nominal) conversion (e.g., his Rome series of dreams). In such cases, Freud provides few if any indications of Oedipal or other early childhood roots to the conflicts, although he maintained in principle that such complexes are ultimately the driving force behind virtually all dreams.

Almost all of the members of Freud's inner circle of disciples were Jewish, and Freud was concerned that psychoanalysis would be viewed as a Jewish national affair. He therefore saw the Swiss Protestant psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung as his crown prince until Jung, who was ever more deeply involved in a mysticism antithetical to Freud, broke with the psychoanalytic movement in 1913 to develop his own depth psychology.

When Hitler came to power in Germany, Jung opportunistically touted his psychological doctrine as an Aryan alternative to Jewish psychoanalysis. Jung's flirtation with Nazism was rather brief, but Freud's doctrines were a target of many anti-Semites as being destructive to the Germanic soul. In the wake of the *Anschluss* of Austria with Germany in 1938, Freud, thanks to his international fame, was able to find refuge in London, where he died, a Jewish exile, the following year.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bakan, David. 1958. *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition*. Repr. Boston: Beacon, 1975.
- Gay, Peter. 1978. *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gilman, Sandor L. 1993. *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Heynick, Frank. 1993. *Language and Its Disturbances in Dreams: The Pioneering Work of Freud and Kraepelin Updated*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Heynick, Frank. 2002. "Vienna, City of Dreams." In *Jews and Medicine: An Epic Saga*, 363–398. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV.
- Robert, Marthe. 1977. *From Oedipus to Moses: Freud's Jewish Identity*. Translated from the French by Ralph Manheim. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. 1991. *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

# Sephardi, Oriental, and Ashkenazi Ethnicities and Culture

## Jews under Muslim Rule

*Frederick Schweitzer*

---

The heyday of the Jews in the Arab-Islamic world was 800 to 1250, when a near equality prevailed in those spheres that were not specifically religious, notably economic activity. Many centuries of political instability, economic deterioration, and military defeats followed. The exception to prolonged decline was the Ottoman Empire, the greatest Muslim state in history, in which Jews flourished so long as the empire flourished, to about 1700; in its successor, modern Turkey, Jews continue to enjoy acceptance. Although there is an anti-Semitic infrastructure extant in Islam, it is clear that Jews were much better off under Islam than in Christendom. References to Jews in the Koran are mostly negative, and the positive references were consistently ignored or explained away by Muslim interpreters. The Koran requires “abasement and poverty” for Jews, and Muhammad’s expulsion of Jewish tribes from Medina was a compelling precedent much invoked by later Muslim authorities. The hadith (tradition, law, legend) is scathing in attacking Jews as debased, cursed, anathematized forever by God; cheats and traitors; defiant and stubborn; murderers of the prophets; and liars who falsify scripture and take bribes. As infidels they are considered ritually unclean, a foul odor emanating from them—such is the image of the Jew in classical Islam, degraded and malevolent. Although they allegedly tried to poison him, the Jews could not be condemned as killers of Muhammad, who, in any event, was neither a Jew nor a god.

Jews (and Christians) had the status of *dhimmis* (protected minority). The *dhimma* code was intended to degrade and humiliate individuals as well as the religious community. It specified that *dhimmis* had to pay heavier taxes and wear clothes and insignia distinguishing them from Muslims (the yellow badge originated in Islam). In addition, they were barred from holding public office, bearing arms, riding a horse or mule, or intermarrying with Muslims. *Dhimmis* were disqualified as witnesses in litigation involving Muslims, they had to swear a demeaning oath, and they could not erect new or repair old synagogues or proselytize or hold public religious processions (including funeral corteges). Later provisions prohibited *dhimmis* from adopting Arab names, studying the Koran, and selling alcoholic beverages. Thus, Muslim antipathy for Jews is a much more normal form of antagonism of one people, or one religion, for another than the Christian-Jewish encounter. *Dhimma* discrimination was often merely theory, and de facto toleration usually prevailed. Nevertheless, the code constituted a perpetual potential menace to the *dhimmis*—a danger that materialized whenever a revolutionary or pious ruler came to power. Dhimmitude was repeatedly invoked down to the present as the proper status of Jews, one of legal inequality and social inferiority, hedged about by

humiliation and contempt, institutionalized, religiously ordained, and utterly routine, yet far better than in Christian Europe.

The *dhimma* system and Jewish status in Islamic society have been the subject of varied judgments, from the older golden age school to the recent revisionists' persecution and pogrom interpretation. The traditional school follows the pro-Islamic Jews, who were pioneering and empathetic historians of Islam, especially of the Arab and Ottoman periods. In response to Christian persecutions, from the Crusades on, which victimized Jews and Muslims alike, such scholars propounded the myth of a golden age or several great ages—notably Muslim Spain—when Jews prospered in economic freedom and presumably enjoyed equality and acceptance virtually undisturbed by persecution or discrimination; these pioneering scholars ignored the historical record of pervasive humiliation, discrimination, and periodic violence in a kind of solidarity with fellow Semites in the face of Christian hostility. The myth, says Bernard Lewis, was fashioned by Jews “as a reproach to Christians” and is now taken up by Muslims—invoking putative golden ages—“as a reproach to Jews” (Lewis 1973, 130, 134–135). According to Arab-Muslim claims, frequently reiterated since 1948, Jews always enjoyed equality and social harmony under Islam. Under the yoke of *dhimmitude*, Muslim-Jewish relations were good because Jews were held in check and Muslims were thus protected from them; the demise of the system, first under Western colonial rule, then the rebirth of Israel meant that Jews were supposedly dangerous to Muslims and Islam.

Such idealization of the past ignores a catalogue of polemics, forced conversions (in some instances victims were allowed to return to Judaism but from the 12th century the theological argument surfaced that Muhammad had promised 500 years of tolerance, after which, if the Messiah had not come, Judaism would be outlawed and forced conversions legalized), expulsions, and massacres. It did not take much to trigger violence when Jews were addressed in such forms as “carrion, sons of carrion” and identified by a yellow badge or its equivalent. Rumors and accusations that a Jew or the Jews had blasphemed Muhammad, insulted Islam, defamed a Muslim, molested a Muslim woman, desecrated a mosque, or apostatized after conversion to Islam could cause an explosion. Expulsions of Jews by the first caliphs were inauspicious. Hostile attitudes manifested in the ninth century resulted in persecution and outbreaks of violence that took a heavy toll, and there is record of a great many Jews expelled from Baghdad by the supposedly liberal caliph, al-Ma'mun. Anti-Semitic propaganda of the 10th and 11th centuries made Jews out to be untrustworthy, treacherous oppressors, and exploiters of Muslims, which inspired outbreaks of violence and caused many casualties. In 1012–1019, Caliph al-Hakim of Fatimite Egypt expelled all the *dhimmis* who refused conversion to Islam; the last century of Mamluk Egypt, until the Ottoman conquest in 1517, was one of outright persecution, extreme discrimination, and extortionate taxation. The Jews of Baghdad suffered severe persecution in the years 1120–1121, again in 1291, and throughout the 14th century from a brutal, persecutory enforcement of the *dhimma* code. Morocco's rulers had forcibly moved many of its Jews to the *mellah* of Fez, a ghetto intended to protect them but that turned into a trap in 1465, when a Jewish vizier was assassinated, the signal, as it often was, to unleash a

pogrom on the *mellah* and touch off a wave of massacres across the country. Thereafter Morocco's history is punctuated every few years to the end of the 19th century with anti-Jewish violence and depredations.

Jews also suffered violence and ghettoization in Muslim-controlled Spain. There were violent outbreaks in Cordoba in 1011, and Granada's Jewish quarter was wiped out in 1066, because some Jews were wealthy and others, as royal officials, exercised authority over Muslims—that is, they “oppressed” Muslims. In 1090, the Almoravids conquered Muslim Spain, destroying Granada's Jewish quarter again. The fanatical Almohads conquered North Africa and most of Muslim Spain from 1147 to 1160, proceeding with widespread massacres and forcing the *dhimmis* to accept Islam or perish by the sword. This development appalled the great sage Maimonides—his family had fled from Spain to Egypt—who lamented that “no nation has ever done more harm to Israel. None has matched it in debasing, humiliating, and hating us” (Cohen 1994, 198). A Muslim poem of the 11th century dubs the Jews a criminal people and complains that society is collapsing because Jews, having accumulated great wealth and power, exploit and betray the Muslims—the poet urges as a religious duty the assassination of viziers and other appointed Jewish officials in order to end their usurpation and domination. The poet also claims that Jews worship the devil, and, as required by Jewish law, they poison food and water just as physicians poison their patients. The poem reprises most of the anti-Semitic accusations made against Jews in medieval and early modern Europe, including ritual murder.

Yemeni Jews, who were perennial targets of riot and forced conversion, were expelled to a desert region near the Red Sea in 1678, which caused great suffering and cost many lives before they were allowed to return in 1681. Persia, the modern Iran, has a long history of persecuting Jews, and from 1500 to 1900 the condition of Jews there seems to have been worse than elsewhere under Islamic rule; Shia Islam regards Jews as ritually impure and unclean, and thus Jews, among other indignities, were compelled to remain indoors when it rained so that their impurity would not wash off on Muslims. Physical attack and forced conversion en masse to Islam were commonplace, creating many crypto-Jews like those of Spain and Portugal.

The Damascus blood libel of 1840 was instigated by Arab Christians and supported by the French ambassador: after many arrests, the torture of suspects, mob violence, several murders, and forced conversions, Western governments intervened with the result that the prisoners were released and the Ottoman sultan issued a decree denouncing blood libel as a baseless fabrication. Nevertheless, many accusations of ritual murder occurred in later decades in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt and are rife in anti-Semitic propaganda throughout the Middle East since 1967. Arab anti-Semitic writings date from the decades after the Damascus affair, when European anti-Semitism was introduced by Westerners and funneled into the Middle East by Arab Christians. It was Islamized by 1900 by reference to the Koran and hadith; the motif of eternal Jewish conspiracy was confirmed by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, first translated by a Lebanese Maronite Christian priest in 1925, and, equally pernicious, August Rohling's *Talmud Jew*, which appeared in 1899. Later, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Henry Ford's *International Jew* were added to these anti-Semitic best sellers.

The end of the Diaspora in Arab lands, reducing more than 800,000 Jews to less than 50,000 by the 1990s, is a unique series of expulsions. The Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948 was a catalyst rather than its cause. From the 1920s and 1930s, and especially during World War II in those areas under German, Italian, or Vichy French occupation and influence, the foundations of every major Jewish community were undermined by repeated violence initiated by Arab governments or mob actions: supposedly spontaneous riots and assaults; massacres and pillage that destroyed homes, businesses, and synagogues; mass arrests and internments; assets frozen and property sequestered; citizenship canceled, rendering Jews stateless in a process of denaturalization; designation of Zionism as a crime in the penal code; spurious trials and public hangings of so-called spies; and demands and orders to leave with only the clothes on their backs alternating with prohibitions on movement or departure. In any year and in any Arab country, this statement by a Jewish reporter about a pogrom in Constance, Algeria, would be valid: “[A]ll of [Arab] North Africa presents at this moment [1934] the aspect of a volcanic territory, at the center of which an explosion can erupt from one instant to the next” (Stillman 1991, 365). Following are some examples: in 1929, Palestinian Arab rioters killed 129 Jews (mostly defenseless elderly pilgrims) at the Western Wall in Jerusalem; in 1936, murderous riots occurred widely in Palestine and spread to cities of neighboring countries; in 1937–1939, there was much pillaging of Jewish private and communal property in many areas of the Middle East; in 1941, there was a terrible pogrom in Baghdad when the pro-German regime was overthrown as the British army approached; in 1941, Italian forces in Libya cleared out extensive areas, deporting Jews to internment camps and labor brigades where many died of disease or exposure or shootings of accused collaborators; in 1942–1943, German military occupation of much of North Africa led to the Nazi brutality of roundups and forced labor, beatings and shootings, and confiscation of property, especially in Tunisia in the last stages of the campaign; in French Algeria, the Vichy racial laws were imposed followed by the familiar gamut of internments, slave labor, confiscations, and high casualties; in 1944 and each year thereafter, culminating in 1948 with Israel’s rebirth, there were incessant anti-Semitic incitement and anti-Zionist riots with much pillage and loss of life throughout the Arab world. Conditions, said a Jewish observer in 1949, are “unbearable materially, economically as well as morally” and compel us to get “free of this hell” (Stillman 1991, 155). And so, Libya, Yemen, Aden, Iraq (where Jews had lived for 2,500 years), and Syria were virtually emptied of their Jewish populations. Having always been closed to Jews in modern times, Saudi Arabia had no Jewish community to demean or expel. Egyptian Jewry’s turn came with Gamal Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal and the 1956 war with Britain, France, and Israel. France’s withdrawal from its North African colonies brought independence to Morocco (its Jewish community of a quarter million was the largest in Arab lands), Tunisia, and eventually Algeria. To the traditional Judeophobia, these countries added an intolerant nationalism that turned the isolated Jewish communities into alien entities, with the result that the Jews fled (mostly to France, because they were French citizens). The final episode was a last exodus from Tunisia after the bloody and destructive riots sparked by the Six-Day War of 1967.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Mark R. 1994. *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lewis, Bernard. 1984. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Perry, Marvin, and Frederick M. Schweitzer. 2007. *Antisemitic Myths: Historic and Contemporary Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Stillman, Norman A. 1979. *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Stillman, Norman A. 1991. *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Wistrich, Robert S. 2002. *Muslim Anti-Semitism: A Clear and Present Danger*. New York: American Jewish Committee.

## History of the Religious Leadership of Oriental Jewry

*Menachem Ben-Sasson*

---

The organization of Jewish public life during the early Islamic period has been sketched many times in a consistent portrait: several centralized, super-communal institutions located in Babylonia and the Land of Israel stood at the top of a hierarchy. Claiming sacred authority, they prevented the rise of independent, local Jewish communities. Only with the decline of these central institutions did new, super-communal networks develop among Jews in Egypt, Yemen, North Africa, and Spain. By usurping the powers and responsibilities of the old sacred centers, however, the new regional centers in turn blocked the development of local Jewish communities in Islamic lands. Such a highly organized picture of the central institutions governing the Jews of Islamic lands distorts the image of their society, which has been depicted within either a Geonic or a Mediterranean framework. Moreover, the tendency has been to overlook specific societal features, such as local and family identities, in order to present a simplified and unified historical picture.

This study offers an alternative description of Jewish intercommunal relations during the Geonic and the classical Genizah periods, from the 8th to 13th centuries CE, dealing with Rabbinite communities throughout the Islamic world. Focus will be on the variegated nature and sophistication of intercommunal relations during the Geonic and Genizah periods and the stages in the rise of local Jewish communities in Islamic lands. What should emerge is an alternative institutional history of Islamic Jewish society.

### Super-Communal Authorities: Image and Reality

The basic structure of Jewish leadership—its institutions and organization—was rooted in the pre-Islamic period. After the Islamic conquest the leadership of the

two sacred centers in Babylonia and the Land of Israel was regarded as authoritative both by the Jews themselves and by the non-Jewish rulers of these regions. Jewish leadership in these centers was concentrated in four yeshiva institutions: the three respective Babylonian yeshivas of Sura, Pumbedita, and the Exilarch (*Rosh ha-golah*), and the yeshiva of the Land of Israel. Claiming to be the sole legitimate successor to the Sanhedrin—not only in name but also in function—each yeshiva demanded recognition as the absolute authority for directing Jewish life.

The centers in the Land of Israel and Babylonia both developed religious justifications for their supremacy. While the former pointed to its geographic location in the Holy Land as proof that it occupied the seat of the ancient Sanhedrin, the latter derived its absolute authority from a tradition concerning Jehoiachin, one of the last kings of Judah who was exiled by the Assyrians to Babylonia. According to legend, Jehoiachin established a yeshiva (i.e., a sanhedrin), accomplishing thereby the divine plan to transfer the teaching of the Oral Law to a more secure place than the Land of Israel, which would face mounting pressures and persecutions for more than 500 years to come. In this way Babylonia became, according to its champions, the divinely chosen place for Jews until the Last Redemption. And the word Zion came to designate a particular Babylonian virtue, excellence in study (*me~zuyanim be-limmudam*), rather than a geographic location. Each center's claim to authority was translated as well into the system of leadership that prevailed at its yeshiva. For generations, only members of certain sacred dynasties were permitted to hold the leading positions at these institutions—positions that invested national leadership in them as well. It should be noted that the term *yeshiva* was exclusively reserved at that time for these leading institutions; it never designated a local academy.

With each institution claiming absolute authority, the communities they sought to control could, in fact, play one off against the other. To avoid such maneuvering and prevent the outbreak of controversies, the eastern regions were divided into four geographical areas or *reshuyot* (sing. *reshut*): Egypt, Syria, and the Holy Land were under the yeshiva of the Land of Israel; Persia and the region east of Iraq belonged to the *reshut* of the Exilarch; northern and western Iraq were attached to the Gaon of Sura; and the South, including the Yemen, was under the Gaon of Pumbedita.

With the support of non-Jewish rulers, through long-established precedent and their claim to sacred supremacy, the yeshivas succeeded in exerting their power. The local Jewish communities of the *reshut* areas were compelled to accept the authority both of the yeshiva's head and of his local appointees; any official Jewish business done in these communities was performed, in effect, with the permission of the head of the yeshiva. Even lower officials in the local communities were nominated by the local judge, who was a member (*haver*) of the yeshiva and received his authority from its head. By supplying the authority for a community's activities, the yeshiva made that community its dependent. It would not be mistaken, therefore, to define the yeshiva as a super-communal institution.

The relations between these centers and the local communities are reflected in hundreds of documents discovered in the Cairo Genizah. Another important source

Fragment of a document from the Cairo Genizah. (Isadore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)



is the detailed report of a certain Nathan ben Isaac the Babylonian (ca. 950 CE), which was based on his personal experience at the yeshiva of Sura. Impressed with his objective tone, historians have tended to give the account special weight and have, for example, accepted uncritically his periodization of Geonic leadership. At the same time, however, much has been incautiously projected from Nathan's description of the Babylonian center, and scholars have assumed that its official authority extended over all Jewish settlements in the Islamic world. Support for such an assumption has been derived from the hundreds of surviving questions, which were directed to Baghdad from the Maghreb. The evidence that thousands of dinars were sent as donations to the yeshivas of Babylonia and the Land of Israel has suggested, moreover, that the two centers maintained similar types of relations with the Diaspora. Indeed, it seemed natural to conclude that throughout the lands of the caliphate, Jewish communities remained subordinate to the centers in Babylonia and the Land of Israel and were thereby prevented from developing as independent entities. Although the Genizah discoveries have led scholars to modify Nathan's harmonious picture, there is still a tendency to project it upon Jewish communities throughout the lands of Islam.

The fault in this line of thought is that, even if Nathan's account were wholly reliable, two main points are ignored. First, Nathan never claimed that his report applied to communities outside the *Reshuyot*, and with more than one institution claiming absolute authority, the heads of the different yeshivas struggled constantly with each other to establish their supremacy. The official authority claimed by the centers in Babylonia and the Land of Israel extended only over the areas already mentioned. Although these centers remained the sources of authority for their *Reshuyot*, the communities west of Egypt appointed their own officials and did not claim the authority of the centers for their daily communal activities. Sources relating to the history of North African and al-Andalus Jewry reveal that the western communities took full responsibility for their members in both sacred and secular walks of life. Second, the

existence of distinct *Reshuyot* did not fully alleviate tension between yeshivas, which some communities succeeded in exploiting. Outside the *Reshuyot*, for example, certain communities systematically approached the heads of two yeshivas with the same question in order to compare their respective Responsa. Although this practice infuriated the heads of the yeshivas, they were powerless to stop it. Within the *Reshuyot*, on the other hand, communities might seek to switch allegiance from one yeshiva to another. This was especially true when a community was distant from the center and the yeshiva under whose authority it lay was experiencing troubles.

### Sicily: A Case of Community's Subordination

Up until now, Sicilian Jewry has been regarded in scholarship as a community influenced by the traditions and authority of Eretz Yisrael. It has even been described as one of the communities officially subordinated to Eretz Yisrael center—under the *Reshut* (jurisdiction and authority) of Yeshivat Eretz ha-Tzvi. However, new data and their interpretation alter this conception considerably.

The common conception of connection between Diaspora and center is based in part on estimates of donations to a particular center. Because the Sicilian communities donated monies mainly to the yeshiva of Eretz Yisrael, they were considered subordinated to that center. However, reexamination of the documents dealing with the donations of the western communities to the centers reveals an unexpected result. Although the financial share of the Eretz Yisrael center was larger than that of the Babylonian, the Sicilians, and in fact all the western communities, sent their Halachic questions to the Babylonian yeshiva.

Additionally, even at a time of tension between Babylonia and Eretz Yisrael, a prominent scholar from Sicily, Rav Matzliah b. Elyah, studied with Rav Hai Gaon in Babylonia rather than in the yeshiva of Eretz Yisrael. Rav Matzliah later became the Jewish chief judge of Sicily, which one would not expect of a community subordinate to the Eretz Yisrael yeshiva. Even during the decline of the Babylonian center, during the 1040s, the leadership in Eretz Yisrael could not have had any illusions with regard to its official authority over the Sicilian communities. As a letter to the Gaon of the Eretz Yisrael Yeshiva clearly states, his opinion in a certain Halachic issue could not automatically be accepted as he had no official authority over the communities west of Egypt.

The relations between the Diaspora Jewish communities and the Eretz Yisrael center are usually measured not only by institutional and social contacts but also by the footprint of Palestinian rites, traditions and texts in a given community. A document from 1020 in Syracuse contains a peculiar item. Among the details describing a long affair regarding one Eliyah b. al-Harar (the silk maker), the writer stresses that “Eliyah b. al-Harar took an oath in their presence [the members of the community who were present in the synagogue that Thursday] that he did not take the money, and the Torah was open [in front of him] and he read the Ten Commandments [to prove] that he did not take the money.”

It is possible to explain this way of taking an oath as reflecting the custom of Eretz Yisrael of having the Torah scroll parade and reading the Ten Commandments (but not from the scroll) and then returning the scroll to the Ark. It seems

that in Syracuse, Elijah b. al-Harar actually rolled the scroll and read the Ten Commandments from it. A careful examination of documentation, both Halachic and historical, points to this as a Babylonian tradition for taking an oath on the Ten Commandments.

Elijah b. al-Harar's oath in the synagogue is a reminder of another aspect of Mediterranean Jewish social life: the procedure of complaining in front of the community about personal problems by interrupting public prayer. The traditional view in research was that the European Jewish communities had to develop this procedure because they lacked organizational tradition; this custom was adduced as another proof that these communities were the first to form that entity known as "the Jewish Community," namely, the framework of a local self-sufficient political unit in medieval Jewry.

Goitein found evidence in the Geniza of a parallel to the custom of complaining to the public and interrupting its prayers, and cited it as one of the functions of the gathering together of the community in the synagogue. He interpreted this phenomenon as a case of community functioning as tribunal. A. Grossman took up again the traditional distinction between Ashkenaz and the Muslim world and interpreted all of Goitein's evidence as post-12th century or as irrelevant to the Ashkenazi custom of stopping the prayer for private purposes.

A letter from mid-11th-century Sicily, presumably from Matzliah b. Elya to Rav Hananel of Qayrawan, mentions (as a familiar procedure) that a certain Shemuel b. Haim was "complaining and shouting" trying to find some evidence to support his legal case. After failing, he accelerated his activities: "For a few months he shut synagogues and prevented [the people of the community of Palermo] from praying."

In the light of this new piece of information, Goitein's other texts of *istighatha ila 'l-yahud* (to call for the Jews) and of *mustaghith ila yisra'el* (calling Israel for help) stand firm as proof of the existence of an almost-established procedure among Jews in Muslim lands for the individual to bring his or her complaints before the public. But, differing somewhat from Goitein's interpretation, all of these cases turn out to have revolved around a procedural issue. The public was not requested to judge as was interpreted but rather to pressure the local institutions into completing the judicial procedure according to the request of the plaintiff.

These cases, however, should be considered along with many other kinds of evidence when describing the beginnings of the local Jewish communities in Muslim lands. Roots, even common roots with the Ashkenazic communities, derived not from their divided medieval reality but from previous Jewish tradition.

The description of the Sicilian Jewish attitude toward the sacred centers of Eretz Yisrael and Babylonia described previously is insufficient to classify the Sicilian Jewish communities as typically Mediterranean. For the Sicilian case testifies to an additional type of relationship with centers. Not only did the Sicilians manifest a deferential attitude toward Eretz Yisrael, and not only did they accept almost fully Babylonian Halachic authority, but they also developed a functional dependence on the authoritative center of learning in Ifriqiya.

True Ifriqiya was a conduit for contacts with the traditional centers. This was the case with Spain, as expressed by ibn Daud when he wrote that Samuel the Nagid

of Andolusia was drinking Rav Hai Gaon's water (i.e., the Torah) from Rav Nissim of Qayrawan's vessels. The relations between Ifriqiya and Sicily, however, were also based on a more essential connection with the local academy of Qayrawan. The authority of the Qayrawanese scholars among the Sicilian Jews was not official and did not enjoy the advantage of the traditional centers in the East. Rather the sages of Qayrawan were recognized because of their proximity and reputation for learning. After the Qayrawanese scholars were acknowledged by the Sicilian communities as an Halachic authority, the Sicilians began to consult with them even on topics of public concern that had no connection with Halachic issues. The regional centrality of Ifriqiya is reflected also in the sparse documents and indigenous Halachic literature of Jews from the northern shores of the Mediterranean. In the Sicilian case, unlike Spain, it was not a matter of turning away from the old, sacred centers in Babylonia and Eretz Yisrael and establishing a new one with native institutions of learning and original scholarship, but rather of becoming dependent on a new regional center in nearly North Africa.

### Selected Bibliography

- Ben-Sasson, Menahem. 1987. "Egyptian Jewry in the 10th–12th Centuries: From Periphery to Center." *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo* 8: 14–16.
- Ben-Sasson, Menahem. 1989. "The Structure, Goals, and Content of the Story of Nathan Hababli" [Hebrew]. In *Culture and Society in Medieval Jewry. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Haim-Hillel Ben-Sasson*, edited by M. Ben-Sasson, et al., 137–195. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center.
- Ben-Sasson, Menahem. 1991. *The Jews of Sicily 825–1068: Documents and Sources*. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute.
- Ben-Sasson, Menahem. 1994. "Ben Ezra Synagogue during the Medieval Period." In *Synagogue*, edited by Phyllis Lambert, 200–223, 259–261. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Ben-Sasson, Menahem. 1996. *The Emergence of the Local Jewish Community in the Muslim World (Qayrawan 800–1057)* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.
- Ben-Sasson, Menahem. 1997. "The Emergence of the Qayrawan Jewish Community and Its Importance as a Maghrebi Community." In *Judaeo-Arabic Studies: Proceedings of the Founding Conference of the Society for Judeo-Arabic Studies*, edited by Norman Golb, 1–13, Vol. 3. Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Brody, Robert. 1998. *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Cohen, Gershon D. 1960–1961. "The Story of the Four Captives." *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 29: 55–131.
- Cohen, Mark R. 1980. *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt—The Origins of the Office of Head of the Jews, ca. 1065–1126*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Friedlander, Israel. 1904–1905. "An Arabic Original of the Report of R. Nathan Hababli." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 17: 747–761.
- Gil, Moshe. 1992. *A History of Palestine 634–1099*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Goitein, Shelomo D. 1967–1993. *A Mediterranean Society*, 6 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Goitein, Shelomo D. 1973. *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Goitein, Shelomo D. 1983. *The Yemenites: History, Communal Organization, Spiritual Life* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: The Ben-Zvi Institute.

- Golb, Norman. 1973. "A Judeo-Arabic Court Document from Syracuse—AD 1020." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 32: 105–123.
- Hirschberg, Haim Z. W. 1974. *A History of the Jews in North Africa*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Ibn Daud, Abraham. 1967. *The Book of Tradition (Sefer Ha-Qabbalah)*. Critical edition with a translation and notes by Gerson D. Cohen. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Lambert, P., ed. 1994. *Fortifications and the Synagogue—The Fortress of Babylon and the Ben Ezra Synagogue*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Mann, Jacob. 1920–1921. "The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim as a Source of Jewish History." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 11: 433–471
- Mann, Jacob. 1920–1922. *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, Vols. I–II. Repr. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970.
- Mann, Jacob. 1931. *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, 1. Cincinnati: HUCA Press.
- Poznanski, S. 1914. *Babylonische Geonim im nachgaondischen Zeitalter*. Berlin: Mayer & Muel-ler, 15–36.
- Sassoon, D. S. 1949. *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*. Letchworth, UK: Alcuin Press.
- Simonsohn, S. 1997–2001. *The Jews in Sicily*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Stillman, N. A. 1979. *The Jews of Arab Lands*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

## Insights into Sephardic Intellectual History

*Marc D. Angel*

---

Although Jews lived in Spain for many centuries, little is known about their intellectual life until the 10th century when a burst of creativity emerged under the patronage of the Jewish leader Hasdai Ibn Shaprut. Through his wisdom, wealth, and political standing, Hasdai transformed Cordoba into a vibrant Jewish cultural center. Whereas Spanish Jewry had formerly relied on Babylonian rabbinic scholars for religious guidance, Hasdai's goal was to create an indigenous Spanish rabbinic and intellectual leadership.

During the 10th and 11th centuries, classic works were composed in rabbinic literature, Hebrew poetry, grammar, biblical commentary, philosophy, and ethics. This was the era of such luminaries as Rabbi Yitzhak Alfasi, who headed the rabbinic academy in Lucena; Shelomo Ibn Gabirol and Bahya Ibn Pakuda, profound philosophers who lived in Saragossa; and Judah Halevi, the premier poet of medieval Jewry, who lived in Toledo. This golden age also included the works of Abraham and Moses Ibn Ezra, Shemuel ha-Naggid, and other authors whose works are still studied today.

The most significant intellectual figure of Spanish Jewry was Moshe Maimonides (1135–1204). Born in Cordoba, his family fled Spain after the invasion of the fanatical



The synagogue in Cordoba, the birthplace of Maimonides, was built in 1315 and is one of the oldest surviving in Europe. (Ogen Perry)

Almohads in 1146. Under the Almohads, anyone who did not convert to Islam faced death or exile. Maimonides's family chose to leave, first going to Morocco and later to Egypt, where Maimonides became personal physician to the caliph. Maimonides's works in Jewish law and philosophy remain staples of Jewish learning today. His achievements as a doctor, logician, and mathematician were greatly respected by Jews and non-Jews alike. He is the foremost exemplar of rational philosophy within traditional religious Judaism.

During the 13th century, kabbalistic studies advanced in Spain. In some measure a reaction to Maimonides's devotion to reason, Kabbalah stressed the irrational, mystical elements of religion. Rabbi Yitzhak the Blind (ca. 1160–1235) and his circle of mystics turned Gerona into a major center of Kabbalah. Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman spread kabbalistic teachings through his commentary on the Torah. Late in the 13th century, Rabbi Moshe de Leon issued the *Zohar*, a kabbalistic text attributed to the Talmudic sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai. The *Zohar* became the classic book of Kabbalah throughout the Jewish world.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, Spanish Jewry faced new challenges because of the reconquest of Spain by Christian forces. A virulent Christianity arose that sought to convert Jews and humiliate Judaism. Jewish thinkers and leaders were compelled to engage in polemics to defend the honor and truth of Judaism and to refute the Christian slanders of Jewish tradition. In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella gave Jews the choice of converting to Christianity or leaving Spain. Although thousands converted (with many continuing to live as crypto-Jews), many thousands more chose exile. When Portugal forbade the practice of Judaism in 1497, public Jewish life came to an end in the Iberian Peninsula after a period of more than 1,000 years.

Jewish intellectual life in Spain encompassed many fields of study. While making lasting contributions to Jewish law, philosophy, and literature, Spanish Jews

also had impressive achievements in general science, medicine, mathematics, and other disciplines. A distinguishing character of Spanish Jewry was their ability to blend Torah culture with active participation in the general intellectual life of their society. Judah Halevi, Maimonides, and Nahmanides were not only Torah luminaries but also physicians. Shemuel HaNaggid was not only a Talmudist and a Hebrew poet but also a military leader and government official. Yitzhak Abravanel was not only a great biblical commentator but also a statesman in the employ of the king of Spain. These outstanding personalities reflected the general Spanish Jewish ideal of excellence in Torah study combined with excellence in worldly wisdom.

During the first several generations after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal, Sephardic Jewry was in the process of creating a new Diaspora. Thousands of Sephardic refugees found haven in the Ottoman Empire; others settled in North Africa and the Middle East, including the Land of Israel. Some Sephardic exiles made their way to cities in Western Europe, although Catholic Europe was not particularly hospitable to Jews.

Aside from Sephardic communities established by exiles from Spain and Portugal throughout the Mediterranean world, other communities were formed by crypto-Jews who chose to return to Judaism, mainly in Western Europe. By the end of the 16th century, Amsterdam—a Protestant domain—was emerging as an attractive settlement for returnees to Judaism, and the country went on to become the major bastion of the Western Sephardic tradition.

During the 16th century, the Sephardim in Muslim lands maintained a vibrant rabbinic literature. Among the great figures were Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulhan Arukh*, the classic code of Jewish law; Rabbis Moshe Cordovero and Hayyim Vital, authors of major kabbalistic works; and Rabbis David Ibn Abi Zimra and Samuel de Medina, authors of authoritative volumes of legal Responsa.

Rabbis such as Yosef Yaavets and Meir ben Gabbai were outspoken critics of philosophy. They argued that the faith of Spanish Jewry had been sapped by its rationalistic tendencies; if Sephardim had studied only traditional Jewish texts, they would have been more pious. Although some Sephardim continued to engage in philosophic speculation, the spiritual climate moved in the direction of narrowing intellectual life to the realm of rabbinic texts—including Kabbalah.

The kabbalistic/midrashic approach to religion came to predominate among the masses of Sephardim in Muslim lands. This tendency increased following the Sabbatai Sevi debacle in 1666, when his messianic pretensions were proven false. The spiritual despondency after this messianic bubble was popped was palpable. Rabbinic leadership from the late 17th through mid-19th centuries stressed the need for Jews to accept their fate with pious resignation.

The general economic and cultural decline in Muslim lands affected Jewish residents along with everyone else. As poverty became widespread, schools and yeshivas lost their sources of financial support as well as their base of students. Boys had to quit school at an early age so they could earn money for their families; education above the elementary level became a luxury. (At that time, girls received little or no formal education.) Intellectual life for the Jewish elite centered on rabbinic literature; for the masses, a lively folk culture emerged.

As Mediterranean Sephardic communities developed during the 16th and 17th centuries, ex-converso communities were established in cities of Western Europe, including Amsterdam; Paris, Bordeaux, and Bayonne, France; Hamburg, Germany; and London. During the 17th century, Western Sephardim were the pioneers of Jewish life in the New World.

The ex-converso communities in Europe were founded by people who had grown up as crypto-Jews in the Iberian Peninsula. Although publicly practicing Catholicism, they observed some Jewish religious practices in secret. While living in Spain and Portugal, the crypto-Jews feared persecution by the Inquisition, which considered Judaizing to be punishable by torture, confiscation of property, and even death.

Crypto-Jews of the first generation still had memories of having grown up with Jewish laws and traditions. Subsequent generations, though, never experienced the open observance of Judaism. Their Jewish knowledge was limited to the Bible, a smattering of prayers and religious observances, and the list of Judaizing practices issued by the Inquisition. When they returned to Judaism in Europe, they needed to study Jewish tradition almost from scratch. Their original teachers were Sephardic rabbis from Turkey, Morocco, and elsewhere in the Sephardic Diaspora.

The newcomers to the Western Sephardic communities, while living as Catholics in Spain and Portugal, had access to higher education. They were proud of their high culture, and continued to engage in the study of philosophy and literature while deepening their knowledge of Judaism.

Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel (1604–1657) of Amsterdam operated a publishing house that provided books in the vernacular for the returnees. He wrote works in Portuguese, in which he recorded the laws and practices of Judaism and explained the principles of Jewish faith. He and other rabbis (e.g., Immanuel Aboab and David Nieto) wrote important works explaining rabbinic tradition and upholding the authority of the Torah and the Oral Law. Isaac Cardoso (1604–1681) and others wrote works of Jewish apologetics defending Judaism from Christian criticisms and slanders.

By the middle of the 18th century, Spanish and Portuguese had died out as spoken languages among the Western Sephardim. They adopted the languages of the lands in which they lived and participated actively in the general cultural and commercial life.

While Western Sephardim were becoming more Westernized, Mediterranean Sephardim were becoming more insulated intellectually. The many rabbinic books published by their sages dealt almost exclusively with religious texts and topics.

The classic work of 18th-century Ladino literature was the *Me'am Lo'ez*, the first volume of which was published in Istanbul in 1730. Its originator, Rabbi Yaacov Huli, wrote in a genial style, with the intention of offering the Sephardic masses instruction in Torah and its commentaries, the midrash, Jewish law, ethical precepts, and so on. Upon Rabbi Huli's death in 1732, other authors continued the project in his style so as to produce volumes on the five books of the Torah and eight other biblical books. The *Me'am Lo'ez* was enthusiastically received and went into various editions. It reflected a deep traditionalism, reverence for rabbinic authority, and a

focus on the world to come. In eschewing the vanities of this world, it taught the importance of piety, patience in the face of suffering, and faith in God's goodness. These were the general values that pervaded Sephardic rabbinic works through the 19th century.

By the mid-19th century, there were signs of an intellectual reawakening among Mediterranean Sephardim. Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai (1798–1879) called for the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. Well before the rise of modern Zionism, Rabbi Alkalai preached and wrote that Jews should assert themselves in shaping their own destiny. He encouraged political activity, including practical steps to create an economically viable society in the Holy Land.

Growing numbers of Sephardic intellectuals were drawn to the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment. Educators called for and implemented expansive curriculums for Jewish schools taught by better-trained modern teachers. The Alliance Israelite Universelle established numerous schools throughout the Ottoman Empire, Middle East, and North Africa, in which French was the language of instruction. Students received a strong general education along with their Jewish studies.

A secular Ladino literature blossomed during the 19th century, including 75 newspapers and journals, hundreds of novels, poems, dramatic works, historical studies, and translations of French and Hebrew works. Many Sephardim found new opportunities for creative expression and communal involvement.

Among the Western Sephardic communities, intellectual life coped with the challenges of modernity. In England, Grace Aguilar (1816–1847) called for modernization of Jewish education, and especially for increased education for girls and young women. In Leghorn, Italy, Rabbi Eliyahu Benamozegh (1822–1900) wrote impressive works on Jewish ethics and the universal teachings of Judaism. In New York, Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes (1852–1937), religious leader of the historic Congregation Shearith Israel (founded 1654), presented Jewish ethical teachings in a style intended to engage Jews coping with the modern world.

Major demographic changes drastically altered Sephardic life. During the early 20th century, thousands emigrated from the Ottoman Empire and Middle East to the United States and other destinations. The Holocaust decimated European Jewry, including Sephardic communities like those in Amsterdam, Salonika, Rhodes, and Sarajevo. During the mid-20th century, hundreds of thousands of Sephardim settled in Israel, nearly emptying their former communities in North Africa and the Middle East. By the end of the 20th century, most of the Old World Sephardic communities had disappeared or shrunk. Israel is currently the main center of Sephardic Jewry, but there are also large communities in France and the Americas.

The profound demographic changes have obviously affected Sephardic intellectual life. The new generations of Sephardim are engaged in the intellectual and cultural process of understanding their communities' history and traditions, while adapting to the new cultural and intellectual patterns that have engulfed them.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Angel, Marc D. 1991. *Voices in Exile: A Study in Sephardic Intellectual History*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House.

- Ashtor, Eliyahu. 1973, 1979, 1984. *The Jews of Moslem Spain*. 3 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Baer, Yitzhak. 1961, 1971. *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Benardete, Mair Jose. 1952. *Hispanic Culture and Character of the Sephardic Jews*. New York: Hispanic Institute.

## Jewish Enlightenment and Its Impact on the Diaspora

*Shmuel Feiner*

---

From the early 18th century until the end of the 19th, relatively small groups of young maskilim (followers of the Jewish Enlightenment) from Central and Eastern Europe wrought a significant cultural revolution, one that was unprecedented in the Ashkenazi Diaspora. The appearance of the maskilim on the stage of Jewish history, as the representatives of a new intellectual elite who felt obligated to undertake the role of educating the public and providing alternative ideological leadership, augured a revolutionary move—the transfer of cultural sovereignty over the Jewish public space to new hands. An intellectual elite emerged to compete with the rabbinical, scholarly elite that held a complete monopoly over knowledge, books, cultural creation, education; supervised norms and behavior; and provided guidance to the public. This new elite adopted some of the basic values of the European Enlightenment culture, in particular humanism, religious tolerance, freedom of opinion, criticism, rationalism, and the consciousness of progress, and it regarded itself as responsible for reforming traditional society in the light of these values. Looking back, it seems as if the whole public culture of the Jews in the modern age—the book culture, the ideological debates, the new religious movements, modern politics, and the press as a forum of cultural and political discourse—all of these would not have been possible had it not been for that revolutionary breakthrough of a new Jewish intelligentsia. It was secular insofar as its source of authority and ideological fabric was concerned (albeit with a diverse spectrum of views regarding its commitment to religious tradition) and had at its center the writer, the modern Jewish intellectual. From a historical perspective, this new elite expanded cultural boundaries, raised acute questions about the place of Jews in modern Europe, and entered into a cultural conflict with emerging Orthodox elite.

This revolution had many remarkable implications. The internal Jewish public discourse left the Talmudic houses of study, the synagogues, the sermons, and the communal committee meetings and moved to the multilingual periodicals, the literary clubs, and private homes. New publications were added to the traditional Jewish library—books of science, history, geography, language, and philosophy. The religious control over knowledge was weakened and in many places changed hands.

Two major moves of the Haskalah had an enormous impact on modern Jewish culture. The Haskalah gave rise to the secular intellectual and the self-consciousness of the modern Jew and optimistically proclaimed humankind's historic shift to the new era and all its challenges. The Haskalah movement was not the first to launch the processes of modernization; it was preceded by philosophical skeptics in the Sephardic Diaspora, particularly in Amsterdam and London, who questioned the conventions of the religious tradition, and the sons and daughters of the wealthy and merchant elite in the cities of Western and Central Europe, such as Berlin, Vienna, and Hamburg, who were acculturated and whose lifestyle was in keeping with the latest fashion. However, the Haskalah was the first to construct an ideology that justified modernization, to mobilize public opinion to support it, and to suggest new directions and practices to introduce it into many spheres of Jewish life.

The cultural shift of the Haskalah began with the early Haskalah—with curiosity and a passion for knowledge and philosophy that awoke among several young men in 18th-century Central Europe who could not find intellectual satisfaction within the boundaries of the institutions, knowledge, and library of the religious elite in which they had been reared. Some of them were also filled with a sense of inferiority and wished to do away with the intolerable cultural limitation that marked the Jews in contrast to the scientific progress and expanded knowledge of the surrounding culture. A new elite of maskilim, who pursued that same science that was assigned such an inferior and external status, shunted to the sidelines as other, and denied legitimacy, emerged from the Ashkenazi religious elite that closely guarded its dominance in the public discourse and demanded a monopoly in guiding the public and shaping their spiritual world. The early maskilim contributed Hebrew works on science, philosophy, language, and Bible to the Jewish library that was being revived. The most famous and influential was Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), who spent most of his life in Berlin. From the standpoint of his aspiration to revitalize Jewish culture, in particular the tradition of philosophical study and Bible commentary, Mendelssohn belonged to the early Haskalah, but his works in general philosophy and literary criticism raised him to the status of a leading member of the Enlightenment elite in Germany. His fame, his widespread social connections, and the esteem in which he was held also obliged him to relate to the discussion then being conducted about how, if at all, the Jews could be integrated into the modern state and European culture. As a consummate humanist, an advocate of religious tolerance and human freedom, and an Enlightenment thinker, Mendelssohn demanded that the state and Christian society show tolerance and willingly forego the authority to supervise and coerce members of the Jewish community insofar as their religious beliefs and mode of behavior were concerned.

But the inception of the Haskalah movement was not dependent on Mendelssohn, and it would be a mistake to regard him as its leader. The first circles of maskilim were organized in the Prussian communities of Koenigsberg, Berlin, and Breslau by young Jewish students and tutors who wished to establish new frameworks in which the maskilim could gather, set up literary forums to disseminate their ideas, and form an alternative force to that of the rabbinical and communal



Naphtali Herz Wessely, German Hebrew scholar and educator. (Isadore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

leadership. The living spirit behind these initiatives was Isaac Euchel (1756–1804), a native of Copenhagen who, in the 1780s, was the initiator of the first circle of maskilim known as *Chevrat Dorshei Lashon Ivri* (Society of Friends of the Hebrew Language). A year later, the first issue of the maskilic journal *Hame'asef* came out, edited by Euchel and several of his friends. A few years earlier, the first modern Jewish school in the world was founded in Berlin (1778): the *Chinukh Ne'arim* (Education of Youth, also known as the *Freischule*), whose curriculum was divided between religious and secular subjects. Four years later, in 1782, Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805) published an open letter entitled “Divrei shalom ve’emet” (Words of Peace and Truth) in which, for the first time, he formulated the principles of a revolutionary curriculum combining in equal measure what he called “the teaching of God” (the religious knowledge whose source was the Torah) and “the teaching of man” (the human knowledge acquired through reason and human experience). Wessely proposed this far-reaching reform in Jewish education motivated by the tolerant legislation enacted by the Austrian emperor Joseph II, aimed at reforming the Jews so they could be integrated as citizens of the state. But Wessely and his program met with a sharp protest by the rabbinical elite in Central Europe who regarded it as threat to the hegemony of the rabbis in the Jewish public arena and to the supreme value of Torah study.

At the end of the 18th century, the Haskalah in Berlin declined. The sweeping processes of modernization there left no room for the trends of the cultural renaissance of Hebrew literature led by the maskilim. But this did not mean the end of the Haskalah. Its ideas, programs, and literary works resonated in communities in which the processes of modernization were relatively slow or had not yet begun. Throughout the 19th century, centers of the Haskalah movement were established in the

Austrian Empire (Vienna and Prague), and with special intensity in European communities, first in Galicia and then in the Russian Empire. Galician maskilim (Yosef Perl, Isaac Erter, Yehudah Leib Miseses, and others) regarded the pietistic movement of Hasidism as the major obstacle to the modernization of the Jews, describing it as a troubling deviation in Jewish history, one that perpetuated the ignorance of the masses, fostered superstition, and blocked progress.

In Russia, the Haskalah developed both as a continuation of the trends that began with Wessely and Mendelssohn and as a result of the Czarist policy that brought pressure to bear on the Jews in order to reduce their communal autonomy, influence them to engage in more productive economic endeavors, oblige them to send their children to government Jewish schools, and require them to fulfill civil duties, including military service. The Haskalah movement achieved the peak of its success in Russia in the second half of the 18th century, when various circles of maskilim were formed; Hebrew literature flourished, enriched by the first Hebrew novels and textbooks; and periodicals appeared in Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish. Outstanding maskilim, such as Moshe Leib Lilienblum and Judah Leib Gordon, then demanded that the rabbis ease the burden of the Halacha that, in their view, was making the daily life of the Jews so difficult. Other maskilim, the most prominent being Peretz Smolenskin, the editor of *Hashachar* (The Dawn), fearful that the solidarity and cohesiveness of the Jewish world would break down in the era of modernization, warned against assimilation and the dangers of modern anti-Semitism and fostered the nationalist stream of the Haskalah.

From a historical perspective, the Haskalah was the movement that led to a cultural shift in Jewish history from several significant aspects. A literary republic, encompassing writers, journalists, publishers, editors, and literary critics emerged from the Haskalah and had a readership that showed enormous interest in expanding the cultural horizons of the Jews. New networks of communication emerged that incorporated letters, meetings, journals, and newspapers in which modern cultural life was conducted. From its inception, this literary republic thought it was also its function to mobilize public opinion for the projects of modernity initiated by the maskilim. From this standpoint, the maskilim were clearly agents of modernization. They not only protested against and criticized phenomena such as the limitation of the traditional library, the excessive authority of the rabbis, the adoration of the Hasidic leader, and the eschewal of non-Jewish cultural assets, but their rhetoric also introduced a new type of discourse. Out of optimism, and perhaps naïveté, the maskilim depicted a world picture divided between a benighted past marked by ignorance, religious fanaticism, oppression, and insularity and a present in which the sun is rising toward a better future in which all the injustices and wrongs of the past will be rectified and the Jews, together with all peoples, will partake of the happiness promised by an era of tolerance, humanism, scientific progress, freedom, and equality.

Just as the maskilim were acutely aware of modernity and the challenges it posed to Jewish traditional society and culture, they were also particularly sensitive to the question of the boundaries of Jewish modernization. The Haskalah brought the Jews of Europe a new world of books and ideas as well as new values of aesthetics,

manners, tastes, and smells, and its spokespeople advocated profound reforms in consciousness and behavior. The Haskalah advocated the division of the Jewish identity into various spheres of behavior, thought, and existence, eloquently expressed by Judah Leib Gordon in his classic poem, “Awake My People”: “Be a man in the street and a Jew in your home, be a brother to your countrymen and a servant to your king.” From now on, a definition of “Jew” that embraced the ethnic, religious, cultural, and communal dimension no longer sufficed, and the unified, cohesive world was broken. Jews could now live in parallel in the all-human sphere and the civic sphere, and they could also continue to preserve their Jewish identity. Their total rejection of the option of assimilation led the maskilim to reexamine the boundaries of the modernization they aspired to. Whenever they encountered Jews who were inclined to assimilate, to abandon the Hebrew language, or even to become religiously permissive, enticed by the opportunities and temptations of life in European cities, they denounced this trend as “pseudo-Haskalah.” Although the maskilim exemplified the transition between tradition and modernity and endeavored to devise dualistic formulas to bridge the old and the new, the pseudo-maskilim in Odessa or Warsaw were depicted as frivolous assimilationists. The Haskalah represents the central position in the discourse of modernization conducted in Jewish society, and it rejected both the antimodernist enemies of Enlightenment from the Orthodox camp as well as the enemies of the unique Jewish identity and a separate Jewish existence.

### Selected Bibliography

- Altmann, Alexander. 1973. *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study*. Philadelphia: University of Alabama Press.
- Feiner, Shmuel. 2002. *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Feiner, Shmuel. 2004. *The Jewish Enlightenment*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Feiner, Shmuel, and David Sorkin, eds. 2001. *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Sorkin, David. 2000. *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought*. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Sutcliffe, Adam. 2003. *Judaism and Enlightenment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Stanislawski, Michael. 1988. *For Whom Do I Toil? Jehuda Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zipperstein, Steve J. 1985. *The Jews of Odessa—A Cultural History 1794–1881*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

# Beginnings of Hasidism in Eastern Europe

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

The Hasidic revolution of the 18th century saw the emergence of certain previously dormant forms of prophetic/mystical Jewish leadership, which was considered marginal, undesirable, and even dangerous by traditional rabbinic sentiment. By their stubborn opposition to the emerging movement the Talmudic elites became known as the opposers to religious renewal, or *misnagdim*. In crisis due to internal and external challenges and the social economic upheaval of the oncoming era, it seemed as though circumstances were again ripe for a resurgence of mysticism and what may be closer to political euphoria, amongst the Jewish population, not dissimilar to earlier socio-messianic movements, such as Spanish expulsion of 1492, the great immigration of Spanish Jewish scholars and mystics to the Land of Israel in the mid-1500s, and the spread of Sephardi mysticism in Eastern Europe via Kabbalah study and the Sabbatean movement.

Parts of traditional Jewish society were drifting in the wake of the Jewish Enlightenment, the emergence of Hasidism, and the political tides of all of Europe. Each ideology competed for the soul of the village Jews of Eastern Europe. The mystic, miracle worker, and saint were also popular, and the emergent ideology attracted many people into a spiritual revolution, where circumstances were hardly an obstacle for spiritual awareness. The myriads of Hasidic rebbes and dynasties that sprung up within this current fused religious, Talmudic, intellectual, spiritual, psychological, cultural, and artistic components.

The Hasidic movement was formerly founded on the life and teachings of Rabbi Israel, the *Ba'al Shem Tov* (Master of the Good Name; 1698–1760). His teachings were disseminated by a mixed circle of Talmudic intelligentsia, mystics, and the piously disenchanting and taken on foot by of a cast of other personalities, all of whom merged to form the first generation of saints and Hasidic rebbes. The socio-religious ideology they taught weaved through many Jewish communities in the Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, and to a lesser extent in Russia. With the migration of surviving Eastern European Jews to other Diasporas, Hasidism spread throughout the Jewish world, itself institutionalizing and becoming the mainstay of Orthodox Jewish life.

The religious hierarchy of Eastern European Jewry had been governed by standards of scholarship, family wealth, and rabbinic inbreeding. Although piety and religious fervor were virtuous, the decisive requisite for eminence, marriage eligibility, or leadership was marked by Talmudic scholarship. Scholarship had been the hallmark of honor, and knowledge of the Talmudic tracts was a mark of superiority and intelligence. Prestige was attained through gymnastic feats of legal sparring and mastery over the commentaries. A good dowry ensuring many years of continuing study and a wealthy and supporting family would often culminate in appointments as rabbi of a community or a town or as a teacher in the study halls.

Without financial means, Jewish village dwellers in Ukrainian, Polish, and other Eastern European regions were increasingly removed from the scholastic world of the ever proliferating Talmudic corpus, and they were ready to cast their eyes on a more inspiring religious leader and toward a religious identity not answerable to material circumstance.

Charismatic personalities attracted more followers, even some from the disillusioned scholarly classes. The various factors that brought about the Hasidic revolution are debated: Dubnow argues that Hasidism was a spiritual palliative for “the stress and sorrow of Jewish public life.” Etkes agreed with Dubnow and points out that the early Hasidim often mingled with the upper echelons of society. This is corroborated by Rosman’s study; he argues that the Ba’al Shem Tov was both a doctor and a mystic who attracted many middle-class people to nighttime study sessions. He enjoyed the community’s patronage until his death, and privileges were handed to his son. Dinur argues that the friction between the traditional establishment intelligentsia and the unschooled masses brought on the deep-seated support for change in the religious leadership. All agree that Hasidism emerged from the relative deprivation of the Jewish masses.

The Ba’al Shem Tov was characterized by his miracle work and wonders. Recently found Polish municipal documents shed a more sobering light on his real persona as a registered doctor. He served as a healer, mystic, and teacher. It is likely that later rabbinic figures and charismatic leaders used him as a repository for their own imaginative projections and aspirations. The charismatic preacher R’ Dov Ber, also known as the *Magid* of Mezeritch (d. 1772), emerged as the most dominant Hasidic master after the Ba’al Shem Tov.

He attracted many hundreds of students and instructed them in mysticism and divine service. He also cultivated a more intimate group of disciples numbering approximately 30 people. Because he was considered a rabbinic scholar, versed in classic Jewish scholarship as well as mysticism, people ranging from mystical/charismatic illiterates to rabbinical figures and scholars of eminence were attracted to him, becoming the first generation of Hasidic “rebbe” that fanned throughout the villages and towns of Poland or the Ukraine.

The movement became a worktable for the frustrated and the gifted who found themselves handicapped and accused by the traditional community of *misnagdim*. Suspicion that they were igniting false messianic hope and exerting other heretical influences on the masses caused Hasidism to be shunned by the traditional leadership. They were accused of trespassing Halacha, but even though some Hasidic writings and behavior indicate a variance with traditional behavior and Halachic commitment, as a rule, Hasidism became the champion of Halacha and preserved it in modernity despite significant challenges.

### Types of Hasidic Groups

There are many hundreds of Hasidic groups, small and large, whose Hasidic people follow dynastic leaders. Some still assert ideologies and religious systems, and others are committed to their lineage of rabbis and the Eastern European towns they hailed from or were buried in.

There have been a few major categories of Hasidim in its 200-year-old history as well as in the surviving strands. Ideological groups include Habad, Breslav, and perhaps *Toldot Aharon* Hasidism; and Polish Hasidism, which includes groups like Kotz, Ger, Radzin, Timshinover, Alexander, and many others. Other Hasidim include Chernoble, Zanz, Visnitz, Belz, Rizhin, Ropshitz, Bluzhov, and more. Another type of Hasidic leaders and followers leaned to miracle working; these included the Jadwokna, Kerestirer, Liska, and others. Lithuania had its own Hasidic groups, including Slonim, Stolin, and Kuvdenov Hasidim.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abramsky, C. 1979. "The Crisis of Authority within European Jewry in the Eighteenth Century." In *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann*, edited by Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.
- Buber, M. 1960. *The Origins and Meanings of Hasidism*, edited and translated by Maurice Friedman. New York: Horizon Press.
- Dubnow, S. 1916. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*. 3 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Dubnow, S. 1975. *History of Hasidism* [Hebrew]. 4th ed. Tel Aviv: New York University Press.
- Dubnow, S. 1991. "The Beginnings: The Baal Shem Tov (Besht) and the Center in Podolia." In *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, edited by G. D. Hundert. New York: New York University Press.
- Ehrlich, M. A. 2000. *Leadership in the Habad Movement: A Critical Study of Habad Leadership, History and Succession*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Etkes, I. 1988. "Hasidism as a Movement—the First Stage." In *Hasidism: Continuity or Innovation*, edited by B. Safran. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hundert, G. D., ed. 1987. *Essential Papers on Hasidism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Loewenthal, Naftali. 1986. "The Apotheosis of Action in Early Habad." *Daat* 18: 5–19.
- Loewenthal, Naftali. 1990. *Communicating the Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rosman, M. J. 1987. "Miedzyboz and Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov." *Zion* 52: 177–189.

# Israel and the Diaspora

## Jewish Immigration to Pre-State and Modern Israel

*Danny Ben-Moshe*

---

Ever since the Jews were exiled from the Land of Israel in 70 CE, the longing to return to Zion has been expressed in daily prayer. A central belief in Zionism, the Jewish national liberation movement, is the ingathering of the exiles through aliyah. A word with biblical origins that literally means “to ascend,” aliyah originally applied to religious pilgrimage to Israel. Since the advent of Zionism, however, aliyah has become a term for immigration that creates, builds, and sustains the Jewish state, offering a renaissance of Jewish identity to those who choose to live there. This was predicated on the traditional Zionist belief that only there could they be fully free and secure as Jews.

The elite within Zionism were the early 20th-century socialist pioneers who gave selflessly of themselves by settling in barren parts of the Land of Israel. The rationale and belief was that, by physically reconnecting with the land, they would be transformed from passive urban European Jews that Zionism was rejecting into new, physically strong, rural Jews Zionism sought to establish. “We will build the land and be built by it” was a song sung by the pioneers. The Zionist leadership knew that the borders of the state would be determined and consolidated by Jewish settlement. “A people for a land for a land with a people” was an early Zionist slogan. There were six waves of aliyah until Israel’s establishment in 1948.

*The first aliyah, 1882–1904:* 30,000–40,000 migrants arrived during this period, initially influenced by Hovevei Zion, the Lovers of Zion group, which was a forerunner to modern political Zionism. Hovevei Zion was an ideological group, seeking to renew Jewish national life by establishing private-economy agricultural settlements, *moshavot*, such as that in Petach Tikva.

*The second aliyah, 1904–1914:* 35,000–40,000 immigrants arrived after a renewed outbreak of pogroms in Eastern Europe. They were pioneers, and the first socialist *Kvutza*, forerunner to the kibbutz, was established during this period.

During the first and second aliyahs, the Ottoman rulers imposed restrictions on Jewish immigration out of concern for Arab opinion, but Jews were often able to circumvent these restrictions. All immigration ceased with the outbreak of World War I.

*The third aliyah, 1919–1923:* 35,000 immigrants arrived as part of this aliyah, which was enhanced by the 1917 Balfour Declaration and Jews escaping the Russian Civil War (1918–1920) and the Russo-Polish War (1919–1920). However, it was a highly ideological migration, the majority being pioneers who established the first kibbutz. After Arab attacks on Jewish settlements in 1921 the British imposed restrictions on Jewish immigration. Ultimately, it was economic depression that brought this aliyah to an end.

*The fourth aliyah, 1924–1931:* 80,000 urban capitalist immigrants arrived in the fourth aliyah, half from Poland, who were escaping harsh fiscal decrees aimed at Jews. Up until this point, most Eastern European Jews immigrants had gone to America, which by this time had introduced restrictions, so the Jewish immigrants had to go to Palestine. After the 1929 Arab riots, the British limited immigration.

*The fifth aliyah, 1931–1939:* This aliyah was made up of 224,785 European Jews escaping anti-Semitism; 1932 saw the start of illegal immigration designed to circumvent immigration quotas. Political instability after the 1936 Arab riots culminated in the 1939 white paper, which limited immigration to 75,000 over five years.

*The sixth aliyah, 1939–1948:* During World War II, 60,000 Jews arrived in Palestine, and another 60,000 arrived after the war until independence. About 40,000 were illegal immigrants.

By the time the State of Israel was established, the Jewish population had grown from 24,000 to 650,000 since the origins of Jewish settlement. The first law the State of Israel passed in 1950 was the Law of Return, which gave all Jews from anywhere in the world the automatic right of citizenship, so that after the Holocaust, no Jew would ever again be homeless.

After the State of Israel was established, Oriental Jewish communities that had lived in Arab countries for centuries were expelled as part of the Arab response to Israel's formation. From 1948 to 1951, Israel's population more than doubled as 687,000 immigrants arrived (see Table 6). These and subsequent aliyahs were known by their country of origin rather than year.



New immigrants to pre-state Israel attend a foundation stone-laying ceremony in 1944 at Kariat Bialik, near Haifa. (Zoltan Kluger/Israeli Government Press Office)

**Table 6 Jewish Arrivals in Israel between 1948 and 1951**

Country of Birth	Number of Migrants
Iraq	123,371
Yemen	45,640
Libya	30,472
Morocco	28,283
Iran	21,910
Tunisia	13,243
Egypt, Sudan	8,760
Algeria	3,810
Aden	3,275

There were further aliyah from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco after the collapse of French rule through the 1950s, and several hundred thousand more Jews from the Arab world (Asia) and North Africa arrived throughout the mid-1960s. By the mid-1960s Oriental Jews had come to equal the number of

Ashkenazi/Europeans in Israel and were soon to become a majority (see Table 7).

Aliyah continued from various countries, including the airlift of Ethiopian Jews in the 1980s. Once they were recognized in Israel as being Jewish, immigration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel began on a large scale in 1976, most notably through dramatic Israeli airlifts from Africa in 1984 (Operation Moses) and 1991 (Operation Solomon). With ongoing immigration since then, there are currently 100,000 Ethiopian Jews in Israel and another 20,000 Falash Mura, the majority of whose ancestors had converted from Judaism to Christianity, waiting to be transported from Ethiopia to Israel.

The next mass aliyah followed the demise of the Soviet Union in 1989 when almost one million Jews arrived over a decade, as is shown in the chart, a movement that had a major impact on Israeli society, contributing to the economic boom of the 1990s. The number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union has now stabilized and was 10,127 in 2004 and 9,378 in 2005.

Over the past 50 years, Israel has absorbed more than 3 million immigrants from more than 100 countries, but less than 15 percent have come from the West, where the Zionist message of aliyah has not resonated.

To increase aliyah from the West, in 2002 the organization Nefesh B'Nefesh was established. From 2002 to 2005 it assisted more than 7,000 immigrants from Canada and America. Nefesh B'Nefesh takes a new approach to Western aliyah by taking on a significant organizational dimension of the migration and covering many

**Table 7 Jewish Immigrants to Israel from Asia and Africa**

Year	Immigrants from Asia	Immigrants from Africa
1952	6,992	10,132
1953	3,115	4,995
1954	3,473	12,343
1955	1,583	32,646
1956	3,182	45,138
1957	5,223	24,413
1958	8,039	4,064
1959	3,622	4,414
1960	1,890	5,310
1961	4,253	18,163
1962	5,415	42,036
1963	5,073	38,834
1964	5,158	17,638
1965	5,351	8,915
1966	3,263	3,387
1967	2,089	6,798
1968	4,828	9,217
1969	7,376	9,487

**Table 8** Diaspora Immigration to Israel, 1948–2000

Year	Ethiopia	South Africa	Argentina	Great Britain	France	North America	Former Soviet Union	Rest of the World	Total
1948	0	178	62	501	640	336	1,175	98,936	101,828
1949	1	228	326	796	1,665	659	3,255	233,024	239,954
1950	5	205	435	662	672	888	290	167,406	170,563
1951	5	72	325	347	401	618	196	173,315	175,279
1952	0	51	291	257	246	353	74	23,338	24,610
1953	3	46	427	192	196	234	45	10,432	11,575
1954	13	73	398	181	201	349	30	17,246	18,491
1955	25	111	363	204	206	380	139	36,100	37,528
1956	1	234	505	176	199	209	470	54,536	56,330
1957	5	96	665	223	267	313	1,423	69,642	72,634
1958	4	106	515	227	274	409	729	25,026	27,290
1959	3	114	420	229	326	379	1,362	21,155	23,988
1960	3	154	337	268	371	462	1,923	21,174	24,692
1961	2	116	495	235	372	348	224	45,943	47,735
1962	11	1,921	693	363	580	677	194	57,094	61,533
1963	17	409	4,255	536	546	968	314	57,444	64,489
1964	8	381	1,998	408	731	1,122	541	49,847	55,036
1965	9	310	1,154	356	830	1,016	895	26,545	31,115
1966	21	301	664	351	700	826	2,054	11,040	15,957
1967	13	233	547	299	893	739	1,403	10,342	14,469
1968	17	160	559	467	2,523	1,035	224	15,718	20,703
1969	14	715	1,274	1,763	5,292	6,419	3,019	19,615	38,111
1970	13	803	1,457	1,585	4,414	7,158	992	20,328	36,750
1971	7	647	2,107	1,381	3,281	8,122	12,839	13,546	41,930
1972	40	605	2,598	1,030	2,356	6,034	31,652	11,573	55,888
1973	41	577	2,809	760	1,473	4,687	33,477	11,062	54,886
1974	24	432	1,625	832	1,345	3,393	16,816	7,512	31,979
1975	19	415	892	707	1,382	3,065	8,531	5,017	20,028
1976	10	585	1,616	592	1,416	2,979	7,279	5,277	19,754
1977	90	1,448	2,158	840	1,226	2,906	8,348	4,413	21,429
1978	37	1,403	1,960	1,005	1,302	3,285	12,192	5,210	26,394
1979	45	978	1,577	1,058	1,648	3,273	17,614	11,029	37,222
1980	259	346	1,036	900	1,430	2,550	7,570	6,337	20,428
1981	650	220	949	882	1,430	2,670	1,770	4,028	12,599
1982	950	271	1,165	1,154	1,682	2,934	782	4,785	13,723
1983	2,393	324	1,283	1,294	2,094	3,806	399	5,313	16,906
1984	8,327	281	841	786	1,539	2,827	367	5,013	19,981
1985	1,886	246	836	577	1,017	2,090	362	3,628	10,642
1986	236	565	772	568	927	2,179	202	4,056	9,505

*(continued)*

Table 8 (Continued)

Year	Ethiopia	South Africa	Argentina	Great Britain	France	North America	Former Soviet Union	Rest of the World	Total
1987	231	737	1,078	577	888	1,986	2,096	5,372	12,965
1988	595	487	1,546	528	920	1,700	2,283	4,975	13,034
1989	1,448	262	1,853	452	900	1,533	12,932	4,670	24,050
1990	4,121	175	2,045	488	864	1,546	185,227	5,050	199,516
1991	20,014	135	666	472	966	1,703	147,839	4,305	176,100
1992	3,648	267	356	459	1,182	2,068	65,093	3,984	77,057
1993	863	437	375	647	1,372	2,280	66,145	4,686	76,805
1994	1,197	595	538	626	1,512	2,398	68,079	4,899	79,844
1995	1,312	287	966	669	1,635	2,503	64,848	4,141	76,361
1996	1,411	299	1,370	547	1,870	2,262	59,048	4,112	70,919
1997	1,661	290	1,255	487	1,938	2,057	54,621	3,912	66,221
1998	3,110	204	738	393	1,667	1,788	46,020	2,802	56,722
1999	2,290	228	936	383	1,366	1,697	66,848	3,018	76,766
2000	2,199	192	1,053	326	1,152	1,400	50,762	3,046	60,130
Total	59,307	20,955	57,164	32,046	66,325	109,618	1,073,012	1,432,017	2,850,444

of the costs. This model appears to be successful, and there has been a 200 percent increase in aliyah from the United States and a 40–50 percent increase from Canada since the Nefesh B’Nefesh began operating. In 2006 it expanded activities to the United Kingdom.

The rise in anti-Semitism in France since 2000 led then Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon to call, in 2003, for their immediate aliyah. Each year from 2000 to 2005 saw an increase in French aliyah from the previous year; a total of 11,148 Jews made aliyah from France in this period. This included 3,300 immigrants in 2005, a 35-year high.

France remains one of Israel’s main targets for increased aliyah, and the Jewish Agency continues to work with the private organization Alya et Meilleure, or Aliyah and Better Organisation, which was established in 2005, to achieve this. Although the end of the largest Jewish community in Europe is not imminent, the recent rise in anti-Semitism has caused many French Jews to question their future in their home country. In a 2005 survey, 65 percent of French Jews said the situation for Jews in France has deteriorated, and a full third said they do not see themselves living in France in the next several years. The majority of these are considering aliyah.

Israel remains a refuge for Jews in times of distress, whether economic or anti-Semitic. For example, when the Argentinean economy collapsed in 1999–2002, tens of thousands of Argentinean Jews emigrated to Israel, but the rate of immigration slowed as the Argentinean economy recovered.

With the growing birth rate among Palestinian citizens of Israel and a declining Jewish birth rate, Israel continues to explicitly seek aliyah (see Table 8). It does

so through 79 Jewish Agency aliyah offices in 43 countries from Ukraine to Uruguay, which help immigrants with aliyah planning information and administration.

### Selected Bibliography

- Hakohen, Deborah, and Gila Brand. 2003. *Immigrants in Turmoil: Mass Immigration to Israel and Its Repercussions in the 1950s and After*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Herman, Donald L. 1984. *The Latin-American Community of Israel*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Jones, Clive. 1996. *Soviet Jewish Aliyah, 1989–92: Impact and Implications for Israel and the Middle East*. London: Frank Cass.
- Ofer, Dalia. 1999. *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939–1944*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rapoport, Louis. 1986. *Redemption Song: The Story of Operation Moses*. San Diego: Harcourt.
- Shulewitz, Malka Hillel, ed. 2001. *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*. New York: Continuum.

## Diaspora Anti-Zionism

*Thomas A. Kolsky*

---

Zionism, with its goal to create a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine, began as a minority movement, which has faced opposition from Diaspora Jews since its inception. The Zionists did not surmount that opposition until the rapidly deteriorating condition of European Jewry in the 1930s and the impact of the Holocaust catastrophe made it possible for them to realize their goal—the establishment of the State of Israel.

In 1896, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), the father of political Zionism, published his pamphlet “Der Judenstaat” (The Jewish State) in which he argued that anti-Semitism was incurable and that the only viable solution to it was the creation of a sovereign Jewish state. In 1897, Herzl convened in Basel, Switzerland, the first Zionist Congress, which created the World Zionist Organization and elected him its president. The Zionist Congress declared that the goal of Zionism was to work for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine that was to be secured by openly recognized, legal means, implying the need to obtain the backing by a great power. To achieve internal consensus and not upset the Ottoman Turks who controlled Palestine at the time, the language of the declaration was deliberately elastic and thus open to various interpretations. Nevertheless, in his private diary Herzl candidly confessed that in Basel he founded a Jewish state.

As early as 1897, Zionism faced opposition from various Jewish quarters. A vast majority of Orthodox Jews, who rejected the notion of the restoration of Palestine by human intervention, considered Zionism to be a false messianic movement. Most Jewish liberals and socialists, believing in the promise of the Enlightenment with its emphasis on optimism, reason, and progress, regarded Zionism as reactionary philosophy. The majority of well-to-do and assimilated Jews in Western and Central Europe opposed Zionism until the events of the 1930s and 1940s undermined



Theodor Herzl was the founder of Zionism, the political movement that espouses the core belief that the Jewish people are entitled to a homeland and a state of their own. Herzl organized the First Zionist Congress, held in Switzerland in 1897. He is admired as the founding father of the modern State of Israel. (Library of Congress)

their optimism and drove them to make peace with Zionism. The anti-Zionists generally argued that Jews were a religious community, not a national entity; that Jews, a religious group, had no right to a state of their own; that Zionism raised the specter of dual loyalty; that Zionism was a political utopian fantasy; and that Zionism was an illegitimate creed. Quiescent during most of the years of Zionist growth, anti-Zionist Jews tended to react aggressively to Zionism at critical moments of its evolution, at times when Zionism seemed to make significant progress: in 1897, 1917–1919, and the 1940s.

The events surrounding the First Zionist Congress in 1897 elicited the earliest Jewish anti-Zionist reactions. When the German community learned that the Zionists planned to hold their congress in Munich, rabbis representing all shades of religious views, dubbed contemptuously by Herzl as *Protestrabbiner*, objected vociferously and forced the Zionists to shift their gathering to Basel, Switzerland. In public protest in Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers, the rabbis proclaimed their undivided loyalty to the German fatherland and denounced Zionism as fanaticism, contrary to the teachings of Jewish scriptures. In Austria, Moritz Guedemann (1835–1918), the chief rabbi of Vienna, Austria, and a major authority on Judaism, criticized Herzl's ideas and activities. Great Britain's chief rabbi, Hermann Adler (1839–1911), rejected Herzl's ideas and characterized political Zionism an "egregious blunder." In France, Zionism was viewed as a retreat from the ideals of the French Revolution and a surrender to anti-Semitism. In an interview in *Le Figaro* on September 7, 1897, Joseph Reinach (1856–1921), the prominent Jewish author and politician, asserted that the "French fatherland [nationality] was given to the Jews by the revolution" and neither the anti-Semites nor the Zionists at Basel were to be allowed to take it away from them. In the United States, Rabbi Isaac Mayer

Wise, the architect of American Reform, dismissed the Zionist movement as a mere aberration, calling it “Zionmania.”

Between 1897 and World War I, Zionism and its institutions in the Diaspora and Palestine evolved into a respectable Jewish political movement that offered a solution to the dilemma of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, its progress was limited. When World War I broke out, the movement still lacked support for a legally sanctioned homeland in Palestine. In the meantime, other ideologies were competing with Zionism as solutions for the Jewish question. In Eastern Europe, where large concentrations of Jews lived mostly in the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, Zionists and anti-Zionists shared the view that Jews were an ethnic or national group. But there the Zionists faced serious challenges from ideological rivals who proposed alternative political programs for the amelioration of Jewish plight. In Western Europe and the United States, where there was a much smaller concentration of Jews than in Eastern Europe, most anti-Zionists preferred to define themselves as a religious community, not a nationality. This turned out to be their main point of contention with the Zionists.

In Eastern Europe, Marxian Socialism, which attracted many Jews, vehemently opposed Zionism. For example, important Jewish Marxist leaders, such as Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, and Julius Martov, rejected Zionism as a reactionary, late capitalist development. They hoped Jews would ultimately assimilate themselves into a just socialist society and abandon their separate identity. After coming to power in Russia in 1917, the Communist regime enlisted Jews in a number of schemes designed to eradicate Jewish nationalism. In 1918 they established the *Yevsektzia*, a Jewish section of the Communist Party created to eliminate Jewish bourgeois nationalism. In 1928, the Soviet regime created a Jewish autonomous region in Birobidzhan, an area in southeastern Siberia bordering China, which also failed ultimately to solve the Soviet Jewish problem.

Diaspora nationalism offered a serious alternative to Zionism in Eastern Europe. Articulated most cogently by Simon Dubnow (1860–1941) and Chaim Zhitlowsky (1865–1943), Diaspora nationalism expressed faith in the possibility of solving the Jewish question in the countries where Jews were living. Both Dubnow and Zhitlowsky stressed the need to preserve the Jewish communal autonomy, identity, and culture as well as the Yiddish language spoken by the masses. Dubnow considered Jews a unique spiritual nation, precisely because they had survived for thousands of years despite dispersion and the loss of homeland. He criticized the Zionists’ negative view of the Diaspora, their emphasis on the exercise of political power, and their insistence on the acquisition of territory. In 1906, in a brief foray into politics, he actually helped to found a party based on his ideas, the *Folkspartei* (Peoples’ Party), which had no success in Russia and moderate success in Poland and Lithuania in the 1920s and 1930s. Zhitlowsky, a dedicated Socialist, who objected to what he considered Zionism isolationism, sought to integrate Jews into the mainstream of progressive history by reviving Jewish culture and connecting the Jews’ future with socialism. His ideas influenced the Bund.

The Bund (the General Jewish Labor Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), founded in Vilna, Lithuania, in 1897 for the purpose of uniting the Jewish workers

in the Russian Empire, presented Zionism with the most serious challenge in Eastern Europe. The Bund was secularist in its outlook. Its major theoreticians, Arkady Kremer (1865–1935) and Vladimir Medem (1879–1923), shared with Zhitlowsky a deep commitment to preserving the Yiddish language and culture as well as socialism. They called for cultural autonomy for Jews in the Russian Empire and the end of the exploitation of the Jewish working class. The Bund accused Zionism of diverting the attention of the Jewish masses from the task of the class struggle necessary for their liberation. The Bund strongly rejected the idea of Jewish homelessness outside of Palestine. It even warned that establishing a Jewish state in Palestine would lead to an endless conflict between Jews and Arabs. Outlawed in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Bund, with the slogan “nationhood without statehood,” became an influential Jewish political party in Poland in the inter-war period.

A substantial segment of Eastern European Orthodox Jews opposed the Zionist movement from its beginning until the 1940s, with some opposed until the birth of the State of Israel. A small minority continued to reject the state until the present. In 1912, in response to the growing influence of Zionism and the creation of the *Mozrachi*, a religious Zionist party, an alliance of anti-Zionist Orthodox groups founded the *Agudat Israel*, a worldwide movement of Orthodox Jews. Bitterly denouncing the secularism of the Zionist movement, the *Agudists* accused Zionism of betraying the belief in the messianic idea. According to Isaac Breuer (1883–1946), one of the major leaders and theoreticians of the *Agudat Israel* movement, Jews were a religious nation, and it was religion that saved the nation from extinction. In Palestine, *Agudat Israel* established institutions independent of the Zionist *Yishuv* (the Jewish settlement in Palestine). In the mid-1930s, however, when *Agudat Israel* began to cooperate with the Zionists in practical administrative matters in Palestine, a group of die-hard ultra-Orthodox Jews, led by Rabbi Amram Blau (1894–1974), which became known as the *Neturei Karta*, withdrew from *Agudat Israel*. The *Neturei Karta* became undoubtedly the most extreme anti-Zionist Jewish group in the world, with branches presently in Israel, the United States, and Great Britain. After World War II, Rabbi Blau found an ally in the fiercely anti-Zionist Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum (1888–1979), leader of the *Satmar Hasidic* sect, which was based in the Williamsburg section of New York City and the nearby Hasidic village of *Kiryas Joel*. Die-hard anti-Zionists, the *Neturei Karta* not only opposed the idea of a secularly created Jewish state, but they also continued to refuse to recognize the legitimacy of Israel after its foundation in 1948. So intense has been the *Neturei Karta* antagonism toward Israel that nowadays they identify themselves as Palestinians, not Israelis. In fact, after the 1993 Oslo Agreement, Yasir Arafat appointed Rabbi Moshe Hirsch, their self-proclaimed foreign minister, to the symbolic post of the Palestinian Authority’s minister for Jewish affairs.

The Zionist movement was finally able to secure an alliance with a great power that would help to advance its cause during World War I. On November 2, 1917, toward the end of World War I, the Zionists secured the Balfour Declaration, a pledge by Great Britain to facilitate “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” After conquering Palestine, the British enabled the *Yishuv* to

evolve into a viable political community and brought the Zionists a step closer to realizing their intended—though not openly declared—final goal: the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state. The events surrounding the Balfour Declaration unleashed open opposition to Zionism from many major Jewish religious, philanthropic, and self-defense organizations as well from prominent community leaders in the United States and Western Europe.

In France, strong opposition to Zionism had existed among the Jewish elite since 1897. Alliance Israelite Universelle, an organization founded in 1860 to promote Jewish emancipation and education as well as to combat anti-Semitism, strongly disapproved of the Balfour Declaration. Sylvain Levi (1863–1935), one of its foremost activists and its president from 1920 until 1935, declared that creating a Jewish polity in Palestine was “singularly dangerous,” fearing it might provoke Muslim fanaticism and intense hostility in the Arab world. In Germany, the Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbuerger juedischen Glaubens (Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith), an organization founded in 1893 to fight for citizens’ rights and against anti-Semitism, considered Zionism a threat to the civil status of Jews in Germany. Also critical of Zionism was the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden (Relief Organization of German Jews), which was founded in 1901 to improve the social and political condition of Jews in Eastern Europe and Asia, including Palestine. Many German civic leaders distanced themselves from Zionism. In fact, the most prominent German Jewish philosopher, Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), expressed a popular view when he stressed the purely religious nature of Judaism, insisting that German Jews belonged to the German nation and that Zionism was incompatible with German patriotism.

In Great Britain the fiercest anti-Zionist reaction to the Balfour Declaration came from the Anglo-Jewish aristocracy. The Board of Deputies of British Jews (founded in 1760), the main representative body of British Jewry, and the Anglo-Jewish Association (founded in 1871), an organization created to help Jews in distress around the world, opposed Zionism until the 1940s. Among the most outspoken British anti-Zionists—all members of prominent families—were Lucien Wolf (1857–1930), Claude Montefiore (1858–1938), Laurie Magnus (1872–1933), and Edwin Samuel Montagu (1879–1924). Their main arguments against Zionism were that it misrepresented Judaism, contributed to anti-Semitism, and undermined the status of Jews as nationals of their home countries. Significantly, it was during British government’s deliberations on the formulation of the Balfour Declaration that Edwin Samuel Montagu, the sole Jewish member of the cabinet, contributed to diluting the phrasing of the document from “Palestine as *the* National Home,” as proposed by the Zionists, to “Palestine as *a* National Home” and to including a safeguard clause providing for the protection of non-Jews in Palestine and the political status and rights of Jews around the world. In 1917, British opponents of Zionism also created the League of British Jews, an anti-Zionist association with several hundred members, which campaigned against Zionism until the end of the 1920s.

In the United States, Zionism faced opposition from Orthodox, Socialist, and liberal Jews. But the most lasting and vehement opposition to Zionism came from Reform Jews. American Reform rejected Jewish nationalism even before Herzl’s

appearance. The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, which remained Reform's basic statement of principle until 1935, defined Jews as a purely religious community and explicitly rejected the idea that they constituted a nation. For many years, beginning in 1897, the religious and lay organizations of Reform Judaism repeatedly passed resolutions condemning Zionism. On March 4, 1919, Congressman Julius Kahn delivered to President Wilson an anti-Zionist statement to be presented to the Paris Peace Conference, which was endorsed by 299 Jews who rejected Zionism. The American Jewish Committee (AJC), an organization founded in 1906 for the purpose of defending Jewish rights in the United States and throughout the world, and the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), an organization created to provide relief to Jews in distress around the world, remained anti-Zionist until the 1930s.

In the 1930s, however, the deterioration of the international situation helped to advance the cause of Zionism. The coming to power of Nazism in Germany, the rapid spread of anti-Semitism, and the savage assault on liberal values undermined the theoretical foundation of anti-Zionism in the United States and Europe. World events seem to vindicate the Zionists' dire predictions about anti-Semitism. The issuance of the British White Paper of May 1939, which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine and proposed an independent—not a Jewish—state in Palestine within a 10-year-period, effectively ended the Zionists' alliance with the British. Disillusioned with Great Britain, the world Zionist movement turned to the United States for the support of its Jews, general public, and government for its ultimate political goal—the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. World War II and the Holocaust created a historic opportunity for the Zionist movement. Half a year after the American entry into World War II, in May 1942, at the Biltmore Hotel, the Zionists openly declared their aims: free immigration to Palestine and the establishment there of a Jewish commonwealth. They proceeded to campaign for the support of the American Jews and the American government.

During World War II, as the European Jewish tragedy was unfolding and the Zionist movement was rapidly gaining support, two organizations were formed to fight against the establishment of that state: the Jewish Fellowship in Great Britain and the American Council for Judaism in the United States. The fellowship, with fewer than 2,000 members, included Jews of Liberal and Orthodox religious orientations. The American Council for Judaism, with approximately 14,000 members, consisted mostly of Reform Jews. Both organizations emphasized the message that Jews were a religious group, not a nationality, and that a Jewish state would endanger the status of Jews around the world. In response, the Zionists savagely condemned the members of the two organizations as insensitive, cowardly, shameless, self-hating, and disloyal Jews.

The Jewish Fellowship was founded in 1942 by Basil Henriques (1890–1961) and began its active anti-Zionist campaign in 1944. Among the lay members of the Jewish Fellowship were members of prominent Anglo-Jewish families. The organization's spiritual guide was Rabbi Israel Mattuck (1883–1954), leader of Liberal Judaism in Great Britain. He was supported by leaders of British Judaism, such as rabbis Curtis Cassell, Harold Reinhart, and Gerhard Graf. Considered by some as

the last stand of organized anti-Zionism in Great Britain, the Jewish Fellowship remained isolated in the Jewish community, which by the 1940s became increasingly sympathetic to the Zionists. It had very little impact on British foreign policy and dissolved itself in November 1948, half a year after the State of Israel was born.

In 1942, a number of American dissident Reform rabbis, led by rabbis Louis Wolsey (1877–1953), William Fineshriber (1878–1968), and Morris S. Lazaron (1888–1979) founded the American Council for Judaism (ACJ), the first and only American Jewish organization created to oppose Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Although initially a group representing religious opposition to Zionism, the council rapidly transformed itself into an essentially secular anti-Zionist pressure group after Lessing J. Rosenwald (1891–1979) assumed its presidency in April 1943. Under Rosenwald's leadership and the organizational and ideological guidance of Rabbi Elmer Berger (1908–1996), the executive director, the ACJ became the most formidable opponent of the Zionist movement in the United States in the 1940s. The organization's membership consisted mostly of Reform Jews of German descent. The ACJ's principles, based on classical Reform tenets, emphasized the purely religious nature of Judaism and rejected Jewish nationalism. The establishment of a Jewish state was repudiated as regressive, undemocratic, and contrary to Jewish interests. For the ACJ, Zionism represented a philosophy of despair, loss of faith in emancipation, and self-segregation. Instead of a Jewish state, the ACJ supported free Jewish immigration and equal rights for Jews throughout the world. For Palestine, it proposed the establishment of a democratic state wherein all citizens, regardless of their religions, would enjoy equal rights. From 1942 to 1948, the ACJ fought fiercely against the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Since in the 1940s a vast majority of American Jews rallied behind the Zionist program, the ACJ failed to make significant inroad into the Jewish community. While isolated among Jews, it cooperated closely with the American state department, which also opposed the creation of a Jewish state.

But the impact of the Holocaust as well as the successful Zionist political preparatory work in Palestine and the international arena created the political momentum that made the birth of Israel possible. With the emergence of the Jewish state, organized Jewish anti-Zionism in Great Britain and the United States was defeated. The creation of the Jewish state was a clear victory for Zionism. After the creation of a Jewish state, anti-Zionist opposition to its establishment ceased to make sense. Despite various degrees of criticism of its policies, with the exception of the Neturei Karta, Diaspora Jews accepted the existence of the State of Israel. Also, the ACJ reconciled itself to the reality of Israel as a *fait accompli*. The ACJ, however, did not go out of existence in 1948; instead, it turned into a severe critic of Israel and its ideological supporters. It remained a lonely Jewish voice crying in the political wilderness.

### Selected Bibliography

- Berger, Elmer. 1978. *Memoirs of an Anti-Zionist Jew*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies.
- Kolsky, Thomas. 1990. *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Laqueur, Walter. 1972. *A History of Zionism*. New York: Rinehart and Holt.
- Miller, Rory. 2000. *Divided We Stand: Anti-Zionist Opposition in Britain to a Jewish State in Palestine, 1945–1948*. London: Frank Cass.
- Wistrich, Robert S. 1998. "Zionism and Its Jewish 'Assimilationist' Critics (1897–1948)." *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (Winter): 59–111.

## Jewish Diaspora Engagement with Israel

*Danny Ben-Moshe*

From the outset of Zionism, the Diaspora has had a distinct role to play with developing the homeland, raising funds, mobilizing political activity, and providing immigrants. Today, particularly since 1948, Israel continues to play an unequivocally essential role in Diaspora Jewish identity. This centrality is expressed through many areas of Jewish life, such as education, community, philanthropy, and political activism. These deep-seated attachments to Israel are also evident through growing rates of aliyah, participation in Israel programs, and visits to the Jewish state.

Since 1967, a time when the Jewish world was gripped by the realization that the State of Israel could be destroyed, and people were then caught up in Israel's jubilation at her survival, Israel has been a central factor in Diaspora Jewish life and identity. Israel is seen as playing a central role in maintaining Jewish identity throughout the Diaspora. The existence of Israel is important to world Jewry, as is illustrated by the following data: 87 percent of Canadian Jewry believes Israel is "important to being a Jew"; more than 80 percent of American Jews in the 2000 National Jewish Population Survey were very or somewhat familiar with social and political events in Israel, and over 80 percent strongly or somewhat agreed that Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people; 81 percent of British Jews were, according to a 1997 survey, strongly or moderately attached to Israel; and 86 percent of respondents to a 2002 survey of French Jews said they felt "very close or close" to Israel. The importance of Israel in the identity of world Jewry today is manifested through various means of engagement with the Jewish State.

### Education

Levels of enrollment in Jewish day schools vary in different parts of the Diaspora: 55 percent in Canada, 29 percent in America, and 70 percent in Australia. For those who do receive a formal Jewish education, Israel is a central part of it.

Jewish schools have dedicated programs that teach about Zionism and the State of Israel. These are not emotionally detached subjects, but rather they teach of Israel as the home of the Jewish people. They are complemented by extracurricular Israeli events in schools, such as celebrating *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Israeli Independence Day) and *Yom HaZikaron* (the day for fallen Israeli soldiers).

Hebrew language teaching is based on curricula that, in addition to teaching the language, imbue identification with contemporary Israel. This is the case, for

example, with the Canadian *Tal Sela* program and the Boston-based Neta (*Noar Letovat HaIvrit*) program. Both programs are used around the world.

## Youth Movements

The formation of the Zionist Movement led to a number of factions that were active in the Yishuv and in preparing Diaspora Jews for settlement in Palestine. Today these organizations, together with those established after the formation of the State of Israel, still exist in the Diaspora in the form of Zionist youth movements, where members meet regularly to discuss Zionism and Israel, hold winter and summer camps, and travel to Israel on programs. These youth movements also operate in Israel. Movements, their members, and participating countries include the following:

- *Hashomer Hatzair*, a socialist movement with 15,000 members in Germany, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, France, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Hungary, Bulgaria, Belarus, Ukraine, and Australia.
- *Betar*, a right-wing movement with 8,500 members in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, France, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Ukraine, and South Africa.
- *Bnei Akiva*, a religious national movement with 45,000 members in the United States, Canada, Ukraine, Holland, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Switzerland, South Africa, Venezuela, Uruguay, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Russia, France, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Norway, Germany, Denmark, Hungary, and Scandinavia.



Members of the *Hashomer Hatzair* youth movement, pictured in pre-state Israel in 1941. (Daniel Kaplan/Israeli Government Press Office)

Additional youth movements include Reform Zionist youth groups, which operate under several names in Britain, Holland, Australia, Argentina, Spain, Russia, Belarus, Germany, South Africa, Ukraine, Baltic countries, and North America; and the kibbutz-oriented *Habonim Dror*, with thousands of members in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, South Africa, Mexico, America, Canada, Zimbabwe, England, Scotland, France, Holland, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, and Belgium.

## Prayer

In synagogues around the world, the Prayer for the State of Israel is read on Sabbath mornings, as is the prayer for the welfare of the Israeli Defence Forces. Thanksgiving prayers are also offered on Israeli Independence Day in Modern Orthodox congregations. Prayer is thus a particular means through which Jews engage with the State of Israel. Indeed, on particular occasions prayer is a distinct means to respond to events in Israel. For example, when Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was taken captive in June 2006, special prayers services were held for him across France.

Not all synagogues, however, say formal prayers for the Israeli state and military, such as non-Zionist Haredi, including Lubavitch, synagogues, and many Reform synagogues. Despite this, Orthodox Jews, be they Modern Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox, including Hasidim, are emotionally attached to Israel, visit often, have high rates of aliyah, read Hebrew, and send their children on more Israel programs, including yeshiva (seminaries). Their prayers, moreover, are heavily littered with references to the Land of Israel, especially on the holidays. They are thus heavily engaged with the State of Israel, even if for the ultra-Orthodox it is the Land of Israel rather than the modern Zionist state.

## Volunteering

Community service is a characteristic central to Jewish life and has been extensively applied to causes for Israel, from door knocking for the Jewish National Fund (JNF) to running a range of pro-Israel organizations in the Diaspora. In addition to volunteering for Israel causes in the Diaspora, Jews also volunteer in Israel itself.

Before statehood, Jews volunteered in a range of efforts to support the Zionist enterprise. In World War I, some 300 Jewish Canadians volunteered for the Jewish Legion, the military unit formed by volunteers from Jewish communities in Western democracies to fight alongside British forces to liberate Palestine from Turkish rule in the World War I.

Jews also volunteered in the 1948 War of Independence. For example, 800 young South African Jews volunteered as part of *Machal*, the Volunteers from Abroad program, and even greater numbers volunteered from the United States and Great Britain. Similarly, during and immediately after the 1967 Six-Day War, more than 1,000 French Jews volunteered in Israel.

Today, Diaspora Jews participate in multiple volunteer programs that specifically encourage Diaspora volunteers, such as the Magen David Adom Ambulance

service and the Israeli fire fighters. In 2004, there were 3,367 Jewish volunteers in Israel from 40 countries, ranging from Brazil to Norway.

**Israel Visits**

Literally going to Israel is another centrally important dimension of Israel–Diaspora relations, although the numbers of visitors vary according to the different Diaspora communities. For example, one survey found that 35 percent of American Jews had visited Israel, 66 percent of Canadian Jews had visited Israel at least once, 83 percent of South African Jews had visited Israel at least once in the previous 10 years, 66 percent of British Jews had visited Israel at least once during the previous 10 years, and 73 percent of Melbourne Jews had visited Israel.

Israel and the Diaspora are committed to increasing the percentage of Jews who visit Israel. The current Birthright Israel Program aims to ultimately bring every Jew aged 18–26 to Israel, as part of their Jewish birthright. In 2005, the MASA initiative was launched by the government of Israel and the Jewish Agency for Israel, with the aim of quadrupling the number of participants in long-term (semester to one year) programs in Israel to 20,000 by the year 2008.

**Philanthropy**

The Jewish Diaspora helped establish the State of Israel by raising funds for it. Two major organizations that still today continue their fund-raising efforts and that preceded the existence of the State of Israel are *Keren Hayesod* (United Israel Appeal or UIA) and *Keren Keyemet* (Jewish National Fund or JNF). UIA operates in 45 countries. Established in 1920, UIA was the central organization for raising funds for the nascent state before 1948. Since its establishment *Keren Hayesod* has raised \$4 billion. Income over recent years is shown in Table 9. In addition to the actual dollars raised, *Keren Hayesod* also provides a network for thousands of volunteers to be involved in Israel related works across five continents.

**Table 9 Funds Raised for the State of Israel by U.S. Organizations**

Year	Donations Raised by World Jewry (U.S.\$)
2000	100,200,000
2001	100,400,000
2002	132,000,000
2003	126,000,000
2004	139,000,000
2005	137,000,000

JNF was established at the second Zionist Congress in 1901 to raise funds to acquire land in Palestine. Between World War I and World War II, approximately 1 million JNF blue boxes could be found in Jewish homes around the world. JNF currently operates in 34 countries worldwide, but the main countries are the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, and Italy. On average, JNF generates \$25–30 million. As part of their core work of raising millions of dollars a year, both UIA and JNF offices around the world have regular newsletters, bring speakers from Israel, and take “missions” of supporters to Israel.

Other major organizations active in raising funds for Israel across the Diaspora include Women's International Zionist Organization, Magen David Adom, and Israeli universities. Hundreds of other organizations, from Israeli soldier to welfare organizations, also connect the Diaspora to Israel through their fund-raising efforts. In total, it has been estimated that Israel imports \$1.5 billion in philanthropic support each year.

### **Political Activism**

Jewish political lobbying for Israel is another dimension of Diaspora participation in the Zionist enterprise that dates back to the origins of the Zionist movement. Chaim Weizmann drew on British Jewry to assist him in his efforts to secure the 1917 Balfour Declaration. During the period in which the State of Israel was established, Jewish American figures such as Rabbi Steven Wise and Justice Louis Brandeis played crucial roles in lobbying Congress and the Eisenhower administration. Lobbying for Israel has continued to be a staple of Israel–Diaspora relations.

Most communities have organizations dedicated to pro-Israel lobbying, such as the America–Israel Public Affairs Committee, the Canada–Israel Committee, and the British–Israel Communications and Research Centre. Activities organized by these and other groups include solidarity rallies, media monitoring, and lobbying of politicians. This is aimed at redressing what is widely regarded as an imbalance against Israel in both media and political environments.

Political activism also includes public demonstrating in support of Israel. For example, in April 2002 when the Israel–Palestinian fighting that erupted in September 2000 was at its peak, 100,000 people rallied outside the White House; 15,000–20,000 gathered in Rome; 20,000 rallied in Ottawa; and the largest pro-Israel rallies in the history of Berlin, Sydney, and London were attended by 2,000, 10,000, and 40,000 people, respectively.

### **Aliyah**

Aliyah, or emigration to Israel, is another way in which Diaspora Jews engage with the Jewish State.

### **Trade**

An underresearched area of Israel–Diaspora relations is trade. Jews are behind the format of binational chambers of commerce in a range of countries. These are aimed at the general import-export sector rather than the Jewish community, but the core membership and leadership of these groups are invariably Jewish.

Other economic engagement with Israel includes purchasing Israel bonds, of which more than \$25 billion have been sold. The proceeds and securities from these sales are used by Israel's Finance Ministry to help fund projects in key economic sectors.

## A Final Word: The Generational Factor

Surveys across the Jewish world note that identification and participation with Israel is weaker among younger age groups. The outcomes of efforts to engage with younger age groups will determine the nature and extent of the Diaspora's ongoing relationship with the Jewish state.

### Selected Bibliography

- Beilin, Yossi. 2000. *His Brother's Keeper: Israel and Diaspora Jewry in the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Ben-Moshe, Danny, and Zohar Segev, eds. 2007. *Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity*. London: Sussex Academic Press.
- Gal, Allon, and Alfred Gottschalk, eds. 2000. *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy: American Jewry and Israel*. Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press.
- Gidron, Benjamin, Yael Elon, Avital Schlanger, and Raviv Schwartz. 2006. *The Sector of Philanthropic Foundations and Funding Organizations in Israel: Its Characteristics, Functions, Relationship with Government and Patterns of Management*. Jerusalem: Israeli Center for Third Sector Research.
- Mittelberg, David. 1999. *The Israel Connection and American Jews*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Rosenthal, Steven T. 2001. *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.
- Seliktar, Ofira. 2002. *Divided We Stand: American Jews, Israel, and the Peace Process*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

## Education in Israel about the Diaspora

*Matt Silver and Aliza Shenhar*

---

Education in Israel about the Diaspora is rooted in attitudes and approaches that developed before 1948, in the pre-state late Ottoman and British Mandatory periods. Although the pre-state models never entirely propounded the Zionist conception of "negation of the Diaspora" (*shlilat hagola*), they were influenced by visions of Jewish life outside Eretz Israel as servile, humiliating, unproductive, and endangered. This hostile attitude toward Diaspora life complemented educational efforts in the Yishuv and early years of statehood to create a new type of pioneering Jew whose character would be bereft of all the negative features associated with Diaspora life.

Since the 1950s, and in an accelerated fashion after the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israeli education has shed this partial commitment to the negation of the Diaspora model and developed new methodologies that explore Jewish continuity, traditional sources, and forms of interdependence between Israel and the Diaspora. However, just as the negation of the Diaspora ideology was never fully dominant in the Yishuv's and Israel's educational system, so, too, have these new, more inclusive models retained traditional Zionist assumptions about

the primacy of Jewish life in Eretz Israel and aliyah as the supreme act of Jewish devotion among Diaspora Jews. Also, a number of challenges and issues remain today in Israeli educational approaches toward the Diaspora. For instance, ambivalence and inconsistency often cloud pedagogical approaches toward traditional Jewish texts; loose ends and questions remain in education about the Holocaust, even though Holocaust teaching has become a standardized part of Israel's educational curriculum; and concepts of Diaspora life important to ideological and religious movements that are based in the United States and elsewhere in the Diaspora are not systematically presented in Israeli curricula.

Research studies about Israeli education on the Diaspora emphasize the transition from a negation of the Diaspora mode to a relatively inclusive methodology of Jewish consciousness or Jewish continuity. There is, however, no single accepted explanation to account for this transformation.

Generally, researchers and educators agree that the rigidly harsh Zionist conception of Diaspora life as intolerable *galut*. Exile became untenable as a result of a number of factors. These include contemporary feelings of empathy with Holocaust victims in the 1940s and then a national reevaluation of the subject in the aftermath of the Adolf Eichmann trial; rising confidence after the establishment of Israel in 1948 and a willingness to acknowledge the country's need for support among Diaspora Jews (a willingness that increased as a result of traumas such as the 1973 war); the waning of the *halutz* ethos by which a new Jewish pioneering vanguard believed itself to be in rebellion against Jewish life outside of Eretz Israel; and the rise of religious Zionism and increased interest in the Jewish roots of Zionism after the 1967 Six-Day War.

### Transition from Negation of the Diaspora to Jewish Continuity

One systematic study of about 150 history textbooks in Eretz Israel classrooms, from the turn of the 20th century to the mid-1980s, emphasizes the eclipse of the negation of the Diaspora mode. Ruth Firer found that in the 1930–1948 pre-state period, when Zionist conceptualization permeated strongly in Yishuv classrooms, teaching about Jewish history and culture presented the Diaspora in a strongly negative light, suggesting that the Yishuv stood alone, and by itself carried the burden of preserving and revitalizing Jewish heritage.

In some ways, this negation of the Diaspora attitude hardened during the period between the 1948 Independence War and the 1967 Six-Day War, during an educational period Firer describes as ideological extremism. Most poignantly the negation position expressed an acute lack of sympathy for Holocaust victims, who were said to have walked like sheep to the slaughter; the only form of Jewish heroism identified in the story of the Holocaust was that of ghetto fighters, as in the case of the Warsaw uprising. Generally, Israeli education struck a suspicious, even somewhat xenophobic, pose toward Gentile nations.

After the 1967 war, Israeli education was transformed. History textbooks were written not by private individuals but by teams that worked in conjunction with the Education Ministry. A more professional, less mythologized approach to Zionist

themes consolidated in this period; and textbooks ceased to use derogatory terms such as “stagnation” or “decline” in the description of Diaspora communities—be they pre-Holocaust centers of Jewish life in Europe or Sephardic communities of North Africa and Asia.

The transition to a more inclusive attitude to Jewish tradition and Diaspora life is a clearly discernible trend in Israeli education from the pre-state Yishuv period to the end of the 20th century. But the question remains: Was there ever a categorical attitude of denial of the Diaspora in the Israeli school system?

Certainly, early Israeli educators were passionately committed to Zionist values that grant precedence to settlement in Eretz Israel and question the long-term vitality of Jewish life in the Diaspora. Yet it would be wrong to generalize casually about a negation of the Diaspora attitude in any period of Israeli education. Overall, Israeli educators condemned the *galut* as an existential condition of exile, persecution, and dependence, but they were loath to condemn the Jews who fought in the Diaspora for national survival and unity.

In the Yishuv period, educators affiliated with the evolving Labor Zionist movement sometimes spoke disdainfully of the “contamination of Exile”—Dr. Baruch Ben Yehuda of the Herzliya Secondary School in Tel Aviv is one such example. But other educators, such as Shlomo Schiller of Jerusalem’s Hebrew Gymnasium, countered this negation trend by pointing out that “Jewish education cannot omit 2000 years of creative existence.”

During the early years of statehood, the Jewish historian Ben-Zion Dinur set the stage both for the renewal and demise of the negation of the Diaspora attitude in Israeli classrooms. Presiding over the legislation of the 1953 State Education Law as Israel’s third minister of Education, Dinur cited two reasons in favor of study of Diaspora communities in the state school system: to prevent another Holocaust by instilling knowledge of anti-Semitism and to cultivate a sense of Jewish solidarity, the ethos of *Klal Yisrael*. His advocacy of education about the Diaspora seemed to mark a retreat from his pre-state attitude, during which he intoned (in 1939) that “Zionism is a revolt against the Diaspora.” (Learning about the Diaspora, Dinur declared in 1939, could be justified only as the effort to “know your enemy.”) All told, however, Dinur’s attitude could be described as hatred of *galut* (exile) but love of the Jewish people who endured it; and as a historian he devoted prodigious labors toward chrestomathies, or edited compilations of Diaspora Jewish life. In fact, as one historian observes, rarely in his writings did Dinur call for the negation of the Diaspora; “on the contrary, much of his scholarly effort was devoted to the recovery of the resilient experience of the Jewish people.” This attitude remains discernible today in Israeli education on the Diaspora, from the secondary school level to the university classroom.

### **Jewish Continuity Efforts in Israeli Education**

After an initial period of educational flux and uncertainty, which preceded the legislation of the 1953 Education Law, a series of official, or semiofficial, attempts arose to formulate educational policy favoring a more inclusive attitude toward

Jewish tradition and Diaspora communities. During his terms of office as education minister (1955–1960; 1963–1969), Zalman Aranne supervised the work of five committees on issues of Jewish continuity education. On the eve of the Six-Day War these efforts culminated in the establishment of a Center to Foster Jewish Consciousness, which upheld four content areas in Jewish education: the people of Eretz Israel; Jewish philosophy; Diaspora communities, past and present; and Jewish religion and tradition examined from a cultural-national perspective. The Jewish continuity perspective endorsed by this center was articulated in the Six-Day War period, when discourse about Judaism and politics in Israel changed radically; the center's influence abated not long after its founding.

After 1967, religious Zionist proponents searched for the Jewish roots of contemporary Israeli society and infused political debate in the country with religious rites and symbols. The rise of religious Zionism significantly changed Jewish education policy discourse in Israel.

By the 1990s, political debates about Israeli settlement policy and related issues between religious-right and secular-left groups spawned an Israeli version of the American culture wars in the education system. Two successive committees, led by Professors Zimmerman and Bartal, issued recommendations for pedagogical methodologies that would survey Eretz Israel and Zionist issues in the broad context of Jewish history and world history. Insisting on this interplay between Jewish nationalist themes and world history, the Bartal Committee conceptualized Jewish education in terms of three categories: nationalism in Israel and elsewhere, Zionism and the Middle East, and totalitarianism and the Holocaust.

Such approaches sparked a backlash in the education system. Critics such as Dr. Yoram Hazoni objected that the Bartal group's proposed curriculum promoted "insufficient discussion of the national legacy and distortion of Jewish and Zionist history." Spurred by such allegations about ways in which proposed curricula might harm national solidarity, the Knesset Education Committee sponsored a process of inquiry; and in an extraordinary step, Education Minister Limor Livnat rejected a history textbook, *A World of Changes*, sponsored by the Bartal Committee.

In 1991, the contentious atmosphere stirred by such mini culture wars, along with widespread reports about declining interest in Jewish studies on all levels of Israel's school system and challenges posed by the mass immigration of Jews from a Soviet system prompted the formation of a high-level Jewish education public commission, popularly known as the Shenhar Committee. The committee's mandate was to formulate policy recommendations on Jewish education in Israel's non-Orthodox public school system.

After years of intensive discussion, the committee submitted its report to Israel's minister of education, culture and sports. Upholding a pluralistic, inclusive approach to Jewish education, the Shenhar report maintained that "Jewish subjects should be taught in a way that emphasizes their character as humanist topics which impart culture and values." Jewish education in Israel, the report explained, "should stress both the uniqueness of Jewish culture, and also that culture's positive links with world cultural groups." Pluralistic methodologies should stress open discussion and dialogue, the report recommended. Espousing curriculum materials that

cover a wide swath of Jewish religion and culture in the periods and regions of the Diaspora, the report noted that such a broadly inclusive methodology should search “for components that are pertinent to the lives of contemporary students.”

Whereas previous educational policy statements in Israel had departed from the negation of the Diaspora model primarily by focusing on aliyah-related trends and Jewish solidarity issues, the Shenhar report moved in the direction of recognizing Jewish Diaspora culture in its own right. Rather than upholding in the Diaspora whatever can be fit into Zionist conceptualization, the report declared that education in non-Orthodox Israeli schools should expose students to the “extensive creativity of Diaspora communities.” Education should emphasize “the mutual responsibility linking Israel and the Jewish Diaspora,” because this bond is “a vital component of Jewish identity.”

The Shenhar report emphasized that complex topics in Jewish history should be studied in wider contexts of Jewish civilization and world culture. School curricula, it added, “should address the role of anti-Semitism in the modern world, and the lessons to be learned from the Holocaust.”

In many ways the report stressed the imperative of familiarizing secular students with the classic sources of Jewish religion and culture. It also conceptualized contemporary secular Jewish identities, in Israel and the Diaspora, as viable existential expressions in a pluralistic Jewish civilization. “We should emphasize that secular orientation is a Jewish identity with a positive value that sprouts from modern and ancient Jewish experience, and integrates Jewish and universal cultural values,” concluded the report.

### **Continuing Challenges and Activities**

Mounting criticism about bias and prejudice in education in Israel about the heritage of Eastern Jewish communities (called either Sephardic or Mizrahi Jews) led in 1976 to the Ministry of Education’s establishment of the Center for the Integration of the Legacy of Eastern Jewry. The extent to which Western ethnocentrism colors Jewish education in Israel remains in dispute.

After the pre-Eichmann period, in which education in Israel was reticent or unsparing about Holocaust issues, Holocaust studies have become a focal point in Israel’s educational system. This is a rapidly developing trend—one study notes that of 75 curricular materials instituted in Israeli education, 5 date from the 1970s, 20 from the 1980s, and the remaining 50 from 1990 through the present.

Some scholars believe this intensive upsurge in formal and experiential teaching about the Holocaust was not preceded by thorough methodological preparation. Among other objections, they claim that Holocaust study has become compulsory study whereas essential components of Jewish religion and tradition are not required subjects, that experiential approaches in Holocaust education deemphasize analytic comprehension and knowledge of Jewish history before the rise of the Nazi party, that there is a lack of thoughtful discussion of parallels and differences between the Holocaust and other acts of genocide, and that education about the Holocaust is sometimes tailored demagogically to suit present political agendas.

The extent to which Israel's educational resources should be linked in a global Jewish education effort remains a relatively underexplored topic. By the end of the 1990s, as concerns mounted in the Diaspora about intermarriage and other identity issues, important Jewish Diaspora leaders called for expanded programming in Israel run along the lines of summer workshops for Diaspora educators sponsored by the Melton Center for Jewish Education.

Can informal education methods be an effective means of stressing consciousness in Israel about Jewish continuity and stimulating Israeli-Diaspora partnerships? This question has been explored over the past decades by a number of innovative ventures in informal Jewish education, including the Melitz Center for Jewish-Zionist Education, founded in 1973 in Jerusalem.

Responding to processes of political, social, and economic polarization in Israel, as well as a perception that the spirit and moral content of traditional Jewish learning has been eroding in Israel's secular society, a number of voluntary non-profit groups have since the early 1990s sponsored local activities devoted to open, pluralistic discussion of traditional Jewish texts. These efforts are often described as the "Jewish bookshelf" movement; their impact on the content and norms of education about the Diaspora in Israeli schoolrooms remains to be seen.

Affirmative conceptualizations of Diaspora experience generated by Jewish leaders and movements within the Diaspora itself are not systematically presented in Israel's education system. Among many other subjects, ideas associated with streams of Judaism in the United States, as well as their European antecedents and counterparts, are not regular parts of secondary-school curriculum. That is to say, the Reform notion of the mission of Jewish life in the Diaspora, the Reconstructionist movement's founding idea of Judaism as a civilization, and many other pluralistic Judaism conceptualizations are not familiar ideas in Israeli education.

A preliminary institutional base for education about pluralistic approaches to Judaism in Israel emerged in 1988, when the Enriched Jewish Studies (TALI) network formally became part of Israel's state education system. Today, TALI is a network comprising 120 Israeli state schools and preschools in which 22,000 Israeli youngsters learn about pluralistic approaches to Judaism.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Dror, Yuval. 2003. "From Negation of the Diaspora to Jewish Consciousness: The Israeli Educational System 1920–2000." *Israel Studies Forum: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 18 (2): 58–82.
- Firer, Ruth. 1985. *The Agents of Zionist Education* [Hebrew]. Haifa: Oranim.
- Gottschalk, Alfred. 1989. "Building Jewish Culture in the Diaspora: Diaspora-Israel Partnership." *Forum on the Jewish People, Zionism and Israel* 62: 39–47.
- Kronish, Ronald. 1984. "Strengthening the Bonds between Israel and the Diaspora in Israeli Jewish Education." *Jewish Education* 521: 29–34.

# Migration and Wanderings of Diaspora Jews

## A Chronology of Jewish Travelers and Explorers

*M. Avrum Ehrlich and Steve Hall*

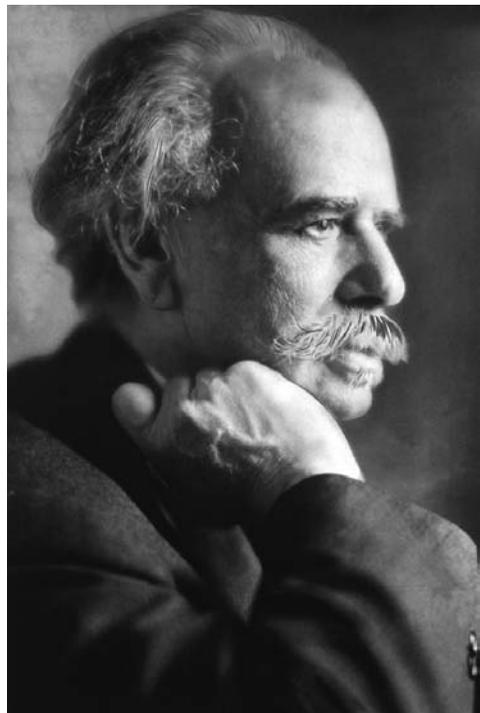
---

- Sixth century BCE Early Jewish travelers are able to establish the first trade routes to Persia, developing political and commercial ties between two large continents.
- 40–135 BCE The famous Rabbi Akiv travels throughout Palestine, Arabia, Cappadocia, Media, Rome, and Parthia, where he continually seeks support for coreligionists. He meets the emperor, Nerva.
- Middle Ages During the Middle Ages, Jewish merchants travel throughout different lands, including Central and Eastern Europe, and into Africa and Asia where they encounter Jews who know Hebrew and support their coreligionists; thus, they could combine their interests in travel and commerce with education about new lands, customs, and mathematics, as well as other scientific pursuits such as mapmaking, math, and astronomy.
- 750 Jewish merchants organize regular commercial expeditions to China.
- 900 Eldad Hadini, a Jewish adventurer, claims to have encountered the descendants of the 10 lost tribes of Israel while traveling through East Africa; though many are skeptical, his reports on Ethiopia are eventually verified.
- 11th century Jewish astronomers, who lead the field, introduce the use of the astrolabe.
- 1108 Abraham ibn Ezra wanders through France, England, Italy, Palestine, and Egypt and toward India, where he studies people, languages, ways of life, learning habits, mathematics, and astronomy in Islamic countries.
- 1160 Benjamin of Tudela, Spain, leaves from Saragossa, Spain, and documents his extensive travels through Provence, Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, and eventually, the frontiers of Tibet and China and Yemen, before returning home.
- 1195 A Bohemian Jew named Pethahiah, from Prague, begins a journey in 1195 through Poland, Russia, Crimea, Armenia, Babylonia, Persia, and India, returning to his homeland through Syria, Palestine, and Greece.
- 1270 Jacob Ben Mahir Ibn Tibbon, a professor at the University of France, invents the quadrant, and his astronomic tables are used by sailors until the middle of the 18th century.
- 1300 Estori Ben Moses Farhi is one of the first to scientifically investigate the topography of the holy lands, and in uncovering archaeology and folklore, his

efforts focus on categorizing important scientific data, such as history, geography, architecture, numismatics, weights, and measure.

- 1375 Abraham Cresques completes the *Catalan Atlas*, now one of the most prized maps in the history of geography, for which he collaborates with Benjamin of Tudela and numerous others who had crossed into Africa, opened unknown trade routes in Europe, and ventured through the Sahara from Algiers to Morocco to Timbuktu. His son, Jehuda Cresques, a crypto-Jew, founds the School of Sagres, which becomes the primary training center of explorers and navigators. Mecia de Villadestes, a crypto-Jew from Majorca and one of Cresques' pupils, is an expert on Africa and traces the first map of the Sahara Desert. Other Majorca Jews are Gabriel de Vallsecha, who provides Amerigo Vespucci with his map, and Abraham Farrisol, an explorer of Africa, who brings treasures back to Europe.
- 1492 Currently, there is a considerable debate as to whether Columbus was Jewish (a crypto-Jew); it is known that of his crew, many were Jewish, and that he was taught by Abraham Zacuto, whose works he carried on his voyages.
- 1500s Abraham Zacuto is instrumental in perfecting tables and an astrolabe before being consulted by Vasco da Gama before the expedition on which da Gama discovers the maritime route to India.
- 1670 Tobias Cohen, a pioneer of medical science, travels throughout the Middle East conducting careful and exact studies of the plague and death, diseases, and hygienic conditions there.
- 1750s Simon van Geldern, a grand uncle of the poet Heinrich Heine, wanders throughout Europe in search of adventure, lecturing throughout most of the towns, from country to country, visiting all the capitals of Europe, and being implicated in various plots and affairs, which he documents in a well-organized diary.
- 1753–1758 and 1772–1778 Haym Joseph Azulai travels throughout Turkey, Egypt, Italy, Germany, France, Holland, England, Tunisia, and Algiers, diligently collecting notes and information on the economic and cultural life of the people, mainly Jews, in those areas. He holds interviews with rabbis and scholars and keeps notes and manuscripts. Around the same time, one of the most fortunate adventurers of the 18th century is Alexander Salmon, Robert Louis Stevenson's intimate friend; he goes on to become royalty in Tahiti when he marries the female ruler of the island, becoming her principal adviser. Eventually, their daughter becomes queen.
- 1774 Israel Lyons accompanies Captain Phipps, or Lord Musgrave, as chief astronomer to the North Pole as part of a scientific expedition headed by non-Jews.
- 1795 Samuel Aaron Romanelli explores North Africa and acquires an intimate knowledge of Morocco; he writes a book on Morocco that attracts general attention. Five Arctic expeditions in the 19th century are headed by Jews. Isaac Israel Hayes becomes known as the ultimate authority on the poles and travels to many areas never before reached by humans.
- 1831–1834 Baruch Ben Samuel of Safed, Palestine, travels to Yemen in search of the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

- 1845–1853 Israel Joseph Benjamin, who called himself Benjamin the second, travels in Syria, Kurdistan, India, Afghanistan, and Algeria, and his reports attract the interest of explorers and geographers.
- 1860 Isaac Israel Hayes leads a polar expedition to the North Pole and eventually directs an expedition to Greenland.
- 1871 Emil Bessels is appointed surgeon on the *Polaris* and proves that Greenland is an island. Eventually, in his studies of the coast of America, he and the other crew members from the *Polaris* are forced to abandon their vessel at Seymour Narrows, British Columbia, before eventually being rescued.
- 1886 Franz Boas, a great anthropologist, begins a study of life in northwestern Canada, eventually providing proof of the cultural relationship between the Siberians, Inuit peoples, and North American Indians, and forming the basis of his anthropological theories.
- 1887 Louis Gustave Binger, an eminent geographer and philologist and an expert on African languages and dialects, concludes important treaties with the native chieftains throughout Africa near the Ivory Coast.
- 1889 Ney Elias is entrusted with the task of demarcating the borders of Siam and the Burman Shan States and accomplishes his task bravely and fairly.
- 1892 Angelo Heilprin becomes world famous when he leads the Peary relief expedition to Greenland; eventually, he explores the island of Martinique, North Africa, and Alaska.
- 1895 Some of the most valuable contributions to the knowledge of Islamic populations, Jews of northeastern Africa, and the Middle East are made by Hermann Burchardt, a Jew who is eventually murdered in Southern Arabia.



Franz Boas was an influential social philosopher and anthropologist.  
(Library of Congress)

- 1900 Sir Marc Aurel Stein travels throughout central Asia making history and changing the historical study of art; he discovers ancient locations in China, such as the cave of the Thousand Buddhas, where he gathers old paintings and manuscripts. He is instrumental in saving a large number of otherwise lost works of art.
- 1910 Leo Sternberg is exiled to the island of Sakhalin as a political prisoner. There he studies the language of the Gilyak, Orok, and Ainu tribes and makes expeditions to the Amur region.
- 1928 Russian Jew Rudolph L. Samoilvich rescues Umberto Nobile in another relief expedition in the polar region.
- 1929 The data gathered by the daring Jewess Sarah Lavenburg Straus (widow of Oscar S. Straus and ambassador to Turkey) while traveling more than 15,000 miles and exploring the fauna of Africa, becomes of great importance to zoology.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bieber, Hugo. 1965. "The Jewish Contribution to the Exploration of the Globe." In *The Hebrew Impact on Western Civilization*, edited by Dagobert D. Runes. New York: The Citadel Press.

## Migration Patterns of Iraqi Jews

*Myer Samra*

---

During the ninth century, the Persian geographer Ibn Khurradadhbih described the prodigious trading network of the Jews from Radhan, a neighborhood of Baghdad, who journeyed across North Africa and the whole Eurasian landmass from France and Spain in the west to India and China in the east, crisscrossing the continents from north to south. These Radhanites had learned many of the languages spoken within this vast territory and traded in commodities as diverse as swords, brocade, eunuchs, and slaves from the west, to spices, perfumes, and precious woods from the east. The Radhanites were fortunate to be able to rely on the local knowledge of Jews living across both continents.

Middle Eastern Jews continued to participate extensively in international trade during the medieval period, but by the beginning of the 16th century, once the Portuguese had charted a sea route from Europe to India, they aggressively fought off competitors in the region and dominated the scene for close to two centuries.

By the mid-1700s, after Britain and Holland supplanted the Portuguese and assumed control of much of the trade in the East, Iraqi Jewish merchants were again able to venture out into that field, gradually reestablishing a vast trading network reaching right across Asia, with smaller outposts in Europe (e.g., Vienna, Paris, and Manchester, England). International trade between Iraq and the rest of the world came to be dominated by Iraqi Jews, who also played an expanding role in the trade between India and China with Europe and the Middle East.

In the process, substantial Baghdadi Jewish communities were established in many of the British colonies in Asia and the Dutch East Indies. These communities

developed successively, commencing with Surat on the west coast of India, followed by colonies further east. By the mid-19th century, Iraqi Jews were living in Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Mandalay, Penang, Singapore, Surabaya, Borneo, Hong Kong, and Shanghai, making significant contributions to the development of each colony. The founders of these communities, many of them pious and wealthy, often traveled with an entourage of Jewish ritual functionaries such as a shohet (ritual slaughterer), a kosher cook, a hazan (cantor) to lead prayers, and an *istadh* (a melamed to European Jews), whose numbers helped to augment the small communities.

Jewish traders from other parts of the Middle East who settled in these locations tended to assimilate into the Baghdadi communities rather than establish separate ones, because there were more traders from Iraq than from other regions and Baghdadi women seemed more ready to accompany their menfolk to such far-off places. In 1790, Shalome Cohen from Aleppo in Syria traveled to Surat on the west coast of India, then the main center for international trade in India. After making several lucrative trips back to the Middle East, Cohen decided to settle in India. In 1792, he sent for his Aleppan wife, Sathie, to join him. Her parents refused to let her go, responding colorfully "If you pave the way from Surat to Aleppo with jewels, we will not send our daughter to you" (Musleah 1975, 17). Consequently, Cohen took a second wife, Najema Semah, from among the Baghdadi Jews then in Surat.

Although the prospects of great profits in international trade partially account for the Iraqi Jews' adventurousness, factors at home also encouraged many to seek their fortunes abroad. The frequent flooding of the Tigris River would bring the plague in its wake, causing many to abandon Baghdad for elsewhere in Mesopotamia, or to leave the country altogether. Additionally, political conditions in the late Ottoman Empire were often unsettled, and the position of the Jews in Mesopotamia depended on the whim of the governor in Baghdad at any given time. Daud Pasha, who governed Baghdad from 1817 to 1831, was the most oppressive, seizing wealthy Jews on the flimsiest pretence and holding them for ransom or assassinating them.

Daud Pasha's most prominent victim was David Sassoon, who was arrested in 1828. The son of Sheikh Sason ibn-Saleh, the former *nasi* (prince) or head of the community of the Jews in Iraq, Sassoon fled to Bushire in Persia after he was ransomed, and then on to Bombay in 1832. There he built a vast fortune: he owned dockyards, provided loans to other merchants, and shipped goods as diverse as tea, raw cotton, opium, spices, carpets, textiles, silks, hides, dried fruits, and gold across Asia, the Middle East, and Britain.

This trade was facilitated by David Sassoon's strategic placement of his eight sons in such entrepôts as Calcutta, the Gulf ports, Persia, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Rangoon, Singapore, London, and Manchester, where they were able to identify foreign goods in demand and purchase local products for export. The firm of David Sassoon and Sons continued to prosper after its founder's death in 1864, as did the firm of E. D. Sassoon & Co., established in 1867 by the patriarch's second son, Elias, who was destined to become a leading manufacturer of cotton in India.

The success of the Sassoon firms attracted many Iraqi Jews and coreligionists from Persia, Yemen, and Syria to migrate to India, Burma, China, and the Straits Settlements, where they could safely expect employment in the firms' scattered branches. Poor Baghdadi Jews were also attracted by the generosity of David Sassoon and his sons, who established magnificent synagogues in many locations and provided hospital amenities and charitable endowments that ensured the basic needs of any indigent Jew would not be left unmet.

The Sassoons' largesse was not restricted simply to the support of their compatriots and coreligionists. David Sassoon endowed a hospital in Poona for the use of people of all creeds, a number of schools, a reformatory to help rehabilitate delinquent youths, and a library for the Mechanics Institute in Bombay, and he supported many other worthy causes. His sons followed their father's generous example, extending their philanthropy to benefit members of the local Jewish community and Jewish concerns farther afield; to support organizations helping the poor and the whole society; and to establish hospitals, parks, and monuments, such as the Gateway of India. In addition, their employees were better paid than the staff of their competitors. The Sassoon family gained recognition for their services to the wider community and were honored with two hereditary baronetcies.

Whereas rich merchants could travel between the various colonies and return to Baghdad from time to time, for the humbler settlers, communications with friends and relatives outside their particular colony were slow and irregular before the spread of telephones and air travel. Those who had left Iraq for the East were sometimes referred to by the term *al-marhum*, which is generally used for a person who has died; the colonials were virtually considered as if they had died, simply by leaving to settle in a faraway place from which they were unlikely ever to return.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 greatly improved communications and trading links between Europe and East Asia. Jews from many countries, Iraq among them, migrated to Egypt to take up opportunities there. The Zilkha family established a bank, which became a major financial institution throughout the Middle East until its assets were appropriated by Egypt in 1956.

The new trade routes increased Baghdad and Basra's importance and prosperity, but they also stimulated growth in the Baghdadi Jewish colonies in India and East Asia. Although the political conditions experienced by the Jews who settled in the various Asian colonies were similar in that they were living under British (or Dutch) protection and their small communities flourished with the opportunities open to them, the communities differed from one another in their contact with Jews of other backgrounds.

Two distinct Jewish communities had been settled on the west coast of India for many centuries: the Bene Israel immediately south of Bombay and the Jews of Cochin, further south in Kerala. Whereas the Iraqi Jews spoke Arabic and later adopted English, the Bene Israel spoke Marathi and the Cochini Jews spoke Malayalam, the languages of their respective territories. In Bombay, the Iraqi Jews kept their distance from the Bene Israel. In Calcutta, Iraqi Jews interacted with other Middle Eastern Jews who had, like them, come to trade in India.

In 1798, Shalome Cohen from Aleppo became the first Jewish settler in Calcutta, exporting precious stones, coffee, spices, and indigo back to the Middle East.

Cohen's business successes attracted members of his family from Aleppo and trading partners from Iraq. He also employed Jews from Syria, Iraq, and Cochin. These people came to form the nucleus of the Jewish community in Calcutta. As the community grew, reaching a peak of around 5,000 souls during World War II, most of the settlers ultimately hailed from Baghdad.

The Jewish communities in Burma and the Straits Settlements were predominantly Iraqi, but included small numbers from Persia, Yemen and Egypt. In the Dutch East Indies, European Jews settled in Batavia (Jakarta) while the Baghdadis preferred Surabaya.

Some Iraqi Jewish families rose to prominence in the various Asian colonies through trade, realty investment, and manufacturing. The leading family in Calcutta, the Ezras, had migrated from Baghdad in 1817. Their mercantile operations stretched from China to the Middle East and across to Zanzibar; they traded in indigo, silk, and opium, and land purchased in the center of Calcutta made them very prosperous. The Ezra Benevolent Institution helped develop a Jewish free school, catering to the needs of the poor members of the community and freeing them from attending Christian missionary schools. Members of the family also provided textbooks, prayer books, clothing, and meals for the students.

In the 20th century, Benjamin Nissim Elias became the most successful Jewish businessmen in Calcutta, running jute mills and manufacturing cigarettes, light bulbs, and electrical goods among other products. These concerns became a major source of employment for members of the local Jewish community, much as the Sassoon firms had been in an earlier generation. As representatives of B. N. Elias & Co., Calcutta Jews traveled across India, seeking and filling orders for the company. In 1948, during Israel's War of Independence, some Muslim leaders exhorted their followers to boycott readymade cigarettes, asserting that the profits from the Indian National Tobacco Company—a B. N. Elias concern—would assist Israel's war effort. The Eliases, like other prosperous Baghdadi Jews, were generous philanthropists: they provided dowries for indigent brides and regular financial support to poor Jewish families.

In Shanghai, Silas Hardoon became a major landowner and the most famous foreigner in the city. His life story has fascinated the Chinese public and has been memorialized in novels and Chinese operas. Although Hardoon built the Beth Aharon Synagogue in memory of his father, his charity was directed mainly to Chinese projects. He sought to acquire the aesthetic sensibilities of a cultured Chinese and was influential with the Chinese nationalist movement led by Sun Yat Sen.

The Iraqi Jews had become a well-established, prosperous community in Shanghai during the course of the 19th century, before the influx of Jews fleeing Russia in the early 1900s and, subsequently, refugees from Germany and Central Europe escaping Nazi persecution. Iraqi Jews, led by Sir Victor Sassoon and Ellis Hayim, spearheaded relief for the refugees. Beth Aharon Synagogue was converted into a reception and accommodation center for the refugees and later housed the Mir Yeshiva, while the Abraham and Toueg families ran a free kitchen, feeding around 600 refugees daily.

The name Kadoorie is almost synonymous with Hong Kong, the home of such luminaries as Sir Ellis Kadoorie, Sir Elly Kadoorie, Sir Horace Kadoorie, and Baron



Iraq-born philanthropist Sir Ellis Kadoorie (front row, sixth from left) during a visit to the Wataniya Jewish school in Baghdad in 1925. A resident of Hong Kong, Ellis Kadoorie was a benefactor of the school. (Courtesy Dr. Myer Samra)

Lawrence Kadoorie of Kowloon, who was elevated to a life peerage in 1981. The Kadoories' commercial interests included the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, a chain of hotels, the Star Ferry between Hong Kong Island and the mainland, the colony's electricity supply, and textile manufacturing. The Kadoories had extensive charitable interests: they founded the New Territories Benevolent Society, established agricultural schools in China and Israel, financed the building of a synagogue for Marranos in Portugal, and supported the education of Jews in Baghdad and the Bene Israel in Bombay.

In Singapore, Sir Menasseh Meyer invested heavily in real estate and came to be regarded as the wealthiest person in Asia early in the 20th century. He was responsible for building two synagogues on the island, Maghain Aboth in 1879, which served the community, and Hesed-El for his own use in 1904. Sir Menasseh paid for a minyan, a quorum of 10 men, to attend Hesed-El daily. Approached by Albert Einstein in 1922, Sir Menasseh donated generously to the founding of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His brother, Elias Meyer, funded the Jewish boys' school in Calcutta and Jewish education in Rangoon.

When Singapore attained self-government in 1955, David Marshall, a gifted barrister of Iraqi Jewish origin, was elected chief minister. Marshall advocated independence for the island state, resigning in 1956 when Britain refused his demands. He later serves as Singapore's ambassador in France between 1978 and 1993.

During World War I, Jews in Iraq were conscripted into the Ottoman army. As the position of Turkey deteriorated, more and more young men were pressed into

uniform, for ever-longer periods of service. After Basra fell to the British in November 1914, many Jews fled there from Baghdad to avoid the army; others went farther, joining kinspeople in Asia.

Between 1920 and 1932, Iraq was a British protectorate, and many Jews found employment in government posts. Knowledge of English was a clear advantage, and some families sent children to relatives in Bombay to study English. In 1941, a pro-Nazi regime briefly controlled Iraq but was expelled by the British. After the collapse of the regime, while the British surrounded Baghdad, a pogrom known as the *Farhud* led to the murder of around 180 Jews in the city over a period of two days. Others were injured or maimed, and Jewish property was looted or destroyed. This was yet another stimulus for hundreds of Iraqi Jews to flee to the east, to take shelter among kinsfolk and friends.

Small numbers of pious Iraqi Jews had settled in Jerusalem from the mid-19th century. With the growth of the Zionist movement, others followed in the 1920s and 1930s. Later, Zionism came to be regarded as inimical to Arab nationalism and its supporters considered criminals. Upon the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, Jews were prohibited from leaving Iraq. However, around 10,000 Jews were smuggled out of the country. In March 1950, the government gave those Jews who wished to leave 12 months to renounce their citizenship or stay in the country. Around 130,000 Jews—more than 90 percent of Iraq's Jewish population at the



Abraham Gubbay of Newcastle, whose parents, Menashe and Sima from Baghdad, had settled in Newcastle, Australia, in the late 1880s. (Courtesy Raie Levy)

time—opted to leave, most of them settling in Israel. In the following decades, virtually all the Jews left Iraq.

When the former European colonies in Asia achieved independence in the postwar period, the conditions that had favored the Iraqi Jews dissipated, and most chose to resettle in Israel, Britain, Australia, Canada (Vancouver), or the United States (California). In recent years, Jews have again been attracted to economic opportunities in Asia. These sojourners are largely associated with Israeli and American companies, although Persian Jews in the gem trade have made their home in Bangkok, Thailand.

Perhaps the most famous Iraqi Jews today are the brothers Maurice and Charles Saatchi, who established the world's most successful advertising agency in Britain. Margaret Thatcher's success in the 1979 British elections was assisted by the powerful advertising campaign conducted by the Saatchis on behalf of the Conservative Party.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abraham, Isaac S. 1969. *Origin and History of the Calcutta Jews*. Calcutta, India: Daw Sen.
- Betta, Chiara. 1999. "Silas Aaron Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai." In *The Jews of China, Volume One: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Jonathan Goldstein, 216–230. New York: M. E. Sharpe.
- Elias, Flower, and Judith Elias Cooper. 1974. *The Jews of Calcutta*. Calcutta, India: The Jewish Association of Calcutta.
- Ezra, Esmond D. 1986. *Turning Back the Pages: A Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry*. London: Brookside Press.
- Hyman, Mavis. 1995. *Jews of the Raj*. London: Hyman.
- Jackson, Stanley. 1968. *The Sassoons: Portrait of a Dynasty*. London: Heinemann.
- Kerem, Yitzchak. 2002. "Assistance Given by the Established Iraqi Jewish Community to the Jewish Refugees in Shanghai, 1937–1945." In *Studies in the History and Culture of the Jews in Babylonia*, edited by Yitzhak Avishur and Zvi Yehuda. Or Yehuda, Israel: Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center Research Institute of Babylonian Jewry.
- Meyer, M. J. 1994. "The Sephardi Jewish Community of Shanghai 1845–1939 and the Question of Identity." PhD thesis, London School of Economics, London University.
- Musleah, Ezekiel. 1975. *On the Banks of the Ganga: The Sojourn of Jews in Calcutta*. North Quincy, MA: Christopher.
- Nathan, Eze. 1986. *History of the Jews in Singapore 1830–1945*. Singapore: Herbilu.
- Roland, Joan G. 1989. *Jews in British India*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Roland, Joan G. 1999. "Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparison of Economic Roles." In *The Jews of China, Volume One: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Jonathan Goldstein, 141–156. New York: M. E. Sharpe.
- Sassoon, David S. 1949. *A History of the Jews in Baghdad* (self-published).
- Weinstein, Brian. 2002. "Charity and Public Service of the Babylonian Jews in India." In *Studies in the History and Culture of the Jews in Babylonia*, edited by Yitzhak Avishur and Zvi Yehuda, 231–246. Or Yehuda, Israel: Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center Research Institute of Babylonian Jewry.

## Westward Migration Routes of Sephardi Jews

*Julia R. Lieberman*

---

The history of the Iberian New Christians, or conversos, and their return to Judaism has been told numerous times and still its narrative does not cease to amaze. It is the history of those Jews who converted to Christianity and remained in Spain after the expulsion of 1492 and those who went to Portugal and were forcibly baptized in 1497. For about 100 years, they lived under the guise of Christianity while in their private lives they continued to practice crypto-Judaism, or religious practices that incorporated aspects of both Judaism and Christianity. Throughout the 16th century, many Iberian New Christians prospered as merchants in international trade, but they also continued to be rejected by the Old Christian society. At the end of the century, monarchs from several Western European countries began to welcome the New Christians to their city ports, where they founded merchant communities. Leghorn, Italy; Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Hamburg, Germany; and London, England, were some of the most important settlements. Collectively these communities formed a well-organized network that not only included Jews in their new settlements but also New Christians still living in Spain and Portugal. Historians refer to these Jews as the Western Sephardim to differentiate them from the Eastern Sephardim, Spanish exiles of 1492 living under Islam in the Ottoman Empire whose members never abandoned Judaism. What united Western Sephardim and the New Christians was their sense of belonging to the Hebrew nation; they referred to themselves in Portuguese as the *Nação portuguesa e espanhola*, which included all New Christians and their descendants.

The Judaism reconstructed by the Western Sephardim followed rabbinic laws and traditions but differed in a number of ways from traditional Judaism as their view of the world was shaped by their experiences in Portugal and Spain. Each Sephardi community developed its own collective character that was shaped by the political and social uniqueness of its hosting country, while at the same time sharing many common features with one another because of their members' mobility as merchants and their desire to maintain ethnic kinship ties.

Soon after their arrival, New Christian merchants began to organize communal prayer in their new places of residency, clandestinely, in small groups and in private homes. Perhaps they were continuing practices they had followed in Portugal or Spain when they might have occasionally celebrated Jewish holidays, at great risk to their lives if they were denounced to the Inquisition. What was different from the Iberian experience in these new places was that if they were discovered holding religious services, they were either ignored by the local civic authorities or given tacit permission to continue their gatherings. As their numbers grew, these congregations would rent or purchase buildings they called synagogues. Another common tendency was the founding of several congregations, usually as a result of dissenting views on how to conduct rituals. Eventually, however, each Western Sephardi

community would once again unite into one congregation and would not allow new ones to be created.

In Leghorn, there were New Christians during the last decades of the 16th century. In 1591, the Grand Duke Ferdinando I de Medici issued *La Livornina*, inviting merchant Iberian New Christians to the city port of Leghorn and granting them freedom of religion as well as protection from the Italian Inquisition. The first synagogue was in a rented house, the home of a wealthy merchant named Abraham Israel. La Santa Esnoga de Livorne, as the synagogue was known in Spanish, was inaugurated in 1607 and embellished several times throughout the years. This synagogue served the Sephardi congregation until 1789.

In Amsterdam, Iberian merchants founded the first congregation around the year 1602; by 1618 there were three, and by 1639 they had all merged into one under the name of Talmud Torah. A synagogue building served the united congregation until 1675, when the great Esnoga (synagogue, in Portuguese) was inaugurated. This beautiful building is still in use and stands as a reminder of the economic prosperity the community enjoyed during most of the 17th century. Amsterdam became the most important of the Western Sephardi congregations.

In Hamburg, three congregations coexisted starting around the year 1605. But, in contrast to Amsterdam, their gatherings in private homes were prolonged because of the hostility of local Lutheran clergy, who limited Jewish practices to the privacy of homes, even though Portuguese merchants were welcomed into the city. In 1652, the congregation was given the right to hold public prayers, and the three



Entrance to the Esnoga, a 17th-century Sephardic synagogue in Amsterdam. (Richard T. Nowitz/Corbis)

existing congregations united into one under the name of Bet Israel. Their synagogue did not survive, as it burned down in the disastrous fire of Hamburg in 1842.

The clandestine period of what eventually became known as the Shaar Ha-Shamaim congregation of London lasted from about 1542 until 1655, when Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel traveled from Amsterdam to London to negotiate with Oliver Cromwell for the readmission of Jews in England, where the practice of Judaism had been forbidden since 1290. Manasseh's petition was denied, but as a result of his appeal, the community was tacitly accepted. The right to publicly practice Judaism was given to the congregation in 1664. The first synagogue was a leased building in Creechurch Lane, which served the congregation from 1656 until 1701 when Bevis Marks, a synagogue still in use today, was inaugurated.

Another urgent need the Sephardi communities had to attend to soon after their founding was the proper burial for the dead, with Jewish rites, in their own cemeteries. The *Bet Haim* or *Casa da vida*, in Portuguese, of these communities differed a great deal from Ashkenazi cemeteries, as they were influenced by the contemporary Christian burial customs the New Christians carried with them when they reentered Judaism. This influence is most evident in the beautifully decorated gravestones they place on the tombs, in spite of the Biblical injunction not to make "a carved image nor any likeness" (Exodus 20:4). The institution known as Hebra de Bikur Cholim provided care for the ill and dying, washed the dead, accompanied the funeral processions, and provided mourners with the first meal after internment.

In Leghorn, despite the freedoms granted to the community, the Sephardim were forced to bury their dead in a site known disdainfully as the "Campaccio," where dead horses were also buried. In 1648, the community was granted its own cemetery, but because of the Catholic Church's constrain, they were not permitted to surround it with a fence. When a third site was granted in 1694, in the Via del Corallo, a fence was built around both the old and new cemeteries.

The first Amsterdam Sephardi community bought a plot of land in 1602 in Groet, in Alkmaar, at a rather long distance from Amsterdam, because the local authorities refused to grant permission for the purchase of a more convenient location. Nevertheless, in 1614, the two existing congregations were finally allowed to purchase a piece of land in Ouderkerk on the Amstel, where the dead were carried to their final rest by canal boat.

In Hamburg, the congregation buried their dead in local Lutheran cemeteries until 1611, when the community purchased a tract of land in the nearby town of Altona, in Konigstrasse. This cemetery was in use until 1839.

Shortly after the London community was founded, it leased land, in 1657, in a nearby hamlet, Mile End Road. This cemetery, known today as the Velho Bet Haim, was in use until 1735.

Although some New Christian merchants arrived at their new places of residency with their families intact and all their members returned to Judaism, many left some of their close relatives or their entire family behind in Spain or Portugal. To start a new Jewish life among members of the *Nação*, a social institution was needed to facilitate the formation of new families. In 1613, a society was founded in Venice, the Hebra de casar horphaos (Society for Marrying Orphans), by 26 merchants

from the Ponentine community, that is, New Christians or their descendants. This social institution was to serve as a model to two others. In 1615, a similar institution was founded in Amsterdam, the Santa Comphanhia de dotar orfans e donzelas pobres, which become known as Dotar. In 1644, the Hebra de Cazar Orfas e Donzelas was founded in Leghorn. Membership in these dowry societies required a substantial entrance fee, but membership was perpetual and could be passed on to an heir. Thanks to their wealth, they dispensed generous dowries to young women, orphans and poor nonorphans alike. Although each developed its own specific features and character, the main function of these three institutions was to arrange marriages between members of the *Nação*, scattered in their network of merchant's communities all over the world. The Amsterdam Dotar went as far as to accept maiden women still living as New Christians in Catholic centers such as Antwerp, Rouen, and southern France.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bodiam, Miriam. 1997. *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hyamson, Albert M. 1951. *The Sephardim of England. A History of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Community, 1492–1951*. London: Jarrold and Sons.
- Studemund-Halévy, Michael. 2000. *Biographisches Lexikon der Hamburger Segarden*. Hamburg, Germany: Hans Christian Verlag.
- Toaff, Renzo. 1999. *La Nazione Ebraica a Livorno e a Pisa (1591–1700)*. Firenze, Italy: Olschki Editore.

## Population Transfer of the Jews of Thessaloniki

*Yitzchak Kerem*

---

For most of the 450 years since the 1492 expulsion of the Jews in Spain, the Jews formed either a majority or plurality of the total population of the city of Salonika (Thessaloniki). With the advent of mid-19th century industrialization in Salonika, the Jewish industrialists of the city relied primarily on Greek Orthodox labor and enjoyed cordial relations with them, except for an occasional outbreak of Greek Orthodox religious fanaticism, or criminal action.

In the Ottoman period, the Sabbath was the unofficial rest day of the city because of the large Jewish population. Banks, markets, large commercial firms, and the port were closed on the Sabbath.

After Salonika became Greek in late 1912, Greece sought to acculturate the Sephardic Jews, who were viewed as a foreign element. The assimilation of the Jews was a solution against the seeming threat the Jewish community posed and would annul the uniqueness of the Jews in the city. In 1921 and 1922, local municipalities such as Kavalla and Florina issued bylaws whereby Jews, like Christians, were obliged to close their businesses on Sunday.

The 100,000 Greek Orthodox Asia Minor refugees that arrived in Salonika in around 1922–1923, because of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey, outnumbered the dwindling Jewish population of about 56,000. The demography of the city changed, and the Jews lost their stature and majority status.

The refugees brought with them from Asia Minor an economic rivalry between the Greek Orthodox and the Jews and a history of zealous fanaticism toward the Jews, mainly in the latter 19th century, through instigating more than 50 blood libels at a time of mounting Greek nationalist activity. Also, they introduced a law in the Salonikan municipal council, *Le Repos Dominical*, intentionally passed to harm Jewish economic life by prohibiting work on Sunday, thus forcing the Jews to either break the Sabbath or lose a day's pay.

The proposal for this social law for a general rest day for all Thessalonikan residents on Sunday was approved by a majority on May 7, 1924; only Jewish council members disagreed. This compelled the Jews to close their stores and businesses twice a week, causing great financial loss. The Shomrei Shabbat (Sabbath Observers) League organized protest meetings and applied external pressure, which in the end caused an increase in anti-Semitic agitation by the local Greek press. On May 24, 1925, in protest over the law, the Jewish communal executive committee members resigned en bloc. However, many Jews adjusted to the new law and opened their businesses on the Sabbath. Many Jews migrated to France and Italy and small numbers of Jews began migrating to Eretz Israel, which had strict immigration quotas imposed by the British Mandatory Government.

Toward the end of the 1920s, the Salonikan Greek-language daily *Makedonia* incited against the local Jewish population; particularly against the Jewish Maccabi youth sports movement. This was an additional expression of the disdain of the Greek Orthodox Asia Minor refugees against the local Jewish population. In 1928, Nikos Fardis, chief editor of *Makedonia*, began to publish the vehemently anti-Semitic text, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," in his newspaper. In 1929, Fardis tried to persuade attorney and Jewish communal executive committee member Asher Moissis to hand over to him one of the buildings of the Jewish community in exchange for the newspaper changing its policy toward the Jews. This act of extortion and blackmail worried the Jewish community, but it refused to give in to Fardis's conniving scheme.

In 1930, *Makedonia* became the official organ of the extremist nationalist movement *Ethniki Enosis Ellas* (National Union Greece; EEE), popularly called the "Tria Epsilon," which had been founded in 1927. Its members were Asia Minor refugees, merchants jealous of Jewish commercial competition, and university students. In 1931 its national membership was 7,000, most of whom were Asia Minor refugees; 3,000 of those members were in Thessaloniki. The organization conducted vehement anti-Semitic propaganda with fascist Nazi-like features such as uniforms and blowing trumpets. The central government in Athens did not support the group, but it had hidden supporters at the regional government level.

On June 20, 1931, *Makedonia* falsely accused Maccabi member Isaac Cohen of going to Bulgaria for a Macedonian nationalist youth conference in Sofia, when in actuality he went to Bulgaria for an international Maccabi meeting four days

afterward. In its front-page headline and article, *Makedonia* accused the Maccabi Federation of Salonika of treason against Greece for its supposed support of the revolutionary Bulgarian Comitadjis (communist) movement. Simultaneously, nationalist EEE students at the Aristotelian University in Thessaloniki distributed pamphlets cursing Jewish communists, accusing the Jews of supporting the Bulgarian Comitadjis, and calling for a systematic boycott of the Jews. That same day, anti-Semitic incidents of violence began. According to David Recanati:

On 20 June the Greeks robbed a Jewish commercial house in the Rege suburb, and pillaged the office of the scout movement "Hakoach," and placed there the announcement "Jews leave Thessaloniki." Anti-Semitic gangs passed through the city and systematically labeled buildings K or H to announce that they belong to Jews, and sent anonymous threat letters to many Jews to leave the city. They broke the windows of the Aboav Orphanage and attacked several house of the edges of the city.

Even though Maccabi published a denial of the accusations against Cohen, *Makedonia* continued the insinuation. In light of this active campaign, anti-Jewish feeling mounted amongst public opinion.

A group of armed nationalists organized an attack on the Maccabi club headquarters on June 23, 1931. They ruined furniture and beat up three Maccabi members who were present at the time.

To prevent the deterioration in relations between the Jews and the Greek Orthodox, the Salonikan Jewish community sent a delegation to the regional governor seated in Thessaloniki, General Gonatas, but he received them very coldly and promised nothing. Based on information of the intentions of extremist elements to attack the Jewish quarters throughout the city, the Jewish community sent a telegram to Greek Premier Venizelos requesting his speedy intervention. Venizelos answered their request and received promises from the city governor to act in quieting the atmosphere and punish all the factions connected to the incitement and violent acts.

On June 25, Venizelos not only told Gonatas that the situation was at its lowest regrettable point and urged him to take measures so that parallel incidents would not dishonor Greece, but he also requested a hearing about the maliciousness in the press. The Jewish parliament member Bessantchi and Senator Asher Mallah also met with Venizelos to voice their dismay at the recent deplorable events. Salonikan Jewish communal leaders met with Police Chief Calochristianakis emphasizing the need for reinforcements to guard the Jewish neighborhoods. He assured them that the Jewish population had nothing to worry about.

On June 25, 1931, a group of rioters entered the house of Shmuel Moshe in the 151 neighborhood and broke the windows. One Jew was murdered and several were injured in the disturbances. Simultaneously, other rioters entered the home of Haim Meir in another neighborhood. The same night, a discussion was held in the local Chamber of Commerce to boycott the stores of the Jews. Three days later, rioters attacked the 6 neighborhood and tried to ignite it, but a group of young Jews repelled them. Both Jews and Greek Orthodox were injured in the disturbances.

On a Monday night, June 29, 1931, taking advantage of Gonatas's absence from the city while on vacation, a mob of some 2,000 Greek Orthodox, organized in gangs

and armed with knives, sticks, and oil containers, entered the Campbell neighborhood and burned it down. This neighborhood contained 220 Jewish refugee families from the famous 1917 fire. The police did nothing to stop it. Residents battled the rioters, but in the midst of the attack the whole neighborhood went up in flames. Fifty-four families lost their houses, including the family of Rabbi Avraham Peretz. The rabbi was injured in the riots and several women were raped (Recanati 1972, 226). The rioters destroyed a synagogue, school, and pharmacy. Two Torah scrolls were ripped and nasty graffiti was written on them. A Christian witness noted that Greek Air Force soldiers took part in the riots and the head of their group even ordered them to shoot at the police who came to defend the suburb. The soldiers came with kerosene and grenades, which they threw on the synagogue and buildings. The rioters prevented firefighters from extinguishing the flames. The police did not allow the Jews to leave their homes and did not intervene to defend them. A group of Jewish youth from other neighborhoods tried to help their Jewish neighbors, but the police refused to allow them in the Campbell neighborhood. The rioters killed the Gentile neighborhood baker who asked to defend his Jewish friends. Twenty Jews were injured in the riots, and Leon Vidal, who had been injured in the previous attack on the 151 neighborhood, died from his wounds. Total damage from the riots was 2 million drachmas.

The Jewish refugees from Campbell found refuge in two synagogues, a matzo factory, the Alliance Israelite Universelle school, and elsewhere. The day after the riots, which the public coined the “Campbell riots,” the police published a report of the disturbances in all of the morning newspapers. According to the police, the rioters were Greek Orthodox refugees, and because of their large numbers the police could not curb them and prevent the disturbances (Kerem and Rivlin 1998, 251). The anti-Semitic press, in its usual fashion, distorted the events and blamed the Jews.

After the Campbell riots, Jews began fleeing from the suburbs and heading toward the center of the city out of fear of further riots. Parliament condemned the rioters, and guards were placed in Jewish neighborhoods. Even Greek Orthodox university students volunteered to guard the Jews. On June 30, anti-Semitic slogans were written on many Jewish stores and homes. Athens issued urgent orders to the authorities in Thessaloniki to restore order. However, the reaction of authorities in Greece’s largest northern city was too slow and failed to deter the rioters. The government prevented newspapers and telegrams from being sent abroad, and letters were censored so the Greek government’s inability to control the situation would not be leaked abroad.

The Jewish community demanded that the allegations against Maccabi be checked and that the responsibility of the press bureau, *Makedonia* newspaper, and nationalist organizations for the Campbell riots be investigated. Those injured from the riots were promised reparations, and the 17 Jews detained during the riots were to be released. In the aftermath, 15,000–18,000 Salonikan Jews moved to Eretz Israel and another 15,000 moved to France during the years 1932–1938. In the Greek parliament, President Venizelos commented that the accusations against the Jews were not true.

The trial opened in the District Court of Veria, an EEE stronghold, on April 2, 1932, and the sessions lasted until April 18. Fardis, the *Makedonia* editor, and EEE leaders Haritopoulos and G. Cosmides were accused of inciting the Campbell riots. Also, several Greek Orthodox refugees were charged with arson in the Campbell neighborhood. Also on trial were the Maccabi leaders in Thessaloniki, who were accused of acting against the territorial completeness of Greece.

The jury's verdict determined the guilt of the three suspects in the arson of the Campbell neighborhood. The court blamed the *Makedonia* for inciting the riots, because its insinuations were fictitious. However, the rioters were acquitted on the premise that their actions were in the spirit of patriotism and they believed their homeland was endangered. The Greek Orthodox anti-Semitic inciters were likewise acquitted. Fardes and the two EEE leaders were deemed innocent of the charges of incitement and spreading hate. The Maccabi leaders were also acquitted. In the end, all those accused were deemed innocent. Law 5369 of April 2, 1932, dealt with payment for property burned in the Campbell neighborhood. The Jewish community received no indemnity for damage caused to its property, but the Jewish community's mortgage for the neighborhood it established was annulled. Finally, on June 21, 1935, the official government register announced that the Campbell neighborhood would be confiscated from the Jews.

Anti-Semitism continued in the form of attacks on individuals during the 1933 elections, and *Makedonia* continued baiting the Jews. The Jews' anti-Venizelist support in the Chamber and Senate elections of 1932 and 1933 was resented by many of the Asia Minor refugees and *Makedonia*. During the Metaxas dictatorship, in 1936, the Jews fared better when the EEE was banned and anti-Semitism in the press was curbed.

In Salonika, during the Holocaust, the Asia Minor Greek Orthodox were still a majority of the general population, and they remained hostile toward the Jews. This population did not help the local Judeo-Spanish and French-speaking Jews hide and flee from the region. Assistance was left to the local elite, and they were not very successful in convincing the conservative Jewish leadership and general Jewish population to resist deportation. Thus, some 54,000 Salonikan Jews were sent to the Nazi death camps in Poland, where most died in gas chambers or by forced labor; only some 2,000 returned to Salonika after the liberation.

### Selected Bibliography

- Ben-Zvi Institute. Jerusalem. Greece manuscripts collection 182/7. Resignation of Jewish communal council over "Le Repos Dominical." 25 May 1925. [Judeo-Spanish]
- Kerem, Yitzchak. 1999. "The Effect of the 1923 Greek-Orthodox/Turkish-Muslim Population Transfer on the Jews of Thessaloniki." *Kol haKehila*. Available at [http://www.yvelia.com/kolhakehila/archive/documents/salonika/salonika/salonika\\_002.htm](http://www.yvelia.com/kolhakehila/archive/documents/salonika/salonika/salonika_002.htm) (accessed April 2, 2008).
- Kerem, Yitzchak. 2003. "The Multicultural Background of Greek Jewry: Factors in their Diversity and Integration in Modern Greece." *Mesogeios* 20–21: 57–79.
- Kerem, Yitzchak, and Bracha Rivlin. 1998. "Saloniki, the Modern Period" [Hebrew]. In *Pinkas Hakehillot, Yavan*, edited by Bracha Rivlin, 217–299. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Le Progres*. 1931. "Les evenments de la journee d'hier." June 26, 4.

- L'Independent*. 1931. "Une demarche du Conseil Communal aupres de M. Gonatas." June 25, 4.
- Mavrogordatos, George Th. 1983. *Stillborn Republic, Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922–1936*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 255–259.
- Recanati, David, ed. 1972. *Zikhron Saloniki*, I. Tel Aviv: Salonikan Communal Book Publication Committee, 226–227.
- Saloniki Ir Ve'em Beyisrael* [Hebrew]. 1967. Jerusalem: Institute for the Research of Salonikan Jewry, 227–231.

## Migration Routes of Rhodian Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean Basin

*Yitzchak Kerem*

---

The most vast Diaspora of Judeo-Spanish Jews from the Ottoman Empire is that of the Jews of Rhodes, who, beginning at the end of 19th century and throughout most of the 20th century, spread throughout the world and created independent communities, synagogues, and enclaves in Africa (Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, and South Africa), the United States (New York City; Atlanta; Montgomery, Alabama; Los Angeles; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle), South America (Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), Brussels, Belgium, and Haifa and Ashdod, Israel.

In 1895, Mousa and Gabriel Benatar arrived in Salisbury, Rhodesia, and in 1905 an influx of Rhodians settled in the northern remote outposts of Chakari, Gatooma, Darwendale, Shamva, Eiffel Flats, Que Que, Penhalonga, and Bindura, but they eventually established themselves in larger enterprises in the capital, Salisbury. In Rhodesia, the Rhodian Jews established the Sephardic Hebrew Congregation in 1931 in Salisbury, and they were active members in the synagogue in Bulawayo. After the fall of the white regime in Rhodesia in 1979, most Rhodian Jews migrated to South Africa where they settled in Capetown and Johannesburg and joined the local Sephardi congregation there. After the fall of the white regime in South Africa, some of the Rhodians migrated to Perth, Australia, Atlanta, Georgia, and Toronto, Canada.

Salomon Benatar of Rhodes left Umtali, Rhodesia, in 1900 and went on an expedition to the Belgian Congo. With 80 armed men, he went by foot 800 kilometers to Elizabethville; where he eventually created the base for a Rhodian enclave and would make his fortune. The Rhodian Jews established general stores and trading posts in Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo. After the nationalization of industry and commerce in Zaire in the late 1960s, most Rhodian Jews relocated to Brussels and Seapoint outside of Capetown, South Africa. Some migrated to Ashdod.

Rhodian Jews in the Congo established a synagogue in Elizabethville as well as numerous trading posts, general stores, and commercial enterprises in the Kasai

region. Maurice Alhadeff helped Mobotu ascend to power in the independent Zaire, and others, like Gabriel Alhadeff, Leon Hasson, and the Israel brothers, became wealthy merchants. In the 1930s, numerous Jews migrated to the Congo from Rhodes, and in 1938, when the Italian Fascist regime annulled Italian citizenship to Jews who settled in Rhodes after the 1923 Lausanne agreement, some 2,000 Jews were forced to leave and settled in the Congo, in the International Zone in Tangiers. Some 200 went to Eretz Israel on the *Agios Nikolaos*, an illegal immigration boat.

The first Sephardi Jews that settled in Seattle in 1903 were from Marmara, Turkey, and Rhodes. They followed local Greek Orthodox groups to work in fish-packing and other sea-related activities. Many of the Sephardic immigrants were sent to Seattle by the Industrial Removal Office. The Rhodian Jews founded a philanthropic organization called Koupa Ozer Dalim Anshe Rhodes in 1909, their own minyan, burial society, and later a congregation called Ezra Bessarot in 1914. The first Turkish Sephardim in Seattle, Washington, were primarily from Marmara and Tekirdag (Rodosto), but also Gallipoli and Istanbul, and they formed the Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation in 1910. After forced military conscription in Turkey in 1924, dozens of families from Tekirdag migrated to Seattle. Since 1907, those Rhodians who had economic problems in Seattle went to Portland, Oregon, and established a synagogue and community there. By 1912, there were 80 Sephardim in Portland; most were Rhodians, but others came from Marmara and Tekirdag. From 1908 to 1910, many Turkish and Rhodian Jews began settling in Los Angeles from Seattle and Portland.

Also, Rhodian Jews followed the Greek Orthodox to Atlanta, Georgia, and Montgomery, Alabama, in the southern United States. Most Jews went first to Atlanta and then some settled in Montgomery. In Atlanta, the Rhodian Ahavath Shalom was founded in 1910; a group of 22 split off to form Or Hachaim in 1912, and in 1914, the two congregations united into Or VeShalom, which is a Conservative synagogue today. In 1912–1914, 42 families were from Rhodes, and 23 families were from Turkey.

The Jews began leaving Salonika when they feared the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and future forced military conscription under a Young Turk regime. They sought to leave the limited economic conditions of their towns of origin and dreamed of golden futures in the Americas or Africa (as in the case of the Rhodian Jews). In the first decade of the 20th century, they began to migrate to New York and London, and Salonikans and other Jews from Greece and Turkey also founded the Holland Park synagogue in London in 1928. In New York, they established the Sephardic Brotherhood of America as a burial society and unsuccessfully tried to unite the Sephardim of New York and America. The Salonikans established synagogues on the Lower East Side in Manhattan, in Harlem, in Bronx, and later in Queens. They also established themselves in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and formed Kahal Kadosh Etz Ahaim, which later relocated in Highland Park.

In the 1930s, the newly established petit bourgeois Salonikan Jews migrated to France, mostly to Paris, but also to Lyons and Marseilles. In Paris, they established themselves in three districts: the wealthy settled in the 16th arrondissement, the middle class in the 9th district, and the poor in the 11th district by the Voltaire

metro station and rue de la Roquette. After the 1931 anti-Semitic Campbell riots in Salonika, some 15,000–18,000 migrated to Eretz Israel. Some 300 Salonikan stevedores and boat workers Judaized the Haifa Port in 1933, and during the 1936 Arab boycott, the Salonikan port workers, denied entrance to their workplace at the Jaffa Port, established the Tel Aviv Port. In 1937, Greek Jews from Castoria and elsewhere in Greece established the Moshav Tzur Moshe, named after Ioanniote Zionist and Jewish community leader Moshe Koffinas.

The Jews of Castoria began migrating to New York in the early 1900s. A small group also settled in Rio de Janeiro. In New York, the Castorialis eventually established synagogues in New Lots, Brooklyn, and Cedarhurst, Long Island.

At the same time, Romaniote, Judeo-Greek-speaking Jews, migrated to New York and established synagogues on Broome Street on the Lower East Side, in Harlem, in the Bronx, and in Mapleton (Bensonhurst), Brooklyn. They also established the Allen Boys Club and the Sisterhood of Ioannina.

Jews in the Greek Peninsula chose immigration when Ottoman sovereignty was replaced by a Greek regime, which often did not curb anti-Jewish agitation. In several instances the Greek regime initiated legislation that was adverse to Jewish communities in Greece, like a mandatory rest day on Sunday and a separate electoral college. Ultimately, the Greek regime was overrun by a heinous Nazi regime that annihilated most of the Jews of Greece but did prompt significant migration to Eretz Israel for those that fled or those who returned from Auschwitz/Birkenau and other concentration camps.

New York City had numerous Sephardi *Landsmanschaften* organizations: Hesed ve Emet de Kastorialis, the Brotherhood of Adrianople, the Brotherhood League of Rhodes, and more. Although these societies provided assistance to the new immigrants through loans, contacts, and fraternity and by helping them with the American acculturation process, they also furthered Sephardic fragmentation, prevented unity, and hindered the formation of unified synagogues, schools, burial societies, a professional Sephardi Judeo-Spanish speaking theater, and a long-lasting Judeo-Spanish press.

The Judeo-Spanish speaking community of Monastir began migrating to the Americas in the first decade of the 20th century. Migration ensued to New York City; Rochester, New York; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Temuco, Chile. When Monastir was bombarded continuously in 1916–1917, much of the community migrated not only to the Americas, but also to Florina and Salonika, Greece. Since the late 19th century, in aliyah to Eretz Israel, in particular to the Old City of Jerusalem, many Monastirli came as individuals and families. They established the synagogues Yagel Yaakov (1888) and Ahavat Hesed (1893) in the Old City. They also settled in the new city of Jerusalem and established another synagogue, Yagel Yaakov, in 1930.

The Sephardi enclave of Cincinnati, which formed in the first decade of the 20th century, had 42 families from the Dardanelles, Turkey, and only 8 from Salonika. They formed the La Hermandad (The Brotherhood) in 1910, bought a cemetery plot in 1920, and attracted Jews from Monastir and Katerini, Greece.

Turkish Jews also migrated to the Americas at the beginning of the 20th century. Aside from the aforementioned migrations after the Young Turk Revolution,

the Balkan Wars, and World War I, many Izmir Jews left their hometown in light of the harsh Greek rule of 1918–1922 and migrated to the Americas. Jews from Izmir and Istanbul were the founders and main congregant base of the kehalim Bet-El in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the Camargo Street synagogue in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which were founded in about 1918 and 1919, respectively. Turkish Jews made up the overwhelming majority of the Judeo-Spanish–speaking Sephardic community of Buenos Aires; which in 1919 evolved into the Asociacon Comunidad Israelita Sefardita de Buenos Aires (ACIS). Rhodian Jews began migrating to Buenos Aires in the first decade of the 20th century, and by 1929 enough had amassed for them to found the Kal Shalom synagogue. Sephardic synagogues were also founded in other cities in Argentina: Rosario, La Plata, Tucumen, and elsewhere.

Turkish Jews began migrating to Cuba in the early 1900s, during the last years of the Ottoman rule, because of fear of future political stability and in search of economic success. At the time of the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 and World War I, Turkish Jews left Turkey for fear of military conscription, and many chose to settle in Cuba. In 1914, they established the Uniona Hebrea Shevet Ajim, a separate entity from the Ashkenazi community. Migration heightened in 1924 when Turkish Jews feared military conscription during the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic. Not only did the Turkish Jews settle in Havana and establish the Shevet Ajim Synagogue, but they also settled in the coastal towns of the far eastern part of the island where they were peddlers and merchants for the rural agricultural population. The Jews from Silivri, near Istanbul, settled in Camaguey, and those from Kirkliste (Killareli) migrated to Oriente. Sephardic religious and communal organizations, mostly of Turkish Jews, were in Manzanillo, Ciego de Avila, Camajuani, Colon, Camaguey, Guantanamo, Artemisa, Matanzas, and Santiago de Cuba in Oriente Province, the most eastern point of the island, 972 kilometers from Havana.

The Turkish Jews in France, like the Salonikans, had similar settlement patterns. Regarding Sephardi Balkan settlement in Paris, the ninth district was primarily Salonikan middle class, but the lower-class 11th district was primarily of Turkish origin.

The Syrian Jews maintained distinct communal identities in Damascus and Aleppo, and their tight communal identity and parochial structure continued afterward in the Diaspora throughout the 20th century in New York City; Deal, New Jersey; Mexico City; Panama; Colombia; São Paulo, Brazil; Buenos Aires; and Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in Eretz Israel. Most of these Jews possessed a Judeo-Arabic culture, but a significant minority emanated from Iberian and later Livornese Portuguese origin. Previously, Aleppoans Jews, as well as Corfiote Jews, had settled in Manchester, England, as early as 1850. They were cotton merchants and were part of the Cheetham Hill Road Synagogue founded in 1871.

In their enclave on Ocean Parkway in Flatbush, Brooklyn, in New York City, the Syrian Jewish community is separated by the Damascan (Shami) and the Aleppoans synagogue congregations, but they share joint institutions like the Sephardic Center and schools. The Aleppoans number many more, and most of them have lived there longer than the Damascan Jews, many of whom had only managed to migrate from Syria in the latter decades of the 20th century. The neighborhood also

contains a Lebanese synagogue and Ahava ve Ahva, an Egyptian synagogue of Cairo Jews, mostly of Syrian origin, who migrated to New York after 1956.

In the 1880s, Sephardi and Romaniote Jews from the Greek Peninsula and Turkey, and Syrian Jews, most of Judeo-Arab culture, migrated to Egypt, which enjoyed economic prosperity after the Suez Canal was built and opened. Corfiote and Zakythian Jews of Italian culture, Ioanniote Judeo-Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews, and Sephardi Judeo-Spanish-speaking Jews from Salonika, Istanbul, and Izmir settled in Egypt, mostly in Alexandria, but also in Cairo. After the large-scale 1891 Corfiote blood libel, many Corfiote Jews settled in Trieste and Alexandria. Italian Jews had migrated to Alexandria since the 1840s, created an autonomous community in 1854, and dominated the Jewish community rabbinic and lay leadership.

At this time, Cairo was full of Jews who had migrated from Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, and the Balkans. Many of the North African and Syrian religious Jews founded the Ahava VeAhva religious cultural center and evening yeshiva. In the 1940s, there was an active movement of illegal immigration to Eretz Israel of youth from Cairo, Alexandria, and elsewhere in Egypt. The first large wave of migration to Israel came in 1948, and then in 1956, when the Jews were forced out of Egypt, some 35,000 Jews migrated to Israel, but most went elsewhere. Many migrated to Italy; to France, where they established a synagogue in Paris near Gare de St. Lazare in the 9th arrondissement; to New York; and to São Paulo, Brazil, where they established their own synagogue and numbered some 6,000 immigrants.

In Mexico, the first Jews were Syrian Jews who fled from persecution and arrived in Mexico City and Guadalajara between 1870 and 1890. At the beginning of the 20th century, Salonikan Jews and Jews from Turkey settled in Mexico City and increased in number after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. The Damascan Alianza de Monte Sinai congregation was founded in 1912, the Aleppoan Sociedad Beneficencia del Alicencia Israelita Sedaka y Marpe was formed in 1928, and the Union Sefardita (consisting of Balkan Jews) was established in 1923.

In Panama, the Sephardic Kahal Shearith Israel was founded in 1876, but eventually became Reform, and most of its members assimilated and intermarried. During World War I, Sephardim came from Eretz Israel, and after World War II, Sephardim from the Balkans, Syria, and North Africa migrated. They affiliated with the Shevet Ajim congregation; which is staunchly Orthodox.

The Judeo-Spanish Haketia-dialect-speaking Jews from Spanish Morocco, mainly from Tangiers and Tetuan, started migrating to the Amazons of Brazil in the 1820s. Waves of migration occurred after 1860, when the Spanish conquered the geographical areas of those Jewish communities of the Moroccan Sultanate; after the rubber boom of the 1880s, when they settled in the Amazons; and afterward. They settled in remote communities like Belem, where they established a synagogue in 1824; in Manaus, Brazil; and in the remote Iquitos in Peru from the 1890s onward. In the next decade, Sephardic Jews from the those Spanish Moroccan communities migrated in relatively small numbers to Buenos Aires and in 1891 established their own community, called Congregacion Israelita Latina. Also, before World War I, Moroccan Judeo-Spanish-speaking Jews, including those from Melilla, migrated to Caracas, Venezuela, and formed the vibrant synagogue Sociedad Israelita de Venezuela

in 1919. In the 1960s, many remaining Moroccan Jews migrated to Montreal, Canada, where these Francophone Jews remain separate from the English-speaking Ashkenazi general Jewish community. Politically, the Francophone Moroccan Jews support the controversial Quebec separatism. In the 1970s and 1980s, many Spanish-Moroccan Jewish immigrants in Montreal left for Toronto and established two synagogues there.

### Selected Bibliography

- Alboher, Shlomo. 2005. *Monastir (Bitola), Macedonia, An Ancient Jewish City Where No Jews Exist Today, The Flames of Treblinka Consumed Them* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Sifriya Sionit and Mossad Bialik, 337–339.
- Baki-Bejarano, Margalit. “The Sephardic Community of Buenos Aires” [Hebrew]. Master’s thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 18, 28.
- Beton, Sol, ed. 1981. *Sephardim & A History of Congregation Or VeShalom*. Atlanta: Congregation Or VeShalom, 101–113.
- Carciente, Jacob. 1991. *La Comunidad Judia De Venezuela*. Caracas, Venezuela: Centro de Estudios Sefardies de Caracas, 48.
- Donnell, Shelton. “At the End of the Frontier: Sephardim in the Western United States.” In *The Sephardim: A Cultural Journey from Spain to the Pacific Coast*, edited by Joshua Stampfer, 114–137. Portland, OR: Institute of Judaic Studies.
- Elazar, Daniel. 1989. *The Other Jews, The Sephardim Today*. New York: Basic Books, 147, 149, 151–152, 155, 157, 159.
- Kerem, Yitzchak. 1996. “The Migration of Rhodian Jews to Africa and the Americas, 1900–1914: The Beginning of New Sephardic Communities.” In *Patterns of Migration, 1850–1914*, edited by Aubrey Newman and Stephen W. Massil, 321–334. London: Jewish Historical Society of England with Institute of Jewish Studies.
- Kerem, Yitzchak. 1997. “The Settlement of Rhodian and Other Sephardic Jews in Montgomery and Atlanta in the Twentieth Century.” *American Jewish History* 85 (4): 373–391.
- Kosmin, Barry A. 1980. *Majuta; A History of the Jewish Community of Zimbabwe*. Guelo, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 125, 130.
- Landau, Jacob M. 1969. *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*. New York: New York University Press, 25.
- Levine, Robert M. 1993. *Tropical Diaspora: The Jewish Experience in Cuba*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 21.
- Papo, Joseph M. 1987. *Sephardim in Twentieth Century America: In Search of Unity*. San Jose, CA: Pele Yoetz Books; Berkeley, CA: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 141–147, 163–165, 279–280.
- Segal, Ariel. 1999. *Jews of the Amazon, Self-Exile in Paradise*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Zenner, Walter P. 2000. *A Global Community: The Jews From Aleppo, Syria*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 65.

# Migration Routes of Egyptian Jews

*Racheline Barda*

---

Like all the other Jewish communities of Arab lands, Egyptian Jewry has come to an end, and there is no prospect of its being revived either in the near or distant future. The Jews of Egypt were either expelled or forced into exile in the aftermath of the first three wars between Egypt and Israel (in 1948, 1956, and 1967). The rise of an exclusive Arab-Islamic type of nationalism, the growing threat of Islamic fundamentalism and the escalating Arab-Israeli conflict were the fundamental causes for its demise. Before these developments, the Jews of Egypt occupied what they thought was a safe and respected place in Egyptian society. They were about 80,000 and formed a diverse, vibrant, and quasiautonomous community. Their immense contribution to the economic development and modernization of the country was “totally out of proportion to their actual numbers.” They were mostly middle class, and their dominant characteristics were an ethnic, religious, and cultural pluralism; a Western-style education; and multilingual skills. They lived in symbiosis with several non-Muslim local communities, such as the Copts, the Greeks, the Syrians, the Italians, and the Armenians. As the Egyptian political climate changed, especially beginning in 1945, the status of the Jews became increasingly untenable, and they were forced to look for a new home. In the space of less than 20 years, Egypt was emptied of its Jewish population. By the late 1960s, approximately 37,000 had immigrated to Israel while the rest dispersed throughout the Western world, mainly North and South America, France, Great Britain, Canada, and even as far as Australia. A handful of elderly Jews still live in Cairo and Alexandria.

A relatively large number—about 15,000—chose to settle in Brazil because of its open-door immigration policy, particularly under the presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–1961). When the Suez crisis erupted, the Brazilian Embassy in Cairo had received instructions not to limit the number of visas issued to Egyptian Jews. The immigration formalities were further facilitated by the fact they could be conducted in Egypt, and the visa applications were processed in situ at a rate that was to allow for the establishment of the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the refugees. In cases of hardship, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) or the Brazilian Jewish community compiled lists of people who wished to immigrate and forwarded those lists, already bearing a permanent visa authorization, to the Brazilian officials in Egypt. Once they landed in the country, the Egyptian refugees were the sole responsibility of HIAS, which provided them with temporary accommodation in hotels and financial support. They settled mostly in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Initially, they experienced some difficulties because of the language, but most learned Portuguese relatively quickly and joined the workforce very soon after their arrival.

France was another preferred migration route for more than 10,000 Jews from Egypt, in view of its proximity and reputation as a traditional haven for political refugees. However, the primary motivation was their affinity with the French language

and culture as a result of their schooling in Egypt. Already in the early 1950s, young Egyptian Jews had chosen to pursue their university studies in France and subsequently settled there. The Jewish refugees who landed in France after the 1956 Suez crisis were either repatriated French nationals or stateless. The latter included those who were forced to renounce their Egyptian nationality before leaving the country and the so-called *sujets locaux* who had never been granted Egyptian nationality.

The plight of the French nationals was somewhat alleviated as the French government had organized emergency housing in hotels, financial aid, and employment assistance. They were also eligible to receive social security and medical benefits. The situation of the stateless Jewish refugees was not as privileged. A large number wished to settle in France and required urgent help. Others were in need of a temporary sanctuary while waiting for visas to other countries, such as the United States or Australia. The combined efforts of relief organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in cooperation with HIAS, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution (AJDC), which facilitated the transfer of the Jewish population from Egypt, through Europe, and to their final destinations. The Jewish Agency directed the immigration to Israel from Europe.

Notwithstanding the subsidies of international and national government institutions, most of the funds needed to settle and integrate the Egyptian refugees into the local economy or to help them emigrate to other countries were provided by AJDC. France was its main theater of operation, particularly between 1957 and 1960. A special programs assistance fund was established by AJDC specifically to cope with the needs of Jewish refugees from Egypt and Eastern Europe. This fund subsidized local Jewish agencies, such as the French Comité Juif d'Action Sociale et de Reconstruction and the Service Social des Jeunes. They provided refugees with cash relief and assistance with food, child care, and housing for a year or until the head of the family found suitable employment. The issue of employment was crucial, as the refugees who wished to settle in France could not have a resident permit without a work permit and vice versa. The majority settled in Paris and seemed integrate successfully into French society and the French economy. They made good use of the opportunities that were available when they first arrived, such as communal and government assistance, cheap housing, and free tertiary education for the young.

A number chose English-speaking countries because they believed these countries would offer better economic possibilities for the future. These countries included the United States, which received approximately 9,000 immigrants; the United Kingdom, approximately 4,000; and Canada and Australia, approximately 2,000 each. The United States was a preferred destination for many of the refugees from Egypt, however, the waiting list was long, as strict quotas regulated American immigration policy. Many had to wait for the Refugee-Escapee Act of September, 11, 1957, which allowed the admission of persons "fleeing persecution in Communist countries or countries in the Middle East," outside the national origins quota system. They settled in various cities of the United States, again with the assistance of HIAS.

Some could not afford to wait for an American visa and tried alternative migration routes. Australia was often a second- or third-choice destination because of its geographical isolation at the edge of the Diaspora. In the 1950s, the sea voyage took over a month from Europe and the plane trip, three to four days. In addition, Australia had a very selective immigration policy. It only accepted holders of British nationality and applicants with a close family member already in the country who could act as a sponsor. Otherwise, the quota system applied. Shortly after Egypt unilaterally nationalized the Suez Canal in July 1956, the Australian Embassy in Cairo was closed because of Australia's close alignment with Great Britain. As a result, immigration applications could not be processed in Egypt. The Egyptian Jews were required to present themselves at Australian embassies in Europe. First, they had to overcome the racial discrimination of the white Australia immigration policy toward Jews of Middle Eastern origin. This hurdle was surmounted thanks to the tireless efforts of leaders of the Australian Jewish community, such as Sydney D. Einfeld, who lobbied the Australian government to allow Egyptian Jews into the country on humanitarian grounds. Through a process of chain migration and the help of a parliamentarian, Patrick Galvin, a significant number settled in Adelaide, where they joined some of their compatriots who had settled there as early as 1947. The rest of the group was divided between Sydney and Melbourne.

Egyptian refugees still had to wait several months in Europe for their applications to be accepted. Those who had no means of support during that interim period were offered accommodation in HIAS-designated hotels, as well as meal tickets and medical help. HIAS also paid for the passage to Australia when required. In accordance with published data, the HIAS helped 591 Jewish refugees from Egypt immigrate to Australia from 1956 to 1963, although the extent of that assistance was not specified.

Regardless of the migration routes they chose to take, the Jews from Egypt have successfully acculturated and integrated into new societies, while retaining their own cultural diversity, thanks to their multilingual skills, multilayered identity, and innate ability to adapt and interact with a variety of ethnic groups. As time unfolds, this distinctiveness is bound to fade away as their descendants acculturate more and more to their host country. Nevertheless, their history both in and out of Egypt constitutes an integral part of the greater picture of Jews of Arab lands and their subsequent dispersion throughout Israel and the Western world.

### Selected Bibliography

- Beinin, Joel. 1998. *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cohen, Hayyim J. 1973. *The Jews of the Middle East, 1860–1972*. New York: Wiley.
- Jupp, James. 1991. *Immigration*. Sydney, Australia: Sydney University Press.
- Krämer, Gudrún. 1989. *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914–1952*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 37.
- Laskier, Michael. 1992. *The Jews of Egypt, 1920–1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism and the Middle East Conflict*. New York: New York University Press.
- Laskier, Michael. 1995. "Egyptian Jewry under the Nasser Regime, 1956–70." *Middle Eastern Studies* 3 (July): 573–619.

- Laskier, Michael. 1998. "The Regeneration of French Jewry: The Influx and Integration of North African Jews into France." *Jewish Political Studies Review* 10 (1–2): 37–72.
- Leftel, Ruth. 1997. "A comunidade sefaradita egipcia de São Paulo." PhD thesis, History, University of São Paulo.
- Rouchou, Joëlle. 2003. "Nuits d'été au parfum de jasmin: Souvenirs des Juifs d'Égypte à Rio de Janeiro—1956/7." PhD thesis, University of São Paulo.
- Rutland, Suzanne D. 1988. *The Edge of the Diaspora*. Sydney, Australia: Collins Australia.
- Rutland, Suzanne D. 1991. "The Hon. Sydney David Einfeld, AO: Builder of Australian Jewry." *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 9: 312–331.

## Why the Majority of the Jews of Iraq Emigrated to Israel in Operation Ezra and Nehemya, as Viewed by Jewish Memoirs

*Daphne Tsimhoni*

---

The mass immigration of the Jews of Iraq to Israel in operation Ezra and Nehemya included 119,000 people and nearly liquidated the ancient flourishing Jewish community of Iraq. Spectators of the period described it as "the largest air migration in history." None of the people involved in preparing the 1950–1951 law permitting the Jews to leave expected such a large-scale migration.

Various explanations have been offered for this unique mass emigration of nearly the total Jewish community of Iraq to Israel. One explanation promoted by the Israeli emissaries who organized the operation, including the Israeli emissaries Shlomo Hillel and Mordechai Ben Porat, considers the origins of the Jewish drive to leave Iraq for Israel as the "natural Zionism" of the Jews of Iraq. Accordingly, despite their 3,000 years of exile in Iraq, the Jews considered themselves guests in their own homeland and yearned for their redemption and emigration to Zion. Other assumptions prevalent among members of Jewish community of Iraq accuse the Israeli emissaries of pushing them to register for emigration to Israel by throwing bombs on Jewish meeting places.

The political circumstances of the promulgation of the 1950–1951 law permitting the Jews to leave were explained in the article "The Political Background of the Mass Immigration of the Jews of Iraq to Israel." The article pointed to the deterioration of the position of the Jews from the 1930s because of the expansion of Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda and the influence of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine; the memory of the *Farhud*—the anti-Jewish pogrom in 1941; and the persecution and discrimination after the 1948 war, which aroused apprehensions of the return of the atrocities of the 1941 pogrom.

For many, the sentence of Shafiq Adas was a turning point and the beginning of the end in Iraq. Adas was a rich, dignified Jewish businessman affiliated with the

Iraq elite. He was apprehended and prosecuted in September 1948 for supplying British military equipment to the Zionists in Palestine. He was sentenced to death and was hanged in front of his house in Basra in the presence of a large mob. His Iraqi partners were not apprehended at all. The persecutions reached their peak in September and October 1949 when members of the outlawed Zionist movement were targeted. These circumstances induced many Jewish youngsters to flee from Iraq to Iran between Basra and the Shatt al-Arab. The upheaval that was created and the activities of American and British Jewish organizations in coordination with the Israeli government brought about American and British pressure on the government of Iraq to stop persecuting the Jews and allow them to leave Iraq legally.

The resignation of the Nuri al-Said government and the rise in February 1950 of the Tawfiq al Suwaydi, a moderate pro-British politician, brought about a change in the Iraqi policy toward the Jews. Hence, the new prime minister presented the Iraqi parliament a law enabling the Jews to leave Iraq. It was officially promulgated on March 9, 1950, after a secret hasty procedure in parliament. It was clear that hardly any country would accept Jewish immigrants. Hence, Israel remained the only option for migration. Spectators anticipated that no more than 10,000 Jews would leave, but the Jewish mass emigration exceeded all the expectations by far.

### **The Yearning for Zion and Its Meaning for the Jews of Iraq**

Babylonian Jews had cherished their deep affiliation with the Holy Land since the beginning of their exile more than 2,500 earlier. It was particularly noticeable among the lower classes, which formed the majority of the community. The yearning for Zion was part of their prayers, their mourning, and their celebrations. However, it did not become Zionist political notion as in late 19th-century Europe, and it was nothing like political Zionism. Emigration to the Holy Land and donations from Babylonian Jews for the purchase of lands in Palestine never stopped throughout the ages. According to this view, emigration to Palestine was not done out of Zionist commitment but rather a religious binding.

The yearning for Zion had different expressions among different groups of the community. The leadership and socioeconomic elite considered itself part and parcel of the Iraqi society, an ancient deep-rooted community whose roots were earlier than that of the Muslims in Iraq, but at the same time, the Jews cherished their own unique ethnoreligious identity. This group maintained close social contacts with the governing Muslim elite and considered themselves to be Iraqi nationals of the Jewish faith. Their affiliation with Jerusalem was of the affiliation with the Jerusalem of heaven. They rejoiced when the State of Israel was established but considered the focus of their life to be their community in Iraq. They were apprehensive about the debacle that the establishment of the State of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict were liable to bring about for the Jews of Iraq. They were particularly apprehensive about the rumors regarding the forced population exchange scheme between Israel and Iraq that was supported by Britain.

During the crucial years of 1946–1950, the communal leadership was in a state of deformation. It lost its prestige versus the young generation; its attempts to ease



Iraqi immigrants arrive at Lod Airport in Israel, 1950. (Hans Pinn/Israeli Government Press Office)

the government's pressures on the community through a quiet diplomacy proved to be useless, which added to their apprehensions regarding the future of the Jews in Iraq. Unlike the young and the lower classes, the leaders of the community hoped for better days with the solution of the Palestine issue.

The Jewish masses kept their deep affiliation with tradition and Judaism. When the Zionist movement reestablished itself clandestinely in Iraq in 1942, it found its first ardent supporters among this group. Some Zionist activists consider this support as the modern reflection of the ancient yearnings to Zion. It is difficult to consider these feelings as the central cause for the mass immigration of the Jews to Israel, however. Religious, cultural, and spiritual affiliation can move individuals and small groups, but never in history had such feelings been so strong as to eradicate total communities. This was true to the Jews of Iraq in the same way that it was true to any Diaspora.

The establishment of the State of Israel had a great impact on the self-identity of the Jews of Iraq. It forced them to decide between two national identities: the Zionist Israeli or the Arab one. There was no space any more for a Jewish Arab identity or a Jewish Iraqi identity, neither in the eyes of the Jews nor in the eyes of their Muslim Arab environment.

For the Jewish masses and young people, particularly the members of the Zionist movement, the establishment of the State of Israel was a dream that materialized. Authors such as Yitzhak Bar Moshe and Eli Amir, and Zionist activists such as Eitan Shems and Yosef Meir, recognized the fact that discrimination and persecution had brought the majority of the Jews of Iraq to the notion that they had no

future in Iraq. Discrimination and redundancies impoverished many and nearly brought some to starvation. The exodus from Iraq was primarily a solution of the poor. Still, there was no immediate danger to the physical existence of the Jews in Iraq.

Shalom Darwish, who was the secretary of the Jewish community of Baghdad in the early 1940s, described his decision to leave Iraq after having been disappointed by the lawlessness of the Iraqi judicial system after the death sentence of Shafiq Adas. Yitzhaq Bar Moshe describes how disappointed and persecuted communists decided that their place was not in Iraq any more and that Israel was the only country that was prepared to absorb them.

### The Snowball Effect

Just a few people registered for denaturalization during the first weeks after the promulgation of the 1950–1951 law on March 9, 1950. As long as the organization of the departure from Iraq was not completed the Zionist emissaries asked the Jews not to register themselves for denaturalization. The preparations of the Jews to leave illegally and the massive sale of property and household expanded, which infuriated the nationalists of the Istiqlal Party, who accused the Jews of causing an economic crisis and started attacking Jews in centers of sale of properties. On April 8, 1950, a bomb was thrown into a coffee house where Jews used to sit, and a few people were hurt. Simultaneously, the members of the local Zionist movement called the Jews to register for immigration to Israel on April 9, 1950, one day after Passover; 40,000 registered within one week. The registration acquired a snowball effect and in less than six months most Jews had registered themselves for denaturalization and immigration by an air lift to Israel.

Between April 1950 and March 1951, approximately five bombs exploded in places Jews used to frequent. Rumors persist today among the Jewish community of Iraq that Zionist emissaries threw these bombs. These claims have never been proved. Altogether the bombs did not cause serious damage, which lent credence to the rumors that they were meant to horrify and push the Jews to leave Iraq. Regardless of who threw the bombs, it is clear that the panic the bombs may have caused could only have emerged against the background of the horrifying events of the *Farhud* in June 1941 and the apprehensions that they were liable to return.

According to Shalom Darwish, the 1950 law permitting the Jews to leave did not promise equal rights to the Jews who chose to stay, and throughout the period extreme nationalists continued to attack the Jews. These attacks convinced the Jews that it was not possible to rewind the clock to the days before the Arab–Israeli conflict began. Furthermore, there was no clue about whether it would be possible to leave Iraq after the 1950 law expired. There was no other possibility to leave Iraq except by the air lift to Israel with the knowledge that the minister of interior had the authority to cancel the law any moment.

Another factor that accelerated the registration to leave Iraq for Israel was the snowball effect. The close-knit structure of the Jewish family in Iraq meant that mothers wanted to join their sons, the young and elderly would not be left behind,

and neighbors followed because they did not want to be left alone either. Most of the Jews in Iraq lived in Baghdad and Basra, which facilitated the snowball effect. Bar Moshe and Samir Naqqash beautifully described the sad atmosphere and the sense of emptiness and strangeness that induced many to go even if it was difficult for them to leave their homeland.

The snowball effect was closely connected with the communal cohesion and cultural uniqueness as well as the education in Jewish schools and the Hebrew teaching. Their acculturation into their Iraqi Arab neighborhood did not create a crisis of identity as Jews faced in the 19th-century Western Europe. This crisis came with the establishment of the State of Israel and the acceleration of the Israeli-Arab conflict. They put before the Jews the choice between their Arabness and Jewishness, and because of the continued discrimination and persecutions most of the community saw no future in Iraq. They took then the only option possible.

Beyond any logical explanation, the mass immigration of the Jews from Iraq to Israel has remained an exceptional historical event, uprooting an ancient Diaspora from its thousand years' roots in its host country and returning it to its motherland.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bar Moshe, Isaac. 1977. *Exodus from Iraq, Recollections 1945–1950* [Hebrew and Arabic]. Jerusalem: Council of Sephardi Community.
- Ben Porat, Mordechai. 1996. *To Baghdad and Back* [Hebrew and English]. Or Yehuda, Israel: Ma'ariv.
- Haim, Sylvia G. 1976. "Aspects of Jewish Life in Baghdad under the Monarchy." *Middle Eastern Studies* 12: 188–208.
- Hillel, Shlomo. 1985. *Operation Babylon* [Hebrew and English]. Jerusalem: Idanim.
- Tsimhoni, Daphne. 1991. "Why the Majority of the Jews of Iraq Immigrated to Israel in Operation Ezra and Nehemya" [Hebrew]. In *Iyunim Bitkumat Israel*, vol. 1, 379–404. Jerusalem: Ben Gurion University.

## Modern Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

*David G. Littman*

---

A mass exodus of nearly a million Jews from Arab lands occurred in the 20th century, mainly from 1948 to 1972. It coincided with two major events: the restoration of the Jewish homeland and Israel's independence and the end of European colonial rule in Arab countries after World War II.

Oriental Jewry's millennial tradition of Zionism was symbolized 40 years before the First Zionist Conference by a Prussian Orientalist, Heinrich Freiherr von Maltzen. When visiting Tetuan in 1858, he noted that Moroccan Jews would ask him if it was true that the Rothschilds were about to buy back Palestine from the Ottoman sultan, and it would again become a Jewish kingdom (Littman 1985, 229 n. 108).

After Israel gained its independence, 90 years later, they began a massive exodus toward their homeland.

### Historical Background as Prologue

Jews had lived throughout the Orient and North Africa from antiquity, and numerous communities had flourished outside the Land of Israel, from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic, for a more than a millennium before the advent of the Arab invasions in the mid-seventh century. Their spiritual, cultural, and material presence is widely attested in many sources, chronicles, and archaeological remains.

The initial tolerance of the Muslim conquerors was dictated by expediency—so long as the populations submitted without fighting. But as Muslim immigration in the conquered lands, and its occupation, took root the social and economic condition of the indigenous peoples (both Christians and Jews) worsened. Their legal status became that of *ahl al-dhimma*, a “protected people,” tolerated in the conquered, Islamized lands (now part of the *dar al-Islam* or the region of Islam), where they were subjected to various disabilities and humiliations specified in regulations known as the Covenant of Umar—the refusal or infringement of which could incur the death penalty.

The minority Jewish communities did not represent a threat to Muslim power and were often considered economically indispensable on account of the onerous *jizya* (poll tax) and their considerable trading experience. They managed to survive successive conquests and dynastic upheaval, even the cruelest of destructions and forced conversions under the fanatic Almohads of North Africa in the 12th century, when some of the worst persecutions occurred. This was the period when Maimonides, like so many Sephardic Jews, fled with his family from Cordoba, Spain, and then from Fez in Morocco—before finding a home and fame in Fatimid, Egypt. Later, in his epistle to Yemen—where Jews were faced with compulsory apostasy—he wrote:

Never did a nation molest, degrade, debase and hate us as much as they [the Arabs] . . . we have acquiesced, both old and young, to inure ourselves to humiliation . . . all this notwithstanding, we do not escape this continual mistreatment which well nigh crushes us. No matter how we suffer and elect to remain in peace with them, they stir up strife and sedition, as David predicted: “I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.” [Psalm 120:7] (Bat Ye’or 1985, 352)

Up to the last decades of the 19th century, and in some regions into the 20th century, the Jews in most of these regions remained a segregated, *dhimmi* community amid the general population. They resided in special quarters, were usually obliged to wear distinctive clothing and forbidden to carry arms, while their sworn testimony was not accepted in any Islamic court or jurisdiction. Harsh persecutions and massacres often preceded their expulsion or flight. The era of European colonization emancipated the Jews from the discriminatory *dhimmi* status of the shar’ia law and introduced religious equality—in Algeria they were even granted French citizenship in 1870.

## Zionism in the 20th Century and Arab Reactions

Basic Arab anti-Zionism had two powerful root causes:

- The atavistic Christian Judeophobia and anti-Zionism, which was inspired in the 19th century by the Catholic, Orthodox, and Reform Churches, linked to European imperialistic designs in the Holy Land and to the Levantine Christian missions.
- The traditional Muslim concepts on *dhimmis*, combined with derogative references to Jews in the Koran and the hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad).

From the 1930s, local Judeophobia, heightened by fascist and Nazi propaganda, increased alongside anti-Zionism, as did economic discrimination and sporadic assassinations, while synagogues were attacked in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Aden. A Nazi-inspired hostility intensified dramatically in many Arab countries—even under European control—during World War II and its aftermath when thousands of Jews were brutally killed and injured, and schools and synagogues were bombed in Iraq (the 1941 *farhud*), Syria (1944, 1945, 1947), Egypt (1945, 1948), Libya (1945, 1948), Beirut, Lebanon (1946), Aden (1947), and Morocco (1948). Most attacks occurred before Israel's independence was declared on May 15, 1948.

## A Double Exodus: Arabs from Palestine and Jews from Arab Countries

By the 1940s, the Jewish population of all Arab countries was nearly a million (over 1,200,000 with Turkey and Iran): in Morocco, about 300,000; French Algeria, 150,000; Iraq, roughly 140,000; Tunisia, 120,000; Egypt, 90,000; Yemen and Aden, 60,000; Syria, 40,000; Libya, 40,000; and Lebanon, 6,000.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 (the Palestine Partition Plan), which delineated the land west of the Jordan river into two parts: an Arab state and a Jewish state, with an international *corpus separatum* for Jerusalem, the whole comprising about 22 percent of the roughly 120,000 square kilometers of the original 1922 League of Nations Palestine area. In 1922, the land east of the Jordan River (78 percent or 94,000 square kilometers) became the Emirate of Trans-Jordan by Britain's decision. In 1949, it was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan soon after the occupation of the West Bank of the Jordan.

This UN decision was refused by the Arab League and the Palestinian leadership—still nominally headed by the mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husayni, who had been named as a war criminal at the Nuremberg trial but was granted asylum in Egypt. Five days earlier, on November 24, 1947, Egypt's delegate, Heykal Pasha, warned the UN General Assembly that the proposed plan “might endanger a million Jews living in Muslim countries. If the United Nations decides to partition Palestine it might be responsible for very grave disorders and for the massacre of a large number of Jews” (Meron 1999, 84).

The title of a *New York Times* article a day after Israel's Declaration of Independence echoed that warning: “Jews in Grave Danger in all Moslem Lands: Nine Hundred

Thousand in Africa and Asia Face Wrath of Their Foes.” The Arab League’s refusal to accept international legality, the infiltration of forces into the UN-designated Jewish state, and the subsequent invasion by the armies of five Arab states in May 1948 led to a double exodus: from 550,000 to 600,000 Arab refugees fled the war zone in Palestine, soon to be followed by an even larger number of Jews obliged to emigrate from Arab lands.

Subjected to regimes of terror, general surveillance, threats and insults, massive arrests, expulsions, sequestrations, and fears for their future, nearly 300,000 destitute Jewish refugees fled Arab countries to Israel from 1948 to 1951 (a further 80,000 left Iran and Turkey). They were integrated even as the nascent Jewish state was threatened with extinction by neighboring Arab states. Nearly 400,000 followed in the subsequent 20 years, thereby doubling Israel’s population, while a further 300,000 found refuge in Europe and the Americas.

After the Six-Day War, UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967, was rejected at the Khartoum Arab League Summit Conference with the slogan: “No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiation with Israel, no concessions on the questions of Palestinian national rights.” But Resolution 242 also called for “a just solution to the refugee problem,” a term covering Jewish refugees from Arab countries as stated by President Jimmy Carter in 1978 at Camp David.

This steadfast refusal by the Palestine Liberation Organization leadership and the Arab League to recognize Israel continued for 40 years—and is still axiomatic for several Arab states and nonstate Arab parties. That denial since 1947 of Israel’s *de jure* existence in any part of UN-mandated Palestine was the fundamental reason for the double refugee tragedy. But the deliberately targeted victims—far from the Palestinian war zone—were the innocent, indigenous Jews in 10 Arab countries, numbering today scarcely 5,000, half of one percent of the roughly million inhabitants from these ancient communities.

### **Refugees from Arab Countries and Their Descendants Are Now Half of Israel’s Jewish Population**

About half of Israel’s current Jewish population (almost 5.5 million) is composed of these refugees from Arab lands and their descendants who received no humanitarian aid from the UN. It was Israel, with assistance from Jewish communities worldwide, which integrated them into a nascent society. The dire hardship endured by these indigenous Jewish refugees from Arab lands has never received serious attention from the international community, nor has the loss of their private and collective property and their inestimable heritage, dating back to antiquity, been recognized.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Cohen, Hayyim J. 1973. *The Jews of the Middle East 1860–1972*. Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press.
- Dineen, Bernard, and Terrence Prittie. 1974. *The Double Exodus: A Study of Arab and Jewish Refugees in the Middle East*. London: Goodhard Press.

- Gilbert, Martin. 1976. *The Jews of Arab Lands: Their History in Maps*, illustrated ed. London: Furnival Press.
- Landshut, Siegfried. 1950. *Jewish Communities in the Muslim Countries of the Middle East: A Survey*. London: The Jewish Chronicle.
- Lewis, Bernard. 1984. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lewis, Bernard. 1986. *Semites and Anti-Semites*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Littman, David. 1975. "Jews under Muslim Rule in the Late Nineteenth Century." *Wiener Library Bulletin* 28 (35/36): 65–76
- Littman, David. 1976. "Jews under Muslim Rule, II: Morocco 1903–1912." *Wiener Library Bulletin* 29 (37/38): 3–19.
- Littman, David. 1985. "Mission to Morocco (1863–1864)." In *The Century of Moses Montefiore*, edited by Sonia and Vivian D. Lipman, 171–229. London: Oxford University Press.
- Littman, David, and Bat Ye'or. 1976. "Protected Peoples under Islam." In *The Myth of Islamic Tolerance: How Islamic Law Treats Non-Muslims*, edited by Robert Spencer, 92–106. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Meron, Ya'akov. 1999. "The Expulsion of the Jews from Arab Countries: The Palestinians' Attitude towards It and Their Claims." In *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*, edited by Malka Hillel Shulewitz, 83–125. London: Cassell.
- Roumani, Maurice M. 1975. *The Case of the Jews from Arab Countries: A Neglected Issue*. Jerusalem: World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries.
- Schechtman, Joseph B. 1961. *On Wings of Eagles: The Plight, Exodus and Homecoming of Oriental Jewry*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff.
- Shulewitz, Malka Hillel, ed. 1999. *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*. London: Cassell.
- Stillman, Norman A. 1979. *The Jews of Arab Lands. A History and Source Book*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Stillman, Norman A. 1999. *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Ye'or, Bat. 1999. "The Dhimmi Factor in the Exodus of Jews from Arab Countries." In *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*, edited by Malka Hillel Shulewitz, 33–51. London: Cassell.
- Ye'or, Bat. 2002. *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide*. Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

## Contemporary Migration Patterns of Russian Jews to Germany

*Barbara Dietz*

---

Between 1990 and 2005, Jewish communities in Germany experienced an unexpected and remarkable growth, expanding the number of community members from 27,700 in 1990 to 103,000 in the year 2005 (Central Council of Jews in Germany, member statistics). This was primarily the consequence of a considerable immigration movement of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Germany.

## Emigration Motivation and German Admission Policy

The emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union and later its successor states has a long tradition that is strongly associated with anti-Semitic sentiments and discrimination (Zaslavsky and Brym 1983; Sabatello 1994). However, emigration from the Soviet Union was kept under strict control by the Soviet authorities until the late 1980s when the policy of perestroika and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union led to a relaxation of emigration restrictions. Because of the new freedom to travel abroad, the emigration of Jews from the successor states of the Soviet Union grew considerably (Tolts 2003). Although Israel and the United States had been the most important immigration destinations for Jews from the Soviet Union until the end of the 1980s, since the beginning of the 1990s Germany was increasingly attracting Jewish immigrants, becoming the most important receiving country of Jews from the successor states of the Soviet Union in 2002 (Dietz 2003, 11). Whereas 2,494 Jewish emigrants moved from post-Soviet states to the United States in 2002, 18,878 went to Israel and 19,262 to Germany.

From what is known about the motivation of Jews to leave the former Soviet Union, a number of reasons played a role (Domernik 1997; Schoeps et al. 1999). First of all, overt as well as latent anti-Semitism in Russia, the Ukraine, Moldova, and other successor states of the Soviet Union were push factors. In addition, economic crisis and political instability contributed to the emigration decision of Jews, and in some cases, career advancement, the future of the children, or health problems were decisive factors.

Yet the decision to move to Germany was to a great extent related to the changing admission policies of Western states. When the authorities of post-Soviet states accepted the freedom of movement, many Western states, first of all the United States, closed their borders to immigrants from this area or reduced their immigration quotas. Israel, in contrast, kept its doors open to Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and Germany introduced a new admission procedure for this group in 1990.

When Jewish emigrants from the former Soviet Union started to move to Germany in the beginning of the 1990s this was in many cases a second choice, as a number of Jewish emigrants, particularly those who lived in mixed families, were insecure about going to Israel for economic, political, religious, or social reasons, and others were unable to obtain a visa for the United States. Besides, some Jewish emigrants voted for Germany because of a greater cultural and linguistic proximity compared with Israel. Furthermore, in the course of the ongoing migration movement to Germany, more and more Jewish emigrants from the former Soviet Union could count on relatives, friends, or acquaintances in Germany who were expected to ease the integration of newcomers. As a consequence, spreading migrant networks supported the Jewish emigration from the former Soviet Union to Germany.

The German admission policy for Jewish emigrants from the former Soviet Union dates back to a July 1990 decision of the German Democratic Republic government to grant asylum to Jewish citizens from the Soviet Union who had come to East Germany because they were threatened by persecution in their home countries. After German reunification, this provision was not incorporated into the Unification



Orthodox Jewish rabbi Yehuda Teichtal holds a candle while lighting a Hanukkah menorah with his family at his home in Berlin, Germany, in 2007. Berlin's Jewish community has grown sharply in recent years with the arrival of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union. (Sean Gallup/Getty Images)

Treaty, although Jewish immigrants who had come to Germany between June 1, 1990, and February 15, 1991, were recognized retroactively as so-called "quota refugees." After lengthy discussions the German government invoked its historical responsibility with respect to the Holocaust, to provide refuge to Jewish immigrants in a time when immigration to Germany was highly restricted (Dietz 2003). A further argument was to strengthen Jewish communities in Germany, which were continuously aging.

Until December 2004, entry visas for Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union were provided on the basis of the quota refugee regulation, guaranteeing a residence permit for an indefinite period and entitling immigrants to various rights and benefits, for example, language courses and welfare payments. Non-Jewish spouses and children under 18, living in the household of the eligible Jewish immigrant, were equally allowed to move to Germany. However, when the first German Immigration Law was introduced in January 2005, new criteria for the admission of Jewish immigrants from the successor states of the Soviet Union were set up. Entry visas would only be issued if Jewish immigrants were admitted by a Jewish community in Germany, had some command of the German language, and could guarantee that they would not become dependent on welfare payments. Because the Central Council of Jews in Germany severely criticized these new regulations, the German government has so far agreed to revise the new rules and grant entry to those

27,000 applicants who have already received an immigration guarantee (Central Council of Jews in Germany 2006).

How many Jews have actually moved from the successor states of the Soviet Union to Germany since 1990? To answer this question, two sources have to be addressed: the Federal Administration Office and the Central Council of Jews in Germany (see Table 10). Whereas the Federal Administration Office defines the number of Jewish immigrants according to the quota refugee regulation, including the group of non-Jewish spouses and children, the Central Council of Jews in Germany counts only those immigrants who have become a member of Jewish communities, meaning they are Jewish according to the Jewish religious law (Halacha). Consequently, this different classifications result in remarkable differences in immigration figures. As Table 10 shows, according to the Federal Administration Office, 219,604 Jewish quota refugees arrived between January 1991 and December 2004, and 83,642 Jewish immigrants joined the Jewish communities in Germany between 1990 and 2002. In the light of these differences, one might argue that approximately 50 percent of Jewish quota refugees in Germany are either non-Jewish relatives of immigrants or Jews who did not become a member of the Jewish communities.

**Table 10 Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Germany, 1990–2004**

Year	No. of Jews Who Emigrated to Germany <sup>1</sup>	No. of Jews Who Joined the Jewish Communities <sup>2</sup>
1990	N/A	1,008
1991	12,583	5,198
1992	15,879	3,777
1993	16,597	5,205
1994	8,811	5,521
1995	15,184	8,851
1996	15,959	8,608
1997	19,437	7,092
1998	17,788	8,299
1999	18,205	8,929
2000	16,538	7,405
2001	16,711	7,152
2002	19,262	6,597
2003	15,442	N/A
2004	11,208	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Jewish immigration according to the quota refugee regulation (Federal Administration Office, running statistics).

<sup>2</sup> Central Council of Jews in Germany, member statistics.

**Jewish Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Germany: Sociodemographic Background and Integration**

Before moving to Germany, most Jewish immigrants had lived in the European part of the former Soviet Union, in Russia, the Ukraine, the Baltics, Belarus, and Moldova (Schoeps et al. 1999). As is typical of the Jewish population in the former Soviet Union, nearly all had been city dwellers. Although the Jewish immigration to Germany consisted of a relatively high number of people over 50, on average, immigrants are still younger than the Jewish population who remained in the Soviet Union successor states. This is characteristic of family migrations with an ethno-national background, where migrants leave the home country without a return option.

A number of surveys found that Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Germany are well educated: more than 70 percent have a university or college education (Tress 1995; Schoeps et al. 1999). Many have extensive professional experience as academics, scientists, or technicians. In most cases, however, this high level of human capital cannot be transferred to the German labor market. Among other reasons, incompatibilities in educational attainment and professional experience and the lack of German-language competence are responsible for this (Gruber and Rüssler 2002).

Having arrived in Germany, Jewish immigrants are confronted with wide-ranging integration problems: They have to learn the German language and seek housing, employment, and schools for their children. Furthermore, Jewish immigrants have to face the integration into German society and into Germany's Jewish communities as well. These are not only responsible for assisting Jewish immigrants, primarily with respect to social integration, but they also support and legitimize the immigration and integration procedure.

As Jewish religious traditions have not been part of the education and upbringing of most Jewish immigrants in the former Soviet Union, their Jewish self-identification is not strong. Many are estranged from Judaism, although their Jewish belonging has been reinforced by post-Soviet nationality policy and often by anti-Semitism (Tress 1995). Most Jewish immigrants in Germany maintain strong ties to the Russian language and the cultural traditions of their former home countries (Kessler 2006). In a number of cases, this led to the formation of Russian-speaking circles in Jewish communities in Germany. Obviously, the more secular practice and the post-Soviet cultural background and education set Jewish immigrants apart from local Jewish Community members.

Some Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union do not participate in Jewish communities, although they are of Jewish background. Instead, they are active in their own, newly established self-help organizations. Usually these organizations pursue integration-related goals, for example, helping to find housing and jobs or organizing leisure activities. Other Jewish newcomers join groups that have been formed by secular Jews outside the Jewish communities, thus contributing to the heterogeneity of Jewish life.

Beyond the Jewish communities, the integration of Jewish immigrants into German neighborhoods or institutions seems to be rather limited so far. Most Jewish immigrants base their social relations on family and friendship networks that rely on connections built up in the former homeland. Regardless of the obviously slow integration process, a considerable number of Jewish immigrants, especially of the younger generation, express a certain satisfaction with their emigration decision.

To conclude, the implications of the recent Jewish immigration for the Jewish communities and Jewish life in Germany are manifold. In the years to come, the integration of Jewish immigrants from post-Soviet societies will challenge Jewish communities in Germany, as the newcomers represent a more secular and pluralistic population. Nevertheless, the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union strengthened German Jewish communities, turning Germany into the only country in Europe with an expanding Jewish population.

### Selected Bibliography

- Central Council of Jews in Germany. "The Law since January 2005." <http://www.zentralratjuden.de/de/topic/83.html> (accessed April 28, 2006).
- Dietz, Barbara. 2003. "Jewish Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Germany: History, Politics and Social Integration." *East European Jewish Affairs* 33 (2): 7–19.
- Doomernik, Jeroen. 1997. *Going West: Soviet Jewish Immigrants in Berlin since 1990*. Avebury, UK: Aldershot.
- Gruber, Sabine, and Rüssler, Harald. 2002. *Hochqualifiziert und arbeitslos. Jüdische Kontingentflüchtlinge in Nordrhein-Westfalen* [Highly Qualified and Unemployed. Jewish Quota Refugees in Northrhine-Westphalia]. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.
- Kessler, Judith. "Foreigners in Wonderland: Jewish Immigration from the Former Soviet Union." <http://www.berlin-judentum.de/englisch/immigration.htm> (accessed April 28, 2006).
- Sabatello, Eitan. 1994. "Migration from the Former Soviet Union to Israel." In *European Migration in the Late Twentieth Century, Historical Patterns, Actual Trends and Social Implications*, edited by Heinz Fassmann and Rainer Münz, 261–274. Avebury, UK: Aldershot.
- Schoeps, Julius H., Willi Jasper, and Bernhard Vogt. 1999. *Ein neues Judentum in Deutschland* [A new Judaism in Germany]. Potsdam, Germany: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg.
- Tolts, Mark. 2003. "Mass Aliyah and Jewish Emigration from Russia: Dynamics and Factors." *East European Jewish Affairs* 33 (2): 71–96.
- Tress, Madeleine. 1995. "Soviet Jews in the Federal Republic of Germany: The Rebuilding of a Community." *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 37 (1): 39–54.
- Zaslavsky, Victor, and Robert Brym. 1983. *Soviet Jewish Emigration and Soviet Nationality Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

# Contemporary Diaspora

## The Demography of Modern Diaspora Jewry

*Sergio Della-Pergola*

---

### Earlier Developments

Throughout Jewish history, the concepts of Jewish peoplehood and Jewish population have been powerfully interrelated. Although history cannot be reduced to a sequence of demographic events, the political, social, and cultural impact of mass migration between different countries and the periods of dramatic Jewish population increase or reduction that have appeared periodically do constitute significant markers of the Jewish collective experience in the longer term.

Since the beginnings of transmitted Jewish collective memory, textual, archaeological, and other sources exemplify three important processes that repeatedly affected Jewish demography:

- A succession of periods of growth and decline emerged in Jewish population size and an unequal pace characterized Jewish population development over time;
- Growth or decline differently affected specific sections within the total Jewish population, significantly shaping the sociodemographic composition of the whole; and
- Large-scale international migration repeatedly influenced the location, contexts, and characteristics of the main centers of Jewish civilization.

World Jewish population in antiquity was predominantly located in the Middle East where it originated. Repeated wanderings between Mesopotamia and Egypt resulted in the creation of a main cultural and at times political center in the Land of Canaan that was renamed Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). Since the early Middle Ages the Jewish population significantly expanded westward to southern Europe and North Africa, then gradually to northwest Europe, and after the 12th century in growing numbers to Eastern Europe.

The size and structure of world Jewry during the Middle Age and early Modern period cannot be accurately assessed, but available evidence points to a range between less than 1 to 2 million persons. Although population size tended to be stable in the long term, major fluctuations reflected occasional catastrophic events, such as famine, mass epidemics, and wars that usually were shared by Jews and non-Jews. Jewish population also periodically declined after massacres, mass expulsions, and forced conversions that particularly targeted Jewish communities in different times and places.

## 17th Century to World War II

Since the second half of the 17th century, a weakening of these negative factors and modest improvements in general standards of living allowed for a gradual buildup of Jewish population size. World Jewry rose from an estimated 1 million around 1700 to 2.5 million around 1800 and 10.6 millions around 1900 (see Table 11). These rates of Jewish population growth—0.9 percent annually during the 18th century and 1.5 percent annually during the 19th century—were quite unique. Jewish population during this period indeed grew faster than most other national populations in Western and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. Most of the increase after 1850 occurred in Eastern Europe. This demographic transition determined a shift from an early balanced split between Sephardi/Oriental communities, mostly located in the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of southern Europe, and Ashkenazi communities, mostly located in northwestern/Eastern Europe. The eventual result was an overwhelming numerical predominance of the East European component of world Jewry.

Central to the onset of Jewish population growth was a comparatively early decline in mortality and infant mortality rates in particular. This occurred in the context of nearly universal, relatively young, and homogeneous religious Jewish marriage and comparatively high fertility levels. These demographic features reflected the influence of traditional Jewish norms, institutions, and behaviors in the daily life of individuals and communities before the start of modernization. Population growth was also one of the main determinants of increased socioeconomic pressure among impoverished European Jewry. Jewish emigration began in Central Europe around the middle of the 19th century, and since the 1880s decisively developed into mass westward migration from Eastern Europe.

Since the 19th century, and especially in the course of the 20th century, cultural and socioeconomic transformations of Jewish society led to a diminished impact of religious norms in the life of the Jewish Diaspora. Especially important were the geographical and occupational mobility processes that had been set into motion since the liberalization of anti-Jewish laws in Central and Western Europe, which became known as the Emancipation. In the newly urbanized and better-educated context, Jews anticipated the surrounding population in the transition from higher to lower fertility levels—as had already been the case with mortality levels, at least partly thanks to the widespread influence of Jewish religious and social norms.

Jewish migrants to Western countries helped to radically change the geography of world Jewry. More than 2.4 million migrated between 1881 and 1918, and another 1.6 million migrated during the interwar years (see Table 12). Toward the end of the 19th century the United States reached its first million Jews, and over the next 40 years U.S. Jewry was to grow to more than 4.5 million. Migrants to North America, Latin America, South Africa, and Australia imported the demographic models of their communities of origin but rapidly adapted to their new modern environments. Rates of natural increase declined, though in absolute terms Jewish population growth was still substantial and could be estimated at 1.1 percent annually since 1900. At the end of the 1930s, the world's Jewish population was estimated at 16.5 million.

**Table 11 World Jewish Population by Major Regions, 1700–2005<sup>1</sup>**

Region	1700	1800	1900	1939	1948 <sup>2</sup>	1970 <sup>3</sup>	2005 <sup>4</sup>
Number in thousands							
<b>World total</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>10,600</b>	<b>16,500</b>	<b>11,500</b>	<b>12,662</b>	<b>13,034</b>
<b>Total Diaspora</b>	<b>1,095</b>	<b>2,493</b>	<b>10,550</b>	<b>16,055</b>	<b>10,735</b>	<b>10,080</b>	<b>7,796</b>
<b>Total Palestine/Israel</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>2,582</b>	<b>5,238</b>
<b>Europe</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>2,020</b>	<b>8,765</b>	<b>9,500</b>	<b>3,750</b>	<b>3,241</b>	<b>1,520</b>
Western Europe <sup>5</sup>	180	363	1,230	1,425	1,035	1,119	1,066
Eastern Europe, Balkan <sup>5</sup>	265	803	3,450	4,680	765	216	94
Former Soviet Union in Europe <sup>6</sup>	275	854	4,085	3,395	1,950	1,906	360
<b>Asia</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,275</b>	<b>2,944</b>	<b>5,277</b>
Palestine/Israel	5	7	50	445	650	2,582	5,238
Former Soviet Union in Asia	195	253	390	165	350	262	20
Other Asia <sup>7</sup>				390	275	100	19
<b>Africa</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>79</b>
North Africa <sup>8</sup>	170	200	305	500	595	83	5
South Africa <sup>9</sup>	5	12	35	100	105	124	74
<b>America-Oceania</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1,055</b>	<b>5,400</b>	<b>5,775</b>	<b>6,270</b>	<b>6,158</b>
North America <sup>10</sup>	5	8	1,000	4,940	5,215	5,686	5,652
Latin America			40	430	520	514	397
Oceania <sup>11</sup>	0	0	15	30	40	70	109
Percent							
<b>Total Diaspora</b>	<b>99.5</b>	<b>99.7</b>	<b>99.5</b>	<b>97.3</b>	<b>93.3</b>	<b>79.6</b>	<b>59.8</b>
<b>Total Eretz Israel</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>40.2</b>
<b>Europe</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>80.8</b>	<b>82.7</b>	<b>57.6</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>11.7</b>
Western Europe <sup>5</sup>	16.4	14.5	11.6	8.6	9.0	8.8	8.2
Eastern Europe, Balkan <sup>5</sup>	24.1	32.1	32.5	28.4	6.7	1.7	0.7
Former USSR in Europe <sup>6</sup>	25.0	34.2	38.5	20.6	17.0	15.1	2.8
<b>Asia</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>40.5</b>
Palestine/Israel	0.5	0.3	0.5	2.7	5.7	20.4	40.2
Former Soviet Union in Asia	17.7	10.1	3.7	1.0	3.0	2.1	0.2
Other Asia <sup>7</sup>				2.4	2.4	0.8	0.1
<b>Africa</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.6</b>
North Africa <sup>8</sup>	15.5	8.0	2.9	3.0	5.2	0.7	0.0
South Africa <sup>9</sup>	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.9	1.0	0.6
<b>America-Oceania</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>47.2</b>
North America <sup>10</sup>	0.5	0.3	9.4	29.9	45.3	44.9	43.4
Latin America			0.4	2.6	4.5	4.1	3.0
Oceania <sup>11</sup>	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.8

<sup>1</sup> Minor discrepancies due to rounding.<sup>2</sup> May 15.<sup>3</sup> December 31.<sup>4</sup> January 1.<sup>5</sup> Eastern European countries that joined the European Union are included in Eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup> Includes the Asian parts of the Russian Republic and Baltic countries.<sup>7</sup> The Asian parts of Turkey are included in Europe.<sup>8</sup> Includes Ethiopia.<sup>9</sup> South Africa, Zimbabwe, and other sub-Saharan countries.<sup>10</sup> United States and Canada.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 12 Jewish International Migration, by Major Areas of Origin and Destination: Absolute Numbers, Percent Distribution, and Yearly Rates per 1,000 Jewish Population in Countries of Origin, 1881–2002**

Areas of Origin and Destination	1881–1918	1919–1948 <sup>1</sup>	1948 <sup>1</sup> –1952	1953–1960	1961–1968	1969–1976	1977–1988	1989–1996	1997–2002
	Absolute numbers (thousands)								
Grand total <sup>2</sup>	2,400	1,615	855	460	565	451	589	1,240	535
Yearly average	63	55	190	58	71	56	49	155	89
	Percent								
From Eastern Europe	97 <sup>3</sup>	86	45	27	20	39	41	64	62
To Western countries	95 <sup>3</sup>	65	8	7	3	8	29	23	25
To Palestine/Israel <sup>4</sup>	2	21	37	20	17	32	12	41	36
From Asia-Africa <sup>5</sup>	3 <sup>6</sup>	5	46	55	59	14	14	19	10
To Western countries	2 <sup>6</sup>	2	4	19	29	5	7	1	1
To Palestine/Israel <sup>4</sup>	1	3	42	36	30	9	8	18	9
From Palestine/Israel to Western countries <sup>7</sup>	0	3	4	15	14	20	24	11	17
From Western countries to Palestine/Israel <sup>4</sup>	0	6	5	3	7	27	20	5	12
Regional subtotals									
To Western countries	97	70	16	41	46	33	60	35	43
To Palestine/Israel <sup>4</sup>	3	30	84	59	54	67	40	65	57
Percent to Palestine/Israel									
Out of total Eastern Europe	2	24	82	74	85	80	71	64	59
Out of total Asia-Africa	33	60	91	65	51	64	53	95	90
	Yearly emigration per 1,000 Jews in country of origin								
Grand total <sup>2</sup>	6	4	17	5	6	4	4	12	7
From Eastern Europe	12 <sup>3</sup>	8	31	7	6	10	12	110	97
To Western countries	12 <sup>3</sup>	6	6	2	1	2	8	38	40
To Palestine/Israel <sup>4</sup>	0	2	25	5	5	8	3	72	57
From Asia-Africa <sup>5</sup>	3 <sup>6</sup>	3	109	43	108	44	73	146	134
To Western countries	2 <sup>6</sup>	1	9	15	52	14	32	42	13
To Palestine/Israel <sup>3</sup>	1	2	100	28	56	30	40	94	121
From Palestine/Israel to Western countries	—	5	6	6	4	4	3	4	3
From Western countries to Palestine/Israel <sup>1</sup>	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1

<sup>1</sup> May 15.

<sup>2</sup> Not including international migration within each typological region.

<sup>3</sup> Including intercontinental migration among western countries.

<sup>4</sup> Since 1970, includes immigrant citizens (from West).

<sup>5</sup> 1990, Asian regions of FSU included in Asia-Africa.

<sup>6</sup> Emigration from Palestine included in migration from Asia-Africa to West countries.

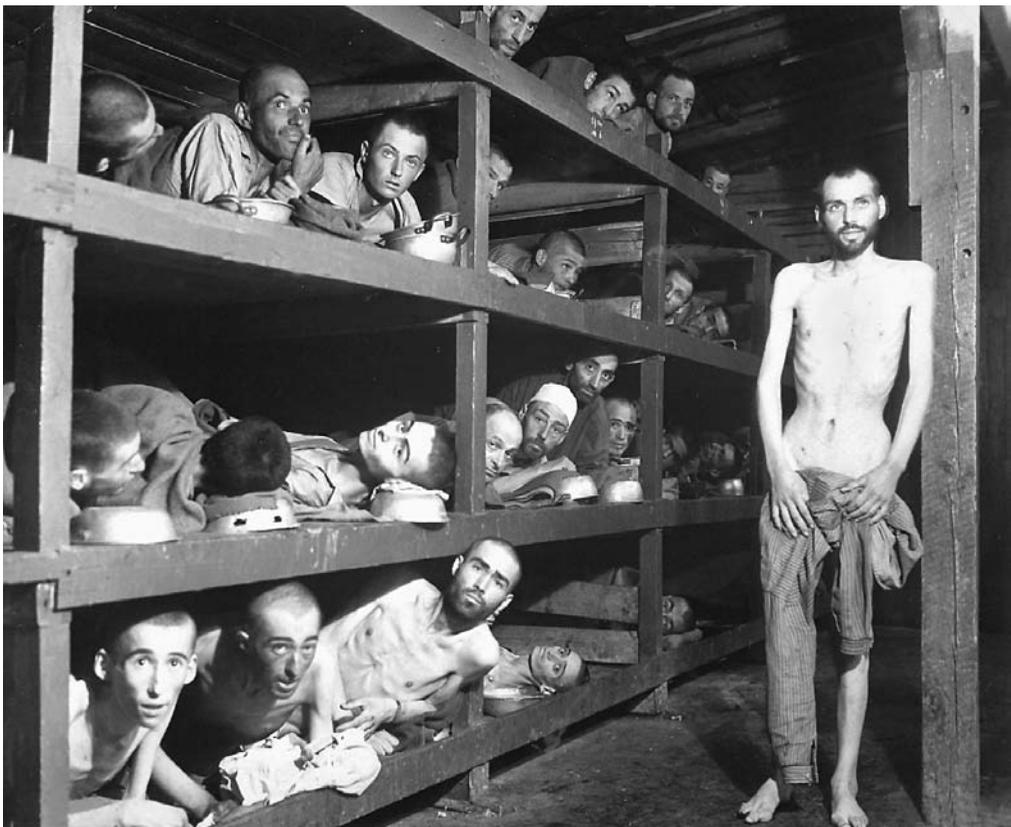
<sup>7</sup> All emigration from Palestine/Israel included here.

Source: Adapted from DellaPergola (1998); Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; HIAS; and various other sources.

## World War II to the Present

During World War II, about 6 million Jews perished, largely because of extermination policies carried out by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. The tragic anti-Jewish persecution—known as the Shoah—determined the destruction of 36 percent of the prewar world Jewish population, more than 60 percent of total Jews in Europe Jewry, and the nearly total annihilation of large Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. World Jewry never again recovered its pre-World War II size. Moreover, long-lasting population unbalances were determined by high Jewish child mortality and low birth rates during the Shoah. It has been calculated under very conservative assumptions that had the Shoah not taken the lives of 6 million Jews, these and their descendants would have been part of a total Jewish population ranging between 25 and 32 million in the year 2000. In the same year, the actual Jewish population was about 13 million. The projected virtual cumulated loss incurred by the Jewish people because of the Nazi massacres therefore ranged between 12 and 19 million Jews.

After the shock of World War II, waves of international migration intensely affected the geography of world Jewry in subsequent decades. During the 1950s and



Slave laborers in a barrack at Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar, Germany, on April 16, 1945. On April 11, the U.S. 3rd Army assumed control of the camp, finding many prisoners dead from starvation and scientific experimentation. (National Archives)

1960s, more than 500,000 Jews left North Africa and the Middle East; between the late 1960s and late 1980s more than 250,000 left the Soviet Union. Since 1990, a major exodus from the former Soviet Union involved over a million Jews and members of their households, and all of Ethiopia’s Jews also left their country. Most of these migrants went to Israel. As a consequence of these changes, the cultural-linguistic profile of world Jewry shifted from a predominance of Russian and other Slavic languages toward English and eventually Hebrew (see Table 13).

Of the 11 million Jews left in 1945, 500,000 lived in Palestine. Since Israel’s independence, its Jewish population grew rapidly—to 1 million in 1949, 2 million in 1962, 3 million in 1976, 4 million in 1991, and 5 million in 2001. Mass immigration was the major determinant of growth until the 1960s, while natural increase subsequently predominated. The total size of Diaspora Jewry declined from 10.8 million in 1948 to 10.1 million in 1970, 9.1 million in 1990, and 7.8 million in 2005. After initial mass aliyah to

Israel had not impinged on total Diaspora population size, a negative demographic balance prevailed. World Jewish population, after some postwar recovery, was approaching zero population growth. Natural increase in Israel was compensated by natural decrease in the Diaspora.

At the turn of the 21st century, world society, and world Jewry within it, witnessed intensive transformations. The general political, economic, and cultural globalization process involved operative contraction of time and space as well as greater interdependence among different and distant components of world society, such as political-military interests, industrial production, international trade, and most significantly media and communication networks. Continuing gaps in standards of living and human opportunities stimulated large waves of geographical mobility and generated growing ethnocultural heterogeneity in local societies. Although as part of the continuing drive of modernization society became increasingly secularized, large masses of people, including Jews, were more than ever involved in a keen quest for spiritual meaning and sought gratification in religious values and ethnic identities.

In 2005, of a world total of about 13 million Jews, 94 percent lived in nine countries that each had 100,000 Jews or more (see Table 14): the United States, Israel, France, Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, Argentina, Germany, and Australia. Other significant communities were in Brazil (97,000), Ukraine (89,000), South Africa (74,000), and Hungary (50,000), down to smaller concentrations in another 80 countries with at least 100 Jews. Similar sociodemographic trends prevailed across the

**Table 13 World Jewish Population, by Official Language of Country of Residence, 1931–2005<sup>1</sup>**

Official Language	1931	1967	2005
English	32	50	47
Hebrew	2	17	40
French	3	4	4
Russian and other Slavic languages	42	18	3
Spanish and Portuguese	3	5	3
German	5	1	1
Arabic	4	1	0
Other	13	4	2

<sup>1</sup> Figures shown are rough percentage estimates.

**Table 14 The 15 Countries with the Largest Jewish Populations, 2005**

Rank	Country	Population	% of World's Jewish Population	% of Diaspora
1	United States	5,280,000	40.5	67.7
2	Israel	5,237,600	40.2	N/A <sup>1</sup>
3	France	494,000	3.8	6.3
4	Canada	372,000	2.9	4.8
5	United Kingdom	297,000	2.3	3.8
6	Russia	235,000	1.8	3.0
7	Argentina	185,000	1.4	2.4
8	Germany	115,000	0.9	1.5
9	Australia	102,000	0.8	1.3
10	Brazil	96,700	0.7	1.2
11	Ukraine	84,000	0.6	1.1
12	South Africa	72,500	0.6	0.9
13	Hungary	49,900	0.4	0.6
14	Mexico	39,800	0.3	0.5
15	Belgium	31,200	0.2	0.4

<sup>1</sup> Not applicable.

Diaspora: intense concentration in major metropolitan areas (see Table 15, showing that more than 50 percent of world Jewry in 2005 lived in five large metropolitan areas), suburbanization, high educational levels, and specialization in liberal and managerial professions. Recent international migrants were rapidly absorbed and acculturated.

Demographic patterns, too, followed similar courses in the Diaspora. Fertility, after a temporary postwar increase, declined to very low levels, and since the mid-1970s approached 1.5 children per Jewish woman in the Diaspora—this figure also reflects an increase in later marriages, permanent celibacy, and divorce. Low birth rates were the major determinant of a steady process of Jewish population aging. Although these features were common to all industrialized countries, Jews were more intensely affected because of the rapid diffusion of mixed marriage. Already widespread in Western and Central Europe since the early 20th century, mixed marriage had not been significant in North America until the 1960s. Around the year 2000, it was estimated that more than 50 percent of new Jewish spouses in the United States, higher percentages in continental Europe, and up to 80 percent in the Russian Republic, were marrying non-Jewish-born partners who did not convert to Judaism. According to available evidence, most children of mixed marriages are not raised as Jews. The combined effect of low Jewish birth rates, growing proportions of Jewish elderly, frequent mixed marriages, and other forms of assimilation determined a negative balance between Jewish births and deaths among Jews in the Diaspora.

**Table 15 The 20 Metropolitan Areas with the Largest Jewish Populations, 2005**

Rank	Metropolitan Area <sup>1</sup>	Country	Jewish Population	% of World's Jewish Population
1	Tel Aviv <sup>2,3</sup>	Israel	2,707,000	20.8
2	New York <sup>4</sup>	United States	2,051,000	15.7
3	Los Angeles <sup>4</sup>	United States	668,000	5.1
4	Jerusalem <sup>5</sup>	Israel	660,000	5.1
5	Haifa <sup>2</sup>	Israel	656,000	5.0
6	Southeast Florida <sup>4,6</sup>	United States	498,000	3.8
7	Be'er Sheva <sup>2</sup>	Israel	347,000	2.7
8	Philadelphia <sup>4</sup>	United States	285,000	2.2
9	Paris <sup>9</sup>	France	284,000	2.2
10	Chicago <sup>4</sup>	United States	265,000	2.0
11	San Francisco <sup>4</sup>	United States	218,000	1.7
12	Boston <sup>4</sup>	United States	208,000	1.6
13	London <sup>8</sup>	United Kingdom	195,000	1.5
14	Toronto <sup>9</sup>	Canada	180,000	1.4
15	Washington, DC <sup>10</sup>	United States	166,000	1.3
16	Buenos Aires <sup>11</sup>	Argentina	165,000	1.3
17	Baltimore <sup>10</sup>	United States	106,000	0.8
18	Detroit <sup>4</sup>	United States	103,000	0.8
19	Moscow <sup>12</sup>	Russia	95,000	0.7
20	Montreal <sup>9</sup>	Canada	93,000	0.7

<sup>1</sup>Most metropolitan areas include extended inhabited territory and several municipal authorities around a central city. Definitions vary by country. Some of the estimates may include noncore Jews.

<sup>2</sup>As newly defined in the 1995 Israeli Census.

<sup>3</sup>Includes Ramat Gan, Bene Beraq, Petach Tikvah, Bat Yam, Holon, Rishon Lezion, Netanya, and Ashdod, each of which has a Jewish population larger than 100,000.

<sup>4</sup>Consolidated metropolitan statistical area (CMSA).

<sup>5</sup>Revised estimate. Includes the whole Jerusalem District and parts of the Judea and Samaria districts.

<sup>6</sup>Miami–Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach–Boca Raton CMSA.

<sup>7</sup>Departments 75, 77, 78, 91, 92, 93, 94, and 95.

<sup>8</sup>Greater London and contiguous postcode areas.

<sup>9</sup>Census metropolitan area.

<sup>10</sup>Metropolitan statistical area.

<sup>11</sup>Capital Federal and Gran Buenos Aires Partidos.

<sup>12</sup>Territory administered by city council.

By contrast, the Jewish population in Israel continued to feature relatively frequent marriages, a total fertility rate of 2.6–2.7 children per Jewish woman, very rare mixed marriages (besides those performed abroad by new immigrants), a comparatively young age structure, and a moderate but persisting rate of natural increase. Differences in demographic behavior between immigrants of different origins tended to decline through a general process of internal convergence among the Jewish population in Israel.

**Table 16 Selected Jewish Populations by Main Age Groups, 1897–2004**

Country <sup>1</sup>	Year	0–14 (%)	15–29 (%)	30–44 (%)	45–64 (%)	65+ (%)	Median Age <sup>2</sup>
<b>Traditional type</b>							
Ethiopia	1991	<u>51</u>	20	13	11	5	14.7
Syria	1960	<u>43</u>	23	12	16	6	19.6
Russian Empire	1897	<u>41</u>	28	16	12	3	19.8
Romania	1899	<u>40</u>	26	19	12	3	20.8
<b>Transition type</b>							
Poland	1921	<u>34</u>	30	16	15	5	23.0
Iran	1976	<u>30</u>	28	19	17	6	25.7
Soviet Union	1926	29	<u>34</u>	18	15	4	29.4
Mexico	1991	24	<u>27</u>	20	22	7	35.0
Venezuela	1998	24	19	21	<u>24</u>	12	35.0
United States	1957	24	17	21	<u>28</u>	10	36.6
<b>Ageing type</b>							
United States	1990	19	19	<u>26</u>	19	17	37.6
Prussia	1925	18	<u>25</u>	24	<u>25</u>	8	34.4
United Kingdom	1986	17	19	19	21	<u>24</u>	41.1
United States	2001	16	20	19	<u>26</u>	19	41.5
Italy	1986	14	23	18	<u>26</u>	19	40.8
Russian Republic	1959	14	19	23	<u>36</u>	9	41.2
<b>Terminal type</b>							
Russian Republic	1970	10	16	23	<u>31</u>	20	45.5
Yugoslavia	1971	10	23	17	<u>29</u>	21	45.0
Russian Republic	1979	8	15	21	<u>31</u>	25	49.2
Russian Republic	2002	5	11	14	33	<u>37</u>	57.5
Romania	1979	5	11	10	34	<u>40</u>	59.1
<b>Israeli type</b>							
Palestine	1931	<u>33</u>	32	19	11	4	23.0
Israel	1948	<u>29</u>	26	26	15	4	27.1
Israel	1961	<u>34</u>	22	19	20	5	25.9
Israel	1985	<u>30</u>	24	20	16	10	27.5
Israel	2004	<u>25</u>	24	19	20	12	30.8

<sup>1</sup> Countries are sorted by the descending percentage of population at age 0–14 years. The largest age group in each population is underlined.

<sup>2</sup> The median divides the population into two equal parts: one half having higher and one half having lower ages than the median age.

## Prospective

Future demographic change will reflect the Jewish population's age composition resulting from past trends and continuing gaps in demographic behaviors across Jewish communities in different regional contexts. The leading future scenario points to a Jewish people increasingly concentrated in North America and Israel, with Israel possibly becoming the single largest Jewish community before the end of the first decade of the 21st century. The sharp age-structural differences separating Israel and the Diaspora have already made Israel the largest reservoir of Jewish youth and the principal and most challenging target for Jewish education (see Table 16). On the other hand, over the forthcoming decades the issue of aging will become a crucial and problematic focus for Jewish community service in the Diaspora. Fewer economically productive individuals will be responsible for ensuring the living conditions of a growing share of Jewish elders. In Israel, the evolving demographic balance of Jews and Palestinians within the territorial framework of Israel's pre-1967 borders and even more so over the whole territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, suggests enormous challenges to the very existence of a state that would at the same time be democratic and have a Jewish majority. The prospect of a significant reduction in the share of Jews out of the total population calls for careful evaluation and strategic decisions concerning the definitive political borders of Israel.

Continuation of demographic trends observed during the 1980s and 1990s in Israel and the Diaspora will expectedly produce significant changes in the total size and geographical distribution of world Jewry—in spite of an expected reduction in the impact of international migrations, namely to Israel. By 2020, according to the medium version among a wider range of projections, the Jewish population in Israel would reach 6,228,000—an increase of 1.0 million (19 percent) over the 2005 total. The aggregate Jewish population of the Diaspora would decline to 7,330,000—a loss of 470,000 (6 percent). The 2020 world total of 13.6 million Jews would be 525,000 higher (4 percent) than in 2005. The proportion of Jews in Israel out of the world total would increase from 23 percent in 1975 and 40 percent in 2005 to 46 percent in 2020. Because of different fertility levels and age composition, the proportion living in Israel out of all world Jewish children aged 15 or less could approach 59 percent. On the other hand, Jewish Diaspora communities will become increasingly older and therefore even more exposed to continuing population decline. Polarization between the two major world Jewish population centers in Israel and North America will increase (84 percent altogether in 2020 versus 81 percent in 2005), while the aggregate weight of other communities will continue to diminish.

## Selected Bibliography

- Bachi, R. 1977. *The Population of Israel*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University and Israel's Prime Minister Office.
- Della-Pergola, S. 1998. "The Global Context of Migration to Israel." In *Immigration to Israel: Sociological Perspectives, Studies of Israeli Society*, vol. 8, edited by E. Leshem and J. T. Shuval, 51–92. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

- Della-Pergola, S. 1999. *World Jewry beyond 2000: The Demographic Prospects*. Occasional Papers, 2. Oxford, UK: Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.
- Della-Pergola, S. 2005. "World Jewish Population." *American Jewish Year Book* 105: 87–122.
- Della-Pergola, S., and L. Cohen, eds. 1992. *World Jewish Population: Trends and Policies*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Della-Pergola, S., U. Rebhun, and M. Tolts. 2000. "Prospecting the Jewish Future: Population Projections 2000–2080." *American Jewish Year Book* 100: 103–146.
- Della-Pergola, S., U. Rebhun, and M. Tolts. 2005. "Contemporary Jewish Diaspora in Global Context: Human Development Correlates of Population Trends." *Israel Studies* 11 (1): 61–95.
- Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. *Statistical Abstract of Israel*. Jerusalem (annual).
- The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute. 2005. *Annual Assessment 2005: Facing a Rapidly Changing World*. Jerusalem: Jewish People Policy Planning Institute.

## Self-Revitalization of Diaspora Life

*Martina Urban*

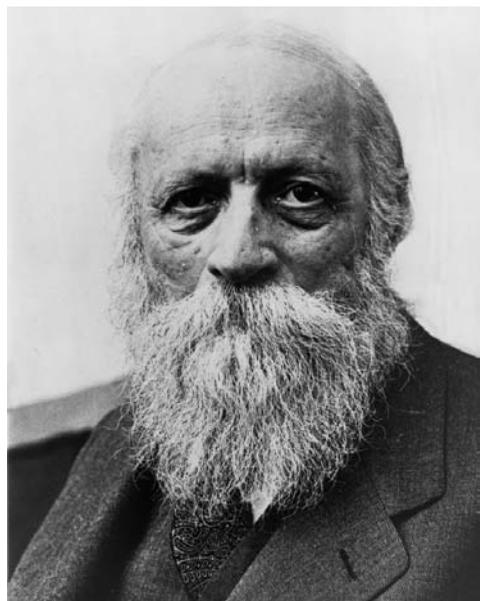
---

The term "Jewish renewal," which is predominantly used today to denote trends in North American Judaism since the 1970s, is the common designation for a set of practices or attitudes intended to revitalize Jewish life. To be sure, renewal or revitalization is not a phenomenon exclusive to the modern period. Renewal is an integral feature of the rabbinic concept of tradition as the continuous interpretation of the Torah and the adaptation of its teachings to ever-changing realities. However, it is only with modernity and major reconfigurations of Jewish communal life and identity that renewal becomes an explicit issue. Competing conceptions of renewal were soon formulated by practically all Jewish denominations, placing a different emphasis on the text-centered form of Jewish tradition, on the one hand, and Jewish spirituality, on the other. Confronted with assimilation, conversion, intermarriage, and anti-Semitism, the exploration of viable visions of renewal became a necessity for Jewish continuity. At the close of the 20th century, far-reaching social changes, including gender awareness, gave rise to new conceptions of Jewish renewal. As endemic to most Diaspora communities today, the decline of the Jewish population, caused by a variety of factors, renders revitalization an especially urgent task.

On the threshold to modernity, 18th-century Eastern European Hasidism presents the first self-declared movement for Jewish spiritual renewal. Whereas the Haskalah, the Jewish enlightenment, sought cultural renewal by modernizing Judaism through Hebrew literature, education, and the adoption of secular humanistic values, Hasidism aimed at a major transformation of Jewish religious consciousness. Through a popularization of central ideas of Lurianic Kabbalah, such as *tikkun* (literally "repair," i.e., the process of restoring the world to its original harmony), Hasidism succeeded in adapting mysticism to everyday life. The movement's emphasis on spiritual worship, that is, religious experience through spontaneous, ecstatic,

and devotional worship of God in prayer and contemplation, but also through everyday life, would later inspire in particular spiritual Zionists as well as many subsequent Jewish renewal movements. Attuned to the existential condition of the human being, especially the problem of alienation, spiritual Zionists sought to regenerate Judaism by regaining a sense of authentic community modeled on Hasidism alongside attempts to recover the spiritual power of Hasidism through its myths and legends. Among those who saw Hasidism as the model for Jewish renewal were Micha Joseph Berdichevsky (1865–1921) and Martin Buber (1878–1965). Both shared the conviction that rabbinic Judaism was spiritually moribund and should be replaced with dynamic modes of religious self-realization or even self-redemption represented by Hasidism. In Buber's view, Hasidism realizes a hallowing of existence that overcomes the separation between the profane and sacred and replaces rabbinic Judaism's fixed concept of religion with a vitalizing religiosity. Although neo-Hasidism also gained a powerful voice in Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972), he does not sever Hasidic spirituality from its traditional rabbinic framework. Interested in the constitutive elements of religious consciousness and the manifestation of the divine in human consciousness, Heschel taught that a persistent self-examination in light of Judaism's founding spirit will guard Jewish life from spiritual atrophy. The founding pathos of Judaism is the prophetic consciousness kindled anew in Hasidism, which charges people to transcend their egocentric preoccupations and assume a divine concern with the human condition in its all social and existential dimensions.

A major impulse for rethinking the meaning of Judaism and its forms of religious practice as well as Jewish identity in a secular, post-traditional age came at the late 19th century from Zionism. As a national liberation movement, political Zionism sought a solution for the abnormalities of Jewish Diaspora existence. This



Martin Buber, Austrian-born philosopher of Jewish thought and religion who immigrated to pre-state Israel and helped develop the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. (Library of Congress)

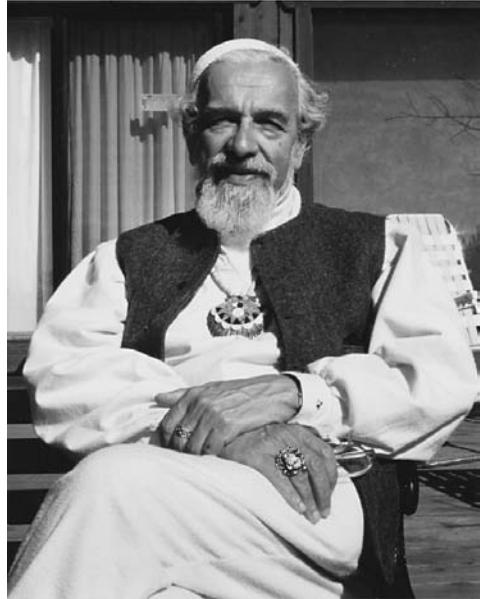
uncompromising negation of a continued life in the Diaspora and its alleged lack of Jewish creativity was not shared by liberal Jews. Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) vehemently rejected the Zionist conception of the Jews as a nation in exile as well as Zionism's quest for nationhood. Given his ethical conception of messianism, Cohen defended liberal Judaism's concept of the mission of Israel, which envisions the realization of Judaism's spiritual vocation in the Diaspora.

For Ahad Ha'am (1856–1927), the founder of spiritual or cultural Zionism, Jewish renewal could only be secured by recasting Judaism as a secular culture, which he insisted must maintain continuity with select spiritual qualities and values of traditional Judaism. As a Hebraist he also shared the concerns of those who favored a rebirth of Judaism as a secular culture through language, which for many Eastern European Jews was Yiddish rather than Hebrew. Although a cultural Zionist, Buber focused his efforts on inducing a radical transformation of spiritual consciousness, one that emphasizes religious-ethical sensibilities rather than the observance of the ritual commandments. He envisioned a Jewish renaissance as the revival of original Jewish creativity through a wide range of cultural activities. In his later philosophy of dialogue Buber linked renewal to interpersonal encounter and the establishment of genuine community as the space of renewed revelation of God's presence. Beholden to the humanistic tradition, Buber made education the central pillar for Jewish revitalization. Together with Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), Buber headed the Jewish adult education movement in Germany which became the center of Jewish life until it was disbanded by the Nazis in 1938. Through his Free Jewish House of Study, which sponsored Jewish learning, Rosenzweig in particular emphasized the renewal of Judaism as a text-centered culture, in which even non-observant, indeed, agnostic Jews could participate. For Rosenzweig, the study and interpretation of the classical Jewish sources would also prompt an encounter with the divine and with God's voice revealed in those texts that constitute the ontological wellspring of all living Judaism. Rosenzweig sought a culture of learning that would lead from life back to the Torah. Here the meaning of Jewishness assumes a new urgency in which learning requires the individual to continuously transform the text into something living that speaks to one's concrete existential reality.

In the wake of the Holocaust, remnants of European Jewry brought various conceptions of Jewish renewal to North America, where the teachings particularly of Buber and Rosenzweig as well as Heschel had a great impact. However, North America had its own indigenous movement of renewal. Reinterpreting Judaism in light of a naturalistic theology, Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983) founded Reconstructionism. By conceiving Judaism as an evolving religious civilization rather than a religion based on supernatural revelation and the authority of a transcendent God, and by emphasizing personal autonomy and the pragmatic value of Judaism to promote individual well-being, Kaplan not only created a new denomination but also brought Judaism in accord with liberal values and the pragmatic sensibilities of America.

Jewish renewal entered a new phase with the rise of the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s. At this historical juncture Jewish identity, political engagement, and the quest for social justice and spiritual renewal became inseparably

Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, a “renegade” rabbi who left Orthodoxy and founded a religious fellowship in 1962. He argued for the need for a paradigm shift in Judaism by emphasizing meditation, mysticism, and prayer in the manner of the founders of Hasidism. He currently lives in Boulder, Colorado. (Helena Foster)



linked. In this liberal milieu so-called *havurot*, experimental fellowships for prayer and study founded by young rabbis, academics, and political activists, began to flourish and prepared the ground for the Jewish renewal movement in North America. Among their founders were Rabbi Arthur A. Green, a scholar of Hasidism, the political activist Arthur Waskow, and Michael Strassfeld. Another major figure in redefining Judaism as a spiritual way of life was Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, a renegade Lubavitch ordained rabbi who founded the *B'nai Or* Religious Fellowship in 1962 (later renamed P'nai Or) to further a paradigm shift in Judaism by emphasizing meditation, mysticism, and prayer for which both Hasidism and Eastern spiritual traditions served as sources of inspiration. Schachter-Shalomi shares the belief of Reconstructionism that Judaism is an evolving religious civilization. He eventually broadened his organization to include the entire spectrum of postdenominational Jewish revitalization efforts, to become ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal with the Shalom Center for Jewish political activism, founded by Arthur Waskow, as one division. In 1986, Waskow's journal *Menorah* merged with Schachter-Shalomi's *The B'nai Or Newsletter* to become the more politically oriented *New Menorah*. Michael Lerner, founder and editor of the journal *Tikkun* (1986), likewise addressed the issue of renewal based on *tikkun olam* as the essence of Judaism in conjunction with a quest for an authentic Jewish identity. Lerner (1994, 14) calls for a Jewish identity that is “more spiritual; moral; God-centered; politically committed to social justice; pluralistic; democratic; nonsexist, joyful; full of intellectual ferment; and open to dissent.” During the 1980s and 1990s, the spirit of Jewish renewal permeated all denominations, above all Reconstructionism. With a new generation of communal leaders, Reconstructionism became increasingly sensitive to the spiritual aspect in Judaism, incorporated some mystical practices and issued new prayer books that reflected its new appreciation of spirituality. The former member

of the *havurot* culture, Arthur A. Green, demonstrated the vitalizing power of Jewish mystical spirituality through Hasidism by adapting some of its ideas and practices to contemporary life. Green, who was influenced by Heschel with whom he studied, has been a central figure in American neo-Hasidism since the 1980s. He occasionally teaches, like Schachter-Shalomi and Waskow, at the transdenominational Jewish retreat center Elat Chayyim.

Since the 1970s, Jewish feminists in the United States made a significant and highly original contribution to revitalizing Judaism. An important concern of women's liberation was social justice, which Jewish feminists also considered a prime aspect of *tikkun olam*. A first concrete step toward the realization of social transformation within Judaism from the feminist perspective was the admission of women in the Reconstructionist and Reform rabbinate. In academia, Jewish feminists reshaped the knowledge of Judaism through the category of gender. What evolved within Progressive Judaism as a reexamination of Judaism from a variety of disciplines was readily acknowledged by women of other denominations as an important process of re-envisioning or "engendering" Jewish life and thought toward a more active, meaningful, and equal participation of women in ritual practice. These activities gained urgency against the backdrop of communal decline in the Diaspora. By recovering suppressed narratives about women in the classic texts of Judaism, Jewish feminist scholars and writers hoped to restore the voice of woman to the collective memory and to rewrite a Jewish historiography they faulted as patriarchal.

Feminists of Modern Orthodoxy, such as Blu Greenberg, critically examined those aspects of Jewish law that pertain to women, claiming that because the Halacha has evolved over time it can absorb feminist critiques. From a post-traditional perspective of Judaism, Rachel Biale argues for the need of a fundamental reform of Jewish law. Feminist theologian Rachel Adler advocates a revision of liturgy and codes for sexual relations and marriage, while Judith Plaskow proposes to use the method of midrash to fill in the lacunae in the biblical text. Tamar Ross, another voice from within Modern Orthodoxy, crafts a theology of "cumulative revelation" (2004, 197), which accepts the transmitted dominant patriarchal interpretations as part of revelation but claims that feminism is the "new revelation of the divine will" (Ross 2004, 210). Yet, she concedes, consensus of the interpretative community is a presupposition for authenticating these new readings as part of tradition (Oral Torah) and as divine. Parallel to these revalorizations of Judaism from the perspective of gender, various groups and institutions were established: the study group *Ezrat Nashim*, founded in 1971 by Paula Hyman and others; *B'not Esh*, a Jewish feminist spirituality collective founded in 1981 by Judith Plaskow; the Jewish Congress Feminist Center in Los Angeles, established in 1991 under the founding rabbinic director, Sue Levi Elwell; *Ma'yan*, a Jewish feminist spirituality collective founded in 1993 by Barbara Dobkin; and the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, founded in 1997. Journals were created to advocate a Jewish feminist perspective (*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *Nashim*, and the magazine *HUES* to name a few). The latest offshoot of Jewish feminism is ecofeminism. Inspired by a gamut of critical theories, ritual innovation also became an issue for queer Jewish theology, which emerged in the 1990s.

### Selected Bibliography

- Adler, Rachel. 1998. *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Hauptman, Judith. 2005. *Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts*. Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum. No. 109. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck.
- Lerner, Michael. 1994. *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*. New York: Putnam.
- Ross, Tamar. 2004. *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Feminism and Orthodoxy*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.
- Silberstein, Laurence J. 1989. "The Renewal of Jewish Spirituality." In *Jewish Spirituality*. Vol. II, *From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present*, edited by Arthur A. Green, 402–432. New York: SCM Press.

## Jewish Values and Diaspora Philanthropy

*Gary A. Tobin*

---

Philanthropy in the Diaspora is deeply rooted in Jewish law and tradition as well as the cultures in which Diaspora Jews live. Giving to both Jewish and secular causes reflects a core set of values that are the foundation of a vast network of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Most of the NGOs for Jews are designed to serve the Jewish community (e.g., Jewish day schools), some have evolved to serve both Jewish and non-Jewish populations (e.g., Jewish community centers), and others help the larger society (e.g., American Jewish World Service). The NGO system is more a system of systems, each of which operates within its own sphere and represents a specific constellation of beliefs and values.

Sometimes the values that guide Jewish philanthropy are explicit—understood by the volunteers and professionals that contribute to and manage the NGOs and clearly stated in the bylaws and mission statements of the organizations. Other times, the values are implicit, embedded in the activities and programs of the NGO. In many cases, the basic Jewish values guiding a Jewish organization are not fully articulated or understood by the users, providers, or supporters of NGOs.

Philanthropy includes giving money and volunteering time. Both are essential to maintain a healthy NGO delivery system. Modern philanthropy requires leadership in both realms—volunteers who will help guide and manage the NGO and donors who will set standards by how much they give. NGOs also need donated labor for many of their services. Without these components, the philanthropic system cannot function.

The need for Jews to achieve a level of self-reliance and mutual aid, both within specific nations and internationally has led to a well-established and, in many cases, large infrastructure of NGOs. For many Jews outside of Israel, most Jewish values are expressed through NGOs, and in those countries where Jews feel free to

do so, they have heavily invested in philanthropy. Successes have been numerous and profound, not the least of which has been the Diaspora support for the establishment of the State of Israel.

Yet Jewish philanthropy, while guided by core Jewish values, is also always in transition. Established Jewish NGOs are continually challenged by the emergence of new initiatives and organizations. Struggles for greater efficacy and efficiency often provide the impetus for new ventures. Inevitably, however, shifts in the Jewish philanthropic world also lead to reevaluation and emergence of new Jewish values that guide philanthropy. Sometimes organizations debate values—what they are, how to fulfill them, and which organization is responsible or best suited to fulfill them.

Traditional Jewish philanthropy is guided by five sets of values. First, Jewish philanthropy is devoted to communal prayer and ritual. The synagogue is the primary institution that embodies this value, although Jewish community centers and other organizations also play this role to a more limited extent. Synagogues are the central institutions for daily, weekly, and seasonal religious services, and they provide most of the rabbis who perform life cycle rituals, such as birth, bar and bat mitzvah, marriage, and death. The synagogue encompasses the values of devotion to God and community—the sacred components of Jewish life. Synagogues, through membership dues (which are charitable donations) and other contributions are one of the core areas of Jewish philanthropic activity, reflecting the central place of religiosity. Most Jews will belong and contribute to synagogues over the course of their lives and will use rabbinic assistance as well.

Second, Jews give money and time to help those in need. The religious directives to support the widow, orphan, homeless, and poor have evolved to include elderly, sick, disabled, and unemployed Jews. Jewish communities have built Jewish family and children's organizations, Jewish vocational services, nursing homes, and subsidized housing for the elderly. Counseling for individuals and families in trouble, help finding a job, and loans for financial crisis are all available from the Jewish community.

Jews contribute heavily to taking care of the needy in the general society as well. In times of crisis, such as natural disasters, Jewish individuals and organizations become deeply involved in relief efforts. On an annual basis, Jews are major contributors to secular NGOs providing human services, and particularly those devoted to health care. Jews provide major support for medical research and to create institutions that tend to the sick in the general society.

The emergence of public support for health care, basic income support, and the availability of public human services necessitate a profound examination of Jewish philanthropic values: How to achieve the right balance between public and Jewish communal NGO services to the needy. This balance requires that the Jewish community avoid duplication while at the same time ensuring that Jews in need are supported. As social welfare systems have developed in modern societies, Jewish communities debate what the appropriate roles should be for the public sector and the Jewish NGO system in providing services, to what extent, and for which populations in need. Whenever possible, the philanthropic system looks to shift

resources to the areas of greatest need and to maximize public sector support—for which Jews pay their fair share in publicly collected and distributed tax revenue.

Third, Jewish philanthropy reflects the core value of teaching successive generations about Judaism—in formal classroom settings, with mentors and tutors, and in nonclassroom settings, such as camping or Jewish community center programs. A growing network of Jewish day schools functions alongside the synagogue-based schools that supplement secular public/private education with Jewish learning. Increasingly, Jewish education also targets adults, both those who have little or no Jewish education and those who want to become more steeped in Jewish knowledge.

The value placed on learning transcends giving to Jewish education and motivates donors to contribute to educational institutions of all kinds, especially colleges and universities. Most of the largest contributions made by Jews go to secular higher education, although occasionally to Jewish colleges and universities.

Fourth, the Jewish community has built a group of NGOs devoted to building bridges to other religious, racial, and ethnic groups and serving the function of community defense. Jews value their distinctiveness and separate identity, but they also want to participate as free and equal citizens in Diaspora countries. They cherish the particularity of their own beliefs, customs, and communal cohesiveness, but they also hold fast to a belief in universalism, where Jews participate actively in secular society. Historical anti-Semitism, which seeks to isolate and persecute Jews, combined with the tensions and conflicts that often characterize the interactions among different groups of people, requires constant philanthropic investment from the NGO system in fighting overt and latent anti-Semitism and working to build dialogue, alliances, and cooperative programs with other racial, religious, and ethnic populations.

Self-protection also involves rescue and relief of Jewish populations at political and social risk. This has included the efforts to financially assist major population migrations—from the Arab world in the post-World War II years and, more recently, from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. In other cases, efforts are made to secure the Jewish community where they are, such as the Joint Distribution Committee's work in supporting Argentina during economic crisis or building infrastructure in the former Soviet Union. Sometimes the motivation for these efforts is bolstered by the value to take care of the needy as well as to protect Jews from hostile forces.

Rescue and support of population transfers are also anchored in a fifth important value: the support of the historical Jewish homeland and nation state in Israel. This devotion has spurred the creation of hundreds of NGOs that support Israel politically and financially. Jewish philanthropy funds religious, cultural, and educational institutions in Israel, as well as NGOs that are designed to provide financial, political, and military support from the United States and other governments. Institutions and programs have also been built that strengthen ties between Diaspora Jews and Israel, both to reinforce the commitment of Diaspora Jews to support Israel and to reinforce the commitment of Diaspora Jews to their own Jewish identity.

Financial support for Israel allows donors to combine a number of their philanthropic values. For example, supporting medical research at an Israeli university

gives the donor three incentives—helping the sick, funding education, and supporting the Jewish nation-state. If the donation is for scholarship for low-income students, another philanthropic value is fulfilled. Philanthropy to support Israel, more often than not, embeds two or more core values of Jewish giving.

Sixth, Jews hold the idea of *tikkun olam*, “repairing the world,” as a commanding value. Jewish teaching is filled with directives, exhortations, and commandments to do good deeds in a myriad of ways. Even though *tikkun olam* is one of many mitzvah that Jews can undertake, it has become in a central theme in Jewish philanthropy. *Tikkun olam* embodies the general desire to make the world a better place in all kinds of ways: improving the environment, seeking justice for minorities who experience discrimination, building libraries, or providing theater, opera, and symphonies to the public. Perhaps the overriding core value in Jewish philanthropy, it represents a sense of obligation and responsibility to improve the natural and human condition in all possible ways. *Tikkun olam* encompasses all the other values and all efforts for sustenance and progress.

Jewish philanthropy is most powerful when it intersects with and is bolstered by the core values of the secular society where Jews live, as is the case in the United States. Americans have built the most elaborate and successful NGO system in the world. Americans embrace the ideology of giving: Philanthropy is a moral and civic responsibility and obligation. The philanthropic system is envisioned as a partner with the public sector. American Jews, therefore, have dual motivations for giving—as Americans and as Jews. This mutually reinforcing value system helps explain why American Jews are leaders in both American and global Jewish philanthropy. The accumulation of wealth, of course, provides the ability to give, but it does not explain the propensity to give. Many wealthy individuals and societies are not very generous. American Jews have both the means and the commitment to give to both Jewish and secular causes.

Jewish philanthropy is nearly always built upon this foundation of values even though most of the root knowledge and history for giving are unknown to the giver and often the NGOs themselves. But the origins and activities of these values are anchored in Judaism. Yet the language of Jewish philanthropy is more often focused on how to run an annual campaign, attract major gifts, and organize fund-raising events. The language of values is often superficial, with cursory references to Jewish tradition, if any.

Yet as Jewish philanthropy evolves, it seeks to both reinforce and redefine the core values of Jewish philanthropy. Sometimes this means challenging and interpreting how a value is institutionally or programmatically expressed. The constant change is, in itself, also a type of Jewish value: a belief in progress. Jewish values are expressed differently in different places and in different times, revealing a measure of a healthy philanthropic system that changes over time.

Jewish philanthropy has, traditionally, relied on the collective action of the Jewish community. However, this collective action is evolving into a myriad of private decisions, as umbrella fund-raising and distribution give way to private foundations. The core values of Jewish philanthropy are increasingly posing different choices: Should donors fund local NGOs or those in Israel? Jewish education or basic human

services? These choices are no longer made in community debate and through consensus, but rather in the marketplace of ideas, NGOs, and private choices.

The dichotomies about where Jews should give are a false construction. While not unlimited, the financial resources of the Jewish community far exceed current giving levels in the Diaspora and to Israel, to secular and Jewish causes, and to meet the various needs within the Jewish community.

There are ambitious old and new organizations that embrace the idea of an ever-changing and ever-growing Jewish philanthropic system. New philanthropic organizations have developed that reflect emerging values in the Jewish community and innovative institutional approaches to issues in Jewish life. For example, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, seeks to expose anti-Semitism in the media, embracing a policy of “sunshine is the best disinfectant” rather than dialogue. Be’chol Lashon (In Every Tongue) promotes racial and ethnic diversity in the Jewish community, tackling head on the issues of Jewish demographic decline, trends of exclusivity, and questions about who is a Jew. El Centro helps Anusim (descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jews) return to Judaism while celebrating their existing cultural heritage. Nefesh B’Nefesh is helping Jews around the world to make aliyah outside the auspices of traditional Jewish mega-organizations such as the Jewish Appeal. Every year, new organizations emerge that reflect the changing values of Jewish life or develop new approaches to expressing existing values.

Also, there are existing organizations that respond to challenges and mold their operations to meet the changing needs of the Jewish community and beyond. The Joint Distribution Committee, while undoubtedly among the older and larger Jewish NGOs has been able to offer a myriad of funding opportunities to Jewish philanthropists that allow for a greater sense of accountability and personal involvement by donors. As the days of collective action wane, some of the Jewish community’s most well-established organizations are becoming more flexible to allow for increasing donor involvement, innovation, and entrepreneurship in philanthropy.

But the Jewish community should not simply focus on maintaining the high levels of giving Jews have already established—it should seek to increase it. Although Jewish philanthropy is characterized by generosity, especially in times of crisis, the resources available to fulfill the values of Jewish philanthropy are largely underutilized. The language of philanthropy must be reinforced with the language of the values themselves—mission statements, the language of fund-raising, and platitudes about giving back to society and making a difference will not be enough to take Jewish philanthropy to its highest levels. The core values from which Jewish philanthropy evolved must become explicit, and the laws, traditions, and sacred meaning of giving must be reinvigorated. The language of philanthropy should reflect the profound purposes it serves.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Burlingame, Dwight F., ed. 2004. *Philanthropy in America: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 3 vols. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Cutlip, Scott M. 1999. *Fund Raising in the United States*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

- Marts, Arnaud C. 1991. *Philanthropy's Role in Civilization*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Salamon, Julie. 2003. *Rambam's Ladder: A Meditation on Generosity and Why It Is Necessary to Give*. New York: Workman.
- Tobin, Gary A. 2001. *The Transition of Communal Values and Behavior in Jewish Philanthropy*. San Francisco: Institute for Jewish and Community Research.
- Tobin, Gary A., Michael Austin, Meryle Weinstein, and Susan Austin. 1999. *Jewish Foundations: A Needs Assessment Study*. San Francisco: Institute for Jewish and Community Research.
- Tobin, Gary A., Jeffrey R. Solomon, and Alexander C. Karp. 2003. *Mega-Gifts in American Philanthropy: General & Jewish Giving Patterns between 1995–2000*. San Francisco: Institute for Jewish and Community Research.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 1991. *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wuthnow, Robert, Virginia A. Hodgkinson, et al. 1990. *Faith and Philanthropy in America*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## Contemporary Responses to Intermarriage

*Gerald Cromer*

---

As American Jews moved to the suburbs after World War II, they underwent a process of acculturation without assimilation. Those living in the newly created gilded ghettos became increasingly indistinguishable from their Gentile neighbors. At the same time, however, the new suburbanites largely remained a group apart. American Jews saw themselves and were viewed by their fellow compatriots as the classic example of voluntary group endogamy. However, the publication of a series of local and national surveys during the 1960s drew attention to a steady increase in the number of Jews “marrying out.” Gradually, the focus of concern shifted from integration to survival and the issue of intermarriage rose to the top of the communal agenda.

As long as the intermarriage rate remained low, academics and communal leaders explained the phenomenon in psychological rather than social terms. They portrayed it, for instance, as a kind of Jewish self-hate and attributed it to dysfunctional family backgrounds. However, these explanations became increasingly difficult to sustain with the dramatic rise in the number of people marrying out. As the rate of intermarriage escalated, it came to be seen less as the result of personal problems of one kind or another and more as “the sting that comes from the honey of freedom.” Marrying out, it was argued, is an inevitable and unfortunate corollary of the privilege of living in an open society.

This realization led to a series of jeremiads and prophecies of doom about the future of the Jewish community. At the height of the concern in the early 1970s, however, a number of sociologists and religious leaders adopted a much more optimistic view of the situation. They suggested that intermarriage provided an opportunity

for American Jewry rather than being a threat to its existence. If a concerted attempt was made to reach out to those who marry out rather than to stigmatize them for doing so, it could lead to a net gain rather than a loss for the community.

Following this advice, first the Reform movement and then other religious and communal organizations have set up a wide variety of outreach projects that are designed to impart basic knowledge about the rudiments of Judaism and/or help the partners explore the nature of their relationship to their respective heritages and think about how they want to incorporate them into their marriage and family life. These programs are backed up by a concerted effort to persuade both the leaders and rank-and-file members of the community to accept those who marry out with open arms.

Advocates of this inclusive approach do not only claim that it has led a large number of Gentile partners to identify themselves as Jews and to take an active part in the life of the community, but they also contend that it has had a positive effect on their Jewish spouses. The chance to learn about Judaism and to explore their relationship with it supposedly stimulates a new or renewed interest in and attachment to things Jewish. Meeting the other, it is argued, leads to a clarification of one's own beliefs and a fresh understanding of the self.

Many academics and communal leaders, however, have questioned the effectiveness of the outreach programs in the battle against intermarriage. They are of the opinion that those concerned—both the Gentile and the Jewish partner—do not represent the best target population, and that the community's resources should be channeled toward the moderately affiliated. According to this view of the situation, the emphasis should be shifted to enlarging the core by shrinking the middle, rather than working with those on the periphery of the community or beyond its confines. "Inreach," it is argued, is preferable to outreach for one simple reason; it is more likely to be successful in strengthening American Jewry.

Taking this argument a step further, there are those who claim that the move from outrage to outreach not only does less good than its proponents would have one believe but it also causes a great deal of harm. They contend that adopting an inclusive approach toward those who marry out and their Gentile partners leads others to believe there is nothing wrong in it and to follow in their footsteps. Outreach is therefore counterproductive. Rather than inducing people to join the community, it encourages them to leave its ranks.

A similar debate has taken place concerning two important developments—the solemnization of mixed or nonconversionary marriages, and the introduction of patrilineal descent—within the Reform movement. In both cases, however, the controversy did not only focus on the effect of the changes on the fortunes of American Jewry; it also related to the question of whether they were in keeping with Jewish tradition. Each side claimed it was both the true heir of the community's past and the sole guarantor of its future.

The requirements regarding both the conversion process itself and the couple's subsequent lifestyle have always been much less demanding in the Reform movement than in Conservative and Orthodox Judaism. Nevertheless, a large and growing proportion of intermarriages are mixed or nonconversionary ones in which the

Gentile partner decides he or she is not interested or ready to become Jewish. In 1973, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) passed a resolution opposing the participation of its members in such weddings, but it seems to have had little or no effect. Taking advantage of the next clause, which recognizes that members of the CCAR hold divergent interpretations of Jewish tradition, an increasing number are willing to solemnize mixed marriages.

Many Reform rabbis insist that the prospective couple accept certain conditions related to the preparations for their marriage (e.g., taking a course of Jewish study), the wedding itself (e.g., no involvement of Christian clergy or presence of Christian symbols), or their family lifestyle afterward (e.g., a commitment to bring their children up as Jews). Nevertheless, the marriage remains a nonconversionary one. Even if all the conditions are met, it is still a union between a Jew and a Gentile.

Having agreed to solemnize mixed marriages, rabbis found it extremely difficult to reject their congregants' demands that the children of these unions be recognized as Jewish. After five years of acrimonious debate the CCAR overturned the long-standing Jewish tradition of matrilineity and declared that "the child of either Jewish parent is under the presumption of Jewish descent." Although this change was first mooted as part of a drive for gender equality, it was actually made as a response to the predicament of an ever-increasing number of Reform Jews. As one scholar succinctly put it: "Social necessity was the mother of rabbinic invention."

Advocates of this and other innovations made no attempt to hide the fact that they were a response to current needs. Indeed, those in favor of solemnizing non-conversionary marriages and patrilineal descent regarded it as point in their favor. Placing themselves firmly within the Reform tradition that views Halacha (Jewish law) as providing guidance rather than being a source of ultimate authority, they believe they have not only the right, but also the duty to adapt it to the needs of contemporary American Jewry.

Those in favor of an inclusive policy toward intermarriage made two seemingly contradictory appeals to tradition. They often contended that the innovations were not a major break with the past. Thus, the advocates of patrilineal descent drew attention to the fact that even though Joseph, Moses, and Solomon married Gentile wives, their children were considered Jewish, and in both biblical and Talmudic times the paternal line alone was followed in matters of inheritance and priesthood. In contrast, they did, on a number of occasions, emphasize the radical nature of the proposed change. In doing so, however, the proponents of change referred to major rabbinic innovations such as Rabbenu Gershom's edict outlawing polygamy to show that Halacha can, indeed should, be altered to meet the needs of the hour.

Clearly, therefore, the advocates of these changes and the accompanying outreach programs defend their stance in terms of the Jewish past and future. There are those, however, who relate to the issue of mixed marriage on a more personal level. A growing number of handbooks for intermarried couples focus on family ties in general and the marital relationship in particular. As far as the authors of these manuals are concerned, the most important thing is to help make intermarriage work for the couple and their children.

This focus of concern finds clear expression in the stance that the self-appointed mentors adopt toward the conversion of the Gentile partner and the religious upbringing of children. Conversion, they point out, is just one of the ways of coping with the complexities of intermarriage and is not inherently preferable to other options. The major criterion for any decision in this regard must be whether or not it contributes to the success of the marriage. The handbooks differ as to whether parents should raise their children in both Judaism and Christianity. Some believe doing so is bound to lead to identity confusion in later life; others insist it gives the next generation the best of both heritages and the opportunity to synthesize them. Either way, however, it is the well-being of the children that is uppermost in the authors' minds. That is the sole criterion for deciding how to raise them.

Those concerned with making intermarriage work make no attempt to underestimate the difficulties in doing so. In fact, they accept that marrying out is a particularly precarious undertaking. The handbooks therefore implore both the Jewish and the Gentile partner to acknowledge the existence of the difficulties and to take two kinds of action, one personal and the other impersonal, to avoid them. Both spouses, it is argued, have to achieve individuation from their parents and discover what their religious affiliation means to them. In addition, the couple must engage in a constant dialogue in order to work out the outstanding issues between them.

Some manuals take this argument a step further. Rather than simply contending that marrying out is not necessarily a recipe for disaster, they insist that it provides an opportunity for personal and interpersonal growth. Differences between spouses are to be celebrated because they can lead to a strengthening of their self-identity and to a deepening of the relationship between them. According to this perspective, intermarriage should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat—on the individual and on the communal level. If dealt with in the right way intermarriage can prove to be a blessing in disguise.

Some of the handbooks portray intermarried couples as role models or pioneers who are paving the way to a more promising future for both themselves and the wider community. In contrast, the authors are highly critical and even contemptuous of anyone who is less enthusiastic than they are about intermarriage. They refer to parents who are unwilling to come to terms with their children marrying out as parochial, prejudiced, and even racist. Significantly, none of the manuals attribute parental opposition to the older generation's commitment to Jewish law or Jewish continuity. They explain it instead in psychological terms. Conflicts about intermarriage, the guides insist, are just a reflection of family dynamics in general and the power struggle between the generations in particular.

Explanations of this nature are highly reminiscent of those used before the steep rise in intermarriage to help understand why Jews married out. This parallelism is, perhaps, the clearest sign of the enormous change that has occurred in American Jewry over the past 50 years. The stigma that was attached to those who marry out has not simply ceased to exist in large sectors of the community; instead, it has been transferred to their parents and communal leaders who oppose them doing so. The outrage is increasingly directed against those who take a firm stand against exogamy. It is they who are now beyond the pale.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Steven M., and Leonard J. Fein. 1985. "From Integration to Survival: Jewish Anxieties in Transition." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 480: 75–88.
- Cromer, Gerald. 2004. *The Quintessential Dilemma: American Jewish Responses to Inter-marriage*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research.
- Massarik, Fred. 1978. "Rethinking the Inter-marriage Crisis." *Moment* (July): 25–26, 31–33.
- Petsonik, Judy, and Jim Rensen. 1988. *The Inter-marriage Handbook: A Guide for Jews and Christians*. New York: William Morrow.
- Wertheimer, Jack, Charles S. Liebman, and Steven M. Cohen. 1996. "How to Save American Jews." *Commentary* 101 (1, January): 47–51.

## A Rabbi's Reflections on the Modern Rabbinate and the Jewish Community

*Marc D. Angel*

---

Before the onset of the modern period, Jewish communities operated within the framework of Jewish law and custom. Jews generally lived in their own sections of town, ran their own schools, and spoke their own languages; they functioned as autonomous communities, relatively insulated from the larger non-Jewish society around them. Jews did not have—or even expect—full privileges of citizenship or equal access to opportunities available to non-Jews. They suffered anti-Jewish discrimination as a normal feature of life.

In the premodern Jewish communities, the role of rabbi was of central importance. The rabbi was the authority in Jewish law to whom people could turn for religious guidance. In many cases, he served on the community's rabbinic court, taught in the yeshiva, oversaw the town's kashruth, and represented the Jewish community to the non-Jewish authorities. His hallmark was Torah scholarship. His task was to teach Torah and lead his community according to its dictates.

With the advent of the modern period, Jewish communities throughout the world underwent major transformations. Increasingly, Jews gained citizenship rights, attended secular schools and universities, and interacted freely with non-Jews. The process of modernization included a lessening of attachment to Jewish law and tradition and a consequent breakdown in the traditional patterns of Jewish life. Assimilation increased. Non-Orthodox religious movements arose, claiming to modernize Judaism.

The demography of the Jewish world also underwent massive changes, especially beginning in the latter 19th century. Significant numbers of Jews left Europe for America; thousands were drawn to the Land of Israel through the inspiration of the Zionist movement. Even within Europe and its colonies, many Jews were leaving villages to move to cities.

These cataclysmic sociological changes ripped the fabric of Jewish life. Large segments of the Jewish people now lived outside the orbit of traditional religious

life. Spiritual and cultural battles erupted between traditionalists and nontraditionalists. Western Judaism became fragmented into competing movements. Many Jews abandoned traditional Jewish belief and observance.

Where traditional patterns held, though, the role of the rabbi as Halachic authority also held. Rabbis were primarily Torah scholars and teachers. They gave guidance to their community based on the Torah wisdom they had attained. This model has continued to prevail within the right-wing Orthodox and Hasidic communities.

Where non-Orthodox communities emerged, rabbis were no longer Halachic authorities—because the people had largely discarded Halacha. They no longer taught in a yeshiva—because the non-Orthodox did not have yeshivas. They were not members of a beth din—because non-Orthodox Jews went to secular courts rather than rabbinic courts to resolve their disputes. Rather, rabbis emerged as a minister of religion—officiating at religious and life-cycle services, providing pastoral counseling, and preaching on righteousness and moral causes. Some became involved in societal issues, interfaith work, charitable efforts, and work on behalf of Israel. Instead of Torah scholarship being their hallmark, the focus for non-Orthodox rabbis shifted to such areas as social work, social action, and communal relations.

Modern Orthodox rabbis have forged a new model of rabbinic leadership. On the one hand, they see their role as Halachic authority, Torah scholar, and teacher. Like the traditionalists, they are vitally concerned with the ritual religious framework of their community: kashruth, mikvah, eiruv, day schools, and yeshivas. Yet they have also taken on roles characteristic of modern religious leaders: pastoral,



The Torah scroll contains the five books of Moses, otherwise known as the written law, which is the basis for the Talmud and the Halacha. (Steven Allan)

social, and communal. They work with the general organizations and charities of the entire Jewish community (not just the Orthodox); they may engage in interfaith work, political action, and especially efforts on behalf of the State of Israel.

Just as right-wing traditionalists have fostered a rabbinate that serves their needs, and just as non-Orthodox communities have fostered a rabbinate that reflects their interests—so the Modern Orthodox community has engendered a rabbinate that combines traditionalism and modernity. Modern Orthodox rabbis not only have studied in yeshivas, but most have also attained college and advanced degrees.

The role of rabbis, then, is influenced by the expectations of their communities. On the other hand, it is vital for rabbis to be focused clearly on their own mission in life and not to let the pressures of communal life crush their idealism. Rabbis, certainly in the Orthodox tradition, must be Torah scholars and therefore devote considerable time to Torah study and teaching. They must reach out to all segments of their community, bringing everyone closer to Torah observance and values. They must teach not only by word but also by example. Because there are so many calls on a rabbi's time—meetings, funerals, counseling sessions, classes, communal obligations, and so on—it is possible for them to feel overwhelmed by their multifarious responsibilities. Peoples' expectations of rabbis are often unrealistic. Unless they are true to their ideals, rabbis risk becoming petty bureaucrats or low-level play actors—a parody of what a rabbi should be.

Rabbis need to make priorities, schedule their time intelligently, be available to congregants and community members, maintain a regimen of Torah study, and tend to the religious needs of the community. They need to work respectfully with their congregation to elevate religious life and Torah commitment. They must foster communal harmony but must not shrink from controversy or independent thought.

What is a rabbi? Rabbis are persons who occupy themselves with assorted tasks and responsibilities on behalf of Judaism and the Jewish people. They accomplish various things, accumulate certain honors, and fill certain functions.

Who is a rabbi? A rabbi is someone who finds no rest in this world and expects to find no rest in the world to come. A rabbi is someone who strives mightily—and often without success—to go from strength to strength in service to the Almighty, the Jewish people, and humanity.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Angel, Marc D. 2001. *But Who Am I and Who Are My People: A Rabbi's Reflections on the Rabbinate and the Jewish Community*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav.

## Insight into the Workings of a Diaspora Beth Din

*Raymond Apple*

---

The institution of a beth din (“house of judgment”) is traced back to biblical times, when Moses appointed elders to help judge and govern the people. Other biblical figures are also said to have had their batei (pl.) din, and in the rabbinic period there arose a controlled hierarchy of courts that dealt with both civil and ritual law. Because the Torah requires difficult questions to be submitted to “the judge that shall be in those days” (Deuteronomy 17:9), it was taken for granted that community decision making should be made by duly authorized experts. Some matters could be adjudicated by a sole judge, but a rabbi who acted without colleagues was regarded as arrogant. The basic number of judges required for most matters was three, although larger courts were needed for some purposes.

The range of matters dealt with by batei din in the Diaspora depended on the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the community. Rabbinic responsa (*she’elot ut’shuvot*) indicate that about 70 percent of rulings made in pre-Emancipation communities dealt with commercial, civil, and even criminal cases. These responsa not only indicate the development of Jewish law in these areas but also afford information about the social and economic life of the times.

With the coming of the Emancipation, rabbinic jurisdiction shrank. Jews were now able to and did resort to the civil authorities, leaving the rabbis to deal with ecclesiastical matters such as prayers, synagogue procedures, life-cycle events, and kosher food. Orthodox Jews still honored the principle of taking their disputes with other Jews or Jewish institutions to a beth din, though others regarded a summons to a beth din as religious coercion. In modern legal systems a beth din is often an accepted medium of alternative dispute resolution, and its arbitrations are binding as a matter of civil law unless there is misconduct, such as fraud, corruption, bias, or denial of natural justice.

Usually there is only one official beth din in a city. Some congregations have established their own internal judicial system, but their batei din do not claim jurisdiction outside their own group. The procedures followed in all batei din are laid down by the volume of the Shulhan Arukh (Code of Jewish Law) known as Hoshen Mishpat (the Breastplate of Justice). Unlike *dinei Torah* (arbitrations), which are recognized by the secular legal system, Diaspora batei din generally have no power of compulsion or sanctions, though it is assumed that those who submit a ritual question to a beth din will abide by its decision.

A beth din’s agenda usually depends on the time and circumstances. Examples are the cases of *agunot* (women whose husbands are missing) after World War II, and the effect of recent technological developments on many areas of Jewish law. If Beth din rulings in different places are not identical, it is generally the result of different circumstances.

Batei din are often engaged in all or many of the following activities:

1. Responding to queries on Halacha. On unusual or complex questions, there will be consultation with other batei din and/or expert *pos'kim* (decisors), and the rulings may be incorporated into written responsa.
2. Advising synagogues and communal institutions, for example, on matters of liturgy, kashruth, Shabbat observance, and burial procedures.
3. Conducting dinei Torah and issuing rulings in due form.
4. Administering gittin (religious divorces). Ancillary issues that arise include securing the cooperation of a recalcitrant spouse, the relationship of Jewish and secular courts, the status of Israelis living in the Diaspora, financial settlements, and the well-being of children of the marriage.
5. Responding to applications for conversion; some batei din never or rarely accept converts, whereas others are more active in this field.
6. Advising in family matters such as adoption, circumcision, pidyon haben (“redemption of the first born son”), bar and bath mitzvah, and marriage.
7. Supervising shehitah (kosher slaughter of animals) and butcheries; the provision of kosher foods, matzo, and Passover commodities; function catering, and so on.
8. Supervising religious institutions and facilities, such as mikvahs (ritual baths) and *sha'atnez* (forbidden mixtures of textiles) laboratories.
9. Examining and certifying candidates for appointment as mohels (circumcisers), shohetim (slaughterers), mashgihim (supervisors), sopherim (scribes), and so on.
10. Attesting and issuing documentation of Jewish status. This issue has become topical since the emigration of ex-Russians to many parts of the Jewish world.

Certain batei din exercise jurisdiction over a number of countries; for example, Australian batei din handle Halachic queries for Southeast Asian communities. As a matter of courtesy, a visiting dayan (judge) from elsewhere will be invited to sit in on proceedings in another city or country. The contacts created assist the process of inter-beth din consultation and often reinforce the status of the host beth din. All batei din have contacts with Israeli rabbinical courts, and though there is no requirement for Israel to endorse a dayan's qualifications to sit on a Diaspora beth din, the informal relationship with Israel is highly valued. In British Empire and former colonies the batei din were originally appointed and authorized by the chief rabbi in London but local independence is now established.

In contrast to the period after the Emancipation, there is increasing resort to Halachic sources and authorities on broader issues of social, economic, and political life. Batei din are called upon to advise and rule in relation to business and professional ethics and bioethics, as well as taxation, inheritance, and intellectual property. Queries constantly arise in connection with synagogues and their religious and lay leadership. The interrelationship between institutions and community facilities frequently raises the issue of *hassagat g'vul* (encroachment on another's territory); for instance, how far away should one school of synagogue be from another, or a butchery, bakery, or other kosher outlet.

In some communities the beth din members are full- or part-time paid officials of the community. In other communities a congregational rabbi doubles as a dayan without additional salary.

### Selected Bibliography

- Elon, Menachem. 1994. *Jewish Law, History, Sources, Principles*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Schachter, Jacob. 1952. "Talmudical Introductions down to the Time of Chajes." In *The Student's Guide through the Talmud*, edited by Z. H. Chajes. London: East and West Library.
- Weinryb, Bernard D. 1967. "Responsa as a Source for History (Methodological Problems)" In *Essays Presented to Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, edited by H. J. Zimmels, J. Rabbinowitz, and I. Feinstein, 275-290. London: Soncino.

## Contemporary Conversion Patterns into Orthodox Judaism

*Marc D. Angel*

---

Each year, thousands of people throughout the world convert to Judaism. They come from different religious backgrounds, races, geographical locations, and sociological conditions.

Within the State of Israel, almost all conversions are performed under the aegis of the Orthodox rabbinate. In the Diaspora, though, most conversions are performed under non-Orthodox auspices. Although many converts in Israel choose to become Jewish in order to feel fully integrated into the Jewish state, converts in the Diaspora come to Judaism for a variety of reasons. Some are seekers of truth who have become disenchanted with the religion in which they were raised and have found spiritual satisfaction in the Jewish tradition. Others have discovered Jewish ancestry and wish to reconnect with the religion of their forebears. A growing phenomenon is the desire to return to Judaism among descendants of "anousim" (Jews forcibly converted to Christianity in medieval Spain and Portugal).

A large percentage of converts choose Judaism for the sake of Jewish spouses. They would like to marry or are already married to a Jew. They wish to convert in order to remove friction from their marriage and to enable them to raise their children in one faith tradition.

Some converts seek Orthodox conversions after previously having undergone non-Orthodox conversions. As their levels of Jewish knowledge and observance increase, they opt to convert according to Halacha as practiced by Orthodoxy.

Some converts are children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers. Although they are not Jewish according to Halacha, they may have a strong Jewish identity and would now like to become Jewish according to Halachic standards.

Orthodoxy—whether in Israel or the Diaspora—only recognizes the validity of conversions performed according to Halacha. The process entails circumcision

(for males), ritual immersion in a mikvah, and acceptance of the commandments of the Torah tradition. The conversion must be sanctioned by a rabbinic court (beth din) of three members, all of whom are fully observant of Halacha. Since the Reform movement does not subscribe to the Halachic system, its conversions are not Halachically valid, by self-definition. Although the Conservative movement claims to adhere to Halacha, it has introduced major revisions based on opinions of its own rabbinic authorities. Their beliefs and rulings are sometimes in sharp contrast to Orthodox understanding and practice; therefore, conversions performed by their rabbis are generally not recognized as valid within Orthodoxy.

In the Diaspora, many converts to Judaism have not converted according to Halacha. Although they have left their birth religions and have adopted a Jewish identity, their status (and that of the children of female non-Halachic converts) is not Halachically Jewish. This poses a variety of problems, especially when it comes to establishing Jewish status for purposes of marriage.

Although Orthodoxy validates only conversions performed according to Halacha, many Orthodox rabbis do not engage in conversions at all; many others do so only with great reluctance. Orthodox rabbinic courts in Europe and North America have raised increasing obstacles in the paths of would-be converts, so that the conversion process might take years. While proclaiming the inefficacy of non-Halachic conversions, the Orthodox rabbinate in general has not provided a meaningful and realistic Halachic alternative for those seeking to join the Jewish people and the Jewish faith, except for those willing to accept a totally Orthodox lifestyle.

Certainly, Judaism historically has not seen itself as a proselytizing religion. It recognizes that people of all nations can be righteous and worthy of a place in the world to come. As long as they observe the basic principles of faith and morality (i.e., the Noahide laws), they do not need to seek salvation by becoming Jewish. Thus, those who choose to become Jewish should do so only because of an extraordinary attachment to the teachings of Judaism and a sincere desire to be counted among the Jewish people.

In discussing the procedure for receiving candidates for conversion, the Talmud instructs that the person be told of the consequences of becoming Jewish:

Our rabbis taught: if at the present time a person desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: Why do you come to be a proselyte? Do you not know that Israel at the present time is persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed, and overcome by afflictions? If he replies, I know and yet am unworthy [but still wish to convert], he is accepted forthwith, and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments . . . He is not, however, to be persuaded or dissuaded too much. (Yebamot 47a–b)

The candidate for conversion needs to realize that he or she must identify with the fate and destiny of the Jewish people and must also be held responsible for observing the religious practices of Judaism.

The Talmud records the opinion of Rabbi Nehemiah who invalidates conversions in cases where the convert comes to Judaism for ulterior motives, for example, to marry a Jew, to gain worldly advantages, or because of fear. According to

this opinion, proselytes may be accepted only if their motives are purely religious and idealistic. Yet Rabbi Nehemiah's opinion is rejected by the Talmud, and the accepted law is that conversions are valid even when the convert had ulterior motives (Yebamot 24b). Maimonides codified the law: "Even if it is known that he converted for some ulterior motive, once he has been circumcised and immersed he has left the status of being a non-Jew." Although one might suspect the convert's sincerity, such a person is still a valid convert. Maimonides adds: "Even if he recanted and worshipped idols, he is [considered] a Jewish apostate; if he betroths a Jewish woman according to halakha, they are betrothed. . . . Having immersed, he is a Jew" (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Isurei Biah 13:17). Although it is preferable for converts to be inspired by pure religious motives, their conversions are Halachically valid even when ulterior motives are involved.

Over the ages, some Halachic authorities have taken a positive view of conversion, and others have taken a far more restrictive view. The inclusive view is based solidly on Halachic precedent in the Talmud, Maimonides, and other classic Halachic codes and responsa. The restrictive view, though reflected in ancient and medieval rabbinic literature, has become more widespread since the 19th century.

With the rise of modernity, Jews have had much greater contact with non-Jews, and the incidence of intermarriage has increased. With the breakdown of traditional religious belief and observance, some Halachic authorities have thought it best to raise standards, demanding that potential converts spend many months, even years, studying Torah and that they agree to observe the religion according to all the rules of Orthodox tradition. In 1876, a leading Halachic authority—Rabbi Yitzchak Shmelkes—went so far as to rule that a conversion is not valid unless the convert fully observes the commandments of the Torah (Beit Yitzchak, 2:100). This view became increasingly accepted, especially within the Orthodox Ashkenazic communities of Europe.

Great Halachic authorities have rejected the opinion of Rabbi Shmelkes and have been far more receptive to receiving converts into Judaism, even under less than ideal conditions. A powerful exponent of the inclusive view was Rabbi Benzion Uziel, Sephardic chief rabbi of Israel (Mishpetei Uziel, 5724, nos. 18 and 20). He argued that it is incumbent for rabbis to enable people to convert to Judaism—even if their religious commitments and observances are deficient—especially if such candidates for conversion are involved with a Jewish fiancé or spouse. Such conversions eliminate the sin of intermarriage and provide the possibility for children to grow up in fully Jewish homes. Rabbi Uziel did not see himself as being lenient in matters of conversion, but strict in his opposition to intermarriage.

Although there are Orthodox rabbis in the Diaspora who subscribe to Rabbi Uziel's view, the dominant position tends to be far more restrictive. Many of the rabbinic courts are controlled—or strongly influenced by—the more extreme right-wing Orthodox Halachic authorities who tend to sympathize with the restrictive position. Thus, potential converts may find it preferable to turn to non-Orthodox channels for conversion.

Orthodoxy, though, has a strong and attractive message for those considering conversion to Judaism. It fosters a traditional belief system and way of life that

provide meaning and happiness. Even when potential converts face initial rebuff by Orthodox rabbis, those who persist often find the conversion experience to be exhilarating. Although many Orthodox rabbis are not receptive to working with would-be converts, others are quite open and helpful. It is to be hoped that the Orthodox rabbinate in general will come to accept the singular responsibility of providing religious guidance and instruction to the thousands of people who wish to join the Jewish people and religion.

### Selected Bibliography

- Angel, Marc D. 2005. *Choosing to Be Jewish: The Orthodox Road to Conversion*. Jersey City, NJ: Ktav.
- Zohar, Zvi, and Abraham Sagi. 1994. *Giyur ve-Zehut Yehudit*. Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute and the Bialik Institute.

## Jewish Day School Education in French-Speaking Europe

*Zehavit Gross*

---

Jewish education is considered the best antidote to assimilation and the only guarantee for Jewish commitment and continuity (Waxman 2001). Hence, the future of European Jewry depends on the quality of its Jewish day schools. The aim of this entry is to describe the challenges facing Jewish day schools in francophone countries. The information is based on a study carried out in six Jewish day schools in Paris, three in Brussels, Belgium, and one in Geneva, Switzerland (Gross 2002).

The main threat to the existence of many Jewish communities in Europe, and especially the francophone communities, are incidents of anti-Semitism and violence toward Jews. In response, for security reasons, many Jews prefer to send their children to Jewish day schools rather than to public schools. If the increase in violence continues, there will be a growing need to establish new schools in those countries, as the existing schools will not be able to hold the vast number of Jews who want to send their children to Jewish schools. The question is whether these schools will be the same as the schools that exist today, or whether something new and fresh will develop.

Today in francophone countries, Jewish schools are not attractive to many parents; as a result, a relatively small minority sends their children to Jewish schools (Tal 2005). These day schools cope with four main problems:

1. *Resources*: the financial state of most school is very poor, their infrastructure is primitive, and they lack the basic educational equipment needed in a modern school.
2. *The economic status of the teachers*: the salaries of most teachers in Jewish education are lower than the official salary tables accepted in all three

countries, and teachers have no union to protect their interests. They have personal contracts (formal and informal), generally for part-time positions, and need to supplement their income by working in more than one school. As a result, many schools cannot establish a permanent staff for Jewish studies.

3. *The social status of the teachers:* most of the teachers are of Sephardic origin and low socioeconomic status. There is a correlation between their low salaries and their image in the eyes of students and parents.
4. *Professionalism:* most of the teachers have neither formal professional training (didactic or disciplinary) nor a diploma from an academic institution.

In spite of these obstacles, the teachers are generally extremely committed to their profession. They view their work as a mission rather than as a job and are ready to sacrifice.

The organizational structure of most of the schools is bureaucratic and hierarchical. The hierarchy is headed by the state, which has *de jure* influence over school affairs. Each principal (except those in Geneva) is bound by state law and is subordinate to the school board or committee, which is made up of key community personalities, such as rabbis, wealthy members of the Jewish community, intellectuals, selected parents of high socioeconomic status, and official community representatives and headed by a president. The committee is the direct employer of the principal and functions as the school's executive body. According to most principals, the school committees are as important as the state.

The more centralized the state, the more pivotal its influence on components of professional administrative functions and school curricula. School principals in France indicate that they have more extensive reporting obligations *vis-à-vis* the state and that the bureaucratic procedures they have to follow are more complex than is the case for their peers in Belgium or Switzerland. This is probably related to the fact that, as representatives of the state, Parisian principals exercise a great deal of power on behalf of the state, and thus their accountability is greater than that of Belgian or Swiss principals.

The most prominent similarity among all schools is the dual structure of school organization, comprising two subcurricular systems (general studies and Jewish studies). This duality on the organizational/administrative level corresponds to particularistic (Jewish) and universal (general) elements and reflects the ambivalence of the Jewish school toward the bicultural world in which Jews live as a minority.

The schools maintain no official, practical contact with parents as individuals except through *ad hoc* committees. Students are situated at the bottom of the school hierarchy and are expected to adhere to the school curriculum and obey its teachers. Students take this situation for granted and accept it as part of the francophone tradition of hierarchy and order.

The school's organizational structure and balance of power reflects its identity and conceptual world. That is, its organizational structure reflects the forces operating within the school system, the power wielded by various actors, and the

relationships existing between the system and the actors. A school's balance of power is thus a practical manifestation of its inherent political inclination and identity (Gross 2006).

All the principals surveyed claim that the purpose of a Jewish school is to enhance Jewish education, expose children to Jewish culture, and create a Jewish milieu where Jews can meet in order to avoid assimilation. However, the hours allocated to the Jewish curriculum are limited and the level and quality of Jewish studies is very low. In most schools, Judaism is perceived in the narrow sense of observance of precepts and not as a civilization in the broader sense. The process of socialization places greater emphasis on the behavioral aspects of Judaism (religious laws and practices) than on cultural ones. Judaism as taught at school is perceived as anachronistic and does not seem to be an equivalent alternative to the meaningful existential experience bestowed by the values of the modern Western world.

The connection to Israel is the foundation of the school but there are fundamental differences between schools. The more religious the school, the more positive its attitude toward the Land of Israel from the theological aspect and the more critical it is from the political point of view. In most schools (especially in Paris, where there is a rapidly growing ultra-Orthodox or *haredi* community) there is criticism about the secular nature of Israel. On the other hand, in the more pluralistic and secular schools (for example, in Brussels, where there is a rapid process of secularization and assimilation), which view Judaism as culture, the State of Israel and the Hebrew language serve as the focus of Jewish education. These dichotomous attitudes are accompanied by negative feelings toward the State of Israel for universal-humanistic reasons (because of the Israeli policy in the West Bank and its relationship with the Palestinians). This attitude can be found among leftist radical intellectuals in Brussels and Paris.

If Jewish education is the basis for Jewish continuity, the local Jewish communities in these countries need to view it as the core of their financial, spiritual, and human investment. The financial priorities of the communities, as well as the professional empowerment of the schools, will make the schools agents of Jewish education, not merely schools for Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

- Gross, Zehavit. 2002. *From Philanthropy to Meritocracy: The World of Jewish Day Schools in Paris, Brussels and Geneva* [Hebrew]. Ramat Gan, Israel: Rappaport Center for Research of Assimilation and Jewish Vitality, Bar-Ilan University.
- Gross, Zehavit. 2006. "Power, Identity and Organizational Structure as Reflected in Schools for Minority Groups: A Case Study of Jewish Schools in Paris, Brussels and Geneva." *Comparative Education Review* 50 (4): 603–624.
- Tal, Rami. 2005. *The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Annual Assessment 2004–2005: The Jewish People between Thriving and Decline*. Jerusalem: The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute.
- Waxman, Chaim I. 2001. *Jewish Baby Boomers: A Communal Perspective*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

# The International Network of Religious Zionist Kollels

*Yael Ehrenpreis Meyer*

---

Kollel Torah MiTzion (TMT) created a revolution in the Jewish world when it launched its first center for the intensive study of Torah within the framework of religious Zionism. Since its establishment in 1996, the TMT system has expanded into a worldwide network that today encompasses 33 school-based, campus-based, and community kollels across five continents. The scope of TMT is constantly increasing, and a new kollel opens its doors nearly every year.

## History

In 1994, two religious Zionist institutions of Torah study were established independently on opposite sides of the world. One, called Torat Tzion, was established in Cleveland, Ohio, under the direction of Rabbi Binyamin Taboury. The second, the yeshiva of Cape Town, South Africa, was founded by Rabbi Jonathan Glass with a staff of Hesder graduates. These revolutionary initiatives set the stage for the development of the religious Zionist kollel concept.

Two years later, the founders of what would become the TMT network established their first institution, a religious Zionist kollel in Memphis, Tennessee. The kollel, initiated as a pilot program, was a success, and by 1998, there were 18 such institutions flourishing in as many geographic locations. The programs in Cleveland and Cape Town were also incorporated into this new network, which was later named Torah MiTzion, a reference to the Biblical line *Ki MiTzion Tetzeh Torah* (From Zion the Torah will come forth).

## Philosophy

The kollel (pl. kollels) is an institute for the advanced and intensive study of Torah, usually with a focus on Talmudic study and analysis. Although many cities worldwide with strong Orthodox communities do have one or more kollels—most connected to yeshivas but some hosted by the communities themselves—in most cases these institutions are run under non-Zionist rabbinic and organizational auspices. In contrast, the TMT kollels were developed not only to serve as centers of Torah study but also to promulgate the ideals of religious Zionism—Torat Israel, Am Israel, and Eretz Israel, to underscore the relationship between Torah learning and Israel and to foster the relationship of the greater Jewish community with these two integral concepts.

To achieve these goals, the TMT system is led in the field by a cadre of *shlichim* who are themselves graduates of Israeli *Hesder* yeshivas and women's *midrashot*, and thus uniquely exemplify the philosophical balance between *safrá v'safya* that is the hallmark of religious Zionist ideology.

The TMT mandate also underlies the importance of strengthening Torah living and learning on a communal level. This means kollel *shlichim* not only devote several hours daily to intense Talmud study but are also committed to enhancing the Jewish identity and education of their resident communities.

### Geographic Distribution

As of 2006, the TMT system encompassed three categories of kollels, for a total of 38 institutions operating on five continents. These include community kollels in the American cities of Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Des Moines, New York, and St. Louis, as well as cities in Canada, South America, Italy, the former Soviet Union, South Africa, and Australia; school-based kollels in Cleveland, Detroit, Memphis, Washington, DC, Montreal, and Melbourne, Australia; and university-based kollels on 16 campuses in the United States and Great Britain.

### The Tripartite Model

The basic TMT kollel model includes: a *Rosh Kollel*, who both teaches and provides administrative management; and *shlichim*, consisting of one to four young married couples and/or two to four single (male) students. There are three paradigms for the TMT Kollel, each one geared to a specific mode of community.

#### Community-based Kollels

The most common type of TMT kollel, community-based kollels provide a full-service educational and communal forum with programs geared to the entire spectrum of the target population, including men, women, and youth.

#### School-based Kollels

In some locations, the TMT kollel is hosted by the local day school. Although teaching and programming is provided for the public at large, as in the community-based model, the focus here is on the school. Hence, students are exposed to the concept of full-time Torah learning, and *shlichim* play a role in both formal and informal Jewish/Zionist education, thus providing maximum impact on the community's youth.

#### University-based Kollels

At university-based kollels, the campus is the community. These kollels serve not just as an educational forum but also as a clearinghouse for information on Judaism and a center for Jewish student life. Thus, the kollel not only provides Torah classes and Jewish/Israel-oriented programming but also acts as a Jewish home away from home for the student body.

### Partnerships

On the executive level, the TMT headquarters in Israel works in close concert with major Israeli and Zionist agencies, including the Israel Ministry of Education, the

Jewish Agency/World Zionist Organization, and major international religious Zionist organizations.

On the local level, each kollel's *shlichim* work together with the leadership of schools, synagogues, and Jewish/Zionist institutions to leverage the kollel's potential within the community. The campus-based kollels represent the Jewish Learning Initiative, an initiative spearheaded by the Orthodox Union in conjunction with TMT and Hillel.

## Administration

The board of directors of TMT consists of members from each of its partner organizations. TMT is also guided by a rabbinic advisory board whose members include Rabbis Avraham Shapira and Mordechai Eliyahu (former chief rabbis of Israel); Rabbi Aaron Lichtenstein, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva Har Etzion; Rabbi Chaim Druckman; and Rabbi Yosef Carmel. Zeev Schwartz, a founder of TMT, served as executive director from its initial establishment until July 2006. He then became director of the World Bnei Akiva organization, but retained his association with TMT as its new chairman. Laurence (Larry) Roth, chairman until July 2006, was appointed president at this time.

## Conclusion

TMT has established an educational model that serves as a paradigm for successful Jewish/Zionist identity and knowledge development on the communal level. In their unique combination of "midrash and *ma'aseh*," the kollels of TMT continue to create a vibrant atmosphere of Torah Judaism and religious Zionism in Jewish communities throughout the world.

## Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Asher, and Israel Harel. eds. 2004. *Religious Zionism: An Era of Change: Studies in Memory of Zevulun Hammer* [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute.
- Gelles, Benjamin. 1964. *Two Essays on Religious Zionism: Mizrachi Ideology*. Jerusalem: World Mizrachi Organization Information Department.
- Morrison, David. 2003. *The Gush: Center of Modern Religious Zionism*. Jerusalem: Gefen.
- Sheffer, Eliezer. 2006. "Mizrachi Education in the Diaspora." In *One Hundred Years of Religious Zionist Education: A Collection of Essays*, edited by Simcha Raz, 365–372. Jerusalem: World Mizrachi Organization Education Department.
- Soloveitchik, Joseph B. 2002. *The Rav Speaks: Five Addresses on Israel, History and the Jewish People*. Brooklyn, NY: Toras Harav Foundation/Judaica Press.
- Teichtal, Yisachar Shlomo. 2002. *Eim HaBanim Semeichah: On Eretz Yisrael, Redemption, and Unity*. Jerusalem: Urim.
- Tirosh, Yosef. 1964. *The Essence of Religious Zionism*. Jerusalem: World Mizrachi Organization Information Department.
- Zohar, Chaim. 2006. "What is the Kollel Tzioni." In *One Hundred Years of Religious Zionist Education: A Collection of Essays* [in Hebrew], edited by Simcha Raz, 365–372. Jerusalem: World Mizrachi Organization Education Department.

# The Habad Movement, Its Organizations, and Its Influence in the Diaspora

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

Habad Hasidism, which hailed from Russia, succeeded in becoming probably the most important and influential network of religious Jewish communities in the world. With universal ideology, highly motivated disciples, decentralized institutions and organizations, and ever-growing success in achievement and numbers, its role in the contemporary Jewish Diaspora is peerless.

## The Outreach Concept

The term “outreach,” as used by the Habad movement, refers to missionary work aimed solely at Jews. Jonathan Sacks, chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, says of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, a key player in the Habad movement, that he “not only came to embody the concept of ‘outreach,’ he very nearly invented it.” The goal of Habad’s outreach was to reawaken the soul of every Jew, especially the majority who were secular and nonreligious, to God, religion, and the observance of Jewish law. The idea was to be found in embryo in the origins of the Habad movement, whose rebbes had always concentrated on educating and sending emissaries to remote Jewish communities to facilitate the observance of Jewish law and custom. It was only under Schneerson, however, that the concept was institutionalized as the prime characteristic of Habad’s social activity.

The concept of outreach gave the impetus for all of the other initiatives undertaken by the movement during the period of Schneerson’s leadership, and it became the primary cause of his fame throughout the world but especially within the general Jewish community. Outreach was the driver behind the *shlichut* (emissary/missionary) program, the most effective tool in the consolidation of Schneerson’s leadership. The promotion of outreach through *shlichut* made many of the services of the movement possible and helped support many of its institutions. So important and effective was Habad outreach for the growth and consolidation of the movement after the death of Yosef Yitzhak, the sixth Habad rebbe, that some observers have called for its tactics, initiatives, and methodology to be adopted in rehabilitating all of Diaspora Jewry.

During the period of Schneerson’s leadership, Habad became the fastest-growing Jewish subcommunity in the world. Although the Habad movement is not the largest Hasidic sect, it is certainly the best known, and the noticeable presence of members of the movement served to promote its name and ideology in overt disproportion to its numerical size. Without the willingness of many thousands of young men, newly married couples, and larger, more established families to move to cities and even foreign countries at the request of Schneerson, the movement

would not have been as effective as it has been in bringing many to return to Jewish observance. At present, Habad is not as well known for its mystical philosophy and ideology as for its outreach efforts.

Schneerson dispatched his emissaries to all areas of the world where Jews might be found, but he concentrated the movement's efforts on several key targets: university campuses, non-Habad synagogues, and remote areas that lacked an effective infrastructure for Jewish observance.

### Campus Outreach

As a former university student, Schneerson no doubt recognized that outreach would at some stage need to reach the secular Jewish intelligentsia, and he wasted no time in doing this. He instructed emissaries to focus on university campuses throughout the United States, where study houses and lectures were initiated for the benefit of Jewish students. It was thought that young, intelligent, idealistic Jewish students might be attracted to the movement, and might be able to find purpose and direction through the practice of Hasidism. The comparative modernity of Habad was an attractive factor in the success of campus outreach. The movement demonstrated that Judaism did not have to be a European, Old World phenomena, as many of the students' parents might have thought, but could be practiced in a modern context, using advanced technology and providing material opportunities not traditionally associated with Hasidism. Habad's outreach activities have been compared with those of the early days of Hasidism, during which the Hasidim were eager to convince the mitnagged (those that opposed Hasidism) intelligentsia of



Lubavitch rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. (AP Photo/Mike Albans)

the Hasidic way, although undoubtedly there was more in common between the Hasidim and mitnaggedim than between Habad and secular Jews.

The efforts of Habad in campus outreach were effective not only in attracting converts, *the ba'alei teshuvah*, but also, and possibly more important, in exposing a high proportion of future academic, business, and political leaders to Habad and its ideas and familiarizing many with the image of Schneerson. It was no doubt hoped that those exposed to Habad on campus might later, when they had become respected members of the general community, be able to support the legitimacy of the movement, whether financially, politically, socially, or otherwise.

## Synagogues

From the origin of his leadership, Schneerson encouraged all his Hasidim who were able to do so to study to pass the semikah examinations and become rabbis. Until 1983, these ordinations were carried out under the old criterion of scholarship and intellectual ability, but from that date Schneerson began to actively encourage the mass ordination of rabbis. Consequently, the standards required to become a rabbi in Habad were lowered, and the emphasis moved from being able to pass examinations to possessing piety and an inclination to the job. This is not to say that there were not many highly learned students in Habad who were encouraged to study for semikah, but rather what was looked for was enthusiasm and suitability for the position of rabbi more than traditional scholarly achievement.

This change was implemented in order to ordain rabbis who would serve primarily as religious functionaries and community leaders; thus, it can be seen as a political tool to increase the influence of Habad in the broader Jewish community. Because of their generally poor academic competence, these Habad rabbis would defer serious Halachic and religious matters to more competent rabbinical authorities, either within Habad or outside the movement. This is not to say that the movement did not produce some old-style rabbis, academically gifted and scholarly, but rather that the minimum standard for ordination had been lowered to accommodate the less academic members of the community. A disproportionately high percentage of Habad Hasidim were consequently ordained into the rabbinate, and many began to take up rabbinical positions in synagogues across America and the world.

Although these new rabbis were often younger than their congregants and less educated in worldly issues, they were often respected by their communities by virtue of their religious studies and commitment to spirituality. When it became evident to their congregations that these rabbis turned for advice and counsel to more senior rabbis, who in turn revered and respected Schneerson, it fostered the impression that Schneerson was a grand rabbi, a "rabbi's rabbi," to whom all turned for clarity and guidance. This enhanced the reputation of the rebbe, and elevated the status of the Habad movement, wisely led by such a respected and venerated man.

The work of Habad rabbis in non-Habad synagogues popularized Schneerson's status and the Habad system. People interested in pursuing a more committed Jewish life were encouraged to do so through Habad educational facilities; hence, the

movement attracted many newly repentant Jews to its ranks. The distinctions between Habad and normative Judaism were increasingly blurred, especially in the minds of newcomers, who frequently were unaware of the differences between the two. Habad community rabbis, believing their traditions were superior, did not call attention to these dissonances.

### ***Ba'alei Teshuvah***

One of the most significant developments in the Jewish world in the past 50 years has been the dramatic rise in the number of Jews adopting the religious lifestyle. At the forefront of the movement encouraging the newly religious, known as *ba'alei teshuvah* (masters of repentance) has been the Habad movement, which has not only actively sought out converts from the nonreligious Jewish community but has also greatly assisted those who wish to spiritually reconnect with their Jewish ancestry.

Like many other new religious movements, the Habad outreach seems to have developed with a specific target demographic in mind: single, educated, Jewish, college-aged, spiritual seekers. The movement's first active recruitment centers were primarily located in college towns, in houses close to campus, with the assumed intention of attracting young, idealistic, and easily persuaded Jewish youth to the religious lifestyle. These early Habad centers provided a home away from home, primarily for students, and for many often represented the first contact with ultra-Orthodox Judaism. The Habad House did not simply serve as a forum for exploring Jewish tradition, for it also served a social purpose in bringing together people of similar backgrounds and ideas.

As with fraternities and other student societies, the primary activities of campus outreach were organizing social functions, but in this case they had an educational purpose, and offered lectures/classes connecting various aspects of Jewish theology to practical concerns in the lives of the audience. Although lectures provided an ideological framework for incorporating Jewish spirituality into the everyday experience of potential recruits, the most important conversionary tactic was the social experience of inviting the curious into everyday Hasidic life. Central to this was the open-house policy maintained by Habad surrounding the observance of Shabbat. The opportunity to participate in one of the foremost religious practices of observant life, in a spiritual and family atmosphere (the Habad Houses were often run by young married couples), was an exceptionally successful recruitment technique, and remains so to this day. The experience of Shabbat represented a golden opportunity to expose the unobservant not only to theology, but also and most important, to the everyday practice of Jewish spiritual life. It was an exceptional tool for exploring religion in a friendly setting where questions of a practical nature could be explored at leisure. The experience permitted the full range of issues surrounding religious life to be examined: ritual and tradition, law and custom, dietary laws (*kashruth*), family relations, prayer and traditions of worship, and perhaps most important, the inculcation of the Hasidic devotional spirit through singing and storytelling.

The Habad House also served as a center for learning and for training those who wished to adopt a religious lifestyle. Although the social complexities of Hasidic custom were important in developing an emotional attachment to the movement, connection to Schneerson also played a major role in the religious life of many, if not all, *ba'alei teshuvah*. However, attachment without proper education in its practical use and direction was discouraged by the movement, as it has been by traditional Judaism through the centuries. To help newly observant followers develop a lasting commitment to Jewish observance and, incidentally, to the Habad movement, Habad Houses and representatives frequently lectured or led seminars in which ideological and practical issues were discussed. At first these classes were small and designed to instruct on a basic level, but as the movement grew in size and influence, the demands of recruits necessitated the development of special educational programs for *ba'alei teshuvah*. In time, this was to develop into an organized curriculum in local communities, and eventually led to the establishment of several yeshivahs, located in key locations around the world. The purpose of this education was quite different from what is found in traditional yeshivahs, where the emphasis is on studying Talmud and *Hasidut*. The emphasis at first was on communicating basic knowledge regarding Jewish custom, culture, and law, as well as Hebrew language, and the basics of Habad philosophy. Most classes, therefore, at least in the initial training, were concerned with ethics, kashruth, observance of Shabbat, and other practical matters essential to the observant lifestyle. Of course, the hope was that by the end of the training, men at least would be able to commence the study of Talmud, and women would be able to maintain an observant home.

This last was to be one of the central elements of the Habad recruitment strategy, because once the basics of Hasidism had been learned, the emphasis was on encouraging recruits to marry and establish observant families of their own. Once married, usually arranged through a matchmaker, the *ba'alei teshuvah* were encouraged to establish Habad Houses of their own and commence the recruitment of further followers. This was to be done through the same tactics by which they themselves had been recruited—a socialization process directed at nonreligious Jews.

One may add that there is now a substantial representation of university-educated *ba'alei teshuvah* in the Habad movement; also, many students and researchers who initially came into contact with Habad for the express purpose of objective research have been inspired to join its ranks. Because Habad was an accessible Jewish group, open to contact with the outside world, favorably disposed to technology and publicity, but still distinct and exotic, it attracted the interest of sociologists, theologians, and others drawn to research a cultural or religious phenomenon. There are a number of prominent cases where researchers were touched either by the local Habad rabbi they contacted, by Schneerson himself, or by both. This is not an unusual occurrence in religious ethnographic research.

The attraction of these academics to the movement added to the intrigue surrounding Habad, and tales of university professors (actually, usually graduate students) who had discovered the greatness of the rebbe spread in the movement. These stories validated the beliefs of Hasidim and gave hope for the ultimate success of

the rebbe's outreach programs. Academic converts to Habad also enhanced the movement's reputation in the outside world. These *ba'alei teshuvah* academics disseminated pro-Habad sympathies through their writing, teaching, and other academic work, and they helped create a positive image of the movement as a living philosophy rather than solely a religious or doctrinal system. Later, some Habad rabbis were to earn academic degrees, so that Habad became even more appealing to the educated segments of the broader Jewish population. The presence of academic Hasidim also helped keep the movement from being classed as a form of fundamentalism, with the negative connotations of narrow-mindedness and naïveté implicit in such a classification.

### Emissaries/Missionaries

Schneerson's emissaries were the executors of his outreach campaign. They were characterized by enthusiasm for Schneerson and strict obedience to his directives. There are claims that few international organizations could have been more tightly led by a single individual on the most slender of resources, namely, the stream of communication he maintained with the emissaries through correspondence and later more modern methods. Despite their dispersal to most places on earth where Jews reside, the emissaries kept in touch with each other, and discipline and morale remained high, mainly thanks to the personal contact each had with the rebbe.

Schneerson's discourses, ideas, suggestions, and campaign initiatives were communicated almost immediately to the emissaries, who in turn obediently communicated them to congregants, students, and children in their respective communities. The purpose of having emissaries throughout the world, and of the organizations and services they founded, was to instill the spirit and practice of authentic Judaism into the life of Jews wherever they may be. According to one observer, "the Rebbe built Lubavitch into the most powerful Hasidic movement in history. . . . tens of thousands around the world feel and act a little more Jewish because of him; no one else comes close to that achievement." This was one of the fundamental goals of the Habad movement under Schneerson and guided much of its outreach work.

Currently, there are an estimated 2,000 official Habad institutions worldwide, staffed by more than 8,000 emissaries, and there are innumerable Habad Houses on six continents. Schneerson encouraged his emissaries to wear their distinctive Hasidic clothing at all times if possible, but certainly when they were representing the movement, believing this would arouse feelings of familiarity and warmth in non-observant Jews and would remind them of their parents or ancestors. It also served as a kind of uniform for the movement, by which its members could be identified, and thus acted to unite the Hasidim wherever they might be, through a sense of common history and tradition.

Habad emissaries in countries with few Jews have often taken advantage of the reputation of Jews as powerful, wealthy, and influential to further their outreach work. In Habad, stories are told of emissaries to Asian and South American countries who were able to cultivate high-profile business leaders and politicians because of

the belief that the Habad movement was an influential Jewish lobby with good business connections. Whatever the reasons, many close political and social alliances were formed by Habad emissaries worldwide, and the idea that Habad was a representative of Judaism itself grew with its increased public profile through these alliances. Schneerson's status as leader of the movement was also enhanced by this type of activity, further consolidating his authority.

## Public Relations

Schneerson was extremely effective in the area of public relations. From the time he assumed the position of rebbe, he encountered a wide and often influential range of individuals who afterwards spoke highly of him. Some of these were important personages, but many were not, and it is significant that there are few articles and reports of encounters with Schneerson that do not describe him favorably. One might think it possible to glimpse the true person behind the public face of the rebbe through accounts by non-Hasidic and even non-Jewish people who met him, people unbiased by any emotional connection to him as rebbe and zaddik, but all the reported encounters seem to have been perceived through the same filter of adulation through which the Hasidim perceived their rebbe. This influenced even non-Habad visitors.

The public profile of Habad was also heightened by the use of billboards, full-page newspaper and magazine advertisements in major publications like the *New York Times*, the appearance of members on radio and television programs, and books and movies. Until the 1990s, Habad was the only Orthodox Jewish religious group to embrace technology as an instrument for Jewish revival.

In addition, the growth within the movement of messianic speculation and ideology throughout Schneerson's tenure provoked a great deal of attention and interest within the general Jewish community and from the media. Chaim Potok has argued that the media-conscious orientation of the Habad movement, starting with the arrival of Yosef Yitzhak in the United States, may have been a key factor in its promulgation of a strongly messianic ideology. Messianism may have been seen as a device to attract more media attention to the movement and its outreach goals. Although this idea may be a little cynical about Habad's sincerity, messianism certainly drew media attention to the movement and provided a framework in which Hasidim were able to missionize to nonreligious Jews worldwide. Outreach campaigns such as public donning of tefillin (phylacteries), the sukkah-mobile (a mobile sukkah used during the festival of Sukkoth), and public celebrations of Hanukkah drew public interest to Jewish issues and in the movement that was behind these activities.

The success of Habad's public relations enterprises was most graphically demonstrated when Schneerson died in 1994. Many important political and civil dignitaries attended his funeral, which was also widely covered on television and in the print media worldwide. Indeed, a collection of more than 200 articles and obituaries for Schneerson was published shortly after the event, with stories taken primarily from American newspapers. That so many articles were written in so short a

space of time is an indication of the huge public interest in the movement and in Schneerson himself. His death even made it onto international television news broadcasts, demonstrating the breadth, if not the depth, of interest Habad and its messianic ideology had attracted worldwide.

### Modern Technology

Public relations for Habad were amplified through the efforts of many technologically conscious Hasidim who, because of their exposure to the modern world and the university, had flirted with these media well before they became essential household tools. Although still influenced by modernity, Habad Hasidim were strongly discouraged from studying at university, in accordance with the ethos of ultra-Orthodoxy. Particular opposition was directed against study of the humanities, which was believed to pose the greatest threat to religious life. The advent of modern technology, particularly the computer and developments in communications, was therefore a blessing for many otherwise outwardly directed people. There are a number of reasons why modern technology was embraced so quickly by Habad: first, it was new, and so its use was not tainted with stigma; second, rejectionist religious views had not yet been developed in relation to the latest technology, and so its use was not forbidden. Technology allowed Hasidim to access the modern world without reliance on formal study of the forbidden humanities.

Habad was the first ultra-Orthodox Jewish group to take advantage of such technology. As the Internet became a medium to access secular education, it came to the attention of non-Habad ultra-Orthodox religious legislators, who subsequently condemned it, and in some instances outlawed its use by their adherents. In Habad, however, technology was adopted so quickly that by the time Habad's religious authorities became fully aware of it, the use of modern technology was so widespread in the movement as to make a prohibition all but impossible to enforce. Indeed, technology had become so indispensable a part of the movement's activities that its use was accepted in rabbinic circles because it was credited with disseminating Torah.

Use of the Internet, and e-mail in particular, was to prove essential to outreach, and also to the cohesion of the movement. Both official and unofficial Habad Web sites began to appear shortly after public access to the Internet was available, and in time many local communities and organizations supported sites of their own. These sites served to inform community members of important events, provided access to teachings, and offered the opportunity to disseminate the teachings of Habad to a new and educated audience. One of the most important consequences of the use of the Internet in Habad, however, was its use as a tool for networking. E-mail lists of community members and activists were developed, and religious teachings were disseminated, including calendars and reminders of events important to the world Habad community, such as birthdays and anniversaries of the passing of the rebbes. Weekly biblical readings were distributed directly to Hasidim electronically, along with commentaries by learned scholars. Online learning was also developed, whereby someone new to Hasidism could move from the basics to

the most abstruse theology and ideology. Most important for Habad, pictures of and discourses by Schneerson were also available online, as well as by satellite, television, radio, and audio and video recordings, enabling the worldwide community to have instant access to Crown Heights, New York, and the court of their rebbe. Religious books and other products could be purchased via the Internet, a useful feature for small and geographically remote communities. The worldwide Habad movement was therefore reinforced by the World Wide Web, and the challenges presented by its international character became more easily negotiable and surmountable.

At present the Internet is one of the main forums for discussing Schneerson and the significance of his passing, and it is used by messianist, nonmessianist, and antimessianist Hasidism. There is even a Web site for ex-Habad Hasidim, who have left the movement for various reasons but nevertheless wish to stay in touch with one other and offer mutual support. Thus, despite geographical separation and lack of wide numerical support, these groups are able to survive and cohere across the world, and the debates in which they engage may well prove determine the future direction of *Habad* in the post-Schneerson era.

Habad's embrace of technology and the Internet has had other positive effects for the reputation of the movement in the wider community. Apart from its direct use in disseminating the ideology of the movement, many Habad Hasidim who did not choose careers as emissaries have become computer technicians, programmers, and professionals in related technological industries. This not only enhances the future survival of the movement by ensuring that it has a presence in the modern world, but it also serves to advance Habad's reputation as a movement that embraces modernity.

### The Drawbacks of Outreach

Despite its many achievements, the outreach program has also had some drawbacks. These were primarily the result of the time and effort required by Habad's innovative techniques of outreach, which diverted funds and energy from other projects, and the challenges to the movement's ideological system raised by exposure to the world at large. These influences have had a negative effect on the education of the next generation of Hasidim, but they have also contributed to the uniqueness of a movement that would not have succeeded were it not for the perceived aberrations it practices.

The practice of outreach has earned Habad a reputation like that of the Jesuits in Catholicism, for the movement's missionizing has given it wide influence and has disseminated its teachings throughout the world. Missionary activity to non-Jews has generally been considered taboo throughout the history of Judaism, which has developed an ideological and practical opposition to the conversion of non-Jews to the faith. Habad adopted the term "outreach" to avoid the negative, Christian-centered connotations of the concepts of "missionary work" or "missionizing," and even within Habad's outreach effort, the emphasis has been on returning non-religious Jews to the religious observance practiced by their ancestors. Nevertheless, Habad's zeal for outreach and its aggressive marketing techniques have

provoked a certain wariness toward the movement among secular and religious Jews alike, who do not care for the notion of Jews engaging in missionary activity even within the confines of the Jewish community. The general success of Habad—its embrace of modernity, its warmth toward fellow Jews throughout the globe, its ideology of acceptance, and the general open-mindedness of its disciples and emissaries—has distinguished itself and left potential critics within the secular Jewish world unable to find sufficient cause for rebuke.

The movement has changed in other ways as a direct result of outreach activity. The Habad Hasidim sent around the world as students and emissaries have themselves been exposed to new ideas and practices to which they would not have been exposed in a more traditional Hasidic sect. One consequence is that Habad youth are often far more worldly than other Hasidic or Orthodox youth, many of whom have grown up in ghettos or sheltered communities with only intermittent or controlled interaction with the outside world. Familiarity with slang and popular culture among modern Habad youth is no doubt a cause for concern to the religious leaders who are responsible for preserving the movement's identity and piety.

### The Habad Yeshiva System

The idea of a specifically Habad yeshiva was initiated by Shalom Dov Ber, the fifth Habad rebbe. The system of Hasidic education it represented may very well have been responsible for the Lubavitch dynasty's survival despite persecution in Eastern Europe, especially during the reign of Yosef Yitzhak. It was also a central part of the reemergence of Habad in the United States. The first Habad yeshiva in America was founded as soon as Yosef Yitzhak arrived in 1940. His experiences in Russia very probably had convinced him that the successful transplantation of Habad into the New World was dependent on the establishment of a yeshiva to train and teach the next generation.

The same principle was applied throughout the United States and around the world under Schneerson. As more children grew up within the movement and more students arrived in Crown Heights to study, it became a routine part of the Habad educational policy to spend some time after high school in a yeshiva. This became even more the case as the educational facilities of the movement attracted more committed people and better teachers and as the infrastructure grew. Although not a common expectation in the early years of the movement, by the 1970s it was practically a basic requirement that every Habad boy study at least for a time in a Habad yeshiva, especially when Schneerson encouraged rabbinic ordination for all men who were able.

A yeshiva is best compared to a theological school. Although the subjects of study vary from community to community, it is generally assumed that the Talmud and other Halachic texts occupy most of the curriculum, which requires a total of approximately 16 hours of study daily. In Hasidic yeshivahs generally, and Habad yeshivahs in particular, the study of mysticism is an added feature of the curriculum, generally occupying two or three hours per day. The trend in contemporary Habad yeshivahs is for students to break from their studies regularly on

Fridays, and less regularly on various occasions throughout the year, to dedicate time to outreach programs. This practice has earned the movement severe criticism from other streams of Orthodoxy, which claim that this practice takes students away from their primary duty of study to less important pursuits. Habad yeshivas have developed a reputation in the Jewish scholarly world for weak scholarship, and therefore do not attract the better Talmudic students. Exceptional Habad students who are serious about learning often continue their studies at non-Habad Lithuanian yeshiva, where the study regime is more traditional and much more rigorous.

The yeshiva system was the backbone of Schneerson's popular support even before he assumed the post of rebbe. It continued to be his main support throughout his tenure and still is years after his death. Schneerson was always careful to maintain ties with the movement's students, whose rebelliousness, enthusiasm, imagination, vigor, and free time made them a valuable (and vocal) resource to be channeled into useful initiatives. As these students grew older, they became the next generation of leadership of Habad, all intensely committed to Schneerson and his vision for the movement.

As school students, Habad boys learn both secular and religious subjects; the yeshiva system is somewhat different. Attendance is voluntary, and therefore students are generally more serious and committed to studying and developing their spiritual life. While attending yeshiva many students begin to mature in their observance, developing a deeper religious commitment. In Crown Heights, yeshiva students were often the most fervent supporters of Schneerson. Part of their curriculum was spent studying Schneerson's writings and teachings, which further developed their commitment to him. They were often the most earnest members of the audience at Schneerson's talks. He was the primary reason they were on their mission, and their attachment to him was palpable. Much of the messianic fervor evident throughout the history of the movement, especially in the last decade of the rebbe's life, was fostered in the yeshiva.

As the movement became larger and more influential, the top students were chosen to go overseas. At first, only specially selected students were given the honor of serving the rebbe abroad. In time, though, it became commonplace, especially as more Habad yeshiva students became available. Today, it is standard procedure for Habad students to travel on *shlichut*, where they undergo an active apprenticeship in the mission of the movement, under trained, experienced leaders in real-life circumstances. Most yeshiva students emerge from their experience as seasoned missionaries, ready for a more committed career within the movement.

Originally, it was mainly students from the central Habad yeshiva, *Ohelei Torah*, in Crown Heights, who were sent to the movement's centers around the world. By the time of Schneerson's death, the Habad movement had opened dozens of yeshivas around the world, and in most countries where there was a sizable Habad community, there was a yeshiva. Students were frequently sent to these smaller yeshiva for one or two years as emissaries of the movement, to perform outreach and strengthen communities that lacked human resources and educators. In turn, many Habad students from around the world spent a few years of study in the

central Habad yeshiva in Crown Heights. This central meeting point has often been described as an officers' training corps for emissaries.

To be sent on *shlihut* was and is considered an honor and a privilege. It is usually very exciting for students, who get to travel the world, meet new people, and practice their outreach skills. Often the period of *shlihut* gives the young student his first exposure to secularism and other perceived vices outside his previously sheltered Orthodox lifestyle, but it is impossible to determine how many have been tempted to leave Habad as a result of this exposure. The sense of being on a mission as an emissary of the rebbe no doubt lessens the desire to adopt outside ways too strongly.

Many emissaries developed a strong sense of responsibility for educating the communities as they came to realize the full extent of Jewish assimilation and cultural ignorance. Students became teachers or took on other roles in the community, and many decided to settle in the location permanently, often marrying a local girl. In this way, Habad developed an international flavor, with relatives and friends throughout the world and a network of contacts focusing on Schneerson, Crown Heights, and the achievements of the movement. Many students developed a new appreciation for the rebbe and his interest and concern for the well-being of far-flung international Jewish communities. His personality became larger than life, because their only contact with him was via stories, satellite hook-ups, and video. As a result, his significance as a leader seemed even more imposing abroad.

The results of this worldwide educational enterprise are varied. The exposure outreach provided to non-Hasidic Jewish communities throughout the world made the Habad movement one of the best-known ultra-Orthodox groups. Although most ultra-Orthodox sects are little known outside their home territory, living as they do in isolated communities in Israel, Belgium, the United State, and other countries, Habad is a familiar force throughout the Jewish world. This has enabled the movement to influence the very concept of Orthodoxy in the broader Jewish community and to establish cross-cultural relationships with a wide cross-section of the Jewish world.

The work of yeshiva students over the years has been invaluable to expanding the movement. Apart from the fact that students give their time and effort to outreach with no expectation of pay, which has saved the movement vast amounts of money over the decades, the yeshiva has provided an organized reserve of activists who can be mobilized for especially worthwhile causes. The independence and initiative of the students, doubtless a result of their youth and idealism, spurred many new ideas for effective outreach on behalf of the movement. This human reservoir could not have been maintained in other, less homogeneous and ideologically united organizations. Its group cohesiveness, coupled with the image of activists as tireless walking advertisements for Schneerson and Habad, had an effect on Jewish communities abroad. To many in the broader Jewish community, Habad became a paragon of Orthodox observance. It stood out as an identifiable movement, separate from other Orthodox schools, and escaped being identified as one strain of Orthodoxy among many. This reappraisal of Habad within the spectrum of Judaism facilitated the appraisal of Schneerson as the grand rabbi of Orthodoxy and not

simply another rebbe of a small subsection of the Hasidic community. Schneerson's position in world Jewry was greatly enhanced by the disproportionate representation of Habad throughout the world, through its emissaries and their role in the revival of religious observance.

The Habad yeshiva system is a good example of Schneerson's centralized-decentralized method of administration. Under this system, the local community took responsibility for the financial and other burdens of its ongoing work, and the central administration provided broad ideological guidance. The yeshiva system is controlled partly by the Merkaz L'Inyanei Hinukh, the central Habad agency, and partly by the United Lubavitch Yeshivot. During the tenure of Yosef Yitzhak, the United Lubavitch Yeshivot was run by Shmaryahu Gurary, and under Schneerson he continued to do so, no doubt in part because of Schneerson's desire to change nothing established by his predecessor. Gurary was an excellent manager of the yeshiva system and a gifted orator and fund-raiser, continuing throughout his life to collect money for his yeshiva. The yeshivas that were opened throughout the United States and internationally during Schneerson's leadership were sponsored primarily by Merkaz and the local communities, although they were administered in conjunction with Gurary's organization. The yeshiva system was a highly effective instrument in establishing Habad influence in mainstream Jewish Orthodoxy, strengthening its influence on world Jewry, and providing a considerable tool for Schneerson's consolidation of leadership.

### **The Habad House**

As part of its aim to spread the observance of religious law throughout the Jewish world, the Habad movement established the institution of the Habad House. Unlike the yeshiva system, the primary aim of which was the further education of those who were already observant, the Habad House aimed to provide education, training, and guidance to facilitate the religious observance of those new to Habad and to provide a living example of observance for the Jewish populace worldwide. The idea of the Habad House was initiated by Schneerson in 1959 with a call for all Habad families to open their homes to the general Jewish community. There was both a personal and an institutional call for homes to be opened for hospitality, education, and prayer, and every family personalized this principle into their daily routine and welcomed fellow Jews into their lives and homes. Because of this program, there are currently thousands of Habad Houses around the world, providing education and hospitality to those interested in seeing the religious life in practice.

In addition to families opening their homes, a number of Habad Houses were opened by young emissaries who targeted a particular demographic, usually the student body on a university campus or younger Jews in a major city. These target-focused Habad Houses eventually expanded their operations to smaller areas and localities, to better serve the needs of the broader population. Habad Houses are often run by a dynamic husband-and-wife team, the wife often becoming indispensable in attracting female interest, as well as providing the hospitality services that are an important element in attracting visitors. The establishment of a Habad

House is often financially aided by the Merkaz L'Inyanei Hinukh and by the local Habad community, but it is expected to achieve independence and do its own fundraising within a short space of time.

The role of the Habad House in expanding the movement is best demonstrated by its operation in smaller communities. In areas with a small Jewish population, and therefore with no synagogue, the Habad House frequently becomes the place for religious services, especially on Shabbat. As a focal point for community building and activity, this often leads to the development of a large local Habad community within a few years. The Habad House thus serves to fill a religious vacuum in the chosen locality.

The practice of sending emissaries into areas and setting up Habad Houses to encourage locals to become part of the movement often leads to complaints about Habad. It has embittered non-Habad community leaders who believe the movement is encroaching on their territory. In some ways, they are right. The movement has an abundance of eager, efficient, enthusiastic emissaries who are willing to work for little or no money, which makes it difficult for those outside the movement to equal the activities or interest generated by the Habad House. As many of the emissaries are also rabbinically qualified, Habad has tended to take over communities in need of rabbis or other religious functionaries. On the other hand, the fact that Habad has been able to do this indicates that there is a need in the local communities that is not being met by other organizations.

Thanks to their central role in their communities, the Habad Houses worldwide have provided self-generated employment for Habad Hasidim, as well as massive public relations activity. They are often the only Orthodox presence in many Jewish communities around the world, providing essential services to those they have encouraged to join the movement. As well as bringing many nonreligious Jews to observance, the Habad Houses and Hasidim disseminate the teachings of Schneerson and Habad and help to build the cult of personality that surrounded him. This in turn further popularized him in general Jewish circles and increased his influence worldwide.

The conception of opening up branches of hospitality and outreach is not new to Judaism, and it has long been a feature of many Jewish organizations. However, the scale on which Schneerson implemented the Habad House was unprecedented. The idea that every Habad household would be actively involved in outreach and public dissemination of Habad ideology and observance meant that the entire movement was drafted into the outreach effort. Whether it was an activity as simple as offering hospitality to strangers or visitors for a Shabbat meal or as complex as studying with a less committed Jew to teach the heritage, the community was put to work. Business and professional Hasidim were not exempt from this, and outside their work hours they were often involved in an extracurricular outreach program.

The involvement of every Habad family was encouraged not only by the rebbe's directive but also by peer pressure from the community. Commitment to the movement was further demonstrated by the Habad House sign affixed to the front doors of many homes, an advertising directive issued by Schneerson to signify the presence

of a Habad House in a community. The pressure to affix the sign to their homes challenged the apprehensive to make up their minds and commit more fully to a leader of Habad. Through symbolic gestures such as signs and community activities, those who were loosely affiliated with Habad were encouraged to deepen their commitment and articulate their connection to the movement.

The Habad House spearheaded Habad's outreach enterprises and activated all the followers of Habad in the movement's activities. It also attracted many newcomers into the religious lifestyle, through commitment to the principles of Habad. In this way, Schneerson further consolidated his authority and translated the Hasidic outreach mission into a format for every individual to participate in, even those outside the institutionalized community.

### Other Organizations

During his years as rebbe, Schneerson initiated many other projects and organizations to expand the movement and serve the general Jewish community. The nature of these initiatives indicates his concern for the advancement of Judaism worldwide, beyond the world of his Hasidim. Many of the programs he established reflect the strategy that characterized Schneerson's institutional policy and work ethic, evident from the very early days of his leadership. Unlike other religious groups, many of which focused their attention on the religious elite and the yeshivas, Schneerson also catered to other segments of society. He was particularly concerned with developing employment opportunities for as many people as possible and with using employment not only to help the Hasidim support themselves but also to advance the cause of the movement.

In 1954, in accordance with these ideas, Schneerson established an agricultural school in Kfar Habad in Israel, one of the movement's main centers around the world. The aim of this school was to help the community sustain itself economically through agriculture and to provide self-reliant labor for the Habad community in Israel. The training of young Habad Hasidim as agricultural laborers, as opposed to sending them to study in a yeshiva, was at the time quite a revolutionary thing to do in the Israeli Hasidic world. The school established under this initiative provided vocations for Habad Hasidim and others who might not have had an aptitude for the yeshiva environment. Schneerson was visionary in seeing that all the members of the community could play a role of some kind in building the movement, and indeed, that in order to grow, Habad needed more than scholars and rabbis. His policy of agricultural education permitted people to work the land, support their communities, and yet still play a role in the Hasidic community. The school reflected Schneerson's realistic concern about the needs of the Israeli Habad community. It also demonstrated a concern for the nonscholarly that was somewhat lacking in other branches of Hasidism.

Apart from catering for the committed Hasidic community, the facilities established under Schneerson's direction drew many immigrants to the movement, especially in the early years of his leadership. They came initially to learn a useful

profession in a familiar environment, with others from East European backgrounds who spoke their language, but they were also exposed to the Habad philosophy and lifestyle. In addition to learning new professions, many also adopted the ideology of the movement and joined its ranks. In the early days of the movement, many new members were attracted in this way. In later years, the practice of training immigrants was effectively applied in Israel to large numbers of Sephardi Jews, many from Arab countries and largely discriminated against by both mainstream society and the predominantly Ashkenazi religious establishment. Habad was the only group to receive them with open arms. To this day, many older Yemenite and Moroccan Jews in Israel remain indebted to Habad and Schneerson for this, and many became committed Hasidim as a consequence of this outreach. The same is true of the many thousands of Russian Jews whom Habad helped to emigrate during the 1970s and the 1990s.

Worldwide, Habad's policy of self-sufficiency and self-employment led to a large number of innovative employment opportunities, many either previously unavailable or unnecessary. As local communities grew because of the work of Habad emissaries, it became necessary to provide certain necessities for the religious. Opportunity therefore existed for the establishment of kosher food outlets (including restaurants and fast food), matzo-baking programs, stores selling religious literature and paraphernalia, wigmakers, providers of kosher child care, and so forth. All of these services were necessary to maintain a religious community and were frequently previously unavailable in many areas. Such initiatives made it easier for non-Habad Jews to maintain a level of religious observance even if they did not subscribe completely to the Habad ideology. Schneerson was thus able to commence the "elevation of the sparks," a necessary component of the messianic doctrine at the core of Habad's outreach momentum.

Habad also contributed to the Jewish community by providing new synagogues, women's centers, yeshivas and study houses, drug rehabilitation centers, Internet services, summer camps, and public celebrations of Jewish festivals such as Hanukkah, Pesach, and Lag b'Omer. Outreach efforts included mitzvah-mobiles, worldwide public seders, Shabbat candle-lighting campaigns, toll-free telephone lectures, and holiday gifts and religious services for Israeli soldiers. Because all of these outreach efforts required people and money to implement, they brought employment for the community. Such efforts have given Habad a massive and powerful influence worldwide, quite disproportionate to its size.

The aforementioned organizations established by Schneerson during his early years as rebbe were attempts to mobilize all segments of the worldwide Habad community and to use each segment of the community—men, women, and children—in accordance with its capability and needs. He tried to provide employment, self-fulfillment, Jewish education, and a sense of community, while remaining steadfast to wider outreach goals. The strategy he undertook indicated that he did not demand a uniform brand of dedication or effort, but desired different Hasidic communities and individuals to participate in his movement and vision according to their disposition. This pluralism was evident in many of his projects.

## Fund-raising

The Habad movement worldwide is dependent on its ability to draw funds from individual donors in each local community. Habad has been organized such that community initiatives are mostly locally sponsored, so each community must cultivate capable individuals and teams for fund-raising purposes. The mentality of many Habad Hasidim and the indication of success within the movement is therefore often focused on fund-raising ability. There are stories of young, inexperienced Hasidim, newly arrived in an area, who have both naively and brazenly approached wealthy individuals for sponsorship, with remarkable success in raising exorbitant amounts of money for their projects. This success has created a cargo-cult mentality, whereby the community relies heavily on funding that often arrives unexpectedly or from unusual sources, and huge projects may be started with no idea of where the funding for their completion will come from. The success of this outreach technique has contributed to the sense of a divinely ordained mission, as unexpected sources of funding often turn up to cover expenses when needed.

The lucrative potential of religious fund-raising has made Habad activists sensitive to fund-raising issues, with the result that for many, fund-raising has developed into a way of life. The Jewish world has been more inclined to donate to Habad projects than to other Jewish causes because of the success of the movement and its high public profile. The appeal of Habad to many wealthy Jews with post-Holocaust guilt and distant nostalgia for the old life was a result of Habad's ability to mix tradition with innovation and modern ways with ancient custom. Even benefactors inclined more to the Conservative or Reform segments of the Jewish world preferred to support Habad institutions because of their noticeable difference from the more modern Jewish movements: the product was more distinct, more tangibly Jewish, and more appealing to donors who wanted to see hard results from their charity dollars. The image of Habad as a modern form of Hasidism appealed to donors and conversely helped cement these images into Habad's own sense of identity.

Because the movement had solid achievements to show and was seen as acting for the benefit of Judaism as a whole, it attracted more donations from the local community and from wealthy donors. The donors were impressed by the results achieved by Habad's outreach projects, and many who had often desired to give were now able to do so, secure in the knowledge that their money would not be wasted. The cycle of donation that Habad has been able to establish began with the enthusiasm of Habad emissaries for hard work and their willingness to support ideals without remuneration, and ended in the strategic donor's recognition of the solid investment he or she was making to a truly charitable cause. In a domino effect, the availability of funds attracted more voluntarism and more activities as well as larger, more ambitious ventures. In 1992 alone, the movement as a whole is believed to have received more than \$100 million in contributions.

The Habad policy of free services, free seating in synagogues, and free food at events was appealing to many donors. The services provided by Habad survived on the generosity of satisfied patrons, and therefore were a refreshing change from the distasteful practice in many synagogues of charging for these things. To many

donors, the break with moneymaking religious practice was attractive for the resulting sense of spirituality and the refreshing separation of religious services and money. For wealthy donors, the issue was not the money but the cause. The spiritual appeal of Habad for many donors did not result purely from its refusal to charge for services. The sense of authenticity and the unapologetic Jewishness of the movement appealed to those who did not feel able to be as committed or open about their own observance of Jewish tradition.

The movement's activities were carried out on a shoestring budget, fired by an ideology that inspired a sense of true commitment and self-sacrifice. As Habad became more prosperous, and the availability of funds increased, the expansion did not create laziness, but opened up more opportunities for determined, trained, experienced activists. The movement's executors were not merely bureaucrats, but ideologues who would seek to use the charity in the most effective and innovative ways, with the consideration not based so much on impressing the donor, but on carrying out the will of the rebbe and his mission.

Unlike earlier generations, where fund-raising was a specialist activity, in Habad even community rabbis and activists have had to become proficient in the pursuit of funding for their projects. The fund-raising concept became part of the consciousness of Habad and was not an activity reserved for the rebbe. The effect of fund-raising on a large scale, with individual communities responsible for their own budgets, has created a very wealthy network of organizations and wealthy patrons who feel personal responsibility for them. Especially interesting is that each Habad emissary has become adept at community administration and human interaction in a profound way, and sometimes the schools and synagogue and yeshiva and mikvah and other services are the size of middle-size businesses or industries. It has been commented that were some of these emissaries industrialists or administrators in the free market, they would have had financial empires by now. In this context, their dedication to the welfare of the Jewish community is often more deeply appreciated.

### Selected Bibliography

- Deutch, S. S. 1997. *Larger Than Life: The Life and Times of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson*, vol. II. Brooklyn, NY: Chasidic Historical Productions.
- Ehrlich, M. A. 2004. *The Messiah of Brooklyn: Understanding Lubavitch Hasidism Past and Present*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV.
- Fishkoff, Sue. 2005. *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch*. New York: Schocken.
- Levin, D. B. 1988. *History of Chabad in the U.S.A. 1900-1950* [Hebrew]. Brooklyn, NY: Kehos.
- Mintz, Jerome R. 1968. *Legends of the Hasidim—An Introduction to Hasidic Culture and Oral Tradition in the New World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mintz, Jerome R. 1992. *Hasidic People*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



# Africa

## Jews in Africa

*Saul Issroff with the assistance of Moshe Silberhaft*

---

**General Population:** 775–900 million. It should be noted that population estimates for most African countries are variable; the effects of high mortality due to AIDS can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population and growth rates, and more changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected.

**Jewish Population:** 87,200 (estimated)

**Jewish Population by Country:** South Africa, 72,000 (52,000 in Johannesburg and 17,000 in Cape Town); Morocco, 5,500; Tunisia, 1,100; Ghana, 800; Democratic Nairobi, 280; Zimbabwe, 200; Republic of Congo, 120; Botswana, 100; Egypt, 100; Mauritius, 65; Swaziland, 50; Algeria, 50–100; Madagascar, 40; Tanzania, 20; Ethiopia, unknown

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Waves of immigration from the Middle East and Southern and Eastern Europe account for the Jewish populations in Africa. For the past 50 years serious concerns over deteriorating personal and national security situations led to Jews immigrate to Israel, the United States, Canada, France, England, and Australia instead of African nations.

---

### Historical Overview

According to Jewish biblical tradition, Jews descended from the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—went to Egypt. They were later expelled, passing through the desert on their way back to Palestine, which was periodically occupied by the pharaohs. Survivors of the destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE founded a Jewish military colony in Elephantine, Egypt.

In the fourth century BCE, after Alexander the Great's conquests, more extensive Jewish settlement occurred. He invited Jews to settle in Alexandria, which became a cultural center. The Old Testament was translated into Greek, the Septuagint translation.

By the second century BCE, Cyrene and Carthage had Jewish settlement. Some Jewish traditions remain in many areas today.

During Roman times, Jews were noted as far west as Gibraltar, and they had significant political and economic importance. At times this led to clashes with their neighbors, as in Alexandria. Jerusalem fell in 70 CE, and Zealots fled to Egypt where they fomented a Jewish revolt, capturing large parts of the countryside but not any urban areas. The Roman suppressed these uprisings. During the great revolt of 115–117 CE, uprisings spread along North Africa as far as Cyrene, and at times large areas of Egypt were under Jewish control before the revolt violently suppressed. With the rise of Christianity, further anti-Jewish riots occurred in Alexandria. In the sixth century, the Byzantines reoccupied North Africa and further suppression of the Jews occurred.

The ancient links between Jews from Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and active Jewish proselytizing on the coast and in the interior left traces of Jewish tradition and practice among the Ethiopians, Berbers, and some African tribes. In the seventh century, Arab invaders record only small scattered Jewish communities, and these lost the Greco-Roman influences and became Arabized in tradition and language. In Egypt Fostat (Old Cairo) was a Jewish town. In Tunisia Kairouan was a main center of rabbinic teaching from the 8th to the 11th centuries. Documents saved in the Cairo genizah describe the religious and social life of the Jews of this era. Sa'adia Gaon, a prominent rabbi and Jewish philosopher of the ninth and tenth centuries CE, was born in the Fayyum region of Egypt. Other Jews, writing mostly in Arabic, contributed significantly to medicine, science and philosophy.

In the 11th century, under Muslim rule, conditions for the Jews were generally good, but there were times of persecution. The Almohad Arabs in the 12th century prohibited the practice of Judaism in Morocco, and forcible conversion to Islam occurred.

Numerous Jews, including Moses Maimonides, went east to Egypt. A slow recovery of Jewish life in the west occurred after the Almohad rule diminished. The expulsions of the Jews from Spain in 1391 set off migrations of refugees; some were practicing Jews, but later this group included conversos who wanted to go back to Judaism. Migrations increased again after the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492. Spanish Jews with their own customs, largely following the takkanah of Castile, lived alongside older Arab and Berber communities. In many places specific Jewish quarters were built, and Jews had to live under Muslim codes, were excluded from certain occupations, and had to wear specific clothing to identify them as Jews. In coastal ports they were often traders, especially with European merchants, and they were also sometimes envoys to European leaders. A few became influential as viziers or ministers of finance. The Jews had little influence in the interior, however.

Slightly better conditions prevailed in Egypt and the northeast, especially after Turkish domination in the 16th century. North African Jews emerged from an almost medieval status with growing European influence from the early 1800s in Algeria to Morocco in 1912.

A number of groups throughout Africa claim historical links with Jews. The most feasible claim is that of the Beta Israel of Ethiopia, recognized by the Israeli government as Jews in 1975, and many were airlifted to Israel. The Israeli Sephardi chief rabbi decided they were descendants of the 10 lost tribes, probably from the tribe of Dan, reinforced by many centuries of rabbinical responsa that discussed these issues. But historical and DNA evidence suggest different origins. The practices of the Beta Israel differ significantly from those of other forms of Judaism. For instance, they do not celebrate the festivals of Purim and Hanukkah.

The Lemba live in the Transvaal in Southern Africa. They were a migrant group that, according to oral tradition, originated in Saana (probably Yemen). The Lemba have some Jewish practices, such as constraints on intermarriage with non-Lemba, and they have a Y-DNA similarity in markers to Kohanim (a Y chromosome known as the Cohen modal haplotype).

In Mali, several thousand people in Timbuktu claim some form of Jewish ancestry. Moors and Jews, fleeing persecution in Spain, migrated south in the 14th century to Timbuktu (part of the Songhai empire). Among them was the Kehath (Ka'ti) family who founded three villages that still exist near Timbuktu. Askia Muhammed came to power in 1492 and forced Jews to convert to Islam or leave. After this Judaism became illegal in Mali.

In Nigeria, the Igbo (Ibo) may be descended from the southern and westward migrations of ancient Semitic peoples and later Jewish peoples from the Middle East into West Africa. There are three groups: Bnei Gat, said to have descended from tribe of Gat, the eighth son of Jacob; Bnei Zebulun, from the tribe of Zebulun the fifth son of Jacob; and Bnei Menashe. Bnei Ephraim are different from other Nigerian Jewish groups as they live among the Yoruba.

In western Ghana, the House of Israel community of Sefwi Wiawso and Sefwi Sui claim that their Sefwi ancestors are descendants of Jews who migrated south through Ivory Coast. The practice of Judaism in this community is recent and dates from the early 1970s.

The Abayudaya, a group founded in 1919, now consists of about 600 black Ugandans who practice Judaism in eastern Uganda. They observe Jewish holidays, sing Hebrew songs, observe kashruth, perform circumcisions, and keep the Sabbath, as they have for generations. In February 2002, they underwent a formal conversion led by five Conservative rabbis, but they are not recognized as Jewish by Orthodox rabbis. They receive aid from Israel and from a U.S. organization, Kulanu.

In Somalia, the Yibir (or Hebrew) tribe is looked down on as descendants of Israelites. Their sultan and his ancestors have been Muslim for 800 years, and they are believed to have come as Arabic-speaking teachers. There are about 25,000 Yibirs in Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. They do not have traditions or knowledge of Judaism.

A tribe in Rusape, Zimbabwe, claims ancient Jewish tribal connections. The practice of Judaism in this small community dates from 1903.

Jews came to Eritrea from Yemen in the late 19th century, and a few European refugees arrived in the 1930s, some going to Israel after 1948. In October 1944, the British, administering both Eritrea and Palestine, removed 251 detainees from the Latrun internment camp and imprisoned them in Sambel. The British navy returned the survivors to Israel in July 1948. Virtually all the remaining Jews left during the violence of Eritrea's 30-year struggle for independence from Ethiopia. The 100-year-old synagogue is a simple building, and the cemetery has 150 graves. As of 2006, one Jew still lived in Asmara. Israel recognized independent Eritrea in 1993.

There was no Jewish settlement of any significance in south and east Africa until the 19th century. By 1880, South Africa had approximately 4,000 Jews, mainly Ashkenazi of English and German extraction. A large number of predominantly Lithuanian Jews, estimated at 40,000, migrated between 1880 and 1914, and another group of around 10,000 migrated during the 1920s. In the 1930s, about 7,000 German Jews went to South Africa. This community peaked at around 115,000 in the 1970s, but has diminished because of emigration to the United States, Australia, England, Canada, and Israel. In 2006, the Jewish population in South Africa was approximately

75,000. A small number of Sephardi Jews from the island of Rhodes went initially to the former Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), then to southern Rhodesia, and after independence to South Africa.

Tanzania has a few dozen Jews but no organized community.

Botswana has about 100 Jews mainly in the capital, Gaborone. The community, formally constituted in 1994, is one of the few growing Jewish communities in Africa.

In 2007, about 40 Jews lived in Madagascar (a French colony until independence in 1960); they are members of *Diaspora Jiosy Gasy* (Diaspora Jewish Malagasy) and have mainly Zionist interests. In 1940, Hitler proposed deporting European Jews to Madagascar as a solution to the Jewish question. This was not a new plan; similar plans were suggested by the British, French, and Polish after World War I, and it is known that as early as 1885, Paul de Lagarde was keen on deporting Eastern European Jews to Madagascar. In 1926 and 1927, Poland and Japan each investigated the possibility of using Madagascar to solve their overpopulation problems. Adolf Eichmann prepared a report on Madagascar in early 1938, and in May 1940, while France was being taken, Hitler approved the idea of sending Jews to the African colony. The Madagascar Plan became technically unfeasible later that year when the Germans lost the Battle of Britain.

Mauritius is an island republic in the Indian Ocean. In 1941, approximately 1,600 Jewish refugees were refused entry to Palestine and deported to Mauritius (then a British colony). They were held as virtual prisoners for the remainder of the war, but were aided by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Many of the surviving refugees went to Israel after the war, arriving in Haifa on August 26, 1945. More than 127 of these internees died and are buried in St. Martin's cemetery. As of 2007, about 65 Jews live on Mauritius.

Mozambique (a Portuguese colony until gaining independence in 1975) has a small Jewish community. Ashkenazim and Sephardim migrated to Maputo (previously Lourenco Marques) and built a synagogue in 1926, and some Jewish refugees arrived during World War II. After independence civil war broke out, and most of the Jews left for South Africa. The synagogue was confiscated and the 100-year-old cemetery fell into disrepair. After 1990 a small number of Jews again arrived, mainly expatriates working for international relief organisations. A non-Jewish businessman facilitated the restoration of the synagogue and the cemetery. A few Portuguese-speaking Jews remain.

Swaziland has a small Jewish community of 50 people in the capital, Mbabane, including some Israelis, South African Jews, and descendents from World War II refugees. Key Jewish figures include Stanley Sapire, who served as chief justice of the Swazi Court of Appeal, and Rabbi Natan Gamedze, a Swazi prince who converted to Judaism and teaches in Tzafat, Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Browning, Christopher. 1990. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, edited by Israel Gutman, s.v. "Madagascar Plan," 936. New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA.
- Fisher, Ian. 2000 "Djibouti Journal: Somalia's 'Hebrews' See a Better Day." *New York Times*, August 15. <http://www.haruth.com/JewsSomalia.html> (accessed May 7, 2007).

- “Jews of Ghana.” Haruth Communication Web site. [www.haruth.com/jw/JewsGhana.html](http://www.haruth.com/jw/JewsGhana.html) (accessed May 7, 2007).
- Lapidot, Yehuda. “In Africa Exile.” The Irgun Site. <http://www.etzel.org.il/english/ac15.htm> (accessed April 2007).
- Levy, Samuel J. 1997–2003. “The Jews of Mozambique.” <http://www.saudades.org/jewsmoz.html> (accessed April 2007).
- Oded, Arye. 1974. “The Bayudaya of Uganda: A Portrait of an African Jewish Community.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 6: 167–186.
- Oded, Arye. 1995. *Religion and Politics in Uganda: A Study of Islam and Judaism*. Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers.
- Pitot, Genevieve. 2000. *The Mauritian Shekel: The Story of Jewish Detainees in Mauritius, 1940–1945*. Oxford, UK: Rowan and Lilienfield.
- Saks, David. 2004. “Contemporary Jewish Africa.” *Jewish Affairs* 59:2.
- Silberhaft, Moshe. 1998. Mauritius. Johannesburg: African Jewish Congress.
- Silberhaft, Moshe. 2005. “Launching the Jewish Community of Mauritius.” African Jewish Congress Web site. <http://www.africanjewishcongress.com/MAURITIUS.htm> (accessed May 15, 2008).
- Sobol, Richard, and Jeffrey A. Summit. 2005. *Abayudaya: The Jews of Uganda*. New York: Abbeville Press.
- Weiss, Mara. 2008. The Virtual History Tour: Ghana. Jewish Virtual Library. [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/ghana.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/ghana.html) (accessed May 7, 2007).

## Migrations of Jews into West Africa

*Ehav Eliyahu*

---

### Legends of Semitic Migrations into the Maghreb (North Africa)

According to most accounts, the earliest Israeli settlements in Africa were in places such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Ethiopia. Historians believe these settlements may have been in existence as early as the kingdoms of David and Solomon, as well as during the Assyrian invasion of northern Israel in 722 BCE and the Babylonian Captivity of Judah in 586 BCE in the Punic-Carthaginian age. These communities were augmented by subsequent arrivals of Jews after the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, when 30,000 Jewish slaves were settled throughout Carthage by the Roman emperor Titus.

Africa is identified in various Jewish sources in connection with Tarshish and Ophir (Tamid, 32b, and the parallel passage where “African land” is evidently the same as Carthage). The Septuagint (Isaiah xxiii. 1) and Jerome (on Ezekiel xxvii.), who was taught by Jews—and very often the targum on the prophets—identify the Biblical Tarshish with Carthage, which was the birthplace of a number of rabbis mentioned in the Talmud. Africa, in the broader sense, is clearly indicated where mention is made of the 10 tribes having been driven into exile by the Assyrians and having journeyed into Africa (Mek., Bo, 17; Tosef., Shab. vii. 25; Deuteronomy R. v. 14; and especially Sanh. 94a). Connected with this is the idea that the river Sambation

is in Africa. The Arabs, who also know the legend of the Beni Musa (Sons of Moses), agree with the Jews in placing their land in Africa.

### Migrations into Sub-Saharan Africa

In later centuries Jews are believed to have settled in western Africa during the height of the Songhai, Mali, Ghana, and Kanem-Bornu empires. According to accounts from explorers of the region, several powerful Jewish families of the Songhai empire were of Jewish origin, until Askia Muhammad came to power and in 1492 decreed that all Jews either convert to Islam or leave the region.

According to certain records in Timbuktu, an older community was formed by a group of Egyptian Jews who traveled by way of the Sahel corridor through Chad into Mali. Another community was that of the Zuwa (Juwa) ruler of Koukiya (located near the Niger River), whose name is only known as Zuwa Alayman (or Zuwa min al Yaman) meaning “He comes from Yemen.” Local legends state that Zuwa Alayman was a member of one of the Jewish colonies transported from Yemen by the Abyssinians in the sixth century CE. Zuwa Alayman is said to have traveled into West Africa along with his brother, and eventually established a local Jewish community between Mali and northern Nigeria. Some accounts place West African Jewish communities in the Ondo forest of Dahomei south of Timbuktu; in the 1930s these groups still maintained a Torah scroll written in Aramaic that had been burned into parchment with a hot iron instead of ink so it could not be changed.

The decline of the Jewish communities of the West Africa-Maghreb most likely began with the influx of Arab invaders into North Africa starting in 640 CE and later into West Africa in the 1300s and 1400s CE. The Jewish Berber Queen Kahina Dahiyah Bint Thabitah ibn Tifan, who was also known as El Kahina, led the most notable uprising against the invasion. Believed to have been a descendent of the Israeli priestly class, El Kahina was able to lead North African Jews, Berbers, Christians, and Greeks alike against the invasion until her defeat at the hands of the Arab commander Hassan Ibn Numan.

In the 1600s, the restrictions on Jewish travel from North Africa lessened, allowing Jewish merchants such as Rabbi Mordecia Serour (1831–1880) to make trade expeditions between Morocco and Mali.

### Selected Bibliography

- Gonen, Rivka. 2002. *The Quest for Ten Lost Tribes of Israel: To the Ends of the Earth*. Northville, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Kati, Mahmud al-. 1999. *Les Juifs à Tombouctou, or Jews of Timbuktu, Recueil de sources écrites relatives au commerce juif à Tombouctou au XIXe siècle*, edited by by Ismael Diadie. Bamako, Mali: Editions Donniya.
- Margolis, Max, and Alexander Marx. 1947. *History of the Jewish People*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Meek, C. K. 1925. *Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, vol. 1. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 66.

# Jews in Algeria

*Saul Issroff*

---

General Population: 29 million

Jewish Population: 50–100

Jewish Population by City: Oran, Blida, Algiers

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Algeria gained independence from France in 1962 and the majority of Jews immigrated to Israel or France.

Languages Spoken: Arabic, French, Hebrew,

---

## Historical Overview

10,000 BCE Berbers (or Imazighen) settled in Algeria.

1,000 BCE Carthaginians settle on the coast; Jews live in at least seven coastal cities.

200 BCE Carthage falls to the Romans. Emerging Berber kingdoms become independent. Some Berber tribes, notably those led by Queen Kahina, convert to Judaism before Islam spreads to the region. Jews live in many major Muslim cities as stated in early descriptions of Tahert, the Rustamid capital. Berbers are again independent in much of the western region.

5th–6th century CE Vandal conquests of Algeria mark the period. Under the later rule of eastern Byzantine Christians (Emperor Justinian I) Jews are subjected to social, religious, and economic restrictions.

665 CE The first Arab invasion fails.

688 CE The second Arab invasion succeeds; they conquer the Byzantines.

1142–1147 Massacres of Jews in Tlemcen, Bougie, Oran, and other cities.

1391 After Spanish riots, many Jews settle in Algeria. Settlement continues until

1492 in the cities of Oran, Algiers, Constantine, and Tlemcen.

1510 Algeria brought into the Ottoman Empire by a pirate, Khair ad Din (Barbarossa), who seizes Algiers on the pretext of defending it from the Spaniards.

1516 During the Turkish regency, Jews are subject to the statute of dhimmi.

1801–1805 The first and second Barbary Wars take place.

1830 France invades and Hussein Dey signs the act of capitulation.

1835–1839 Autonomy of Algerian Jewry is limited.

1841 Jewish courts (beth din) are abolished.

1845 Consistories (ecclesiastical offices) are formed in Algiers, Oran, and Constantine.

1870 Jews are granted French citizenship under the Crémieux decree.

1931 Jews make up less than 2 percent of Algeria's population.

1934 Muslims attack Jews in Constantine.

1940 Marshall Petain and the Vichy government repeal the *Crémieux* decree.

1943–1945 Algerian Jews participate in World War II in Tunisia, Italy, France, and Germany.

### The Arab Period

Berber leaders such as Kusayla and Kahina resisted fiercely for some decades, but eventually adopted Islam en masse, then almost immediately expelled the Umayyad caliphate from Algeria and establishing an Ibadi state under the Rustamids. Shia Fatimids converted the Kutama of Kabylie to their cause, overthrew the Rustamids, and conquered Egypt. They left Algeria and Tunisia to their Zirid vassals. The Zirads rebelled and adopted Sunnism, and the Fatimids sent in a populous Arab tribe, the Banu Hilal, to weaken them, thus incidentally initiating the Arabization of the countryside. The Almoravids and Almohads, Berber dynasties from the west that were founded by religious reformers, brought a period of relative peace and development. However, with the collapse of the Almohads, Algeria became a battleground for their three successor states, the Algerian Zayyanids, Tunisian Hafsid, and Moroccan Marinids.

Until the 12th century, little is known of the history of the Jews of Algeria. In the black period of Almohads, Moroccan invaders persecuted, converted, and massacred Jews. Spanish rabbis imposed their authority on the local communities and included outstanding 14th- and 15th-century scholars, such as the Rav Yitzchak ben Sheshet Perfet (the *Ribash*) and Rav Shimon ben Zemah Duran (the *Rashbatz*).

Barbarossa subsequently recognized the Ottoman sultan's rule over the territory he controlled, and he was appointed the sultan's regent in the Maghreb. Piracy continued for three centuries and attacks on American vessels in the Mediterranean resulted in the First and Second Barbary Wars (1801–1805).

### The Turkish Period

Under the Turkish regency in 1516 Jews were subject to the statute of *dhimmi* (laws for indigenous Jews and Christians). A particular dress was proscribed for them, the green and red *chechia*. They were not permitted to carry weapons or ride horses, only donkeys and mules. The Jews had a *moukadem* (a rabbinical court with authority over civil and penal law). They also collected taxes. At the same time, commercial activities of certain Jewish families expanded, reinforced by the arrival of Livornian Jews. Jewish merchants largely prospered under Ottoman rule. The millet system (legal courts for non-Muslim minorities) has a long history in the Middle East and is closely linked to Islamic rules for the treatment of non-Muslim minorities (*dhimmi*). Minorities were allowed to rule themselves with little interference from the Ottoman government.

### The French Period

The French invaded Algeria in May 1830 and sent a regent to govern. The French attack was in response to Husseing Dey's demands that the French government pay large outstanding wheat debts to two Jewish merchants, Bacri and Busnach. The majority of the Constantine Jews welcomed the French arrival. On July 5, 1830, Hussein Dey signed the act of capitulation, ensuring the freedom of religion, property, and trade for all. Between 1835 and 1839, with the support of Louis Philippe, a commission to reform worship effectively limited the autonomy of Algerian Jewry.

The French restructured the Ottoman millet system. They distinguished French citizens (who had the vote, were subject to French laws, and had to do army service) from Jewish and Muslim indigenous people, who had their own laws and courts. Jewish courts (*beth din*) were abolished in 1841. In 1845, Consistories (ecclesiastical offices), similar to the French model, were formed in Algiers, Oran, and Constantine. French chief rabbis were appointed with the duty “to inculcate unconditional obedience to the laws, loyalty to France, and the obligation to defend it.” Jews were granted French citizenship, under the *Crémieux* decree of 1870, in response to French Jewish pressures. North African Jews were considered backward, and the perceived need was to modernize them. Algerian Jews took on French cultural attributes and many spoke French.

Anti-Semitic attacks were encouraged by the Dreyfus affair, the French political scandal of the 1890s and early 1900s that led to the unjust persecution of a Jewish military officer. In World War I, nearly all Algerian Jews supported France. By 1931, Algiers, Constantine, and Oran had Jewish populations of more than 7 percent, as did many smaller cities, such as Ghardaia and Setif. One smaller town, Messad, had a Jewish majority. Jews mainly supported the parties of the left. In 1934, Muslims, encouraged by Nazi Germany, attacked Jews in Constantine, killing 25 and injuring many others.

## World War II

After the French-German armistice of June 1940, Marshall Petain and his Vichy government had considerable support among Europeans in the Maghreb. The law of October 7, 1940, repealed the *Crémieux* decree. On June 2, 1941, a second statute ordered a census of all Jews and their goods. The statute of August 14, 1941, applied discriminatory measures, such as dismissal of civil servants and teachers and limits on professionals and students. Preparations to set up a *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) were made. Many Algerian Jews were put into concentration camps. In Algiers Jews were prominent in the Resistance; some notable fighters were Jose Aboulke and Rene Moatti. They assisted the Allies in the successful invasion of Algeria in November 1942. Vichy administrators and discriminatory measures remained. The 1940 law was abolished, but the *Crémieux* decree was kept until October 1943. Many Jews took part in the fighting in Tunisia, Italy, France, and Germany between 1943 and 1945. After the war the Jews of Algeria regained their rights despite some opposition from anti-Semitic French bureaucrats such as Francois Darlan, the high commissioner for North Africa. After his assassination Jewish underground leaders were charged with collaborating with the assassins. Another Vichy leader, General Giraud, replaced Darlan. He repealed the racist laws, but reinstated the *Crémieux* decree. General de Gaulle took over and with some reluctance finally restored Jewish rights.

## Contemporary Overview

Algerian Jews were subject to both Oriental and Western cultures. On November 1, 1954, before the Algerian war of independence, this rich culture became a trap. Jewish names and culture were strongly oriental. Algerian Jews were also very loyal

to France. The 1961 referendum on self-determination was strongly supported in Jewish districts. After independence in 1962, the Algerian government again deprived Jews of their civil and economic rights. As a result, almost 130,000 Algerian Jews emigrated to France. An estimated 25,681 Algerian Jews went to Israel after 1948.

In 1994, the terrorist organization Armed Islamic Group declared its intention to eliminate Jews from Algeria. After the announcement, many of the rest left. The few remaining Jews live mainly in Algiers, although a few live in Oran and Blida. A single synagogue functions in Algiers, but there is no rabbi. All other synagogues have been taken over for use as mosques. The Jewish Communities of Algiers and Blida have offices of the Consistoire d'Algérie

### Important Personalities

Following is a list of important Algerians of Jewish descent:

- Jacques Attali (born 1943), a French economist, writer, and scholar, who also served as adviser to the president of France from 1981 to 1991, was born in Algeria.
- Baruj Benacerraf (born in 1920 to an Algerian mother) an immunologist, won the 1980 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discovering the major histocompatibility complex genes. His brother is Paul Benacerraf, a philosopher and mathematician.
- Claude Cohen-Tannoudji (born 1933), a physicist who won the 1997 Nobel Prize in Physics, was born in Constantine, Algeria.
- Robert Cohen (born 1930), was the World Bantamweight Boxing Champion from 1954 to 1956.
- Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) was an Algerian-born French literary critic and deconstructionist philosopher.
- Claude Lelouch, a film director, has an Algerian father.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abitbol, Michel. 1990. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*. Vol. 1, s.v. "Algeria." New York: MacMillan, 18–22.
- "Aidez nous a etablir la liste des noms de famille des Juifs d'Algerie." <http://www.zlabia.com/http://www.zlabia.com/genealogie.htm> (accessed May 7, 2007).
- Ayoun, Richard. 1986. *Problématique des conflits internes de la communauté Juive; Simon Kanouï, Président du Consistoire Israélite D'oran*. Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, August 4–12, Jerusalem: 75–82.
- Ayoun, Richard, and Bernard Cohen. 1982. *Les juifs d'Algérie: 2000 ans d'histoire*. [Jews of Algeria: 2000 Years of History]. Judaiques. Paris: JC Lattès.
- Bahloul, Joëlle. 1992. *La maison de mémoire: ethnologie d'une demeure judéo-arabe en Algérie: (1937–1961)* [The house of memory: ethnology of a Judeo-Arabic residence in Algeria: (1937–1961)]. Traversées. Paris: Éditions Métailié.
- Bard, Mitchell. 2008. "The Jews of Algeria." Jewish Virtual Library. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/anti-semitism/algjews.html> (accessed May 7, 2007).
- Garrot, Henri. 1898. *Les Juifs algériens, leurs origines* [Algerian Jews, Their Origins]. Alger: Librairie Louis Relin.

Israel, Jonathan Irvine. 1994. "The Jews of Spanish Oran and their expulsion in 1669." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 9 (2): 235–255.

"The Jewish Communities of Algeria." The Shema Yisrael Torah Network Smicha Program Web site. <http://www.amyisrael.co.il/africa/algeria/> (accessed May 7, 2007).

"Rabbis of Algeria." 2004. Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture. <http://www.sephardicstudies.org/r-alg.html> (accessed May 7, 2007).

Schaub, Jean-Frederic. 1999. *Les Juifs Du Roi D'Espagne*. Paris: Hachette, 240.

Schwarzfuchs, Simon. 1981. *Les Juifs D'Algérie Et La France (1830–1855)*. Jerusalem: Institut Ben Zvi.

"World Jewish Communities: Middle East and North Africa (Maghreb)." World Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/comm\\_middle.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/comm_middle.html#) (accessed May 7, 2007).

## Jews in Cape Verde

*Carol S. Castiel*

---

The story of the Jews of Cape Verde and their descendants has yet to be fully researched and documented, but it constitutes an important, little-known chapter in the history of the Jewish Diaspora. Evidence shows that from the period of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition through the 19th century, Cape Verde hosted Jews fleeing religious persecution or seeking greater economic stability. Although a minority in a predominantly Catholic country, Jewish settlers and their descendants have exerted—and continue to exert—a positive and enduring influence on the economic, political, and cultural life of the tiny African nation of approximately 500,000. In the early 20th century, the well-loved Jewish businessman and philanthropist, David Benoliel, was known to have literally fueled the economy of the tiny island of Boa Vista. He was the son of Abraham Benoliel and Esther Benathar Benoliel, natives of Rabat, Morocco. The first democratically elected prime minister of Cape Verde, in 1991, was Carlos Alberto Wahnnon de Carvalho Veiga, a prominent lawyer and great-grandson of Rachel and Isaac Wahnnon, Jews who came to Cape Verde via Gibraltar in the mid-1800s. Gardenia Benros, the great-great-grand daughter of Isaac Benros of Tangier, is a well-known Cape Verdean vocalist based in Boston, Massachusetts.

Jews settled in Cape Verde, an archipelago of 10 islands, about 300 miles off the coast of Senegal, West Africa, in two distinct waves. The first wave arrived with Portuguese colonialists who began settling the uninhabited islands in the mid-1400s. (The Portuguese subsequently ruled the islands for more than 500 years.) The Jews came as New Christians, or forced converts to Catholicism. Unlike Spain, Portugal did not expel its Jewish population at the start of the Inquisition; rather, Jews were baptized by force. Although many New Christians were known to have secretly practiced Judaism, the furtive nature of their identity has made it difficult for historians to accurately assess their numbers, impact, and legacy.

In contrast, it is much easier to verify and analyze the second wave of Jewish settlement, which occurred in the mid-1800s. Several small cemeteries that dot the

archipelago are the most tangible reminders of the presence of Sephardi Jews hailing primarily from Moroccan cities of Tangier, Rabat, and Mogador (now Essaouira) and from Gibraltar. Their ancestors probably fled to Muslim Morocco after 1492 to escape the Inquisition. They began arriving in the Portuguese colony of Cape Verde after 1821, the year in which the Portuguese Inquisition was officially abolished. Jews could openly return to Portugal and its territories, like Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Mozambique, without fear of persecution. The tombstones have distinctive Sephardic names, such as Cohen, Levy, Benoliel, Benrós, Wahnnon, Benathar, Benchimol, Brigham, Auday, Anahory, Pinto, Maman, and Seruya. The marble headstones are typical of those found in Jewish cemeteries throughout Morocco. These families landed primarily on the islands of Santo Antao, São Vicente, Boa Vista, and São Tiago and engaged in international commerce, shipping, civil service, and other trades. The cordial relationship between Britain and Portugal during the 19th century facilitated the movement of Jews from Tangier to neighboring Gibraltar, from whence they proceeded to Cape Verde. The arrival of Jews in Cape Verde coincided with British settlement there, primarily on the island of São Vicente. The British were engaged in building the port and other related commercial activities.

Some scholars suggest that the exodus to Cape Verde may have been prompted, in part, by the Spanish-Moroccan war of 1859–1860, which caused many Jews from Tangier and Tetuan to seek safe haven in Gibraltar and the Portuguese territories. Another possible impetus cited for the Jewish emigration to Cape Verde was the depression of 1873. Hence, economic pressures in northern Morocco may have spurred many young Jewish men to seek opportunities in the Cape Verde Islands and elsewhere, namely Brazil and Argentina. In those days, the Junta, a democratically elected body representing the Jewish community in Tangier, established a special fund for eligible applicants that covered the cost of passage to these distant lands.

However, because the majority of the settlers were male, and their numbers were few relative to the larger non-Jewish community, widespread intermarriage with the predominantly Catholic population occurred. This frequent intermingling gradually weakened the settlers' affiliation with Jewish customs and rituals. Although many of the prominent families, such as the Cohens, the Levys, the Benoliels, and the Wahnons, married among themselves, more often than not, Jewish men married and had children with indigenous Portuguese or Cape Verdean women. Hence their offspring, while retaining the Sephardic name of the father, would not formally be considered Jewish.

Interestingly, many of the offspring of mixed marriages were not baptized, illustrating that neither spouse was particularly observant, or perhaps that a spirit of compromise prevailed in the face of differing customs. Some of the settlers had children out of wedlock. As a result of these circumstances, there are virtually no practicing Jews in Cape Verde today. The Jews and their descendants became so thoroughly assimilated in Cape Verde that former Cape Verdean minister of culture, Ondina Ferreira, said that one did not know where their "Jewishness" left off and their Cape Verdean identity began!

Regardless, in talking with the descendants, many of whom still bear the distinctive Sephardic names of their paternal forebears, one encounters a sense of pride and identity with their Jewish heritage. Daniel Brigham, a prominent businessman (now deceased) in the capital city, Praia, stated, “When I was 10 years old, I witnessed my grandfather’s traditional Jewish burial. Although I am not religious, I try to follow the Ten Commandments. I’d like to think I conform to the basic tenets of the Jewish faith. I am very proud of the fact that I have a Jewish rib.”

By definition, Cape Verde is a mixed-race nation. From its history as a slave trading post the country endured centuries of intermingling between Portuguese colonialists and Africans. When the Jews arrived in the 19th century, they added to the rich cauldron of cultures. And although the original Jews of Cape Verde no longer exist, their legacy lives on through their descendants on the archipelago and abroad. The four small cemeteries that dot the rocky landscape of Cape Verde are a tangible reminder of the once thriving community in a country that warmly welcomed them and to which they contributed in countless ways. Efforts to restore the dilapidated cemeteries and to document the presence of the Jews of Cape Verde continue under the auspices of the Cape Verde–Israel Friendship Society whose president is Januario Nascimento (a descendant of the Jewish family, the Audays) and Carol Castiel, representative in Washington, DC.

### Selected Bibliography

- Benoliel, Israel. 1997. “Book Review of *The Jews of Cape Verde: A Brief History*.” *Cimboa* 4: 53.
- Castiel, Carol. 1995. “Cape Verde Hosts Jews.” *Washington Jewish Week*, January
- Castiel, Carol. 1995. Personal interview with Daniel Brigham.
- Castiel, Carol. 2000. “Recovering Jewish Heritage in the Cape Verde Islands.” In *Proceedings of World Bank Symposium on Historic Cities and Sacred Places*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

## Jewish Community of the Democratic Republic of Congo

*Moïse Rahmani*

*Translated by R. George Anticoni*

---

General Population: 65,000,000

Jewish Population: 120

Percent of Population: Less than 0.0001 percent

Jewish Population by City: Kinshasa, 70–110 (not all are permanently resident, but they are members of synagogue); Lubumbashi, 4; Other, 10 (not permanently resident)

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Some Italian officers migrated in 1880s, followed by a few Ashkenazis from South Africa and Rhodesia. Immigrants between 1914 and 1939

were primarily from Rhodes, and between 1946 and 1956 they were mainly Syrian, Lebanese, and Egyptian. European immigrants were predominant in the 1960s.

Languages Spoken: French, English, Hebrew

---

## Historical Overview

- 1880s First evidence of permanent Jewish presence
- 1885 Conference of Berlin recognizes the Kingdom of Congo as the property of King Leopold II of the Belgians.
- 1904 The town of Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) is founded in the Katanga (now Shaba) region, and the first Jews arrive there.
- 1908 Leopold II cedes the country to Belgium.
- 1909 The first minyan (prayer group of 10 men) is formed in Elisabethville, Katanga.
- 1911 Statutes of Jewish Community of Katanga are filed.
- 1912 The Solbena Company, founded by Salomon Benatar and Maurice J. Alhadeff, arrives in Elisabethville.
- 1915 Oldest Sephardi tombstone, of Abraham Benatar, is found in the Elisabethville cemetery.
- 1930 There is an influx of Jews from Rhodes.
- 1937 Rabbi Moise M. Levy from Rhodes is engaged by the Jewish community
- 1946 Authorization is given for more than 50 survivors of the Shoah to enter the country from Rhodes.
- 1960 The country gains its independence from Belgium, and Katanga secedes. The unrest promotes Jewish emigration
- 1973 President Mobutu nationalizes foreign businesses without compensation. As a result, more Jews emigrate. Diplomatic ties with Israel are severed.
- 1975 President Mobutu restores remnants of confiscated assets to rightful owners.
- 1983 Diplomatic ties with Israel are restored.
- 1987 A silver jubilee celebration of the appointment of Rabbi Moise M. Levy is organized by leaders of other faiths in Lubumbashi.
- 1991 and 1993 Foreign-owned assets are pillaged.
- 2003 Financial restrictions cause the closure of Israeli embassy in Kinshasa.
- 2004 Robert Levi founds the Merchant Trust Bank, which specializes in micro-credits.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Former generations included doctors, shopkeepers, diamond merchants, and cutters. There were also some substantial industrial enterprises involving oil milling, soap production, textile factories, and raw material importing. A Jew founded the Merchant Trust Bank, the only Congolese bank with headquarters outside the capital in Lubumbashi.

### Present Economic Conditions

In general, the large and medium-size Jewish-owned businesses of the past no longer exist. A few businesses survive, barely ticking over.

### Religious Denominations and Communal Institutions

The synagogue in Kinshasa survives and has an active community that is 50 percent Sephardi and 50 percent Ashkenazi. Community activities include a library, film club, and conferences. The group also publishes a magazine, *Kadima*. The former synagogue in Lubumbashi stands empty, although the two cemeteries, which had been abandoned, have been renovated and the stolen tombstones are being replaced. There is no organized Jewish life in Lubumbashi, as only a handful of Jews live there and not on a permanent basis.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The Jewish community in the Congo is shrinking and as of 2005 was reduced to about 120 persons. Political unrest and periodic lootings and pillaging at various times since independence have caused several waves of emigration to South Africa, Israel, and Europe.

### Selected Bibliography

- Errera, Milantia Boula. 2000. *Moïse Levy, un Rabbin a Congo (1937–1991)*. Brussels: Éditions La Longue Vue, Consistoire Israélite de Belgique.
- Rahmani, Moïse. 2002. *Shalom Bwana, la Saga des Juifs du Congo*. Paris: Éditions Romillat.
- Rahmani, Moïse. 2007. *Les Juifs du Congo, entre raison et espoir*. Brussels: European Sephardic Institute.
- Remy, Ilona. "Rabbi Rosen, Nigeria, Igbo Land and the Igbos." <http://members.aol.com/moreshetnet/igbo.html> (accessed April 2007).

## Jewish Community in Egypt

*Jeffrey S. Malka*

**Population of Egypt:** 80 million

**Jewish Population:** Less than 30 persons in 2007

**Percent of General Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Less than 30, all in Cairo and Alexandria

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Sephardim came in the 12th century, 16th century, and 19th century. Ashkenazim (5,000) came mostly in late 19th century. There were also indigenous Egyptian Jews and Karaite Jews.

**Languages Spoken:** Historically, almost all Egyptian Jews were multilingual. French was the primary language. English, Italian, and Ladino were common. The indigenous Egyptian Jews and Karaites spoke Arabic at home. Ashkenazim all spoke French at home and some were fluent in Yiddish.

## Historical Overview

- 1st millennium BCE Egypt has been part of Jewish history since the earliest of times. Joseph, Moses, Philo of Alexandria, the prophet Jeremiah, Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides), and the Sa'adia Gaon all lived in Egypt. After the Biblical Exodus, Jews returned to Egypt in 586 BCE and maintained an uninterrupted presence in that land ever since. There is even a local tradition that some Jews did not follow Moses and instead remained in Egypt settling in Asyut, where they formed a warrior tribe, thereby maintaining an uninterrupted Jewish presence in Egypt since the days of Joseph. Ben Ezra synagogue in old Cairo (Fostat-Goshen) is the world's oldest known synagogue. Believed to have been founded by Ezra the Scribe half a millennium before the common era, it stands, according to both Jewish and Coptic tradition, at the site where Moses was retrieved from the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter. The waters of the Nile still flood its basement.
- 1169 The medieval Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela mentions visiting the Ben Ezra synagogue in his 1169 travels.
- 1492 A wave of Sephardim exiles arrives from the Iberian Peninsula.
- 16th century Ashkenazim first arrive in Egypt when, as a sign of his favor, Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent grants Yosef ben Shlomo the unique privilege that Shlomo and his descendants would be perpetually exempt from taxation and have total religious freedom within his domains. In 1525, Shlomo, a Jew from Budapest, had delivered the keys of Budapest to the sultan's triumphant Ottoman armies. Fargeon reports that descendants of the Aleman family, as they became known, were still in Egypt as late as 1914, still taking advantage of their ancient tax exemption.
- 19th century Ashkenazim number about 5,000 and most arrive in the late 19th century, fleeing pogroms and anti-Semitism in Russia, Romania, and elsewhere. Economically, the mostly newly arrived Ashkenazim fare less well than the local Sephardim. Many live in Cairo's *harat al barabra*, though a number accumulate considerable wealth and move to the Cairo suburbs. Yiddish speaking, they maintain their own separate synagogues in Cairo, an Ashkenazic B'nai B'rith lodge (Loge Maimonide No. 366), a Yiddish theater, and a Yiddish radio station (that was still broadcasting as late as 1950). Founded in 1865, the main Ashkenazic synagogue in Cairo is located at Haret El Noubi, off Rue Farouk of the *harat el barabra*, and was known locally as the *Temple de la rue Farouk*. The 19th century also saw a large influx of Sephardim from other areas of the Ottoman Empire, mainly Aleppo, Baghdad, Izmir, Livorno, Salonica, and Tunis.
- 1948 About 70,000–80,000 Jews live in Egypt, approximately 55,000 in Cairo and most of the rest in Alexandria, although there are smaller communities in Port Said and smaller towns. Of these, 5,000 to 10,000 hold Egyptian citizenship, 40,000 are stateless, and 30,000 are foreign nationals (mostly Italian, French, British, and other), though most of those holding foreign nationality were born in Egypt.
- 1950s The long history of Jews in Egypt comes to a sad close in the 1950s under President Gamal Nasser when a second exodus takes place and most of the

Jews of Egypt either flee or are expelled, forced to leave behind all their property, jewelry, and cash, which are confiscated.

2007 Less than 30 Jews remain in Egypt, most of advanced age.

## Contemporary Overview

### Religious Denominations

Twentieth-century Egyptian Jewry consisted of four main groups. The most populous were the Sephardim, who first came to Egypt in the 12th century, followed in order by the indigenous Egyptian Jews; the Ashkenazim, and the ancient Karaite. The Sephardim and Ashkenazim were largely Francophone in language and culture and were rarely fluent in Arabic. English, Italian, Yiddish, or Judeo-Spanish were also commonly spoken. The indigenous Jews and the Karaites, inhabitants of Egypt for more than a millennium, usually spoke Egyptian Arabic and wore Egyptian-style clothing. Even so, nearly all the Jews in Egypt felt themselves distinct from the surrounding Egyptian Arab culture. The indigenous Jews, inhabiting Egypt for centuries and Egyptian in both language and culture, numbered 20,000 and were mostly goldsmiths and merchants. Many lived in Cairo's *harat al Yahud* (Jewish lane) neighboring *harat al barabra* (foreigners' lane), and in Alexandria's port district. Karaite Jews, numbered about 5,000 in Egypt in 1947 lived primarily in Cairo, where they maintained separate synagogues. Karaites are an ancient Jewish sect that broke away from rabbinic Judaism in the first millennium CE. Rejecting rabbinic interpretations (such as the Talmud), their religion and practices depend on the written texts of the five books of Moses (*kara'a* means "to read" in Hebrew) and maintained their own separate synagogues.

In Egypt, both Karaites and rabbinic Jews considered Karaites a Jewish sect, although both groups banned marriage with each other's members. Although many lived elsewhere, the traditional home of the Karaites was in Cairo's *harat al yahud al kar'in* (Karaite Jewish lane), which adjoins the *harat al yahud*. They buried their dead in their separate half of the Jewish Bassatine cemetery of Cairo, separated by a wall from the portion used by the rabbinic Jews. This Arab-speaking community of mainly goldsmiths and jewelers also produced several notable poets and playwrights. Their last chief rabbi in Egypt was Tuvia Bakovitch (1934–1956). Like the rest of Egyptian Jewry, they, too, have left Egypt and can now be found mostly in the San Francisco area and elsewhere in the United States.

Egypt had two chief rabbinate, one in Cairo and the other in Alexandria. Jewish communities in smaller Egyptian towns reported to and were administered by one or the other of these chief rabbinate. Cairo's Jews formed three autonomous communities (Sephardic, Ashkenazic, and Karaite), each administered separately. In Alexandria there was one unified Jewish community that included the majority Sephardim, the Ashkenazim (who were just as numerous as in Cairo), and the fewer than two dozen Karaite Jews of Alexandria. In the mid-20th century, Alexandria had several grand synagogues, both private and community-based Jewish schools, a dozen Jewish benevolent societies, a B'nai B'rith Lodge, a 140-bed Jewish hospital, several Alexandria-based Jewish periodicals (*Le Messenger Sioniste*, *La Revue*

*Israelite d’Egypte, La Voix Juive, and La Tribune Juive*), and a very active Jewish presence. After the 1950s Jewish exodus, Alexandria, ancient home of the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo, now has virtually no Jews left.

In Cairo, only one of three synagogues, Shaar Hashamayim, remains functioning (though only on Jewish holidays); it has been restored. Meyr Biton and Ben Ezra are no longer in use. It was in Ben Ezra synagogue’s genizah (storehouse of discarded sacred documents), however, that a treasure trove of ancient documents was found that have yielded so much information about medieval Jewish history, especially from around the 10th century.

### Jewish Educational and Communal Institutions

Cairo’s huge Bassatine cemetery is the oldest Jewish cemetery in the world after the Mount of Olives. Long occupied by homeless squatters, it is in sad shape, and its marbles have been plundered and lost. Alexandria has three Jewish cemeteries, two in Chatby and one in Mazarita (sometimes called the Chatby 1 cemetery). All three Alexandria cemeteries are walled and have largely escaped vandalism. They are overgrown with vegetation at some times of the year, but the gravestones show only the ravages of time and weather.

Fewer than 30–40 Jews are left in Egypt, and all are extremely elderly. When they die, for the first time in millennia Egypt will have no Jews except for tourists. A remnant of the Jewish community center in Cairo persists under the presidency of



View of Bassatine Cemetery in Cairo, Egypt, the oldest Jewish cemetery in the world after the Mount of Olives. (Daniel Kolman)

the octogenarian Carmen Weinstein, but the vast majority of Egyptians have no memory of the recent existence of a Jewish community in Egypt.

In the first half of the 20th century, the cosmopolitan, multilingual Jews of Egypt maintained 37 synagogues in Cairo alone, six B'nai B'rith lodges, several all-Jewish orchestras, three Jewish theaters (one in Yiddish), nearly a dozen Jewish newspapers in a variety of languages, a Jewish hospital that treated 43,000 patients in 1936, old-age homes, and numerous charitable organizations. In 1938, Cairo's Jewish community schools enrolled 8,462 children; approximately 51 percent of all Jewish children. Many other children enrolled in private Jewish schools, such as the Jabes or the Green schools and the Petit Lycée de Sakakini. Jewish aristocracy entertained and hobnobbed with both Egyptian and European royalty, and some served as government ministers and in other high government posts.

### Selected Bibliography

- Beinin, Joel. 1998. *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Fargeon, Maurice, ed. 1938. *Les Juifs en Egypte: Depuis le Origines jusqu'à ce jour* [Jews in Egypt: From the Origins to this Day]. Cairo: Imprimerie Paul Barbey.
- Fargeon, Maurice, ed. 1942. *Annuaire des Juifs d'Egypte et du proche orient* [Annuary of the Jews of Egypt and the Near East]. Cairo: La Société des Editions Historiques Juives d'Egypte.
- Fargeon, Maurice, ed. 1984. *Juifs d'Egypte: Images et Textes* [Jews of Egypt: Images and Texts]. 2nd ed. Paris: Les Editions du Scribe.

## Jews in Ethiopia

*Shalva Weil*

---

**General Population:** 77,000,000

**Jewish Population:** 12,000–30,000

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** There is a large population of Jews in Addis Ababa.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The origins of Ethiopian Jews, as they are known today, are unknown. although many theories have developed.

**Languages Spoken:** The Beta Israel spoke a Cushitic language, Agau, mixed with the two principal languages of the regions in which they resided: Amharic and Tigrinya.

---

### Historical Overview

1st millennium BCE–1st millennium CE The origins of the Ethiopian Jews, as they are known today, are shrouded in mystery. According to some Ethiopian traditions, many inhabitants of the Kingdom of Aksum were Jewish before the advent of Christianity in the third to fourth centuries. The survival of Hebraic

traces in the local Ethiopic Christianity is striking: the local population circumcises its male offspring near or on the eighth day after birth, they do not eat pork, women observe purity laws, and more. The popular Ethiopian belief, and indeed the most popular theory given by the Beta Israel themselves before their aliyah to Israel, is that they are descendants of Israelite henchmen who had arrived with Menelik, the son of the union of King Solomon and Queen Sheba in the Kingdom of Israel. A theory that has gained exceptional importance in Israel is that the Beta Israel are descendants of the tribe of Dan, one of the 10 lost tribes, which was exiled by the Assyrians in the eighth century BCE. In one of his Halachic response, Rabbi David ben Zimra (Radbaz) (1479–1573) referred to a Jew in Ethiopia as a member of the tribe of Dan. Other theories are that the Beta Israel were immigrants from Nubia or southern Arabia, or even an offshoot of Yemenite Jewry, or that they were children of Israel from Egypt, who had wandered south.

9th–12th centuries Legends and texts report the presence of Jews in Ethiopia, including those from the 9th-century traveler Eldad Ha-Dani (Eldad from the tribe of Dan) and the 12th-century traveler Benjamin of Tudela.

14th century Many academics today posit that the Beta Israel emerged as an identifiable Jewish group known as “Falassi” or “Falasha,” from the 14th century to the 16th century, who were different from the local populations. Early documentary evidence of a Judaized group opposing the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is found in a royal chronicle from the reign of Emperor Amde Zion (1314–1344), which refers to a war with a part of the Christian population that had abandoned Christianity in favor of people “like Jews,” who had “denied Christ, like the Jews who crucified him.” In the same century, a renegade monk, Qozmos, left the Christian clerics in Lake Tana and joined the Jews in opposition to local Christian armies.

15th–17th centuries From the period of Emperor Ishaq (1413–1438) until the reign of Susenyos (1607–1632), there are reports of “Ayhud,” who may have been “Jews,” but may also have been groups of other rebellious populations, who resisted conversion to Christianity. During this period Emperor Ishaq declares war on the Beta Israel, and they are defeated. They lose their rights to land (*rist*) and become a subjugated people. They are employed as blacksmiths, weavers, and potters, which are considered lowly professions, and they are accused of possessing *buda*, or magical evil eye powers. During this period, they adopt monasticism as a Beta Israel religious expression and develop a strict code of purity laws involving menstruating women, women in childbirth, burial, and restriction on contact with outsiders. During the reign of Emperor Sarsa Dengel (1563–1597), Gushen (d. 1594), a Beta Israel leader, initiates a hopeless raid in Woggera against the Christian emperor in 1587–1588. The belligerent attempt ends with the captivity of hundreds of Beta Israel, the massacre of some, and the enslavement of women and children. During the reign of Emperor Fasilades (1632–1637), Gondar becomes the political metropolis of the empire, and the situation of the Beta Israel improves somewhat. Local Beta Israel are employed in higher-ranked professions, such as carpenters and masons in the

churches and royal castles; this practice is continued by Emperors Yohannes I and Iyasu I. In addition, the emperors recruit Beta Israel as soldiers for their personal armies. Some Beta Israel reach the ranks of *azmach* and *bejrond* and as a result are allowed to retain land rights. According to the Scottish traveler James Bruce, the Beta Israel built the roof of the palace of Emperor Iyasu II. They continue in their roles as craftsmen well into the 19th century. However, during this historical period, the Beta Israel's position once again deteriorates and their religion is in disarray.

19th century The encounter with the Western world begins as late as the 19th century. Protestant missionaries from the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews succeed in converting some Beta Israel to Christianity; they also bring into question the Beta Israel's religious practices, such as monasticism, sacrifices more or less as specified in the Bible, rigid purity laws, and more. Aragawi, an Amhara Christian, along with other Beta Israel-born native agents (such as Debtera Beroo Webe, Gebra Heiwot, and Hiob Negoosie), run the London Society mission in Ethiopia during the period 1864–1922, after Tewodros II imprisoned and thereafter expelled European missionaries from Ethiopia in 1863. In 1862, a band of Beta Israel, under the leadership of Abba Mahari, makes an abortive attempt at aliyah to the Holy Land, but it ends in tragedy.

1867 Professor Joseph Halevy (1827–1917), a representative from the normative Jewish world and a Semitic scholar from the Sorbonne, Paris, meets with the Beta Israel in Ethiopia.

1877 In a detailed report to the Alliance Israelite Universelle, who sponsored the trip, Halevy describes the religious practices of his fellow coreligionists, who have not been exposed to the Oral Law, as Jews knew it in the West, and recommends steps to improve the socioeconomic condition of the Beta Israel; no action is taken.

1888–1892 The Kifu-Qen, or Great Famine, hits Ethiopia, and many Beta Israel must either starve to death or convert to Christianity.

1900s–1930s Dr. Jacques Faitlovitch (1881–1953), a student of Professor Joseph Halevy at the Sorbonne, leaves Paris under the sponsorship of Baron Edmund de Rothschild for his first expedition to Ethiopia in 1904. During this visit, he surveys the situation of the Beta Israel and returns to Palestine and Europe in 1905 with two “Falasha” boys: Taamrat Emmanuel, whom he took out of a Swedish Protestant mission in Asmara, and Gete Hermias, whom he met in a village in Gondar. From the time of his first mission to Ethiopia until 1935, when he is prevented from visiting Ethiopia because of the fascist Italian occupation, Dr. Faitlovitch brings 25 young men out of Ethiopia places them in different Jewish Orthodox communities in Palestine and Europe. He believed the boys would return to Ethiopia and educate their brethren in the tenets of normative Judaism. These pupils included Yona Bogale, Hizkiahu Finkas (who died in Italy), Solomon Isaac (who died in Egypt on the way back to Ethiopia with Dr. Faitlovitch), Menguistu Yitzchak, Mekuria Tsegaya, and Taamrat Emmanuel, who later becomes the aide of Emperor Haile Selassie. Dr. Faitlovitch establishes a

Falasha school in Addis Ababa in 1923, where some of these pupils later teach. His activities are curtailed by the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1935–1936. Emperor Haile Selassie is restored as emperor of Ethiopia in 1941 after a brief period in exile in Jerusalem.

- 1940s–1950s There is no mass emigration from Ethiopia among the Beta Israel after the State of Israel is established in 1948, as with other Jewish communities. Although a few emissaries are dispatched to Ethiopia from Palestine and Israel, there is no attempt to encourage them to make aliyah. In 1952 and again in 1956, Emperor Haile Selassie allows two groups of young Beta Israel pupils to study in a dormitory school, Kfar Batya, in Israel, on condition that they return. Only one or two of the students, who married local Israelis, remained in Israel.
- 1970s Emperor Haile Selassie is replaced by a revolutionary Marxist government headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam. Although the revolution includes land reform, the economic position of the Beta Israel in the villages does not really improve. In 1973, on the basis of the Halachic precedent by the Radbaz concluding that the “Falasha” are members of the lost tribe of Dan, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef declares that they can be accepted as lost Israelites and thereby return to their historic homeland. In 1975, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren also accepts the Ethiopian Jews into the fold.
- 1980s The Beta Israel begin to organize more seriously to immigrate, although emigration from Ethiopia is still prohibited. Until 1980, about 250 Beta Israel manage to reach Israel. In 1979, Ferede Akum, a Beta Israel from Tigray, arrives in the Sudan and is contacted by the Israeli Mossad. The idea of leaving Ethiopia through the Sudan is conceived. Beta Israel walk in the night led by guides, who take them to the Sudanese border, where they wait in refugee camps. An estimated 4,000 Beta Israel die on the way. Finally, in 1984–1985, Operation Moses takes place, in which 7,700 Beta Israel are airlifted from the Sudan to Israel. However, the operation is terminated suddenly by the embarrassed Sudanese government, after a speech by a Jewish Agency official in New York, which is picked up by an obscure Israeli newspaper and then quoted throughout the world. Operation Sheba, a few months later in 1985, mops up some 700 Beta Israel, who are stranded in the refugee camps in the Sudan. From Operation Sheba until 1989, when diplomatic relations are restored between Ethiopia and Israel, approximately 2,400 Beta Israel immigrate to Israel. International pressure, and in particular the intervention of American Jewish organizations, helps the “rescue” effort for the Beta Israel.
- 1990s In 1991, Operation Solomon brings 14,310 Jews out of Ethiopia to Israel in 33 consecutive flights over 36 hours during May 24–25, 1991, as the future of Mengistu Haile Mariam’s government hangs in the balance. Upon termination of Operation Solomon, different groups of Beta Israel begin to emerge, claiming the right to live in Israel. Some had been overlooked in Operation Solomon; others in remote areas had been forgotten. In 1992, the Jews of Qwara submit a list of 2,800 Beta Israel to the Jewish Agency; some of these are brought to Israel that year. From 1992 to 1998, the aliyah of the Jews of Qwara takes place at a slow pace of a few hundred a year; in 1999, on the basis of an Israeli government

- recommendation, some 1,200 additional Beta Israel from Qwara arrive in Israel. Several hundreds belonging to a group now being called “Felesmura,” whose ancestors converted to Christianity and now claim to be of the “seed of Israel,” are also brought to Israel that year. The Rubinstein committee (1991); the Tsaban committee (1992), established by Yair Tsaban, the Minister of Absorption; and the Handel committee (2001) set up commissions of enquiry to understand the history and demography of the Felesmura and to decide their fate. Because of political pressures and rabbinical decrees by various rabbis, including some of Israel’s chief rabbis, thousands of Felesmura have since migrated to Israel and converted to Judaism. More are waiting in Ethiopia in the hopes of emigrating.
- 2005 A compound for potential immigrants is still active in Addis Ababa; people designating themselves Felesmura or “Zera Israel” (the seed of Israel) live in neighborhoods in the vicinity. The compound is run by the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ) and provides religious and educational services; the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is responsible for health. At the end of 2005, NACOEJ is expelled from Ethiopia, and the compound is disbanded.
- 2006 About 105,000 Jews of Ethiopian origin reside in Israel, including Felesmura and others; more than 30 percent were born in Israel. This group includes Ethiopian Jews, who are known as Beta Israel (House of Israel), Israeletoch or Israelawi (Israelites), or Falasha in Ethiopia. It also includes non-Jewish Ethiopians who managed to immigrate to Israel as the seed of Israel and receive Israeli government benefits as new immigrants, as well as a larger group designated Felesmura, or descendants of Beta Israel, who converted in the past to Christianity. Sometimes the latter group is connoted Falashmura, reminiscent of the Torah-observant Falasha, as Beta Israel were once called. Today, both Felesmura and those non-Jews who have succeeded in entering Israel as Jews are converted to Judaism according to the laws of Halacha (Jewish legal law) and thereafter accepted as Jews. All these different groups of people are today emerging with a new ethnic identity and part of an ethnic group (*eda*) called “Ethiopian Jews” in Israel. In recent years and in the wake of globalization, transnational ties are manipulated and kept alive between communities of Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel. Israeli Ethiopians, particularly males, visit Ethiopia for several weeks each year. They visit kin and friends, spend money on shopping and leisure pursuits, and indulge in petty trading. A few have set up transnational homes or businesses in Ethiopia and Israel.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries

Although the Ethiopian community in Israel has achieved many successes in different fields, it is also beset with social and economic problems, both among new immigrants, who continue to arrive from Ethiopia, and among old-timers and their offspring, who may have been in the country 20–30 years. Most Ethiopian Jewish adults in Israel live below the poverty line. Some Ethiopians complain of racial

discrimination; others cannot find suitable employment. Among the greatest changes undergone by the Ethiopian Jewish community in its transition from an underdeveloped society to a modern, Western society are those in the field of family and personal relations. Today, kinship among Ethiopian Jews is breaking down, thus causing anguish to more elderly and traditional Ethiopian Jews and exemplifying the generation gap. The ideology and laws of ritual impurity, observed in Ethiopia, are being modified. There are experimental new arrangements to deal with female impurity, such as dividing up apartments into pure and nonpure spaces instead of the female Ethiopian having to go off to a menstruating hut or isolate herself for a week each month, as in Ethiopia. Girls no longer marry at first puberty—it is illegal to marry in Israel before the age of 17. Married women are encouraged to go out to work to assist with the family income, and it is often easier for a woman than a man to find employment, particularly in the temporary, unskilled jobs in which the Ethiopian Jews tend to congregate. According to a source within the Israel Defence Forces, 48 percent of Ethiopian women of military age were serving in the army in February 2003.

#### Present Economic Conditions

For perhaps the first time, Beta Israel from rural backgrounds are handling money and managing bank accounts. A woman's salary may be paid straight into her bank account, or she may be earning more than her husband. Quarrels tend to break out between marriage partners, leading to violence against women. In 2006, in the space of seven months, seven women were murdered by their enraged husbands, making the number of murders against women the highest among ethnic groups in Israel.

A major reason for the high divorce rate among Beta Israel is the demasculinization experienced by Ethiopian Jewish men in Israel. The Israeli rabbinate has established a special department to deal with the Ethiopian divorce rate, which is far higher than that in the general population. According to statistics available, 30 percent of Ethiopian families are one-parent families, but the actual rate is higher and the situation more complicated as parts of one-parent families often align with other one-parent families, and thereby create other families.

Although Ethiopia has one of the poorest health systems in the world and infant mortality is one of the highest, in Israel Ethiopian Jew enjoy access to all health services, and infant mortality is very low. In 1996, the community staged a large strike opposite the prime minister's office, in which 20,000 Ethiopian Israelis object to the policy adopted by Israel's Red Cross (Magen David Adom) of discarding blood of Ethiopian Jews for fear it is HIV-positive. This policy has since been terminated, and a Commission of Enquiry was set up, chaired by Yitzchak Navon a past president of Israel. However, the Ethiopian Jews continue to have the highest proportion of HIV-positive members per ethnic group in Israel.

#### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

The Ethiopian Jews were known as Beta Israel ("House of Israel"), Israeletoch or Israelawi ("Israelites"), or Falasha in Ethiopia. The latter designation, from the

Semitic root “falas” (to intrude), was considered stigmatic and indicated their lowly outsider status.

Traditionally, the Beta Israel were monotheistic and practiced a Torah-based Judaism, without observing the Oral Law, or knowing the Talmud, known to other communities of Jews. The Beta Israel followed both the lunar and the solar calendar and observed a complex cycle of fasts and festivals, most prescribed in the Torah. They circumcised their boys on the eighth day, as did other Ethiopians, and refrained from work on the Sabbath. Some religious festivals known to other Jewish communities were not marked by the Beta Israel, such as Hanukkah or Purim (although they knew the Fast of Esther), but they, in their turn, celebrated certain days that are not marked by other Jews, such as the Sigd festival, which expresses yearning for Jerusalem and is marked 50 days after Yom Kippur. Ethiopic Christians influenced their religious practices, and many elements were in common to both religions, such as praying to Jerusalem, speaking the common liturgical language of Geez, and the longing for Israel and Zion.

According to an Israeli government decision, once the Israeli Chief Rabbinate accepted the Ethiopian Jews as Jews in every respect, they were eligible for aliyah (immigration). Nevertheless, until this day, Ethiopian Jews in Israel have to undergo conversion or special registration with one specific rabbi for purposes of marriage. Otherwise, they are afforded equality of rights and responsibilities in all spheres of life and, as immigrants, are entitled to subsidized public housing, free Hebrew tuition, an initial cash payment for “absorption,” and special educational advantages. Because of their background, they benefit from affirmative action in many fields, including mortgages, free loans, and a wide variety of educational programs tailored for the Ethiopian community. Ethiopian Israelis serve in the Israel Defence Forces or National Service.

In 1986, Ethiopian Jews in Israel staged a massive strike opposite the offices of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem objecting to the symbolic conversion they had to undergo, which involved ritual immersion, but was considered insulting by members of the community. Today, all new immigrants have to undergo conversion, and there are still obstacles in registering marriages freely, despite several High Court law cases, including a 1995 High Court instruction to the Israel Rabbinate to make available several additional marriage registry offices for Ethiopian Jews. *Kessotch* (Ethiopian priests) still act as spiritual leaders for the older generations in the Ethiopian Jewish community. Some 15 young Modern Orthodox rabbis have been ordained in Israel. The younger generation of Ethiopian Jews is sometimes lost as to whom to consult on religious matters. Several Ethiopian Jewish synagogues have been built in cities in Israel, where there are large concentrations of Ethiopian Jews. Sometimes they run dual services—in Geez for the older generation and Hebrew for the younger Israeli Ethiopians.

The changing of the guard within the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel has to do with a new, young, secular leadership replacing the older religious elite as well as the fact that several exceptional women have taken up positions of leadership. Some manage key Ethiopian associations responsible for raising substantial funds for the community, such as the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews;

multicultural programs in Elem, such as an organization for disattached youth; Fidel, which works to advance the education of Ethiopian Jews in Israel; and the National Project, which aims to raise massive funds for the improvement of Ethiopian populations in specified cities in Israel.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Ethiopian Jews in Israel are a young ethnic group relative to the general Israeli Jewish population. The average age is 20.1 years, compared with 30.5 years in the general Jewish population. More than 20 percent of the Ethiopian Jewish community is born in Israel. The Ethiopian Jews in Israel have made enormous strides in their new Jewish homeland. One member, Adisu Messele, was elected member of Parliament in the Israeli Knesset on behalf of the Labour party. Three other Ethiopians were proposed as candidates by different political parties in the 2006 Israeli general elections, but narrowly missed being elected. Several Ethiopians are active politically on municipal councils. Members of the community have succeeded in attaining high-ranking jobs in the media, sports, and education and as models, singers, and actors. A steering committee for Ethiopian Jewish education, run by an Israeli Ethiopian, has special funding for selected projects and is funded by an arm of the ministry of education.

It is impossible to estimate how many potential Ethiopian Jews are waiting in Ethiopia to immigrate to Israel. Estimates range from 18,000 to 30,000. As soon as a certain number arrive in Israel, more people surface with immigration claims and proof of relatives in Israel. In July 2003, it was reported that 20,000 were waiting to come to Israel; by 2006, a similar number were still waiting despite the emigration of several thousands. An Israeli grassroots organization, From the Wing to South Zion, stages demonstrations in Israel and encourages the aliyah of the Felesmura. Ethiopian Jews have immigrated to Israel at a pace of 150 per month, but this quota has changed from period to period, according to Israeli government policy, national interests, and relations with Ethiopia. The compound in Gondar, which is still active in 2006, receives financial aid from NACOEJ, which helps run the school, synagogue, and mikvah (ritual bath) and supports the administration. The JDC runs the clinic on the compound. Officials from the Israeli Ministry of Interior process requests for immigration in consultation with the Jewish Agency. A few dozen Ethiopian Jews live in the United States, including a small enclave of young people in Harlem, New York.

### Selected Bibliography

- Anteby-Yemini, Lisa. 2003. "Being an Oleh in a Global World: From Local-ethnic Community to Transnational Community." *Hagar* 4 (1-2): 141-154.
- Bruce, James. 1790. *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*. Edinburgh: Robinson.
- Kaplan, Steven. 1992. *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia*. New York: New York University Press.
- Leshem, Eleazar, and Osnat Zamir. 2004. *Ethiopian Jews in Israel: Situation Report 1999-2004* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Meyers-Joint Brookdale Institute.
- Offer, Shira. 2004. "The Socio-Economic Integration of the Ethiopian Community in Israel." *International Migration* 42 (3): 29-55.

- Pankhurst, Richard D. 1997. "The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Their Ethiopian Setting." In *Ethiopian Jews in the Limelight. Israel Social Science Research*, edited by Shalva Weil, 1–12. Jerusalem: National Council of Jewish Women.
- Quirin, James. 1992. *The Evolution of the Ethiopian Jews: A History of the Beta Israel (Falasha) to 1920*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Swirsky Barbara, and Joseph Kapela. 2005. *Employment Status among Israelis of Ethiopian Origin* [Hebrew]. Tel-Aviv: Adva Center, Information on Equality and Social Justice in Israel.
- Weil, Shalva. 1995. "Collective Designations and Collective Identity among Ethiopian Jews." *Israel Social Science Research* 10 (2): 25–40.
- Weil, Shalva. 1999. "Collective Rights and Perceived Inequality: The Case of Ethiopian Jews in Israel." In *Divided Europeans: Understanding Ethnicities in Conflict*, edited by T. Allen and J. Eade, 127–144. The Hague: Kluwer Law International.
- Weil, Shalva. 2004. "Ethiopian Jewish Women: Trends and Transformations in the Context of Trans-National Change." *Nashim* 8 (Fall): 73–86.
- Weil, Shalva. 2006. *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, vol. 2, edited by S. Uhlig, s.v. "Gweshen." Wiesbaden, Germany: Verlag Otto Harrassowitz, 940.

## Jews in Kenya

*Saul Issroff*

---

General Population: 34,256,000 (July 2005 estimate)

Jewish Population: 280

Percent of Population: Less than 0.0008 percent

Jewish Population by City: Mainly Nairobi

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: The Jewish population came predominantly from Lithuania, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Languages Spoken: Swahili, English

---

### Historical Overview

Kenya, previously known as British East Africa, was established as a Crown Colony in 1920. Jewish settlement began in the early 1900s. In August 1903, Britain offered the Zionists about 5,000 square miles (Guas Nigshu, Uasin Gishu plateau) in Kenya. This was known as the Uganda Scheme because at the time the land was in Uganda. Opposed by the international Jewish community and within the area itself, the scheme was rejected at the seventh Zionist Congress in 1905.

Nevertheless, several Jewish families immigrated to Kenya and founded the Nairobi Hebrew Congregation in 1904. They built a synagogue and purchased a burial ground. In 1913, 20 Jewish families lived in Nairobi. By 1926, there were 256 Jews among a European population of 12,509. By 1931, the number had risen to 305. A few were farmers; most were in business or the professions.



Members of the Berg family outside their home near Limuru, Kenya, in 1941. The Jewish family sought refuge there during World War II. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Kenya was a safe haven for World War II refugees. Some young German Jewish men, aided by the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden and a local refugee committee, had settled before the Holocaust. Another small group settled in 1939, training as farmers.

After the Holocaust, more Jews arrived in Kenya. In 1945 there were 150 families. In March 1947, the British set up a detention camp in Gilgil to hold captured members of Jewish underground organizations. The Jewish community of Kenya helped to improve the living conditions of the detainees. About 24 internees, including Yaakov Meridor, an underground leader, escaped. In July 1948, the remainder were released and sailed to Haifa.

In 1955, a new synagogue was built. As of 2006, about 280 Jews lived in Kenya, mostly in Nairobi. There is a burial society and a branch of Women's International Zionist Organization.

### **Notable Individuals among Kenyan Jewry**

In addition to H. Fein, the first chairman of the Nairobi Hebrew Congregation, other pioneers included J. Marcus, Michael Hartz, Otto Markus, Abraham Block, M. W. London, and Simon Medicks. In 1906, Sammy and Gertie Jacobs founded S. Jacobs Pty Ltd—East Africa's largest department store. Before World War II, Herman Strauss and the Berg family provided homes and work for other refugees. Israel Somen, the president of the Board of Kenya Jewry, was elected mayor of Nairobi in 1957. Dr. Vera Somen is currently president of the Nairobi Hebrew congregation.

## Relations with Israel

Kenyan–Israeli connections date back to Kenya’s struggle for independence. Israeli experts trained Kenyan leaders in the organization of the institutional bodies required for statehood and trained young people in agriculture. In addition, military and medical training were given.

After the 1973 Yom Kippur War, diplomatic relations between the two countries ceased, to be resumed only in 1988. Still, Kenyan connections proved invaluable in the successful rescue of Israeli hostages from Entebbe, Uganda, in 1976, when airplanes carrying the soldiers and freed hostages were permitted to land and refuel.

In 1998, after terrorists attacked the American Embassy in Nairobi, the Israel Defense Forces sent rescue teams. In November 2002, a car bomb attack on an Israeli-owned hotel in Kikambala killed 15 people, including 3 Israelis.

## Selected Bibliography

- Carlebach, Julius. 1962. *The Jews of Nairobi, 1903–1962 (5664–5722)*. Nairobi, Kenya: Nairobi Hebrew Congregation.
- Musiker, Naomi. 2004. “The Jews of Kenya.” *Jewish Affairs* 59 (2, Winter): 21–23.
- Salvadori, Cynthia. 2004. *Glimpses of the Jews of Kenya: The Centennial Story of the Nairobi Hebrew Congregation, 1904–2004, 5664–5764*. Nairobi, Kenya: Nairobi Hebrew Congregation.

# Jews in Libya

*Vivienne Roumani-Denn*

---

**Population of Libya:** 6 million

**Jewish Population:** A single Jew is known to reside in Libya.

**Percent of General Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Jews arrived in Libya in about the third century BCE. The largest communities of Libyan Jews are now in Israel and Italy; there are smaller groups in the United Kingdom and the United States.

**Languages Spoken:** Libyan Jews spoke Judeo-Arabic, a dialect of Arabic that was written using Hebrew characters. Merchants also spoke Italian because of a history of trade with Italy, especially Livorno, even before the Italian occupation.

---

## Historical Overview

**Pre-300 BCE** One tradition holds that Jews came to Cyrene as early as the time of Solomon.

**300 BCE** Jewish life in Libya can be traced with certainty to the third century BCE.

**1st millennium BCE–1st millennium CE** According to Flavius Josephus, Jews arrive in Cyrene at that time with Ptolemy, son of Lagos, a general of Alexander the Great

and the first of the Ptolemaic pharaohs. Jews live in Libya continuously under Ptolemaic, Roman, Ottoman, Italian, British, and Arab rule, although little is known of the Jewish community between the time of the two Jewish revolts against the Romans (73 CE and 115 CE), which were brutally crushed, and the arrival in the 16th century of refugees from the Iberian expulsion,

16th century Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal arrive in Libya, some by way of Livorno. The communities in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica number several thousand in the mid-16th century, but Jewish education is limited. Jewish learning is reinvigorated at this time by the arrival of Rabbi Shimon Labi, a Kabbalist and poet (the author of the piyyut “Bar Yochai”).

18th century During the Ottoman period, the Jews suffer occasional persecution, especially under Ibrahim Sherif in 1704 and Ali Burghal II in 1795. Tripolitanian Jews begin to celebrate two additional Purim holidays, Purim Sherif, on the 23rd of Teveth, and Purim Burghal, on the 29th of Teveth, to commemorate their liberation.

19th century European influence on Jewish life in Libya begins in the 19th century. The Ottoman-appointed Libyan chief rabbi (*hakham bashi*) from 1874 to 1888, Eliyahu Hazan, encourages moderate change, including the introduction of secular education with the religious, to retain the religious character of the community while resisting European influence.

1890s The French Alliance Israelite Universelle, which the traditional community views as assimilationist, begins vocational schools in Tripoli in 1890, and includes some education for girls starting in 1895. Reforms in the Talmud Torah system, whereby students are grouped by age and ability, are introduced in 1893, but the subject matter remains religious only. Italian schools that continue through high school and include Hebrew language instruction are started in 1894.

1911 The Italian occupation of Libya begins, at which time there are about 21,000 Jews in the country; Libyan Jews initially prosper under the Italian occupation, often serving as intermediaries between the European and Arab and Berber communities because of their knowledge of the languages of both. Some Jews keep to traditional ways, and others adopt Italian dress and customs. A Libyan Arab living in Scotland writes, “As a child I remember asking why some women wore black, purple with silver stripes, and others wore just black, and was told that this denotes who was Jewish and who was Muslim. The men, I was told, were similarly distinguished; those wearing plain black baggy trousers were Muslim, those with silver stripes down the sides were Jewish.” A Jewish narrator in an oral history remarks, “In Tripoli those who . . . put on trousers, shirts, we said that he is dressed *labes btelyan* (a la Italian). Before the Italians came to Libya no one wore these modern clothes. You can see them . . . in pictures [in] the traditional garb, like the *tarbush* (Turkish hat) . . . women went with a *big zdad* (traditional dress), red and black colors and white.” During this time, the leaders of the Tripoli community, who are successful businessmen, favor the adoption of Italian culture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They are opposed by a group of young Zionists who see Jewish identity and Jewish education, especially study of the Hebrew language, as the path to modernity. Jews

from Tripoli and Benghazi correspond with the Zionist congresses in Vienna as early as 1900. The traditional community members and the Rabbinate initially see both Italian culture and Zionism as threats, but by 1918 the Zionist perspective prevails over Europeanization, and the Rabbinate is supportive.

- 1910s–1920s The first Zionist organization is established in Tripoli, followed by the Circolo Sion in 1916, but it is only after 1919 that the organization experiences wide community support, and tensions between the various factions continue: an election for leadership of the Tripoli Jewish community in 1929 is annulled by the Italian governor Pietro Badoglio “for the sake of public order,” and the governor appoints a non-Jewish Italian as commissioner of the community. The first course in modern Hebrew is started in Tripoli in 1919. The development of Zionism is smoother in Benghazi, where a teacher from Jerusalem is recruited to teach modern Hebrew in 1915. The Herzl Association is established in Benghazi in 1919 to further Zionism. Badoglio, governor from 1928 to 1933, has a strongly negative view of the non-European Jews in Libya and seeks to “modernize” them.
- 1932 Jewish children are required to attend middle schools on Saturday, causing a crisis that is not resolved until 1933 when Italo Balbo replaces Badoglio as governor.
- 1938–1945 The alliance between Mussolini and Hitler leads to the imposition of racial laws in 1938, but because of the importance of the Jews to the economies of Tripoli and Benghazi, the racial laws are generally ignored under the governorship of Balbo until his death in 1940. Jews suffer greatly during the North African desert war of 1941–1943. Benghazi Jews view the British as liberators when they capture the city in February 1941. After the British withdrawal in April 1941, the Jews experience an Italian-led pogrom. In 1942, Jews with French passports are expelled to Tunisia, which subsequently comes under direct German occupation, and a large number of Libyan Jews are killed during Allied air raids in the battle for Tunisia. Additionally, 300 Libyan Jews with British passports are sent to internment camps in Italy, and many are subsequently sent to camps at Bergen-Belsen and Biberach. More than 5,000 Libyan Jews are sent to internment camps in the Libyan desert, where more than 500 die. According to Yad Vashem statistics, Libya had 650 Holocaust victims, more than 90 percent of the victims in North Africa.
- Late 1940s There was Arab hostility toward the Jews throughout the 20th century because Arabs identify the local Jews with the European colonizers and because of the rise of Arab nationalism. The Libyan Jewish communities receive valuable support after the Allied victory in North Africa through the presence of the Jewish Palestine Brigade, whose members strengthen the Zionist ideology and help establish schools. Local Arabs lead pogroms against Jews in Libya during the British postwar occupation in 1945: more than 100 Jews are killed in Tripolitania and five synagogues are destroyed. During another pogrom in 1948, the community is more prepared for self-defense and resists fiercely. More than 3,000 Jews leave illegally during this postwar period. In 1948 there are about 38,000 Jews in Libya.

- 1949 More than 30,000 Jews leave when the British permits emigration in 1949; most go to Israel
- 1951 The Jewish population at the time of Libyan independence at the end of 1951 numbers only about 5,000.
- 1950s–1960s Jews are unwelcome in the new University of Libya, which is established in Benghazi after independence; the few Jews who matriculate quickly leave. The 4,100 Jews remaining in Libya in June 1967 flee, mostly in an airlift to Italy, following Arab violence in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli Six-Day war; two Jewish families are murdered during the riots. Only about 300 Jews remain in Libya at the time of Mu'ammad Gadhafi's coup in 1969, when the property of Jews who are not resident in Libya is confiscated.
- 1970 Only 90 Jews remain in Libya.
- 2002 The last known Jew dies in Libya, but in the same year an elderly Jewish woman is found to be living in the capital.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries

The Jews of Libya were mostly merchants, tradespeople, and craftsmen. Jews were also dominant in trade and in gold and silver work.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Most Libyan Jews lived in Tripoli and its environs, and about 6,000 lived in and near Benghazi (Cyrenaica); very small communities of Jews lived in the countryside and the mountainous interior. The Jews of both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania were traditional, with general observance of the Sabbath and the dietary laws. Intermarriage was rare. Most Jews of Tripoli, who were typically poor and received support from the community, lived in one of the two Jewish quarters (*haras*). Wealthier members of the community, many of whom were European Jews, lived outside the Jewish quarters. There was no Jewish quarter in Benghazi, where the community consisted largely of middle-class merchants, and most Jews lived in a mixed neighborhood near the town square.

Jewish schools that teach Hebrew and some secular subjects open in Benghazi and Tripoli in 1943 with the assistance of soldiers from the Palestine Brigade. Talmud Torahs are also started in Benghazi and Tripoli. Italian Hebrew schools, both state-supported and private, are started in Tripoli, and the Alliance Israelite Universelle opens a school in 1946. The Yeshiva Naveh Shalom-Ozar Hatorah opens in Tripoli in 1946. The school in Benghazi closes in 1949 after the aliyah, as do most Jewish schools in Tripoli. An Italian school sponsored by the Italian consulate opens in Tripoli in 1950.

Today synagogues in Libya have been desecrated, and Jewish cemeteries have been paved over. The largest communities of Jews from Libya and their descendants live in Israel, where they are believed to number more than 100,000. (Many Libyan surnames are distinctive, but some immigrants changed their names after

arriving in Israel, so good estimates are difficult to make.) There are synagogues in Netanya, Or Yehuda, Bat Yam, Ashkelon, Petah Tikvah, and Yaffo that follow the Libyan tradition, which differs in detail from that of other North African communities. For example, they include a unique cantillation for Torah reading and special piyyutim during prayer. The Babylonian Jewish Heritage Center in Or Yehuda contains a collection on Libyan Jewry; the Or Shalom Center in Bat Yam, which publishes the newsletter *Ada* in Hebrew, is planning to open a public collection. There is no organized Libyan Jewish community in Israel. The second largest community of Libyan Jews, numbering about 6,000, is in Italy. Much smaller numbers live in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other parts of Europe.

### Selected Bibliography

- DeFelice, Renzo. 1985. *Jews in an Arab Land: Libya, 1835–1970*. Translated by Judith Roumani. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Goldberg, Harvey E. 1990. *Jewish Life in Muslim Libya: Rivals and Relatives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goldberg, Harvey E. 2003. "Libya." In *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, edited by R. S. Simon, M. M. Laskier, and S. Regeur. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ha-Cohen, Mordecai. 1980. *The Book of Mordech: A Study of the Jews of Libya*, edited and translated with introduction and commentaries by Harvey E. Goldberg. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Haggiag-Liluf, Yacov. 2005. *Storia degli Ebrei di Libia*. Or Yehuda, Israel: Centro di studi sull'Ebraismo Libico.
- Roumani, Maurice M. 1983. *The Case of the Jews from Arab Countries: A Neglected Issue*. 2nd ed. Tel Aviv, Israel: World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries.
- Roumani, Maurice M. 2007. *The Jews of Libya: The Disruptions of Italian Colonialism, Arab Nationalism, Migration and Reconciliation*. Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press.
- Roumani-Denn, Vivienne. The Last Jews of Libya Web site. <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Jews ofLibya/> (accessed May 2, 2007).
- Stillman, Norman A. 1991. *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. New York: Jewish Publication Society.
- Tironi, Stefano. 2003. La comunita ebraica Tripolina tra la Libia et Roma (a transcript of an oral history). <http://www.morasha.it/tesi/trni/index.html> (accessed May 2, 2007).

## Jewish Community in Morocco

*Richard Gold*

---

General Population: 33.25 million (2006)

Jewish Population: 5,500 (2006)

Percent of Population: 0.02 percent

Jewish Population by City: Casablanca, 4,000; Rabat, 300; Fez, 300; Marrakesh, 250; Tangier, 250; Meknes, 150; Agadir, 50; Tetouan, 25; Oujda, 25

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Palestinian Jews (second century BCE–third century CE), North African immigrants and indigenous Berber converts (fourth–eighth centuries), Arab Jews (9th–10th centuries), and Sephardic Jews (15th–16th centuries). Almost all Moroccan Jews today consider themselves Sephardic.

**Languages Spoken:** French, Moroccan Arabic. Some Moroccan Jews speak Hekatia, a form of Ladino.

## Historical Overview

4th century BCE Jews arrive with Phoenician traders.

1st century CE Jews live in Roman cities in Morocco.

4th century CE Other Jews move inland from Cyrenaica (Libya), convert Berber tribes, and establish settlements in the foothills, mountains, and desert oases of Algeria and Morocco.

7th century CE A Jewish woman, the kahina (priestess), reputedly leads the Berber resistance in Algeria and Morocco and slows down the Arabs' westward movement through burning crops and evacuating villages.

8th century CE Idriss I founds the first Muslim state in Morocco. His authority extends over central and western Morocco, and he fights Christians and Jews who will not convert.

9th century CE Idriss II creates the city of Fez, developing it from a village that is believed to have been inhabited by a Jewish tribe. He invites Jews to live there together with Arabs.

11th and 12th centuries CE A Berber tribe from the Sahara desert, the Almoravids, creates an Islamic empire in Morocco and Spain. Jewish scholars migrate to the Almoravid empire, producing some of the religious writings associated with the golden age of the Jews.

12th century CE The Almohads, a Berber mountain people, develop a fundamentalist Islamic doctrine and build an empire that spreads from Spain to western Libya. They expel Jews from Marrakesh and try to eliminate their presence from Morocco.

1159–1165 CE Maimonides lives in the old city of Fez, where he begins writing his most important book, *Guide for the Perplexed*.

13th century CE The Merenids give preferential treatment to the Jews. Resentment of the sultan and his close ties to the Jews incites a pogrom in Fez in 1276.

1438 The Merenids force the Jews to move into a *mellah*, a fortified area adjoining the royal palace of Fez, to ensure their safety.

1472 The Wattasids neither encourage nor prevent tens of thousands of Jewish refugees from Spain and Portugal from entering Morocco in the late 15th and early 16th centuries.

16th and 17th centuries The Saadian Dynasty taxes the Jewish community heavily to finance military activities. Sultans give Jewish traders the monopoly over sugar exports. Jews play a key role in the caravan trade with sub-Saharan Africa.

1660s The first Alaouite Dynasty ruler, Moulay Rachid, captures the caravan routes in eastern and western Morocco, ensuring the cooperation of Jewish traders in financing the new empire.

- 1672 Moulay Ishmael completes the task of pacifying Morocco. Jews are protected from violence, although they are taxed highly. Jewish traders grow wealthy from increased trade with Europe and within Morocco.
- 1760s Muley Mohammed increases the economic and political importance of the Jews by populating coastal cities with Jewish traders. He installs Jews in the Portuguese city of Mazagan (El Jadida) and creates the port of Mogador (Essaouira).
- 1790 Moulay Yazid incites pogroms against the Jews throughout the country. He encouraged attacks on the *mellahs* of Tetouan and other cities. The Jews of Fez and Marrakesh are forced to leave their *mellahs*.
- February 1860 Spain invades the city of Tetouan. The entire city is pillaged to prevent the Spanish from benefiting from Jewish wealth. European consulates encourage the sultan to protect Jews in Tetouan and throughout the country.
- February 1864 Moses Montefiore of the British Anglo-Jewish Association negotiates a royal declaration affirming that the Jews will be treated as equals under the law, with justice and impartiality, and that anyone mistreating them will be prosecuted.
- Late 19th century While Jewish life in Morocco flourishes, the ability of the sultans to control the country and provide security for the Jews deteriorates. Many Moroccan Jews receive protection from European consulates. These “protégés” do not pay taxes and are immune from prosecution.
- March 30, 1912 Most of Morocco becomes a French protectorate. Spain is given control of Northwest Morocco.
- April 17, 1912 The sultan’s troops in Fez revolt against the French, and a crowd following them pillages the *mellah*. Jews abandon the *mellah* and take refuge in the sultan’s palace.
- August 1941 The Vichy government of France enacts laws that discriminate against Moroccan Jews. The Moroccan sultan, Mohammed V, tells Jewish leaders that in his opinion Vichy laws singling out the Jews are inconsistent with Moroccan law.
- May 1948 Arab armies launch their war against the new State of Israel. Sultan Mohammed V declares his support for the Arabs. In response to anti-Jewish rhetoric, Mohammed V warns Muslims not to hurt Moroccan Jews, reminding them that Jews have always been protected in Morocco and have always showed their devotion to the throne. He also warns Moroccan Jews not to support Zionists.
- June 1948 Tensions associated with the Israeli-Arab War, the beginnings of Moroccan Jewish emigration to Israel, and the struggle for independence from France contribute to two pogroms in the eastern towns of Oujda and Djerrada.
- 1950–1961 Jews emigrate during the period before Moroccan independence in 1956, when emigration to Israel is legal, as well as from 1956 until 1961, when emigration is illegal. As a result, the Jewish population drops from about 220,000 in 1952 to about 160,000 in 1960, according to censuses.
- 1955 Nationalist leaders from the Istiqlal Party meet with the World Jewish Congress. They state their intention, once Morocco becomes independent under

the king, to guarantee the liberty of Moroccan Jews and their equality with other citizens and to allow their participation in representative organizations and the government.

1956 The new government's constitution ensures equality between Jews and Muslims. In the coming years, three Jews are eventually elected to parliament, including a rabbi from the heavily Jewish town of Sefrou. Jews begin to take the place of the French in the administration.

February 1961 Morocco's Jews join Muslims in a national day of mourning for King Mohammed V. Emigration continues to Israel until 1964 and then mainly to France and Canada.

1975 The dwindling Jewish community participates in the Green March, when 350,000 Moroccans march into the former Spanish Sahara to reclaim it for their country.

May 16, 2003 An Al Qaeda–related group bombs Jewish sites in Casablanca.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

In the 19th century, when the Jewish population was about 80,000, the Jewish community consisted of a tiny group of rich traders who were close to the sultan and Europeans; a somewhat larger middle-class group of small traders, jewelers, treasure hunters, and religious officials; and a large group of the relatively poor, including artisans and shopkeepers. In addition, there were many indigents, prostitutes, and beggars. By the 1980s, when the population had dropped to about 8,000, the Jewish community was made up of 30 percent affluent businesspeople, 30 percent small business and shop owners, 30 percent laborers and artisans, and 10 percent recipients of private and government assistance.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Many Moroccan Jews are proud of their Sephardic ancestry, which is reflected in their knowledge of Hekatia, a variation of Ladino that integrates some Arabic words. They also appreciate Andalucian music, which was imported from 16th-century Spain and is now played by both Muslims and Jews. Andalucian melodies and poetry are also used in prayer services. Jews have maintained their own social clubs, kosher restaurants, sports clubs, scouting troops, and summer camps. After Morocco's independence in 1956, Zionist groups were forced to go underground. Few Jews have national prominence, apart from some major industrialists and Andre Azoulay, who is economic adviser to the king.

### Alternative Jewish Culture

Moroccan Jews are unique in their reverence for deceased learned and pious rabbis. Throughout Morocco, there are hundreds of Jewish "saints," as these rabbis are called, whose tombs are usually located in Jewish cemeteries. Some Jews make regular visits to the saints' tombs to pray for a better life. Once a year groups of Jews

hold festivals, known as *hiloulot*, at the gravesite of the most important saints. Many *hiloulot* take place during the Jewish holiday of *Lag B'Omer*.

### Present Economic Conditions

Morocco is a developing country with a gross domestic product per capita of \$4,100 in 2005. It is struggling to decrease its dependence on agriculture, given the erratic rainfall. By liberalizing its economy, the Moroccan government has increased private investment, creating greater wealth for the urban areas. The few Jewish farmers moved to the urban areas as early as the 1950s. Most Jews have benefited from improving economic conditions, particularly the industrialists and shop owners. Unemployment, estimated at 11 percent in 2005, remains a problem, affecting Jews and Muslims. However, the few young Jews left in Morocco typically leave Morocco upon graduation from high school.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The French organization Alliance Israelite Universelle established its first secular school for Jews in the Moroccan city of Tetouan in 1862. By the 1950s, it had built a large network of schools throughout the country. Osar Hatorah, a New York-based Sephardic association, began to support religious schools in 1948. The Hasidic Lubavitch movement supported schools at about the same time. In 1950, the Moroccan High Institute for Hebrew Studies was created in Rabat to train rabbis. Almost all synagogues are Sephardic. Until the 20th century, minor differences between the religious practices of indigenous Berber Jews and the descendants of Andalucian Jews led them to establish separate synagogues. The wealthy Jews aspired to have their own family synagogues. Consequently, each Jewish community has many synagogues. In the 1980s, for instance, Casablanca had 34 working synagogues for its 8,000 Jews. Jewish civil law applies to Moroccan Jews, as interpreted by a *beth din*, a Jewish religious tribunal. Each major Jewish community has its own community committee. The Council of Jewish Communities of Morocco is the coordinating organ for all Jewish community committees.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Moroccan Muslims and Jews have limited social interaction, although both groups are strongly attached to Morocco. Prejudice against Jews exists side by side with warm, neighborly feelings. Many Moroccan Muslims feel betrayed by the Jews who emigrated, especially those who moved to Israel. Until independence in 1956, France created enmity between Jews and Muslims. These feelings were enhanced by Muslim solidarity with Palestinians and Jewish solidarity with Israel. For many years communications with Israel were prohibited. However, since the 1980s, King Hassan II and the current king, Mohamed VI, have encouraged Moroccan-born Israeli tourists to return for visits to Morocco. Mohamed VI, like his predecessors, has attempted to balance an interest in protecting his Jewish subjects with efforts to promote justice for the Palestinians. Moroccan Jews avoid discussing Israel in the presence of Muslims. The Moroccan Jewish community is getting smaller each year

as a result of continued emigration to Europe, the Americas, and Israel. The problems in Israel and Palestine and the increasing power of a Moroccan Islamist political party make Jews in Morocco nervous. Unless political and religious groups make a sustained effort to affirm the place of Jews in Morocco, the pace of emigration is likely to increase.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

In 1950, there were more than 220,000 Jews. In 1971, there were 35,000. In 2006 there are less than 5,000. Many factors have contributed to this exodus. Moroccan Jews never had a strong commitment to political Zionism. Emigration to Israel in the 1950s was inspired by a fear of possible violence, the hope of finding more lucrative employment, and the despair of the poor. Zionist recruiters helped create a climate of fear between Jews and Muslims based on both fact and fiction. Urban Jewish leaders and the Moroccan government negotiated the emigration of Jews from the Berber areas of southern Morocco with Zionist recruiters and the Israeli government. In the face of increasing poverty and a second-class status in Moroccan society, these Jews were offered the hope of social improvement in Israel. During the 1967 and 1973 Israeli-Arab wars, many middle-class Jews left for France and Canada, rather than move to Israel. Jews who remained in Morocco were able to maintain their culture and communities and live in safety. Although the Moroccan kings have been genuinely committed to protecting the Jews, the Moroccan political parties never offered Jews a meaningful political role.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bertram, Carel. 2000. "A Different Kind of Diaspora: Moroccan Jews Looking Back." *Al Jadid Magazine* 6 (33). <http://aljadid.org/art/0633bertram.html> (accessed May 2, 2007).
- Brown, Kenneth. 1976. *People of Sale: Tradition and Change in a Moroccan City, 1830–1930*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gerber, Jane S. 1980. *Jewish Society in Fez 1450–1700: Studies in Communal and Economic Life*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Kosansky, Oren. 2001. "Reading Jewish Fez: On the Cultural Identity of a Moroccan City." *Journal of the International Institute* 8 (3, Spring/Summer). <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.4750978.0008.305> (accessed April 12, 2008).
- Laskier, Michael M. 1994. *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*. New York: New York University Press.
- Schroeter, Daniel J. 1988. *Merchants of Essaouira: Urban Society and Imperialism in Southwestern Morocco, 1844–1886*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stillman, Norman A. 1991. *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.

## The Sephardi Jewish Community in North Morocco

*Tito Benady*

---

The Portuguese occupied the city of Ceuta in north Morocco in 1414 and from there laid waste to the Muslim lands in the vicinity. In 1471, Chechuen was founded in the mountains 30 miles from Ceuta by fugitives from Granada, which at the time was being hard pressed by the Castilians. In 1485, Al-Mandari, a Granada nobleman, aware that his country would soon be overrun, decided to conduct a campaign against the Christians from Africa. To that end he founded the modern city of Tetuan in the fertile plain below Chechouen. Situated five miles from the river Martil, Tetuan became a center of corsair activity. The inhabitants sent ships to harass the Spaniards, and their activities brought prosperity to the city.

Tetuan was to become a stronghold of Spanish tradition. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, most of those who came to Morocco settled in Fez and Mekenes, but a number settled in Tetuan. The Jews in Tetuan conserved the traditions they had brought from Spain more completely than the other *meqorashim* (exiles) in Morocco. In 1609 when the *Moriscos* (Spaniards of Moslem descent) were also expelled, a considerable number settled there. Tetuan was sufficiently distant from the sultan's court to preserve a more liberal outlook and until Sidi Mohammed, who reigned from 1757 to 1790, consolidated his control over the north, it remained a Spanish-speaking enclave, where Jews lived in a more liberal climate than in central Morocco. They were allowed to build synagogues and make wine, in spite of the prohibition under sharia law.

The Jews of Tetuan maintained their Spanish traditions and dialect, called Haketia, which was 15th-century Spanish with some Hebrew and Arabic elements. They retained many 15th-century Castilian ballads, called cantares, which have been collected by Ramón Menéndez Pidal and other scholars. Some of the cantares date from after the expulsion from Spain and show that owing to their proximity to the Iberian Peninsula (less than 40 miles by sea) they remained in touch, probably through Spanish sailors and merchants who called at Tetuan.

The Sephardi Jews found a refuge in Morocco, but together with their Muslim neighbors they suffered from the unsettled state of the country. Dynastic struggle brought much suffering to the inhabitants and sometime massacres, looting, and rape. Although personally protected by the law they had the inferior position of dhimmi, that of protected subjects who worshiped God but denied the truth of the Koran. Among other things they had to abide by the sumptuary laws and wear black to distinguish them from the Muslims, who wore white or light-colored clothes. The Sephardi Jews were subject to a poll tax and had to remove their shoes when passing a mosque. In most of Morocco they were confined to certain "unpleasant" trades, which including tanning and cleaning cesspits, and they were not allowed to ride horses, only mules. Traditionally, they had to salt the heads of executed

criminals, so the Jewish quarters were known as *mellahs* (*mellah* meaning salt); but the Jews of Tetuan used the Spanish term *Judería*.

The history of the early years of the Tetuan community is not well documented. In 1530, R. Hayim Bibas of Fez was appointed chief rabbi and founded a distinguished dynasty of rabbis. In 1665, the town suffered in the contest between the Filali and the Wattasy dynasties, and the magnificent Bibas synagogue was burned to the ground. By this time the activities of the corsairs had largely ended, but Tetuan became the Mediterranean port for exporting the produce of central Morocco, which was brought by caravan from Fez. The British occupation of Tangier from 1662 to 1684, and of Gibraltar after 1704, opened up new trading possibilities for the inhabitants. Tetuan also became the diplomatic capital of Morocco until the consuls were moved to Tangier by royal decree in 1772.

In 1727 an unnamed English visitor called Tetuan "the most agreeable town in all Barbary." It had 30,000 inhabitants, of which 5,000 were Jews, who lived in 170 houses. They had seven synagogues. The visitor approved of the quality of the wine, but found that the brandy contained too much aniseed. He stated that it was the only Spanish-speaking Jewish community in Morocco, which was not correct, as Larache was also Spanish-speaking and Tangier was becoming one.

The community continued to be affluent until it suffered a terrible catastrophe in 1791. Muley Yazid's accession to the throne, on the death of Sidi Mohammed (1789), led to a terrible massacre of the Moroccan Jews as they had refused to support him in his fight with his brother for the succession. Yazid sent 2,000 troops into the town to loot, murder, and rape. Dozens died. The Jews went to the doors of the mosque to petition the sultan, who seemingly relented and ordered attacks to cease. Similar scenes were later repeated in Arzila, Alcazarquivir, and Larache. Much to the relief of the Jews, Yazid, "the malicious one," was killed the following year.

Yazid was succeeded by his half-brother Sultan Moulay Hicham, who was then succeeded by Moulay Sulaiman in 1796. Sulaiman had little regard for his Jewish subjects. In August 1807, he ordered the Jews to abandon their *mellah* in the center of the town and move to a new quarter outside the walls. As the law did not allow them to build new synagogues, they henceforth had to make do with a number of rooms in private houses.

In 1859, incidents on the Ceuta border led to the Spanish occupation of Tetuan for two years. At the beginning many of the Jews took refuge abroad, in Gibraltar and southern Spain, but they soon returned and found themselves treated as equals by the Spanish military authorities. Jews formed part of the new town council, a privilege they lost when Moroccan rule was established again.

From then on, the economic position of the community deteriorated as trade moved to Tangier where the harbor could take larger vessels. In 1877, the Jews were described as petty traders and artisans (shoemakers, smiths, tailors, muleteers, and so on), but they mostly lived in abject poverty. One quarter lived on charitable relief. The *Juderia* was terribly overcrowded and most families lived in one room. They had six yeshivas and 16 small synagogues, inconvenient, ill-ventilated, and insufficiently lighted. It was reported that none was larger than 120 square feet.

These events alerted Jews abroad of the plight of the community. Assistance began to arrive, and the Alliance Israelite Universelle set up schools. Better education enabled many to move to Tangier or immigrate to Algiers, Spain, France, and South America. They were also able to reestablish communities in the Spanish *presidios* of Ceuta and Melilla. At the beginning of the 21st century, there were 800 Jews in Melilla and 400 in Ceuta. Ceuta was the last place in the Spanish dominions where Jews were allowed to live, as they were not been expelled from there until 1707.

In 1912, Spain occupied the north of Morocco in agreement with other European powers, and Tetuan became the capital of the protectorate. Many Jews from other towns moved there; in particular, the Jews of Chechuen moved there en masse. In spite of emigration the Tetuan community numbered 7,631 in 1951. But after Morocco became independent in 1956, mass emigration, mostly to Israel, meant that few Jews remained, and the community currently numbers less than 200.

There was a community in the port of Arzila that had been captured by Portugal in 1471, and 250 of the Jewish inhabitants were sold as slaves in Portugal but redeemed by Spanish Jews. The Portuguese allowed the Jews back in 1510 as they were needed as intermediaries to obtain supplies of food from Morocco. After the Portuguese were driven out in 1546, the community continued, although it had to pay an annual tax of 60 gold ducats. After 1956 most of the community moved to Tangier, and the last synagogue was closed in 1980.

The port of Larache, south of Arzila, also had a small Jewish community, which lived in its own *Juderia*, although it was in Spanish hands from 1610 to 1689. By 1900 the community numbered 2,000, but it has since ceased to exist. A number of *Megorashim* from Spain also settled in Alcazarquivir some 25 miles inland. In 1900 the community numbered 1,360, mostly craftspeople and shopkeepers, but they have all emigrated, and the community no longer exists.

The most important Jewish community in northern Morocco during the past two centuries has been Tangier. This city was captured by Portugal in 1471 and ceded to England in 1662 as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza when she married Charles II. When they arrived, the English found a few Jewish families in residence who proved indispensable in obtaining provisions for the garrison and acting as interpreters with the Moroccans. In 1677, it was felt dangerous to have Moroccan nationals within a garrison liable to sudden attacks, and they were expelled, but they were readmitted two years later. It is recorded that they were so poor that they could not afford a Sepher Torah for their synagogue.

A number of European Jews also arrived who were involved in supplying the garrison, and they formed a separate community with their own synagogue. Relations between the two communities was not good, and in 1675 the Europeans were put under herem (ban of excommunication) by the rabbis of Tetuan because they drank unsanctified wine and traded in salt pork, but Lord Inchiquin, the governor of Tangier, made them lift the herem.

The English abandoned Tangier in 1684, and a new Moroccan population was established. The first leader of the Jewish community was Abraham Benamor of

Mekenes, but most of the Jews who settled in Tangier were from Tetuan. R Judah Hadida was appointed the first dayan in 1744.

During the 18th century, the trade of Tangier increased considerably, particularly after the consuls moved there from Tetuan in 1772. By the middle of the 19th century the community numbered some 2,500. The presence of the consuls protected the town from the ravages of Muley Yazid, but in 1844 French warships bombarded the town, and because no Jews were harmed, a special commemorative service was held every year known as the *Purim de las bombas*.

The building of a new harbor commenced in 1907, and in 1923 Tangier was declared an International Zone, under the control of the consuls of Britain, France, Spain and Italy. Its status made Tangier very affluent during World War II, and the Jewish community increased to 15,000. But since it was incorporated into Morocco in 1958, emigration to Israel, Canada, France, and South America has reduced the Jewish population considerably. Currently, only a few hundred Jews remain, and there is only one synagogue.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bengio, Joseph. 1983. *The Spanish-speaking Jews of Morocco*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Beth Hatefusoth.
- Hirschberg, H. Z. 1967. "Jews and Jewish Affairs in the Relations between Great Britain and Morocco in the 18th Century." In *Essays presented to Israel Brodie*, edited by H. J. Zimmels, 153–181. London: Soncino Press.
- Hirschberg, H. Z. 1974–1989. *A History of the Jews in North Africa*. 2 vols. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Leibovici, Sarah. 1984. *Chronique des Juifs de Tétouan (1860–1896)*. Paris: Maisonneuve Larose.
- Nahón, Zarita. 1977. *Romances judeo-españoles de Tánger*, edited by S. G. Armistead and J. H. Silverman. Madrid, Spain: Cátedra-Seminario Menéndez Pidal.

## Jewish Community of Namibia

*Richard Newman*

---

General Population: 2,000,000

Jewish Population: 60

Percent of Population: 0.003 percent

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: German and Lithuanian origins

Languages Spoken: English, German, indigenous languages

---

### Historical Overview

Late 15th century There may have been Jewish participation in the explorations of Prince Henry the Navigator in this region.

Middle of the 19th century The first known involvement of Jews in the uncharted territory of the vast area of the Namib occurs. The brothers Aaron and Elias de

Pass, English Jews of Sephardic origin, while residing in Cape Town and along the Namaqualand coast, extend their considerable commercial and shipping enterprises north of the Garieb river.

- 1908 The area is colonized by German Imperial forces. The discovery of diamonds elicits attention and investment from German political and business sectors. Carl Fürstenberg, a German Jewish banker who developed the railroad system, contributed greatly to the expansion of the colony, as did Emil and, later, Walther Rathenau, in the fields of mining, farm irrigation, and improved administration.
- 1915 The main area of Jewish settlement in German South West Africa, grouped mainly in the coastal town of Swakopmund, never comprises more than 100 families. After the South Africa Campaign and the capitulation of the German *Schutztruppen*, Jewish and other alien families, who had been divided by internment and internal deportation at the Okanjande Internment Camp, are reunited. Most prefer to settle in the inland capital of Windhoek.

### Important Personalities

In the 20th century, Simon “Sam” Cohen, was a pioneering force in a variety of areas such as transport and road and dam building. His service and generosity to the economy and the community earned him the title of “Uncrowned King of South West.” When the Cohen family withdrew from the Namibian economy and left the country, leadership of the Jewish community was assumed by Harold Pupkewitz, whose father, Max, was among the early Jewish settlers in the first decade of the 20th century.

Other prominent Jewish personalities were George Kerby, the Windhoek town clerk and engineer for three decades until 1953, whose parks and cemeteries are a living memory to his endeavors, as well as Windhoek mayors, Jack Levinson, Samuel Davis, and Dr. George May. Jack Drucker was mayor of Lüderitzbucht for nine years.

Advocate Israel Goldblatt, son of a noted Yiddishist, was prominent in the fight for South West Africa’s independence at the United Nations. One daughter, Karen Blum, was prominent in law in southern Africa. An elder daughter, Naomi Jacobson, became a well-known sculptor of southern African and Namibian leaders.

### Religious Denominations and Communal Institutions

Swakopmund had no synagogue, although it did have a problematic cemetery that was perpetually covered by the shifting desert sands. However, the Jewish communities of the capital, Windhoek, and the small southern town of Keetmanshoop had each built a house of worship by 1924, as well as establishing cemeteries. The Windhoek synagogue was still in use at the beginning of the 21st century.

The scarcity of Jewish institutions and facilities made the practice of Orthodox Jewish life difficult at times. Especially in the smaller, outlying areas of Jewish settlement it was not always possible to procure kosher meat or to ensure rabbinic presence at life-cycle events. The women of the community showed special fortitude and strength, particularly during the 1918 influenza pandemic when 11 deaths were attributed to the outbreak, a high proportion for the fledgling community.

In 1917, a few years after its inception, the Windhoek Hebrew Congregation began its Minute Book, in which it is noted that the committee's main task was to find a spiritual leader who could perform the services of rabbi, teacher, shohet, and mohel. The most noteworthy were Rabbi M. L. Cohen, who was the first to occupy the pulpit of the 1924 Windhoek synagogue, and Rabbi Z.W. Rachman, who served the congregation from 1947 for 20 years. Initially, the congregation was affiliated to the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, and in later years to the Johannesburg Beth Din.

The Windhoek Hebrew Congregation is under the leadership of Harold Pupke-witz, Nahum Gorelick, and Laurie Pieters. Services are held regularly, conducted by Zvi Gorelick who is the local teacher and officiates at life cycles. For the High Holy Days a rabbi is brought in from the Johannesburg-based African Jewish Congress, under the guidance of Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

When the territory was mandated to South Africa by the League of Nations after World War I, the Jewish population, mainly from South Africa, grew about 500 people. It dwindled with the rise of nationalism and the war of independence, so that by the start of the 21st century the numbers had dropped to only a few dozen. The economic upswing after the transition to independence has brought some new Jewish settlement to the area.

### Selected Bibliography

- De Saxe, Morris, ed. 1929. *Jewry in South West Africa*. In *South African Jewish Year Book*. Johannesburg: South Africa: South African Jewish Historical Society, 127
- Newman, Richard. 2008. *The Jews of Namibia*. Cape Town, South Africa: Windhoek Hebrew Congregation.

## Jews in Nigeria

*Remy Ilona*

---

General population: 135,031,000

Jewish Population: 40,000

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Jews migrated to Nigeria from North Africa circa 500 CE. The majority of Jews are Igbo.

Languages: English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (Ibo)

---

### Contemporary Overview

Determining who is Jewish in Nigeria is problematic. Many of the Igbo people, whose ancestral land is in the southeast of Nigeria and who number more than 40 million, see themselves as Jews. Among these Igbos are thousands who were

converted to Christianity by the colonialists but later renounced Christianity, formed synagogues, and now live as children of Israel (Jews). In Nigeria other tribal groups have also renounced Christianity and practice Judaism, including the Tiv, Ibibio, Urhobo, and Mada

The Igbo people have many Jewish traditions. Noam Katz, the current Israeli ambassador in Nigeria, and others point to their possible ancient Israelite origins. Most may be considered lapsed Jews. Small, but significant and very influential minorities of Igbos still practice the Igbo religion. They are difficult to categorize, but could be termed "Israelites before the advent of the rabbis."

The Igbos and other Nigerians have tiny synagogues in many cities. Kulanu, the nongovernmental organization that assists Diaspora groups, and its supporters equip these synagogues. One eminent Igbo is Avishai Agbai, a geologist who heads the Gihon Synagogue and Beth Knesset Siyahh Israel, Abuja.

### Selected Bibliography

- Remy, Ilona. "Rabbi Rosen, Nigeria, Igbo Land and the Igbos. <http://members.aol.com/moreshetnet/igbo.html> (accessed April 2007).
- Remy Ilona and Ehav Eliyahu. 2004. *Igbos, Jews in Afrika?* Vol. 1. Abuja, Nigeria: Mega Press.

## Jews in South Africa

*Saul Issroff*

**General Population:** 47,432,000 (July 2005 estimate)

**Jewish Population:** 77,262 (2003 estimate)

**Percent of Population:** 0.16289 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Johannesburg, 52,000; Cape Town, 17,000; Durban, 2,750; Pretoria, 1,600; Port Elizabeth, 600; Bloemfontein, 132; East London, 180; remainder of the country, 3,000 (2003 estimate)

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Predominantly of Litvak (Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus) origin; the Jews embarked on ships at Libau (Courland) via the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter, in London England. Smaller numbers arrived from England, Germany, Poland, and Ukraine. A small Sephardi community is from the island of Rhodes, and there has been some recent migration from Israel.

**Languages Spoken:** Jews speak English, Afrikaans, some Hebrew, and Yiddish. There are 11 official languages in South Africa: Afrikaans (Afrikaans), English, Ndebele (isiNdebele), Northern Sotho (Sesotho sa Leboa), Sotho (Sesotho), Swati (siSwati), Tsonga (Xitsonga), Tswana (Setswana), Venda (Tshivenda), Xhosa (isiXhosa), and Zulu (isiZulu). There are eight nonofficial national languages: Fanagalo, Lobedu (Khilobedu), Northern Ndebele (Sindebele), Phuthi (Siphuthi), South African Sign Language, Khoe, Nama, San (Khoisan/Khoesan) languages. Older immigrant communities speak Hindi (Gujarati variety), Urdu, Tamil, Greek, Yiddish, Polish, Portuguese, French, and German.

## Historical Overview

Jewish links to South Africa commenced in 1487 when Jews are involved as map-makers, navigators, and sailors in the Portuguese voyages of exploration around the Cape, en route to the profitable trading areas of Asia. The Portuguese never settled in the Cape, however.

South Africa was first colonized by the Dutch in 1652. Between 1795 and 1803, South Africa was ruled by the British, and between 1803 and 1806, it was ruled by the Batavian Republic. The British, to avert the possible seizure of the Cape by Napoleon, took control again in 1806. A group of Dutch settler families known as Boers (farmers), who opposed British rule and the associated antislavery legislation, started migrating into the hinterland in 1836, in what came to be known as the Great Trek. They later founded two Boer republics: the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal. Diamonds were discovered at Kimberley in 1869 and gold in Johannesburg in 1886. These discoveries brought an influx of fortune seekers, traders, and financiers from Europe and America. The Anglo Boer War (1899–1902) ended with the establishment of four self-governing colonies: the Cape, Natal, the Orange River Colony (after 1910, the Orange Free State), and the Transvaal. They joined in 1910 to form the Union of South Africa, which, in 1961, became an independent republic outside the British Commonwealth.

### Jewish Migration in the Different Epochs

The religious freedom permitted under the short-lived Batavian Republic continued after 1806 under British rule. In 1820, the British government gave assisted passage and land grants to people willing to settle in the remote wilds of the eastern Cape Colony, people later known as the 1820 settlers. At least 16 Jews are known to have been part of this early settlement. Small numbers of Jews from Britain, Holland, and Germany continued to settle in the Cape Colony over the next 40 years. In the period up to 1870, there were progressively more English immigrants.

In the middle of the 19th century, German Jews, the “Merchant Pioneers,” became significant in developing inland areas. Between 1845 and 1870, Jews from Hesse-Cassel, in particular the Mosenthal family, were responsible for bringing about half the Jews (numbering a few thousand by 1870) to South Africa. Many became managers of the Mosenthals’ rapidly spreading enterprises or traded on their own account. The development of the largely untouched hinterland was mainly attributable to their endeavors. They were early pioneers in Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State. Many of these families with international trading connections took part in banking, trade financing, and insurance. They initiated major agricultural activities, including those of ostrich farming (feathers), Angora goat farming (mohair), and various industrial and mining enterprises. Few of these early families retain Jewish links.

After 1881, Jewish immigration from Russia increased rapidly. Major causes were economic deprivation, pogroms in the Ukraine (1881–1884), and other catastrophes—droughts, floods, deportation, and fires, particularly in Kovno Gubernia, a Lithuanian province within the Russian Empire, although there were no pogroms in

Lithuania itself. There was a strong potential for success in South Africa—in particular on the emergent Kimberley diamond fields and later on the Witwatersrand goldfields around Johannesburg.

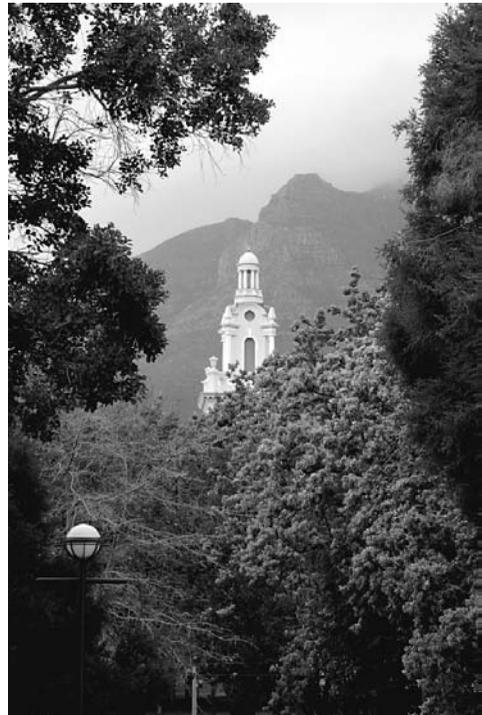
This immigration accelerated after 1895. Most were Lithuanian (Litvaks) from the then provinces of Kovno, Vilna, Grodno, and Northern Suwalki (East Prussia and later Poland) and Belorussia. With subagents of shipping agencies in the shtetlach (small towns), many Jews embarked initially, on small cargo boats under crude conditions, at the port of Libau (in Courland, now Latvia). Some immigrants came through Hamburg and Bremen. More than 47,000 Jews were enumerated in the first South African nationwide census of 1911.

At various times, attempts were made to limit the influx of Jews. In 1903, they were placed in the same category as Asiatics on the grounds that Yiddish was not a European language. This ruling was successfully challenged and reversed. About 15,000 Jews entered between 1925 and 1938.

In 1930, the Quota Act, without specifically mentioning Jews, but making “assimilability” a criterion for admission, limited the influx to a small number. The rise of Afrikaner nationalism, coupled with its overt Nazi sympathies, led to more severe restrictions. Between 1933 and 1936, only 3,600 Jews were permitted to enter and probably fewer than 500 entered during World War II.

### Contributions Made by Individual Jews in These Different Epochs

After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Abraham ben Samuel Zacuto (1450–1525), a famous rabbi, court astronomer, historian, and mapmaker who was known as



The synagogue in Cape Town, South Africa, was erected in 1862 and was the city's first. (Brian Cooper)

“mathematician to the King,” went to Portugal as court astronomer to King John II. In 1496, he instructed Vasco da Gama before his voyage around the Cape.

Joseph Suasso de Lima (of Amsterdam), arriving in 1789, was a sworn translator who started the first Dutch newspaper in the Cape. A member of the Dutch Reformed Church, he nevertheless contributed to the building of the first synagogue.

Some early Jews during the period of British colonialism include Michiel Levy, a shopkeeper in the *Boereplein* (farmer’s town square) in 1806. Saul Solomon, a trader from St. Helena, founded the English press in Cape Town. He retained prominence in the Jewish community despite converting to Christianity. Dr. Siegfried Fraenkel was the first Jewish doctor and the first person to openly practice Judaism in Cape Town in 1810. Nathaniel Isaacs, nephew of Saul Solomon, was an intrepid Natal explorer who befriended the famous Zulu chief, Chaka.

Early British families include the De Pass family, who played a major part in establishing the shipping, sugar, and fishing industries. Maximillian Thalwitzer was a pioneer in sheep farming and the wool industry. The Norden, Norton, and Sloman families were leaders of the small number of Jews among the 1820 settlers. In 1841, Benjamin Norden founded the first Jewish congregation, Tikvath Israel, in Cape Town. Early families developing the hinterland in the middle to late 1800s include the Baumanns, Levisseurs, Ehrlichs, and Hamburger. They were early pioneers in Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State.

Sammy Marks (1844–1920) from Neustadt (Lithuania) is regarded as the forerunner of Lithuanian emigration. In partnership with his cousin, Isaac Lewis, he started the firm of Lewis and Marks. Commencing as hawkers, they became general dealers and were highly successful pioneer industrialists. Marks befriended President Paul Kruger. London-born Barney Barnato (Isaacs) was a partner of Cecil John Rhodes in forming the De Beers Diamond Mining Company. Control later passed (with the assistance of the Rothschilds) to the German Jewish family of Ernest Oppenheimer. Other notable mining pioneers include Sir Lionel Phillips and the Lippert and Albu brothers.

Emmanuel Mendelssohn, born in Pakosch near Posen, went to the Witwatersrand in 1887, established a newspaper and became President Kruger’s friend and publicist. He was a founder of the first Johannesburg community and organized the first Jewish burial. Max Langermann and Sir Harry Graumann were early mayors and pioneers of Johannesburg. Another contributor to civic life was Adolf Schauder, a mayor of Port Elizabeth, who pioneered mass housing schemes for the poor from the late 1930s onward. Many Jews were active in local and provincial councils. In the 1940s, Bertha Solomon, a barrister, became a member of Parliament and was active in promoting women’s rights and the welfare of the underprivileged. Dr. Henry Gluckman was minister of health (1945–1948) and a member of Parliament for 20 years. Solly Sachs and Katie Gelvan were among the many active trade-unionists.

Among the many notable Hebrew and Yiddish writers was the Witwatersrand pioneer and historian of Jewish life in early Johannesburg, Meyer Dovid Hersch (1858–1933). In addition, in the years Mahatma Gandhi lived in Johannesburg and Tolstoy Farm, his main supporters and advisers were Jews: Hermann Kallenbach, Henry S. L. Polak, Lewis Rich, and Sonia Schlesin (his private secretary).

In 1989, a reformist leadership under President Frederick Willem de Klerk commenced negotiations with the African National Congress, led by Nelson Mandela. Apartheid was abolished and, in 1994, black majority rule ensued. South Africa then rejoined the Commonwealth. As of 2006, the original four provinces became nine: Western Cape, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Free State, North West, KwaZulu/Natal (KZN), Mpumalanga, Gauteng, and Limpopo.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Agriculture crops include corn, wheat, sugarcane, fruits, vegetables, beef, poultry, mutton, wool, and dairy products. Industries include mining (South Africa is the world's largest producer of platinum, gold, chromium), automobile assembly, metalworking, machinery, textiles, iron and steel, chemicals, fertilizer, foodstuffs, and commercial ship repair.

### Present Economic Conditions

South Africa is an emerging market economy with substantial natural resources; well-developed financial, legal, communications, and transport sectors; infrastructures; and a large stock exchange. There is a very high unemployment rate and significant poverty, however.

As an undeveloped country South Africa offered opportunities to early immigrants far better than anything they could have had in Eastern Europe. The traveling hawker, or *smous*, became an institution in the remote rural areas. Many settled in small towns as shopkeepers and tradespeople. A number of efficient entrepreneurial farmers were pioneers of the wool, ostrich feather, and citrus industries. Jews in the Eastern Cape town of Oudtshoorn played a major role in establishing the then lucrative ostrich feather industry, particularly after 1880. An influx of Jewish traders and farmers, largely of Lithuanian origin, were influential. The community grew to around 1,500 people by 1913, but with changing fashions and the outbreak of World War I, the industry declined. In many places, Jews were prominent in civic affairs, often becoming mayors.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The community is predominantly traditional. Orthodox, Reform, or Progressive Jewry account for less than 10 percent of the Jewish population, and secular Jews account for 12 percent. Some South African rabbis have had distinguished careers. Joseph Hertz, rabbi of the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation, Johannesburg, from 1898 to 1911, became chief rabbi of the British Empire until his death in 1946. Rabbi Judah Leib Landau, rabbi of the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation from 1903 to 1915, succeeded Rabbi Hertz as chief rabbi of the combined Johannesburg congregations. Despite their differences, both were intellectual and spiritual leaders of high caliber. Rabbi Louis I. Rabinowitz, a fiery orator, scholarly author, and

Zionist, was chief rabbi from 1945 until he went on aliyah in 1961. He became a deputy mayor of Jerusalem. In Cape Town, the Rabbi Joel Rabinowitz served for 23 years before becoming a gold assayer. The community was later dominated for more than 60 years by the Reverend A. P. Bender and Chief Rabbi Israel Abrahams. The United Jewish Progressive (Reform) Jewish Congregation was established in Johannesburg in 1933 with Rabbi Moses Cyrus Weiler as its spiritual leader until he retired to Jerusalem in the late 1950s. In 2005, Warren Goldstein, a lawyer, became the first South African-born chief rabbi of the Orthodox community.

In spite of a decline in total numbers, the community is now significantly stronger in terms of Jewish commitment and involvement. This was shown in the results of a 1998 attitudinal survey (Institute of Jewish Policy Research, London and the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, University of Cape Town) and confirmed in a 2005 survey (Kaplan Centre). The predominant affiliation is Orthodox (88 percent), the remainder being Reform (Progressive), with one small Masorti congregation in Johannesburg. The Lubavitch (Habad) movement and *Ohr Somayach* are strong in Johannesburg, as is the *Bnei Akiva/Mizrachi* movement. *Aish HaTorah* as well as various *Haredi*-oriented congregations, such as the *Kollel Yad Shaul* and *Adass Yeshurun*, are also active. Rates of marrying out of the faith are low. Religious identification is strong and growing. Johannesburg alone has more than 50 synagogues, including a proliferation of small ultra-Orthodox groups with small separate synagogues. The African Jewish Congress, administered by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and affiliated with the World Jewish Congress, has an itinerant rabbi serving as rabbi for rural areas of South Africa and sub-Saharan African countries.

As communities grew, communal institutions were founded. In 1897, one year after the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, the South African Zionist Federation was founded, remaining influential until around 1990. The major representative body was the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), started in the Transvaal in 1903 and in the Cape in 1904. These were based on the Anglo-Jewish model, but were founded primarily to make representations against anti-alien laws, which limited Jewish immigration. The Johannesburg Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society (*chevra kadisha*) is well organized and controls most of the welfare organizations.

Some welfare organizations and schools run by the recently established ultra-Orthodox congregations have been criticized by some as an unnecessary drain on communal resources, but are welcomed by others as an indication of a vibrant communal diversity.

More than 80 percent of Jewish children attend Jewish day schools. King David in Johannesburg (founded in 1948) and Herzlia in Cape Town are the most successful. In Johannesburg, *Beyachad* Communal Centre (founded in 2000) houses the main civic and Zionist organisations. In Cape Town a campus houses the historic Gardens synagogue, the South African Jewish Museum, the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, the Gitlin Library, and the Albow Communal Centre. Jewish adult education is popular and well attended. The only formal Jewish higher education establishment is the internationally renowned Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies, established in 1980 at the University of Cape Town.

The distinctive characteristics of the South African Jewish community compared with other new world communities are as follows:

- A predominance of Litvaks (Jews from Lithuania, Latvia, and part of Belarus), which led to an unusually homogenous composition of the community;
- The very strong Zionist influence; and
- The amalgam of Anglo-Jewish form and Lithuanian spirit that characterizes the lay and religious communal institutions.

The communal infrastructure has long been well-organized and has a cohesive network of welfare, educational, Zionist, social, sporting, and political institutions. There has been a continuing deep commitment to Jewish life and to Israel.

Zionist Jewish youth movements have always been active in promoting Jewish identity. Habonim (Labour Zionist), previously the main movement, is now smaller than Bnei Akiva (Religious Zionist). Betar (Likud) and Netzer (Reform) are marginal.

#### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, Existential Problems of the Community

A disproportionate number of Jews were active in the struggle against apartheid, many choosing exile, but others were implicated in the notorious Treason Trial (1956–1961) and Rivonia Trial (1964) as colleagues of Nelson Mandela. Advocate Isie Maisels, later chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, was the leading barrister for the defendants. In the Rivonia Trial, however, Percy Yutar, also a prominent member of the Jewish community, was the state prosecutor.

Although the Jewish leadership never openly supported apartheid, they seldom actively opposed it. Some notable exceptions were the opposition leader Helen Suzman of the Progressive party, rabbis such as Ben Isaacson and the late chief rabbi, Cyril Harris, and his wife, Ann. In Harris's 1997 submission, on behalf of the Jewish community, to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, he acknowledged that the Jewish community should have done more to oppose apartheid. Efforts were, however, made to build bridges with black communities. Since the 1930s, the Union of Jewish Women and the United Sisterhood of the Progressive Jewish movement have been active in outreach work with the poorest sectors. Jewish businesspeople, together with Rabbi Harris and black leaders, formed Tikkun (1990s), to provide social uplift programs. Rabbi Harris used traditional Jewish ethics as a basis for activism on behalf of impoverished non-Jews. His eloquent presence at many public occasions led to an improved image of the Jewish community.

#### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Johannesburg remains the largest community with an estimated 55,000 Jews. The past half-century, however, has seen emigration supplant immigration. A significant number of South African Jews were volunteers at the time of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Many went on aliyah to Israel between 1950 and 1970. The political environment during the apartheid era led to increased violence, little of it, however, directed specifically against Jews. Many young families, however, did

not want to bring up children in this racist environment and, specifically, opposed conscription of their sons into an army defending apartheid. Other factors were declining standards of state services, such as health and education, and economic pessimism. Many wanted to live in broader environments with better economic and professional opportunities. Estimates are that about 40 percent of South African Jewish emigrants have gone to Australia, 20 percent to the United States, 15 percent to Israel, and 10 percent each to the United Kingdom and Canada. Table 1 shows population trends in the South African Jewish population since 1904.

This emigration has been countered to a small extent by recent immigrants from Israel, adjacent southern African countries, the United States, and the United Kingdom, some in commerce and industry and some to retire. In a 1998 survey (Kaplan Centre, UCT), over 10 percent of all respondents were previous emigrants who had returned, a figure confirmed by a follow-up survey in 2005 (Kaplan Centre 2005).

Until the fall of the apartheid government in 1994, Jews had formed part of a privileged minority dominating a multiracial society. Paradoxically, this led to Jews becoming prominent in the antiapartheid and liberation movements, while, at the same time, the organized community failed to openly denounce the injustices of the apartheid era. The abolition of apartheid brought to an end the entrenched privilege of South Africa's Jews.

Whites began to adapt to the new regime and, with a process of self-examination, confronted the past record of oppressive treatment of the blacks. In the first post-apartheid elections, Jews overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party (later led by Tony Leon, a Jew), but a significant number voted for the African National Congress (ANC), which won the election with a large majority. Under the initial leadership of Nelson Mandela, the government was committed to nonracial and democratic policies. The Jewish community had a sense of security, despite the ongoing criminal violence. Political violence had all but ceased after the 1994 election.

The SAJBD has continued to monitor legislation and provide input in as far as it may influence Jews. One aspect was inclusion in the new constitution of a clause concerning freedom of expression laws that limits hate speech.

**Table 1 South African Jewish Population Trends, 1904–2003**

	1904	1911	1918	1926	1936	1951	1970	1980	2003
Johannesburg			20,085		38,939	53,423	61,325	65,846	52,000
Cape Town			9,100		16,284	20,446	25,640	26,977	17,000
Durban			1,644		2,849	4,482	5,990	5,930	2,750
Pretoria			1,698		2,677	3,228	3,750	3,487	1,600
Port Elizabeth			1,142		2,057	2,866	2,820	2,436	600
Bloemfontein			962		1,412	1,240	1,250	690	132
East London			432		782	1,115	800	641	180
Rest of country			19,642		19,263	14,609	9,570	5,875	3,000
TOTAL	38,101	46,919	54,705	72,169	84,263	101,409	111,155	111,882	77,262

Source: SA Jewish Board of Deputies and various SA Jewish Yearbooks.

### Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism, as in all Diaspora communities, exists, but it is infrequent. Right-wing extremist activity is minimal. Some violent incidents have been organized by Islamic militants, such as the pipe bombing of Wynberg synagogue in Cape Town in 1998. South Africa has a Muslim population estimated at around 800,000, but this community is fragmented and few leaders are prepared to counter the prevalent anti-Jewish and anti-Israel extremism. There is also widespread pro-Palestinian support within the ruling ANC.

The ANC had close ties with the Palestinian Liberation Organization during the apartheid era, and ideologically is in a third or developing world camp, but it consistently includes support for Israel's right to exist, while supporting an independent Palestinian state. One of the first state visits by Palestinian President Abbas after the Hamas election victory in March 2006 was to South Africa, and it was suggested that the South African government mediate between the Palestinian state and Israel.

The 2001 Durban World Conference against Racism became noted for virulent anti-Semitism and anti-Israel pronouncements, both in the conference and outside. Local Muslim groups were active and strengthened alliances with international groups, and Israel became tagged as a racist and apartheid state. Virulent, crude, anti-Semitic publications such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion were distributed together with Holocaust denial material. Harassment and abuse of Jewish and Israeli delegates occurred in a parallel nongovernmental organization (NGO) conference. The United States and Israel sent low-level delegations to the conference as a protest against the anti-Israel wording of the draft statement, and recalled their delegations before the end of the conference.

In 2002, a second major United Nations conference, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, gave another opportunity for anti-Israel stances. The SAJBD, along with the World Jewish Congress, was well-prepared and used local people and resources to lobby major summit attendees. Representatives sat on the executive committee for the Global (NGO) Forum and the Interfaith Initiative. The outcome was that issues related to the Middle East had little impact.

The SAJBD has successfully countered anti-Semitic propaganda in a number of court actions. It currently monitors anti-Semitism and seeks to promote good relations with the government, meeting regularly with political leaders of all types.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Although small in numbers in relation to the world Jewish population, South African Jewry remains influential. Arieh Louis Pincus was a founder of El Al airlines, and treasurer of the Jewish Agency. In the 1990s, Mendel Kaplan was honorary president of Keren Hayesod, chairman of the board of governors of the Jewish Agency, chairman of the Jerusalem Foundation, and is current chairman of the World Jewish Congress.

Prominent Jewish writers have included the versatile and prolific author Sarah Gertrude Millin, who wrote 48 novels and several biographies. Nadine Gordimer



Nadine Gordimer is one of South Africa's most famous writers and one of its most acclaimed Jewish novelists. In 1991, Gordimer received the Nobel Prize for Literature, becoming the nation's first writer to be so honored. (United Nations)

received the 1991 Nobel Prize for Literature. Dan Jacobson wrote on Jewish themes in a South African context. Henry Freeman Cohen founded the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1902; later editors who opposed the Nationalist government were Lewis Sowden and Benjamin Pogrud. Famous South African Jewish actors include Janet Suzman, Laurence Harvey (Hirsch Skikne), Sid James (Sidney Joel Cohen, comedian), and Sir Anthony Sher. In art, Moses Kottler, Lippy Lipschitz, Irma Stern, Sidney Goldblatt, and the contemporary William Kentridge are notable. David Goldblatt is a prominent photographer.

Almost every major medical center in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Israel has South African physicians in leading positions as teachers, researchers, and clinicians. Among many in South Africa, two stand out: Professor Frank Forman, of the University of Cape Town, and Moses Suzman, a Johannesburg physician. Sir Aaron Klug, who was born in Zelva, Lithuania, but educated in South Africa, won a Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1982 (for the structure of biologically active substances). Sydney Brenner won a Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2002.

In the postapartheid era, several Jews have held cabinet positions. Lithuanian-born Joe Slovo was minister of Housing, Gill Marcus served as deputy minister of finance, and Ronnie Kasrils was deputy minister of defense, deputy minister of water affairs and forestry, and then deputy minister of intelligence.

Judge Arthur Chaskalson was appointed chief justice in 2001, holding the position until his retirement in 2005. Albie Sachs is a constitutional court judge. Distinguished Jewish lawyers and judges include Sir Sidney Kentridge and the British

Law Lord Leonard Hoffman. Richard Goldstone, a Supreme Court judge, was later on the Constitutional Court and was chief prosecutor of the International War Crimes Commission (1994–1996).

### Selected Bibliography

- Herrman, Louis. 1930. *A History of the Jews in South Africa from the Earliest Times to 1895*. Repr. Johannesburg: South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 1935.
- Issroff, Saul, ed. 2003–2007. "Southern Africa Jewish Genealogy SA-SIG:Bibliography," Jewish Gen Web site. [www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/bibliography/index.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/bibliography/index.htm) (accessed April 2007).
- Kaplan, Mendel. 2006. *The Future of South African Jewry. Comments and Observations*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Privately published.
- Kaplan, Mendel, and Marian Robertson. 1991. *Founders and Followers—Johannesburg Jewry 1887–1915*. Cape Town, South Africa: Vlaeberg.
- Saks, David. 2003. *South African Jewry: A Contemporary Portrait*. Policy Study no. 25. Jerusalem: Institute of the World Jewish Congress.
- Saron, Gustav, and Louis Hotz. 1955. *The Jews in South Africa from the Earliest Times to 1895*. Cape Town, South Africa: Geoffrey Cumberlege.
- Shain, Milton. 1983. *Jewry and Cape Society: The Origins and Activities of the Jewish Board of Deputies for the Cape Colony*. Cape Town, South Africa: Historical Publication Society.
- Shain, Milton. 1994. *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Shain, Milton, and Richard Mendelsohn. 2002. *Memories, Realities and Dreams: Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Jonathan Ball.
- Shimoni, Gideon. 1980. *Jews and Zionism. The South African Experience 1910–1967*. Cape Town, South Africa: Oxford University Press.
- Shimoni, Gideon. 2003. *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa*. Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry Series. Cape Town, South Africa: University Press of New England.
- Sichel, Frieda. 1966. *From Refugee to Citizen*. Cape Town, South Africa: A. A. Balkema.
- "The South African Jewish Board of Deputies." Shema Yisrael Torah Network Web site. [www.shemayisrael.co.il/sa/sajbd/sajbd.htm](http://www.shemayisrael.co.il/sa/sajbd/sajbd.htm) (accessed April 2007).

## Jewish Community in Sudan

*Jeffrey S. Malka*

---

**General Population:** 40 million (2007)

**Jewish Population:** As of 2006, there were no Jews in Sudan.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Background:** Almost all came from Egypt around the turn of the 20th century. The majority were Sephardim from the Mediterranean or Jews from Iraq. Ten percent were Ashkenazim who came to Egypt in the late 19th century and then moved to the Sudan.

**Languages spoken:** All spoke English. Many were multilingual and spoke Arabic, French, Italian, or Ladino.

---

## Historical Overview

- 19th century Jews first venture into the Sudan in the late 19th century when a half dozen Jews from Egypt travel south to start businesses in what was then a dangerous and still-not-fully-charted African interior. These early settlers endure further hardships when they are taken prisoner by a fundamentalist Muslim leader known as the Mahdi. The Mahdi routs both British and Egyptian armies and rules the Sudan for 13 years until the British under General Kitchener finally defeat him in 1898.
- Early 1900s After the overthrow of the Mahdi, and under the security blanket of British rule, Jews stream into the country and a flourishing community develops. A young rabbi, Shlomo Malka, is recruited in 1906 from Tiberias, and a large synagogue seating a thousand on holidays is built and serves a united congregation of 90 percent Sephardim and 10 percent Ashkenazim living almost exclusively in the environs of Khartoum. Several Jewish institutions are created, including a large Jewish recreation club, Maccabi athletic teams, and the only B'nai B'rith lodge in the African interior. Jews are prominent in local businesses and rise to positions of leadership in British and other trading companies as well as in the legal and medical professions. Others are shopkeepers and the like.
- 1940s World War II has virtually no effect on the Sudan except for some import trade restrictions, control of which is delegated by the British governor to Eli Malka, then director of the largest British firm in the Red Sea area. Two Jewish families come to the Sudan as refugees: the Weiss from Vienna and a theater couple from Germany. Both are housed and supported by the Jewish community; the Austrians live in Rabbi Malka's home for a time.
- 1950 At this time, 1,000 Jews live in the Sudan, almost entirely in Khartoum and Omdurman. Prominent families include the Dweks, Gaon, Malka, Ishag, Goldenberg, Braunstein, and Ades.
- 1956 Sudan achieves independence, which results in a government progressively more Islamic and hostile to the local Jews.
- Late 1950s–1960s The rise in anti-Semitism leads to a mass exodus to England, Israel, Switzerland, and the United States. Jewish property remaining in Sudan is confiscated and the synagogue is destroyed. The Jewish cemetery in Khartoum is vandalized and desecrated, and many of the gravestones are overturned or broken. As a result many relatives arrange to transfer the remains of their rabbi and families for reburial in Israel within the Sudan section of Jerusalem's Givat Shaul cemetery. And yet, under American pressure, the Sudan government quietly acquiesces to temporary staging camps for fleeing Ethiopian Jews bound for Israel in operations Solomon and Moses.
- 1998 The United States bombs a nationalized but originally Jewish-owned pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, suspecting that it is being used to produce chemical weapons.
- 2007 No Jews are left in Sudan.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries

Jews were involved almost entirely in major import/export trading companies. The rest were professionals (physicians, opticians, lawyers) or owned factories, and a few were small shopkeepers. In exile, many of the Sudan Jewish community prospered and had an influence well out of proportion to their numbers. They donated millions of dollars to Jewish and Israeli causes, revived the World Sephardic Federation, provided huge subsidies and scholarships to universities in Israel, owned and ran deluxe hotels and international firms in Israel and throughout the world, and were major contributors to Jewish and Sephardic causes wherever the need arose. The ancient Adli synagogue in Cairo was refurbished with a \$700,000 grant from Nessim Gaon, the most prosperous exile of the Sudan community. Funds from Sudan Jews helped preserve the Bassatine cemetery in Cairo.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

The only remaining archival material concerning the Jewish community of the Sudan are the rabbinic records maintained by Rabbi Malka. Difficult to use because they are written in the Sephardic cursive script, they include copies of ketuboth of all Jewish marriages that occurred in the Sudan. An index of these marriage ketuboth appears in Malka's 1998 book *Jacob's Children in the Land of the Mahdi*, along with copies of the initial Jewish documents establishing the community.

Professor Nahem Ilan, of Touro University in Jerusalem, provides some additional insights into the community. He studied several hundred articles written by Rabbi Shlomo Malka and published in the Cairo Jewish periodical *Al Shams* (the Sun). The articles, which cover a broad range of religious, political, and social topics, provide a glimpse into the thinking of the time, particularly of what Dr. Ilan believes are Rabbi Malka's progressive views of modern Judaism, especially concerning women's issues and their role in Jewish society.

### Selected Bibliography

Malka, Eli. 1998. *Jacob's Children in the Land of the Mahdi: The Jews of the Sudan*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

# The Sudan Jewish Community According to the Community Register

*Nahem Ilan*

---

A Jewish community existed in Sudan between the 1880s and the 1960s. At its peak, there were about 1,000 members; the vast majority lived in Omdurman and then in

**Table 2** Types of Documents in the Community Register in Khartoum

	Ketuboth	Match-making	Engagements	Divorces	Conversions	Wills and Inheritance	Other	Total
No. of documents	109	25	7	15	11	5	9	181
%	60	14	4	8	6	3	5	100

Khartoum, and a small minority settled in Wad Madani, about 175 kilometers southeast to Khartoum. The most important source for its history is the community register (*Pinkas*), which is currently located at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem and contains 181 documents. The register includes two volumes and records the time period of 1907–1965. Most of the entries are marriages, divorces, engagements, matchmaking, and conversions. Table 2 shows the types of documents in the community register in Khartoum.

There is no distinction between matchmaking and engagement, and it means an agreement signed before marriage. Generally, the writers used both names in the same document. In most cases, the agreement set a timeframe to hold the wedding, the amount of money to be given by parents of both the bride and her brothers, and the financial responsibilities of the groom. Occasionally, it also included a cancellation fee, to be paid to the community, either by one family or by both.

Most of the documents are written in Hebrew and Aramaic, although some are in Arabic. The rabbinical tribunal in Khartoum and its chief rabbi had an official authorization as marriage registrars. In the peak, there were about five weddings a year (1954, 1957, 1963).

## The Significant Data Derived from the Register

### Community Name

The community is described in various languages, suggesting that different names were in use at the same time, without a preference. Using one name or another did not affect the legal validity of a document.

### Functionaries

The first five documents are signed by Rabbi Eliyahu Hazzan, a great scholar and an eminent leader, who led the Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt, at the turn of the 20th century. In 1908 he went on a well-advertised trip to southern Egypt and Omdurman, Sudan. His visit to the few Jews who lived there at the time (about 60 people) was the founding event of the community and its institutions. Hazzan's reputation, and the collaboration with Rabbi Shlomo Malka in establishing the ad hoc conversions and wills tribunal, helped establish Malka's status within the local community. Ever since, Malka was considered the spiritual leader of the growing community, and he signed most of the documents in the register, until his death in the spring of 1949. In 1951, Rabbi Haim Refael Siboni signed a ketubah as "the scholar of the city." For a short period (1953–1955) ketuboth were signed by Matzliah Eliezra, matchmaker. Two ketuboth from 1956 do not mention who arranged

them, and from 1957 to 1965 all documents were signed by Rabbi Massoud Elbaz. Other functionaries mentioned in three documents are president, treasurer, secretary, advisers and committee members, and the community scholar.

### Population Distribution

Until 1919, 21 weddings took place in Omdurman, 2 in Khartoum, and 1 in Wad Madani. The last wedding in Omdurman took place in the winter of 1923. These findings go along with the reports about the community moving from Omdurman to Khartoum at the late 1910s. In 1918, a synagogue was established by Farag Shoua in a building he rented for this purpose. One ketubah states that a wedding took place in Al-Khartoum bahri, which was considered a separate town north of Khartoum, until a bridge over the Blue Nile was built in 1916, connecting the two.

### Community Constitution

The various surnames indicate that the Jewish community in Sudan comprised people from diverse origins. Some names indicate specific origin, like Ades, Dwek, and Safdia, from Aleppo, Syria; Lupo from Turkey; Malka from Morocco; and Abboudi, El-Eini, and Sassoun from Iraq. Several documents include the citizenship of the bride or groom. Ashkenazi Jews were a minority in the community, about 10 percent, hence it is clear why their children married people from other origins soon after their arrival in the community.

### Interaction with Other Communities

The community had a special relationship with the Egyptian Jewish community. The amounts of money mentioned in the ketuboth were given in Egyptian currency, and various customs are ascribed to the Egyptian tradition.

### Wedding Customs and Ketubah Formulas

In most cases, weddings took place in synagogues, as was done in Egypt. ketuboth were written based on traditional formulas, but they were not identical to another. Often times, ketuboth stated that they were done according to the Alexandrian regulation.

The matchmaking agreement and ketuboth indicate the financial situation of the newlyweds and their parents, as well as wedding customs. Several matchmaking agreements allocated a certain amount to buy an apartment or a store. Some agreements included a list of items the bride's parents (usually her father) undertook to give to their daughter. This is mostly a standard version, yet sometimes amendments were made, depositing money in an account under the woman's name, purchasing securities for the bride, depositing dowry-postponed bills with the groom's family, giving the bride gems as part of her dowry, and using parts of it as a loan to the bride's father, in exchange for monthly interest, payable to the couple.

There was one outfit called *badlat hammām* (literally, bathing garment) that was worn for the mikvah, and a different outfit for the wedding itself, called in Arabic *shawār*. Except for one document, in which the bride assumes the responsibility to

pay for it, most agreements mention the groom as the person who pays for the *shawār*.

A few ketuboth, and even fewer matchmaking agreements, mention the couple's age. The men were usually a few years older than their wives. The average age was mid-20s and on, namely after the groom is financially independent and capable of providing for a family. This is a typical characteristic of a modern community, whereas in traditional communities the marriage age was younger.

### Interfaith Marriage and Conversion

The vast majority of community members maintained their Jewish identity. As time passed, marriage for love and independent choice of spouse became more common, matchmaking became rare, and parents' involvement in spouse selection decreased greatly. Conversion certificates testify that the process was done according to Jewish religious law, Conversion entries were made since late 1944, and they are also found in the register and in the synagogue's genizah. Those documents reflect three tendencies. First, the synagogue's spiritual leaders made sure to follow the Jewish law. Second, rabbis Malka and Elbaz were sensitive to changes that occurred in the community and in the Jewish world, and they expressed discretion and leadership in order to include everyone, even those who did not live their lives according to Jewish law and seemingly disconnected themselves from the community. Third, the rabbis' attitude made people feel part of the community, and soon the non-Jewish spouses chose to join it.

### Currency

The register mentions currency from three countries: Great Britain (two ketuboth only, from 1915 to 1917, the first years of the community), Egypt, and Sudan. Many documents refer to kirsh sagh (genuine Egyptian kirsh). Sudan declared independence on January 1, 1956; one ketubah from that month mentions the amount in Egyptian pounds whereas from the next ketubah on the currency is always the Sudanese guinea.

### Women's Status

Unlike the first years of the register, when men signed on behalf of the women, probably because of a lack of reading skills, in the 1920s women signed the ketubah copies themselves. A divorce agreement from 1909 deals with a woman who would live on her own and support herself for a few months (up to a year), without being divorced. Her ability to support herself is noteworthy, both because of the community's acceptance and her independent skills that did not require the husband's support. The condition to work specifically in Khartoum might imply supervising her; or it might imply protecting her, and keeping her part of the Khartoum community, the only active Jewish community at the time.

Several matchmaking and engagement agreements included a specific term to invest part of the dowry in an asset, to be registered under the bride's name, and to remain so registered even after her wedding, or to be deposited in a bank account

under her name. This can be interpreted in two opposite manners: on one hand, it testifies to recognition of women as property owners, while maintaining their financial independence even after marriage; on the other hand, it might suggest how weak her status was, causing her parents to strengthen her financially, or else she might face difficulties supporting herself during a material crisis. In one match-making agreement the mother of the bride undertook to “bring up to her the piano she has at home,” which was done. This fits into the general impression that the Khartoum Jewry were among the financial and cultural elite.

### Selected Bibliography

- Ilan, Nahem. 1999. “From Morocco to Sudan: Rabbi Solomon Malka—A Leader at a Time of Change” [Hebrew]. *Pe'amim* 80 (1999): 93–111.
- Ilan, Nahem. 2007. *The Community Register Pinkas of the Jewish Community in Sudan*. Oriens Judaicus Series. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute.
- Malka, Eli S. 1997. *Jacob's Children in the Land of the Mahdi: Jews of the Sudan*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

## Jews in Tunisia

*Judith Roumani*

---

**General Population:** 10 million

**Jewish Population:** 1,100

**Percent of Population:** 0.011 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Most live in Tunis. There are some additional small communities, mainly in Jerba, Sfax, Sousse, and Nabeul.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Most Tunisian Jews have immigrated to France and Israel, though some have gone to French Polynesia.

**Languages Spoken:** Arabic, French

---

### Historical Overview

The Jewish community of Tunisia is an extremely ancient one, dating back, possibly, to the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem (586 BCE). According to tradition, at that time a group of Kohanim fled westward, landing on the island of Djerba off southern Tunisia and founding a community that survives today. They are said to have brought with them a stone or stones from the First Temple that were incorporated into the Ghriba Synagogue, which was rebuilt in the 1920s. There is also a folk tradition about a door having been brought from the Temple to Djerba and giving the community its second name, Dighet. No material or documentary proof exists, but the community of Djerba has traditionally enjoyed great prestige as a center of mysticism and Jewish learning and publishing, and even today tourists and pilgrims flock to its synagogues.

- 1st century Around the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, numerous Jewish communities in North Africa come into being, including those of northern and coastal Tunisia. Jews had perhaps arrived even earlier together with Phoenician or Canaanite traders, the founders, with the mythical Queen Elisa (or Dido), of Carthage. A probable cultural syncretism between Jews and the local population had survived the destruction of Carthage by Rome in 146 BCE, and the Carthaginian rulers were replaced by Roman, eventually Christian, masters.
- 5th century Christianized Vandals drive out the Romans in the fifth century and are replaced by Byzantines in the sixth century. Jewish-Berber connections in the Maghreb (North Africa) had become close among the local populations after the defeat of the Jewish rebellion against the Romans in Cyrenaica to the east in the second century CE, after which many Jews from Cyrene had fled into the hinterland, far into the desert, and westward toward southern Morocco.
- 7th century The resistance to the Muslim invasions of the seventh century is led, according to legend, by a Jewish-Berber queen, Dahya or La Kahéna, who has become a symbol of national resistance in North Africa. After the triumph of Islam, Tunisian Jews become subject to *dhimmi* status, as elsewhere; they are tolerated yet subjected to humiliating restrictions. However, Tunisian Jewish merchants in the early centuries of Islam manage to achieve great prosperity, and cities in the center of the country, especially Kairouan, become centers of Jewish learning for about three centuries.
- 1057 Kairouan is destroyed by the Hillalian Bedouin and Jews are banned from the city until 1881.
- 1159 Almohad invasions in the rest of the country make Jewish life extremely difficult. The Hara or Jewish quarter of Tunis come into being about this time.
- 1228 Under the Hafsids, Jews regain a small measure of their former prosperity. Jewish life continues to be intermittently precarious in the Middle Ages and later.
- 1391 A different cultural note is seen with the arrival of Jewish exiles from the Spanish persecutions and the expulsion of 1492 and the arrival of Livornese Jews from central Italy, themselves largely descendants of exiles from Spain, in the 17th century. By the 18th century, an enormous cultural and material gulf exists between these new European arrivals—Spanish, Ladino, and Italian-speaking “Gorni” (from Livorno) or “Grana”—and the formerly prosperous indigenous Jews of Tunisia, who called themselves “Touansa.” The Grana are wealthy merchants with far-flung family-run trading networks, and the two groups keep apart, even refusing to accept the kashruth of each others’ butchers. They constitute two separate Jewish communities from 1710 until 1899.
- 1535 Spanish occupation of Tunisia.
- 1574 Turkish occupation of Tunisia
- 1736 Algerian occupation of Tunisia. With each invasion, Jews are robbed, killed, and sold into slavery.
- 19th century Three new colonial powers, the British, the French, and the Italians, all vie for influence in 19th-century Tunisia, until the 1857 execution of a humble

Tunisian Jew, Batou, or Batto Sfez, who has French nationality, which provides a pretext for French intervention with the weak regime of the Turkish-backed Bey of Tunis.

- 1857 France obliges the Bey to establish the Fundamental Pact of 1857 granting minorities freedom of religion, the right to own real estate, and the right to be tried by a court of one's own coreligionaries (among other rights).
- 1942–1943 World War II marks the beginning of the end for Tunisian Jewry. Tunisia briefly comes under Nazi control for six months in 1942, at which time the Jews suffer from roundups for forced labor camps, extortions, deportations, and executions. In addition, lives are lost in the Allied bombings.
- Late 1940s The Jewish population, on the eve of independence, is at its zenith between 80,000 and 105,000, just over 2 percent of the total population of Tunisia. Although some Jewish intellectuals, such as the novelist and sociologist Albert Memmi, support the movement for independence, the majority, correctly or not, view the prospect with trepidation.
- 1956 Tunisia gains its independence and follows a path of relative moderation among the Arab states. President Habib Bourguiba, uniquely among Arab leaders, allows emigration to Israel, maintains a position of independence vis-à-vis the Arab League and Nasserism, and puts forward a peace proposal for the Arab-Israeli conflict very early in 1965. After independence, Jewish-Muslim relations are better than elsewhere in the Arab world, and the government typically steps in to reassure the community after violent events. Although immigration to Israel or elsewhere is allowed, it is not encouraged, and in the early years of independence the government tries to discourage Jewish artisans, especially silversmiths, from departing.
- 1961 The Bizerte crisis between Tunisia and France sparks the emigration of Jews from that region, Tunisian Jews in the rest of the country largely remain.
- 1967 The Jewish population sinks to 20,000; about 40,000 have moved to Israel and the rest to France, French-speaking Canada, or other countries.
- 1967 The main synagogue of Tunis is partially burned during the Six-Day War, but the government repairs it at its own expense.
- 2002 A terrorist (Al Qaeda) bomb partially destroys the revered main synagogue of Djerba in 2002, killing 15, mainly German tourists. Once again, the government repairs the damage.
- 2004 The grand rabbi of Tunisia travels to Israel to be treated at the Hadassah Hospital. He dies there and is buried in Jerusalem.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The majority who stayed on in Tunisia after independence were a few professionals and a larger number of businesspeople who were comfortably off. Typically, they are joined in the summer by Tunisian Jews who live in France but maintain summer homes or other connections in Tunisia.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

A group of modern Jewish writers, such as Albert Memmi and Raphaël Lévy (Ryvel), and younger writers, such as Marco Koskas and Nine Moati, have celebrated traditional Tunisian Jewish life in their fiction and poetry, memorials to a traditional way of life that vanished under the impact of modernization brought by the French and the new national state. They have continued in the French language a tradition of Tunisian Jewish literature in Judeo-Arabic, begun in the 19th century in oral, manuscript, and eventually published form. The use of themes and techniques from Tunisian Jewish and Muslim storytelling, humor, and nostalgia characterize their most recent work. Since independence, first one Jewish representative (Albert Bessis) and then another (André Barouch) served for a short time in the national parliament, and a Jewish senator was serving in 2006, Roger Bismüth (who is also president of the Jewish community), appointed by President Ben-Ali. There have also been a number of Jewish artists (e.g., Bernard Sberro, Victor Journo, Daniella Azria Wortman, Nello Levy, Lynda Memmi-Sandhaus, Rafael Uzan), singers (Leila Sfez, Habiba Msika, Banat Chamama, Cheikh Elafrif), and athletes (e.g., the boxers Young Perez and Sadok Bahri). In Israel, Tunisian Jews have risen to positions of prominence (e.g., Sylvan Shalom, foreign minister, and Shalom Cohen, Israel's first representative to Tunisia and ambassador to Egypt). Many lawyers, intellectuals, and doctors in France are of Tunisian Jewish origin. Over the years, three Jewish Francophone writers (Ryvel in 1931, Raoul Darmon in 1945, and Albert Memmi in 1953) have won the Prix de Carthage literary prize. In June 1984, President Bourguiba awarded Albert Memmi the Order of the Tunisian Republic for his writing on behalf of Tunisian culture.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

From 1881 to 1956, when Tunisia was a French Protectorate, Tunisian Jews of both groups (Touansa and Grana) eagerly embraced French culture, and many had the opportunity to attend French-language Alliance Israélite Universelle schools from 1878 on. Though the two Jewish communities were not fully united until the 1940s, the differences between Touansa and Grana seem to fade as all became increasingly Europeanized. The Europeanization and secularization of Tunisian Jewry was opposed by the Touansa rabbis, who saw the process as a threat to traditional values, to the unique culture of Tunisian Jewry, and to religious observance. Thus, a new rift, one that continues to this day, opened within the community. As independence approached, however, Tunisian Jews feared that they would be marginalized in the coming new Muslim state. As elsewhere in the Maghreb, the forces of Jewish and Muslim nationalism, together with the end of the age of colonialism, pulled and pushed Jews to uproot themselves from their ancestral homes of many centuries.

The institutions of Tunisian Jewry have survived on a much smaller scale. As part of the then official policy for secularizing Tunisian society, the rabbinical court was abolished in 1957. In 1958, the elected Jewish community council that ran the community was likewise abolished and replaced by a smaller provisional committee appointed by the government. The last Alliance Israélite Universelle school closed

in 1974. Since the 1970s the Habad rabbi Pinson and his wife have run the Jewish school of Tunis and provided many other Jewish services such as Brit Millah, filling the gaps in services that were formerly provided by the Jewish community.

About 11 synagogues are still functioning in Tunisia today. The two synagogues of Djerba also receive many visitors, especially for Lag B'Omer when at a special ceremony the menorah is paraded through the streets. This is an elaborate tiered wooden box (not really a candelabra) reminiscent in name and form of an amalgamation of the holy objects of the Temple of Jerusalem (whence the exiled ancestors of the Kohanim of Djerba are said to have come to found their community). For many years a *Feuille de Miel* (calendar with blessings and prayers for Rosh Hashanah) was published in Tunis for expatriates, and later it was published from Paris. Djerba itself was a center of Jewish religious publishing from 1904 to 1960, and it still supplies Sephardic communities with locally made Jewish ritual objects, such as silver items and talliths. Some new religious life may have infused the community through Djerba's becoming a focus of international Jewish heritage tourism and religious pilgrimage.

The Internet and renewed Jewish heritage tourism (a phenomenon also apparent in many parts of Europe where the Jewish population has dwindled) may in fact be granting a reprieve for the continuing life span of the ancient Jewish community of Tunisia. The expatriate Tunisian Jewish community is, meanwhile, actively regrouping elsewhere, due also in part to the Internet. Harissa.com, named after the typical Tunisian hot pepper sauce, is the Web site for the culture of Tunisian Jews, "les Tunes." A yeshiva established in Israel by Tunisian Jews (the Kise Rahamim Yeshiva in Bnai Brak, named in honor of a well-known contemporary rabbi, Rabbi Matsliah Mazouz) now trains and supplies rabbinical candidates for some European communities (e.g., Livorno) because of the continuing religious prestige of the Tunisian and especially Djerba community. In Netanya, Israel, a synagogue and cultural center describing itself as the world center of Tunisian Jewry is now being built.

In France, a Tunisian yeshiva, Hod Yoseph, is continuing the religious tradition by publishing an anthology of biographies of well-known Tunisian rabbis, which describe their great learning and high reputations as well as their struggle against the westernizing influence of the Alliance Israélite Universelle. Those included range from Rabbenu Hushiel, one of the four sages who reputedly fled in the eighth century from the deteriorating situation in Babylon to found new centers of Jewish learning in the West (Hushiel founded Mahdia and Kerouan after being kidnapped by pirates and ransomed by Tunisian Jews), to Rabbi Hai Taieb, and to the more modern Rabbi Matsliah Mazouz and Mordekhai Amiyess HaKohen. At the same time, contemporary secular Tunisian Jewish intellectuals based in France (such as Lucette Valensi), while sympathetic to the social and cohesive aspects of religious practice, have a firm allegiance to Jewish humanism.

Thus, the split between Tounsa (indigenous and more traditional and religious Jews) and Grana (European Jews of Spanish and Italian origin) did not totally disappear in the 1940s, but rather has metamorphosed into the contemporary Jewish dichotomy between the return to traditionalism and Orthodoxy (always the established form of Judaism in Tunisia, but often challenged in an informal way by the

*évolués*) and secular, humanistic Judaism. In a way, history has come full circle since the arrival three centuries ago of the Livornese Jews and their westernizing, Europeanizing ways. In 2006, the rabbi of the Italian community of Livorno, Rabbi Didi, was from a family of Djerban origin, trained in Israel at the Tunisian yeshiva of Bnai Brak. Splintered, scattered, and dispersed, Tunisian Jewish life yet continues, albeit with multiple centers and ongoing discussion of the issues of tradition versus modernity.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

There has been a general trend making life in Tunisia less hospitable to Jews, partly because of repercussions of the Middle East conflict and partly because of the government's policy of secularization. In the early years after independence, the Jewish Community Council elected by Jews was abolished, and in Tunis the old Hara or Jewish quarter, as well as the cemetery, were dismantled in the name of slum clearance. After Jewish protests, some of the remains from the old cemetery were moved to a new Jewish cemetery outside the city. Of the 14 ancient synagogues, one was to be preserved as a historic site, but bulldozers inexplicably came and demolished that one, too. It is hard to say whether the destruction of the Hara was anti-Semitic, a health measure (it was notoriously unsanitary), or simply insensitive to what today would be preserved as a cultural heritage site. Considering that Tunisia served for about a decade as the headquarters of the Arab League, and of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in exile, and is situated between two radical Arab states, Algeria and Libya, the situation remains relatively calm.

The Oslo Peace Process of the 1990s led to the establishment of mutual representatives in Tel Aviv and Tunis, the Tunisian representative having been withdrawn at the onset of the Second Palestinian Intifada. In the meantime, by the late 1990s, six joint Israeli-Tunisian research projects had been conducted by Israeli and Tunisian academics.

### Selected Bibliography

- Awret, Irene. 1984. *Days of Honey: The Tunisian Boyhood of Rafael Uzan*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Enhaili, Aziz, and Oumelakheir Add. 2003. "State and Islamism in the Maghreb." *MERIA Journal* 7, no. 1 (March). <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue1/jv7n1a6.html> (accessed May 15, 2008).
- Fein, Judith. 2001. "Festival in Djerba." *Hadassah Magazine* 82 (April): 28–32.
- Laskier, Michael M. 1994. *North African Jewry in the Twentieth Century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria*. New York: New York University Press.
- Laskier, Michael M. 2004. *Israel and the Maghreb: From Statehood to Oslo*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Or Shalom Center Web site [Hebrew]. <http://www.or-shalom.org.il/> (accessed May 2, 2007).
- Roumani, Judith. 1984. "The Portable Homeland of North African Jewish Fiction: Ryvel and Koskas." *Prooftexts* 4, no. 3 (September): 253–257.
- Roumani, Judith. 1985. "Storytelling in Tunisian Jewish Literature." *Revue du Centre d'Etudes sur la Littérature Francophone de l'Afrique du Nord* 4, no. 2 (February): 17–19.
- Soltes, Ori Z. 1996. *Jews in the Cultural Fusion of Tunisia*. Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum & Embassy of Tunisia.

- Tironi, Stefano. 2001–2002. “La comunita ebraica Tripolina tra la Libia et Roma.” <http://www.morasha.it/tesi/trni/index.html> (accessed May 2, 2007).
- Udovitch Abraham, and Lucette Valensi. 1984. *The Last Arab Jews: The Communities of Jerba, Tunisia*. London: Harwood.
- Zohar, Zion, ed. 2005. *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry from the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times*. New York: New York University Press.

## Jews in Uganda

*Saul Issroff*

---

**General Population:** 27,616,000 (July 2005 estimate)

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** There is no original Jewish settlement. A Ugandan tribe, the Abayudaya, has a variant of Jewish ritual practice.

**Languages Spoken:** Luganda, Ateso, Swahili, English

---

### Historical Overview

About 500 black Ugandans, the Abayudaya, practice Judaism in eastern Uganda. They observe Jewish holidays, sing Hebrew songs, observe kashruth, perform circumcisions, and keep the Sabbath, as they have for generations. They have synagogues, usually in mud huts, in four villages outside Mbale.

The community was founded by Semei Kakungulu in 1919. He read about Judaism after meeting several European Jews who worked for the British. During the 1920s, a European Jewish trader met Kakungulu and taught the community the theory and practice of the Jewish faith. From 1920 until 1992, approximately 15 Jews from the outside Jewish world visited the community.

In February 2002, about 600 Abayudaya underwent a formal conversion by five Conservative rabbis. Although the Orthodox do not regard the Abayudayu as Jewish, they regard themselves as Jewish despite harassment and discrimination. The community receives aid from the Israeli Embassy (now in Kenya) and several organizations, including Kulanu and some U.S. organizations.

### Selected Bibliography

- Oded, Arye. 1974. “The Bayudaya of Uganda: A portrait of an African Jewish Community.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 6: 167–186.
- Oded, Arye. 1995. *Religion and Politics in Uganda: A Study of Islam and Judaism*. Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers.
- Oded, Arye. 2008. “A History of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda.” Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/uganda1.html> (accessed May 7, 2007).
- Saks, David. 2004. “Contemporary Jewish Africa.” *Jewish Affairs* 59, no. 2: 10.
- Sobol, Richard, and Jeffrey A. Summit. 2005. *Abayudaya: The Jews of Uganda*. New York: Abbeville Press.

# Jews in Zambia

*Saul Issroff*

General Population: 11,600,000

Jewish Population: 35 (estimate)

Percent of Population: less than 0.0001 percent

Jewish Population by City: Mainly in Lusaka

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Jews came to Zambia from Lithuania, Latvia, and the United Kingdom.

Languages Spoken: English and 78 other languages

## Historical Overview

1891–1893 Northern Rhodesia is administered by the [British] South Africa Company.

1900 The first Jews arrive in Rhodesia.

1905 The first permanent Jewish congregation is established in Livingstone.

1921 The Jewish population is 110.

1923 The United Kingdom annexes Rhodesia.

1953 Northern and southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Malawi) join to form the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

1955 The Jewish population is 1,200, and they are mainly located in Lusaka and the northern copperbelt towns.

1964 Rhodesia gains independence and the country's name is changed to Zambia. Zambia remains part of the British Commonwealth.

1968 The Jewish population is 500.

2006 Approximately 35 Jews remain in Zambia, mainly in Lusaka.

The earliest Jewish settlers in Livingstone and Broken Hill, although few in number, became prominent as traders and farmers (mainly cattle), in timber plantations, and in activities associated with copper mining.

A small number of Jewish refugees arrived in the country before and after the Holocaust. Northern Rhodesia was a potential refugee haven during World War II as it had no immigration restrictions and was constitutionally under the authority of Britain. The British Colonial Office was fully aware of its potential and seriously considered plans for fairly large-scale Jewish settlement. However, anti-Jewish prejudices among the settler population blocked settlement. Later, many Jews immigrated to South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Israel in the 1960s.

In 1978, the Council for Zambia Jewry was founded in Lusaka. There were two synagogues, in Lusaka and Ndola (recently closed).

## Eminent Northern Rhodesian or Zambian Jews

Robert Gordon and Fischel Levitz were among the earliest traders. Among the earliest pioneers were Elie and Harry Susman (settled 1900) who, as traders and

large-scale farmers, developed river and wagon transport to Barotseland and were associated with Harry Wulfohn. In 1914, the Susmans had the first claims on a copper mine (Nkana), but an attempt at starting a mining company failed, and the claim was sold for £250. The Susmans also had large timber concessions. Prominent Jewish mining pioneers included Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, Sir Edmund Davis, and Solly Joel, and they mostly operated out of London and Johannesburg.

Abe Galaun (b. Vornia, Lithuania 1914, d. London 2003), prominent in the meat and dairy business, was referred to by President Kaunda as “the man who feeds the nation.” He founded the Council for Zambian Jewry and was chairman of the Lusaka Hebrew Congregation. Marcus Grill, who was related to the Sossen and Susman families, was a pioneer trader, hotelier, and the first cinema operator in Northern Rhodesia.

Simon Zukas played an important part in the struggle for Zambia’s independence. Some South Africans of Jewish descent who were involved in antiapartheid movements lived in exile in Zambia.

Jews were mayors in Livingstone, Broken Hill, Kitwe, and Luanshya. Sir Roy Welensky was a leading political figure from the 1930s to the 1960s and served as prime minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland between 1956 and 1963. Maurice Rabb was elected to the national legislative assembly. S. W. Magnus was a prominent member of the Zambian parliament (1962 to 1968) and was appointed a high court judge in 1968. Michael Galaun is currently chairman of the Council for Zambia Jewry.

Stanley Fischer (b. 1943 in Mazabuka) was deputy-managing director of the International Monetary Fund and was subsequently appointed governor of the Bank of Israel in 2005. Denise Scott Brown (née Lakofski, b. Nkana 1931) is a notable international architect. Dr. Michael Lane, OBE, is a leader in HIV/AIDS treatment.

Israel and Zambia maintain full diplomatic relations.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Macmillan, Hugh, and Shapiro, Frank. 1999. *Zion in Africa: The Jews of Zambia*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Saks, David. 2004. “Contemporary Jewish Africa. The African Jewish Congress and Its Affiliates.” *Jewish Affairs* 59: 2.
- Shapiro, Frank. 2002. *Haven in Africa*. Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House.
- Sossen, Marion, ed. 2001. *The Grills: Faces of a Family*. London: Privately published.
- Susman, David. 2004. *An African Shopkeeper*. Vlaeberg, South Africa: Fernwood Press.
- Wigoder, G., et al., eds. 1971. *Encyclopedia Judaica*. New York: Macmillan Company.

# Jews in Zimbabwe

*Saul Issroff with the assistance of Dave Bloom*

---

**General Population:** 13,000,000 (July 2005 estimate)

**Jewish Population:** 200 (estimate)

**Percent of Population:** less than 0.0001 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** mainly in Harare and Bulawayo

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Jews migrated from Lithuania, Latvia, and England, and a small Sephardi group migrated from the island of Rhodes.

**Languages Spoken:** Shona, Ndebele, English.

---

## Historical Overview

**1870s** The first Jews arrive in the region. The earliest known Jewish settler was an English-born adventurer, David Montague Kisch. As manager and trader for the Tati gold mining concession, he befriends the king, Lobengula.

**1875** Kisch moves to Pretoria, and in 1878 becomes auditor general of the Transvaal.

**1889** The Chartered Company (British South African Company), under Cecil John Rhodes, controls much of the territory.

**1890** The Pioneer Corps (with a number of Jews) occupies Mashonaland.

**1894** The first synagogue is formed by 20 Jews in a tent in Bulawayo, Rhodesia.

**1895** A second Jewish community is started in Salisbury (later known as Harare).

**1898** The Central African Zionist Organization is established in Bulawayo.

**Early 1900s** Several Sephardic Jews arrive from the island of Rhodes.

**1900** The Jewish population in Rhodesia is 400.

**1901** Gwelo forms a third small congregation.

**1921** The Jewish population in Rhodesia is 1,289.

**1923** The United Kingdom annexes Southern Rhodesia from the [British] South Africa Company.

**1930s** Some German Jewish refugees are permitted to settle.

**1943** The Zionist Council and the Jewish Board of Deputies are established.

**1953** Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) combine with Nyasaland (now Malawi) to form the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Central African Federation).

**1961** The Jewish population is 7,060.

**1965** A unilateral declaration of independence by the white minority government is not recognized by the United Kingdom.

**1980** The independent state of Zimbabwe is formed, but the dictatorial rule of Robert Mugabe leads to an exodus of white farmers, economic shambles, and widespread shortages of food and fuel.

**1987** The Jewish community numbers approximately 1,200.

Among the early Jewish settlers was Augustus Greite (1875), a trader in Bulawayo, who later returned to the Transvaal with ivory and ostrich feathers. Jews moved into the wild interior, the lands of the African tribes and the missionaries. Moss (Paddy) Cohen lost much of his trading activities as a result of Cecil Rhodes outwitting Lobengula and gaining land concessions. Alfred Beit and his cousin Lippert were of Sephardic origin, and with Barney (Isaacs) Barnato were Jewish partners of Rhodes. The Rothschild family also became partners.

The predominant Jewish settlement was by Eastern European Jews, mostly from Russia and Lithuania, in the territory of the British South African Company later known as Rhodesia. These settlers were traders. Rhodesian Jewry was always very active in regional and international Zionist activities. After World War II an economic upturn brings more Jews arrived from South Africa and England. Jews were among the active pioneers in transport, mining, hotel corporations, and cattle ranching.

Sir Roy Welensky (1907–1991) was the second and final prime minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. He was born in Salisbury to a Polish Jewish father and an Afrikaans mother and described himself as “half Jewish, half Afrikaner and 100% British.” The Honorable Abe Abrahamson was Rhodesian minister of treasury and local government in 1958, and was a member of Parliament from 1953 to 1965. His uncle, Leizer Abrahamson, died in May 2007, just after his 108th birthday, and was possibly the oldest Jew in Africa.

Jews were active in all professions and many established successful commercial and industrial businesses. A relatively small number were large-scale farmers, like the Goldberg family with their tea estates in the eastern highlands.

After the unilateral declaration of independence in 1965 an armed uprising by the Zimbabwe African National Union and the Zimbabwe African People’s Union against the white minority government led by Ian Smith led to a civil war. Subsequently, most of the Jewish population emigrated. On April 18, 1980, the independent Republic of Zimbabwe was declared. Salisbury, the capital, was renamed Harare.

In the 1990s the Jewish communities could no longer afford full-time rabbis, and local members ran services. As of 2007, fewer than 200 aging Jews live in Zimbabwe, predominately in Harare and Bulawayo. There are no Jews living in Kwe Kwe, Gweru, and Kadoma.

Both Ashkenazi (1895) and Sephardi (1931) synagogues exist in Harare, and Bulawayo has an Orthodox Ashkenazic community. The Ashkenazi and Sephardi synagogues combined in Harare, and Rabbi Nathan Asmoucha of Bulawayo is the sole rabbi.

The Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies is the leading communal organization. Very few young Jews remain in Zimbabwe; most have immigrated to Israel or South Africa. Zionist youth movements have mostly ceased. Jewish day schools, Carmel in Bulawayo and Sharon in Harare, serve a very small number of local Jewish children but have large numbers of Indian and Black pupils. There is a Jewish aged home, Savyon Lodge in Bulawayo.

Anti-Semitism is almost nonexistent today, but the Palestinian Authority has an embassy that promotes their cause. Both Harare and Bulawayo communities

established their own sports clubs in the 1950s as Jews were barred from membership of mainstream white-run clubs of the day.

The Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation (Ashkenazi) was established in 1894 in a tent with 20 members. On October 5, 2003, the day before Yom Kippur, the synagogue burned to the ground. The Torah was saved, and services are now mainly held at the Savyon Old age home. Jewish communal life endures.

The Harare (formerly Salisbury) Hebrew Congregation was founded on June 2, 1895, by 20 men and 2 women. Joe van Praagh, the first chairman, became the first Jewish mayor. In 1901, the first synagogue was built (70 members), but it grew fast and in 1920 a new synagogue was built. By 1964, the community had more than 500 families. A *chevra kadisha*, Hebrew School, youth groups, and Zionist organizations were established.

Jews began settling in Kadoma (Gatooma) in the early 1900s, and by 1930 the region had approximately 25 to 30 Jewish families. Their synagogue was erected in 1953, and in 1956, Robert Sternberg became mayor. Most of the community left, however, because of political and economic difficulties; fewer than 20 Jews remain.

In 1993, Israel and Zimbabwe established formal diplomatic relations. Since 1948, more than 700 Jews immigrated to Israel.

The current president of the Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies is Peter Sternberg. Other prominent Jews include Professor Michael Gelfand, a world expert in tropical diseases, African medicine, and African culture. Rabbi Maurice Konviser, OBE, was the rabbi in Harare from 1935 to 1965. Harry and Ivor Pichanick were mayors of Salisbury. Dr. Ahrn Palley, a physician, and was also a member of Parliament representing the Liberal Party. In Bulawayo, Ben Baron was a leading lawyer and Phillip Baron, a physician. Nick Alhadeff, was also a chairman of the Jewish Board of Deputies. Dr. Kipps Rosen was a prominent physician and founder of the Sephardic Hebrew Congregation. Muriel Rosen was a member of Parliament.

### Selected Bibliography

- Arnold, W. E. 1980. *The Goldbergs of Leigh Ranch*. Reading, UK: Books of Zimbabwe.
- Clingman, Paul. 2004. *The Moon Can Wait. Biography of Hon. A. E. Abrahamson*. New York: Penguin.
- Kosmin, Barry A. 1980. *Majuta: A History of the Jewish Community of Zimbabwe*, Gwelo, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.
- Rosenthal, Eric. 1960. "Rhodesian Jewry and its Story." [www.zjc.org.il/showpage.php?pageid=16](http://www.zjc.org.il/showpage.php?pageid=16) (accessed April 2007).

# Australasia

## Jews in Australia

*Suzanne D. Rutland and Gary Eckstein*

---

General Population: 20,090,437 (2006 census)

Jewish Population: 105,000 (official census)

Percent of Population: 0.5 percent

Jewish Population in Key Cities: Melbourne, 50,000; Sydney, 40,000; Perth, 7,000; Brisbane, 3,500; Gold Coast, 3,500; Adelaide, 1,000

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Until 1850, most Jews migrated from Britain as convicts and free settlers. Next, until the mid-1950s, Jews migrated from Europe as a result of various waves of migration; some came from Russia via China, Central European refugees arrived via Shanghai, and other refugees arrived from Egypt. Since 1960, most immigrants have been Russians, South Africans, and Israelis. Until the 1950s, migrants arrived by boat, but now most fly to Australia.

**Languages Spoken:** English, Yiddish, Russian, Hungarian, Hebrew

---

### Historical Overview

**1788** Jews arrive on the First Fleet from Britain as convicts in chains. Between 1788 and the end of transportation about 800 Jews are sent out as convicts, mostly male of Ashkenazi background. Some manage to enjoy a high level of success.

**1817** Burial Society forms (*Chevra Kadisha*).

**1828** Phillip Joseph Cohen arrives in Sydney. He is authorized to conduct Jewish marriages. The development of organized Jewish life has to wait for the arrival of free settlers from Britain. They come from well-known Sephardi families, such as the Montefiores.

**1831** The first congregation forms and in 1837 begins to hold more regular services in rented rooms.

**1844** The first purpose-built synagogue is opened in Sydney in 1844; shortly afterward synagogues are built in Hobart (1845) and Launceston (1846) in Tasmania, Melbourne (1848) in Victoria, and Adelaide (1848) in South Australia.

**1848–1858** Gold rushes lead to Victorian Jewry growing from 300 to 3,000, and new congregations are established in the Victorian gold rush towns of Ballarat, Geelong, and Bendigo. For the first time continental Jews, especially from Germany, arrive in Australia.

**1872** St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation opens in Melbourne, making it the third synagogue to be built there. Among its leaders are German Jews who prospered through the gold rushes; its first minister is also from Germany.

**1878** The Great Synagogue opens in Sydney. Known as the “Cathedral Synagogue,” it remains the only synagogue in Sydney for more than 30 years and is very Anglo-Jewish in practice.

- 1880s Unlike the rest of the English-speaking world, only a small number of Jewish refugees from Czarist Russia find a refuge in Australia. Those Russian Jews who do find their way there have only a minimal impact on Australian Jewry. In Melbourne, the inner-city suburb of Carlton develops as the first area of settlement with a rich Yiddish and Zionist culture and a more Orthodox lifestyle.
- 1886 Margaret Synagogue is consecrated in Brisbane, marking the slow growth of the Jewish population in Queensland. It still serves the Brisbane Orthodox Jewish community today.
- 1895 The *Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, the oldest Jewish newspaper, is established. It is later renamed *Australian Jewish Times* and then *Australian Jewish News*. The newspaper, still in existence today, is the only Jewish paper serving Australian Jewry as a privately run and funded enterprise.
- 1902 The first Zionist organization is established. Zionism develops very slowly because there is strong opposition to the Zionist movement from assimilated Anglo-Jews.
- 1911 Kadimah, the first Yiddish organization, is formed in Carlton, Melbourne, and includes a Yiddish library and Yiddish theater. Kadimah develops slowly and acts as an important magnet attracting Polish Jews to Melbourne.
- 1917 The New South Wales Legislative Assembly closes on Yom Kippur because both the speaker, John Jacob Cohen, and the deputy speaker, Sir Daniel Levy are Jewish. This incident highlights the active political profile of Australian Jews until the 1980s.
- 1918 Sir John Monash is appointed commander-in-chief of the Australian army because of his brilliant tactics in tank battles in France during World War I. In August 1918, he is knighted in the field by the British king, George V, the first person to be so honored in 300 years. A university in Melbourne is named after him.
- 1923 The Council of Jewish Women is formed under the leadership of Dr. Fanny Reading. By 1929, it has established branches across Australia and holds its first federal conference. It continues to be the premier organization representing women's views and supporting local and Israeli fund-raising until the present.
- 1927 The Zionist Federation of Australia is formed with Sir John Monash as its first president.
- 1930 Sir Isaac Isaacs is appointed Australia's first Australian-born governor general. This is a high point demonstrating the prominent role Jews play in politics, law, medicine, and other professions.
- 1933 Adolph Hitler's assumption of power in Germany creates an enormous refugee problem. Australia is seen as a possible refuge, and the number of European Jewish refugees gradually increases, especially when the Australian Jewish Welfare Society is formed in 1936–1937 to help refugees resettle.
- 1938 The Evian Conference, called by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to deal with the refugee crisis after Hitler takes over Austria, is attended by 32 nations, including Australia whose refugee quota is 15,000 over 3 years. The Australian representative, Thomas W. White, says, "Australia does not have a racial problem and is not desirous of importing one," which is indicative of the inadequate response of the free world at Evian. The outbreak of war in September 1939 cuts off this migration: a total of around 9,000 refugees arrive, so the full quota is not filled.

- 1940 The *Dunera* arrives with 2,000 Jewish internees sent by Britain to internment camps in Australia.
- 1943 Moriah College, the first Jewish day school in Sydney, is founded. This is the beginnings of a strong day school movement in Australia. Later, Mount Scopus College opens in Melbourne in 1949, and by the 1980s it has become the largest private Jewish day school in the world.
- 1944 The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) is formed to assist postwar immigration to Australia and further the cause of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and B'nai B'rith as a social/cultural organization.
- 1946–1954 A total of 17,000 European survivors arrive in Australia. They completely change the nature of the Australian Jewish community, but Jews continue to constitute only 0.5 percent of the overall population because of anti-refugee hysteria. Both before and after the war, proposals to admit Jewish refugees are met with a hostile reception. Known as “anti-refo” feeling, this manifested itself in general newspapers and statements by some members of parliament.
- 1950s The community is transformed by the rapid growth of synagogues, Jewish schools, and cultural life.
- 1967 The Six-Day War has a great impact on the community and results in the formation of the Jewish Communal Appeal in Sydney. The Yom Kippur War further increases Jewish identification.
- 1970 The campaign for Soviet Jewry begins, and it continues through the 1970s and 1980s. Isi Leibler becomes a major figure on the international scene and is involved in the struggle for Soviet Jewry.
- 1985–1992 The campaign against the 1975 United Nations resolution “Zionism is Racism,” is led in Australia by Zionist Federation president Mark Leibler. The resolution is eventually rescinded in 1992.
- 1986 The Menzies Commission recognizes that Nazi criminals did enter Australia after the war. Some war crimes trials are held, but no one person is convicted, and the overall result is a failure.
- 1989 The disintegration of the Soviet Union leads to increased immigration from the former USSR until 1997. The 1990s also see increased immigration from South Africa
- 1994–2006 Moriah College moves to a new campus and develops into the largest Jewish day school in Australia. This is part of the ongoing diversification of the community, including the rapid growth of synagogues in the 1980s and 1990s, many due to the influence of the Lubavitch sect, Habad.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The postwar migrants largely became self-employed: some established clothing factories and some entered property development. Since the 1980s, employment has been dominated by managerial and professional occupations, and a high rate of young Jews are completing tertiary studies. Most young Australian Jews enter the workforce with a university degree.

Jewish businesspeople, mainly refugees and survivors, continue their high profile in the business world, often being joined by their children. One outstanding example is shopping magnate Frank Lowy, who manages Westfield shopping centers in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom, with his three sons. Jews continue to make their contributions to the law, medicine, and academia: Justice James Spigelman serves as chief justice in New South Wales, and there are a large number of Jewish judges.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Constituting less than 0.5 percent of the overall Australian population, Jews have enjoyed a high level of acceptance and have made outstanding contributions to many aspects of Australian life. A number of leading Jews have become involved in aboriginal affairs, including Justice Marcus Einfeld and the late Ron Castan. Mark Leibler heads the Aboriginal Reconciliation body.

In the arts, Jews have made a substantial contribution. Founded by refugee Jews from Nazi Europe, Musica Aviva plays a key role in the Australian musical scene. Jewish composers and musicians include pianist Isadore Goodman, piano accordionist Herbie Marks, and composer George Dreyfus. Postwar Jewish writers include David Martin and Judah Waten. A second generation of writers, mostly children of Holocaust survivors, have begun writing about their parents' experiences, including Diane Armstrong, Mark Baker, Arnold Zable, and Elliot Perlman. Holocaust survivor Judy Cassab has become one of Australia's foremost female artists.

In the field of sport, Jews have played a role in the Australian obsession with sporting achievements. Among a long line of notable athletes, Myer Rosenblum (1907–2002) was a stand out in rugby (the Australian Wallabies), track and field, and tennis teams. Postwar and later immigrants brought a love of soccer that was previously uncommon in Australia. Peter Fuzes represented the national Soccerroos, and businessman Frank Lowy is involved in Football Federation Australia and once headed Soccer Australia.

### Alternative Jewish Culture

Communities in Melbourne and Sydney offer a myriad of organizations that cater to the social and cultural needs of the community. In Melbourne there is the Theodor Herzl Club. In Sydney the Hakoah Club, located in Bondi, has the largest membership of any of the local Jewish organizations. A Jewish museum culture has developed with the Jewish Museum of Australia, and the Holocaust Museum in Melbourne, the Sydney Jewish Museum in Sydney, and the Holocaust Centre in Perth, becoming foci of Jewish activity.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

In recent years, Australian Jewry has emerged as one of the most vibrant Jewish communities in the world. Most Jews have a strong sense of Jewish identity and a rich network of Jewish communal organizations.

Rates of attendance at Jewish schools are among the highest in the world with 17 schools in Australia: eight in Melbourne, five in Sydney, and one each in Perth,

Adelaide, Brisbane, and the Gold Coast. The largest Jewish day schools, both nominally Orthodox, are Moriah College in Sydney (about 1,750 students) and Mount Scopus College, slightly smaller, in Melbourne. Melbourne schools represent a spectrum ranging from the secular Bundist Yiddish school, Sholem Aleichem, to the ultra-Orthodox Adass Israel and the Progressive King David. In Melbourne about 70 percent of Jewish children attend Jewish schools, a declining percentage, while in Sydney it is around 62 percent. Most of the remainder are catered for by part-time systems of Jewish education with Academy Board of Jewish Education being very effective in Sydney and offering Hebrew classes as an ethnic language at some government schools. Adult education facilities have developed rapidly through the Melton Adult Education Program, which is centered at the Jewish Museum of Australia in Melbourne and the Shalom Institute in Sydney.

Of the affiliated, about 80 percent join Modern Orthodox synagogues and schools, although only about 6 percent of Australian Jews are practicing Orthodox. About 20 percent affiliate with the Progressive movement. In recent years, Conservative Judaism has been introduced into Australian Jewry. The Progressive movement has not expanded as rapidly as none of the three newest waves of migrants—from the former Soviet Union, South Africa, or Israel—come from places with a strong a tradition of Reform Judaism. Habad has become a major religious force. The rapid growth of synagogues in the 1980s and 1990s is largely because of the expansion of Habad, although the Sephardi community has also grown in size. The nonaffiliated component of the community stands at about 30 percent. Children do not obtain regular Jewish education, although bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies are sometimes held, and some children participate in Jewish sporting teams.

The two main federal governing bodies are the Executive Council for Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia. Other federal bodies include the National Council of Jewish Women, the Women's International Zionist Organization, the Federation of Australian Jewish Welfare Societies, Federal B'nai B'rith, Federal United Israel Appeal, and Federal Jewish National Fund. At the state level the various organizations are represented through boards of deputies (New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia) and community councils (Victoria and Western Australia), while Canberra and Tasmania have community centers. The Zionist organizations are also represented through state Zionist councils. This multiplicity and complexity of organizations is a feature of Australian Jewry.

The main lobby group is the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, formed in 1997 and headed by Mark Leibler in Melbourne. B'nai B'rith also has antidefamation units in both Melbourne and Sydney.

The Jewish contribution to the general political life in the country, however, has decreased. Michael Danby, representing the Labor Party for Melbourne Ports, is currently the only Jewish member of federal parliament. Jewish political activism continues to be concentrated in the Australian Labor Party.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Although Australian Jews have experienced a high level of acceptance, there have been ongoing attacks on individual Jews and Jewish communal institutions. The

rate of such attacks has steadily increased since the early 1990s, when a quarter of Sydney synagogues were attacked by arson. There were further peaks in 2002 during the second intifada and again in 2006 with the second Lebanon war. Anti-Zionism has been a phenomenon on university campuses, and some individual Jews also contribute. The major problems facing the community today are assimilation and catering for the high proportion of elderly, many of whom are Holocaust survivors.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Migration has continued from South Africa and Israel, but at a slower rate since 2001. Since 1997, migration from the former Soviet Union has ceased because the government ended the refugee status of Jews, and they no longer receive benefits from the Australian government. Migration continues to contribute to the population growth of the community. There is minimal emigration, but some Jews chose to live in Israel (aliyah).

Intermarriage is becoming more common in Australian Jewish society, although it is less frequent than in some comparable Diaspora countries. The rate of intermarriage for individuals is similar to that of Canada and lower than in the United States or most European countries, but it is steadily rising. The intermarried proportion of Australian Jews is approximately 22 percent in total and only slightly higher for men than for women. Among people under the age of 30, the intermarriage rate is estimated as approaching 35 percent.

### Selected Bibliography

- Fagenblat, Michael, Melanie Landau, and Nathan Wolski, eds. 2006. *New under the Sun: Jewish Australians on Religion, Politics and Culture*. Melbourne, Australia: Black.
- Levey, Geoffrey Brahm, and Philip Mendes. 2004. *Jews and Australian Politics*. Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press.
- Levi, J. S., and G. F. J. Bergman. 2002. *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788–1860*, new ed. Carlton, Australia: Melbourne University Press.
- Rubinstein, Hilary, and W. D. Rubinstein. 1991. *Jews in Australia: A Thematic History*. Melbourne, Australia: Heinemann.
- Rutland, Suzanne D. 2005. *Jews in Australia*, 2nd ed. Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge University Press.

## Sephardi Jews in Australia

*Myer Samra*

---

Sephardim constitute approximately 5 percent of the 100,000 Jews in Australia today. Throughout the 19th century, Sephardi Jews from prominent families in Britain featured in the history of each colony established in Australia, although for much of the 20th century, immigration restrictions hindered the growth of the community.

Jacob Montefiore was 1 of 11 commissioners appointed to establish the colony of South Australia, founding the city of Adelaide in 1835. This was the first colony settled entirely without relying on convict labor. Although Montefiore himself did

not settle there, Adelaide's civic leaders appreciated his ongoing interest in the development and progress of the colony, naming a prominent hill overlooking the city in his honor.

Jacob's brother, Joseph Barrow Montefiore, arrived in New South Wales in 1829, attracted by the colonial government's land grants to free settlers. Purchasing additional lands, he became a major pastoralist, while engaging in trade in several colonies. A founder of the Union Bank of Australia in the 1830s, he also became a trustee of the South Australian State Savings Bank in 1848.

Although Sir Moses Montefiore never visited Australia, he contributed to the building of the synagogue in Hobart, Tasmania, in 1845, and presented a Sepher Torah to the Melbourne Synagogue in 1854. In both Sydney and Melbourne, homes for the care of elderly Jews carry his name.

Solomon Mocatta, a shipbroker, served as lay minister of the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation from 1857. Frederick Pirani was appointed acting professor of mathematics at Melbourne University in 1874, and in 1893, he was elected to the New Zealand parliament. Henry Cohen Pirani worked as a journalist in Australia and New Zealand in the 1860s, before returning to Britain and writing several novels based on his experiences in the colonies, featuring members of their Jewish communities.

While interacting with other Jews in the colonies, the Sephardim were conscious of their distinctiveness and proud of their heritage. In 1846, J. M. Belisario of Melbourne wrote to the journal *Voice of Jacob* to correct the notion that all Jewish communities in the British Empire accepted the jurisdiction of the (Ashkenazi) chief rabbi of Britain, asserting that "the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of this city is subject to its own Ecclesiastical and Civil Authorities, *and to none other*" (Aaron 1979, 24).

In Melbourne, Benjamin Farjeon and Henry Cohen Pirani attempted to form a Spanish and Portuguese congregation with the assistance of the Bevis Marks Synagogue in London. From 1854 to 1873, Sephardi Jews in Melbourne conducted services for the High Holy Days in a room within the Melbourne Synagogue. However, individuals who were not Sephardi joined these services to avoid the cost of a seat in the main synagogue, causing friction with the host congregation.

The first two Torah scrolls in the possession of the Perth Hebrew Congregation (established 1855) were gifts from members of the Montefiore clan, while Lady Rachel Ezra of Calcutta presented the Hobart Hebrew Congregation with a silver-cased Sepher Torah. After World War I, Perth received another Sepher Torah, presented by Pasha Moise de Cattaoui, head of the Jews of Cairo, to Rabbi David Freedman, who had been chaplain to Australia's Jewish troops in Egypt.

By the mid-19th century, several Baghdadi Jews had settled in Australia and New Zealand, extending the Baghdadi Jewish colonies then established across Asia. David Sassoon in Bombay received a request from Sydney for prayer books in the Baghdadi tradition. Rabbi Jacob Saphir, who visited Australia in 1861, identified a Baghdadi Jew, Saleh Khazzoum, who had settled in Sydney in 1854 as "a kind and generous friend who was my guide during my stay" in the city (Falk 1939, 49).

Isaac Zecharia, who had served as shohet to the Sassoons in Bombay, reached the goldfields in Ballarat, Victoria, in the 1860s. He served as minister for various

congregations in Australia and New Zealand, establishing a Jewish burial society in Wellington in 1892. A Sydney resident published an account of the suffering of the Jews in Baghdad under the brutal governor Daud Pasha from 1817 to 1831, in *Maggid Mesharim*, a Judeo-Arabic journal from Calcutta in 1897.

Jewish immigration from non-European countries was severely restricted after the White Australia Policy was implemented in 1901. Whereas 161 Jewish males with Turkish citizenship were naturalized in Australia between 1881 and 1890, only 15 were naturalized between 1901 and 1940.

World War II and the establishment of Israel in 1948 dislodged Jewish communities throughout Asia and the Middle East. Jews from Singapore and Java were evacuated to Perth and Brisbane during the war, and others from Burma and India entered the country in the immediate postwar period. From 1948, however, Australia secretly implemented a policy excluding Jews from Asia and the Middle East, frustrating attempts by Baghdadi Jews in Asia to enter the country.

Although some Jews from Egypt were able to arrive in 1948, after the Suez Crisis of 1956 Egyptian Jewish refugees had difficulty obtaining Australian settler permits. Sydney Einfeld, president of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, wrote "We are finding it almost impossible to get a single visa for our people in Egypt, even those of European origin and are in peril of their lives" (Samra 1987, 129). However, representations and rallies in Adelaide on behalf of Egyptian Jews persuaded the government to admit individuals with relatives in Australia.

Around 400 Egyptian Jews settled in Adelaide and contributed substantially to both the Jewish and the general community. Henry Ninio served as president of the Reform Beit Shalom Synagogue in 1983 and was lord mayor of Adelaide from 1993 to 1997. The founder of a chain of perfumeries, Ninio was honoured by the French government for services to perfume and the French community.

Ninio's daughter Jacqueline was the first Australian woman to be ordained as a rabbi, serving the Temple Emanuel, Sydney. His brother Albert has been president of the Orthodox Adelaide Hebrew Congregation and president of B'nai B'rith in Adelaide. Other prominent Egyptian Jews include Albert Bolaffi, who was president of the South Australia Zionist Federation and Victor Ades, president of the South Australian Board of Deputies from 1963 to 1970. Adelaide's Jewish kindergarten was named in his honor.

Although Sephardi Jews in Adelaide and Perth have participated in the mainstream Jewish community, Sydney and Melbourne have nurtured distinct Sephardi institutions. From 1947, Sephardi Jews in Sydney organized High Holy Day services in rented premises. Aaron Aaron, a great-grandson of Saleh Khazzoum born in Calcutta, founded the NSW Association of Sephardim in 1954, to promote Sephardi settlement and to establish a synagogue that followed the Sephardi rites familiar to its members. It gained lukewarm support from the wider Jewish community as they were unfamiliar with Sephardi Jews and uncertain of their claimed identity.

During the 1960s, political links between Reuben Aaron OBE and Sir William Aston, the Liberal member of State Parliament representing the electorate where most Jews resided, helped some Sephardim to immigrate. The late 1960s and early

1970s saw many Baghdadi immigrants from Singapore and Bombay, followed later by a continuing stream of Jews of various backgrounds from Israel.

The Sephardi Synagogue in the Sydney suburb of Woollahra was consecrated in 1962. Its first minister, Rabbi Simon Silas, joined the congregation in 1963 and remained its spiritual head until 1980. Silas was born in Calcutta, India, and his wife was from Egypt. Together they represented the two main cultural elements of the local community, the Egyptian Jews and those of Baghdadi origin.

Although other Sephardi congregations have arisen—the Eastern Jewish Association in 1960, Bet Yosef in 1992, Rambam in 1993, and Baba Sali in 1994—the Sephardi Synagogue remains the central focus of Sephardi ritual in Sydney. Only the Sephardi Synagogue has its own premises; the other congregations hold services in accommodations rented from various Jewish groups. The Sephardi Synagogue originally had a congregation comprising Baghdadi and Egyptian Jews, but over the years the more assimilated Egyptians have tended to drift away, many joining Reform congregations. The synagogue has also attracted some of the more recent immigrants from Israel. The Eastern Jewish Association's membership is made up of Baghdadi Jews from across Asia, but it has an aging nucleus from Calcutta and Rangoon, India.

Bet Yosef operates from a hall of Adath Yisroel. Initially accommodating Baghdadi and Israeli Jews (many of Moroccan background), its membership is now mainly



Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser (second from left) dedicates a painting entitled *Moses*, by Louis Kahan, at the opening of the Sassoon Yehudah Sephardi Synagogue in East Malvern, 1977. It was the first time an Australian prime minister officially inaugurated a synagogue. (Courtesy Gad Ben-Meir)

Baghdadi. Rambam has catered to Hebrew-speaking Israelis and has a significant Moroccan influence. After several transformations, it is now effectively Lubavitch run. Baba Sali, which also served Israeli-Moroccan Jews, ceased functioning in 2003, when its host synagogue reclaimed its premises, and the health of the founder, Rabbi Yosef Ben-David, deteriorated.

In Melbourne, the Sephardi Association of Victoria was formed in 1965, modeled on Sydney's experience. In 1977, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser inaugurated its Sassoon Yehudah Sephardi Synagogue in East Malvern, some distance from the heart of Jewish Melbourne. In 1994 it moved to the Jewish hub, East St. Kilda. This congregation attracts Jews from many countries, particularly from Egypt, and Baghdadi Jews. Melbourne has hosted a number of additional Sephardi congregations. Rabbi Ezra Douek established 'Od Yosef Hai in the premises of Adass Yisroel, and the Rambam congregation is located on the grounds of the Lubavitch-affiliated Yeshiva College.

With no distinctive Sephardi educational facilities, children adopt the normative customs and liturgy of their Ashkenazi friends, and marriage with Ashkenazim is commonplace. The absence of many youthful faces in Australia's Sephardi congregations is noticeable, growth coming from the new Israeli settlers and sojourners.

Although 50 years ago Sephardi immigrants were unwelcome in Australia, many have contributed substantially to the cultural life of their adopted country. They have been conspicuous in rabbinical positions—in Ashkenazi congregations as well as Sephardi ones—and in the kosher foods industry. Several have achieved distinction in public administration, the law, philanthropy, music, architecture, and the arts.

### Selected Bibliography

- Barda, Rachel M. 2006. "The Migration Experience of the Jews of Egypt to Australia, 1948–1967: A Model of Acculturation." PhD thesis, University of Sydney.
- Gale, Naomi. 2005. *The Sephardim of Sydney: Coping with Political Processes and Social Pressures*. Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic.
- Goultman, Rodney. 1993. "A Jew and Coloured Too! Immigration of 'Jews of Middle Eastern Origin' to Australia, 1949–58." *Immigrants and Minorities*, 12 (1): 75–91.
- Rutland, Suzanne. 1984. "Egyptian Jews in Adelaide: A Case Study in Oral History." *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*. 6:19–24.
- Samra, Myer. 1987. "Yisrael Rhammana: Constructions of Identity Among Iraqi Jews in Sydney, Australia." PhD thesis, University of Sydney.

## Conversion to Judaism in the Sydney Jewish Community

*Raymond Apple*

---

The Sydney beth din, established under the auspices of the British chief rabbi in about 1876 and reorganized with greater independence in 1905, handles conversions for the whole of Australia and New Zealand, with the exception of Melbourne, which has its own beth din. It accepts 30 to 50 conversion applications per year. Some arise out of an ideological attraction to Judaism, but many converts have a previous involvement with Jewish life, for example, a Reform convert or the children of a Reform convert who ask for their Jewish status to be regularized, children of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother who have discovered they are not Halachically Jewish, or people with Jewish ancestry who seek to return to their Jewish roots. A uniquely Australian phenomenon is to find a person whose family has lived in Australia for generations but uncovers evidence that an ancestor was a Jewish convict transported to Australia as long ago as the late 18th century and who now wishes to resume the Jewish identity that was hidden or abandoned.

Until the reorganization of the beth din in 1905, conversion applications had to be submitted to the chief rabbi in London for approval. If approved, the candidate underwent immersion in Sydney—sometimes at a quiet spot in Sydney Harbour or occasionally in a private mikvah maintained by a pious family. (There was no official community mikvah until the late 1920s or early 1930s.) Even when the beth din was permitted to make its own decisions about accepting converts, a lay committee carried out interviews and investigated the background of the candidate until the early 1940s when the rabbi of the Great Synagogue refused to work with the lay committee, and it was subsequently disbanded.

Thereafter, members of the beth din undertook all steps necessary to consider and handle applications, though Sydney, like all batei din, faced the problem of converts who later drifted away from Judaism and in some cases resumed their former religion. As most Australian Jews were not strictly Orthodox, the converts who joined the community often tended to emulate the Jews they saw around them, though others maintained a high level of religious observance and some became religious officials and even rabbis.

# Jews in Fiji

*Steve Hall*

---

**General Population:** 917,000 (2007)

**Jewish Population:** Approximately 60 Jews

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population in Key Cities:** Most Jews live in Suva (the capital).

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Migrations in the 19th and early 20th centuries were from India, other Asian countries, and Australia. Modern migration are mainly business and alternative-lifestyle migrations.

**Languages Spoken:** English

---

## Historical Overview

Henry Mark, at the age of 20, was the first Jew to settle in Fiji in 1881. He came from Australia and set up extensive commercial enterprises throughout the region. Jews from India, the Middle East, and other places in Asia joined Mark. In three cemeteries in Fiji, Momi (private cemetery), Ovalau Island (Levuka), and Suva (old cemetery), Jewish inscriptions can be found on the tombstones dating back to the first Jewish settlers in the 1800s. The Australian Jewish Historical Society in Victoria, Australia, stores the records of inscriptions on Jewish tombstones in Fiji.

## Contemporary Overview

Nearly all Jews in the Fiji Islands live in the capital city of Suva. A Fiji Jewish Association was recently set up, which gave some organization to the Jews living there, but religious life remains limited for these Jews.

Missionaries converted the ethnic Fijians to Christianity, although the Indian population remains either Hindu or Muslim. There has been extensive contact, however, between ethnic Fijians and Israelis, as the Fiji armed forces (almost exclusively ethnic Fijian) have served for decades in peacekeeping or peace monitoring roles along Israel's borders. Israel and Fiji enjoy full diplomatic relations. In May 2002, Fiji's prime minister, Laisenia Qarase, agreed with the Israeli ambassador, H. E. Ruth Kahanoff, that the two countries should strengthen their relations even though they are so far apart geographically. The Israeli ambassador in Canberra, Australia, represents Israeli interests in Fiji. There is also an Israeli embassy in Suva, which serves as a point of identification for visiting Jewish tourists or businesspeople, both from Israel and elsewhere. The ambassador holds an annual Passover Seder, which accommodates 50 to 60 people. Kosher food is imported from Australia.

## Selected Bibliography

Cowen, Ida. 1971. *Jews in Remote Corners of the World*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Kosher Delight: Your Online Jewish Magazine Web site. [www.kosherdelight.com/Fiji.htm](http://www.kosherdelight.com/Fiji.htm) (accessed April 22, 2007).

Schoffman, Stuart. 2007. "More Than a Refuge: The View from Jerusalem." JUF News, Jewish United Fund Web site. [www.juf.org/news\\_public\\_affairs/article.asp?key=5283](http://www.juf.org/news_public_affairs/article.asp?key=5283) (accessed April 22, 2007).

"Fiji: The Jewish Community." 2005. International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies: Jewish Cemetery Project. Jewish Gen.org Web site. [www.jewishgen.org/cemetery/asia-pac-ind/fiji.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/cemetery/asia-pac-ind/fiji.html) (accessed April 22, 2007).

## Jews in French Polynesia

*Stephen Levine*

---

General Population: 250,000

Jewish Population: 150 (estimate)

Percent of Population: Less than one percent

Jewish Population by Key Cities: Most are in Papeete

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Most of the Jewish population is from France, but most previously migrated from Algeria to France.

Languages Spoken: French, English, Hebrew

---

### Contemporary Overview

Most of the population of French Polynesia is Christian, although there are Jewish businesspeople from France who have migrated to the territory and established businesses of one kind or another—some in the tourism sector (restaurants, for instance) and others in import-export of one kind or another. The largest number of Jews in the territory is to be found in the capital, Papeete, on the main island of Tahiti. This group of Jews—largely Sephardim from Algeria—began to migrate to Tahiti in the 1980s. Having left Algeria for France, they were not disinclined to migrate elsewhere if there were good opportunities available to them. When one of their number went to Tahiti and found the environment congenial, others duly followed. The group is close-knit, and Friday night and Saturday services are held in their small, beautiful synagogue in Papeete. The synagogue is within walking distance of the members' homes and apartments. There is no rabbi; the members run the services themselves. There is a high level of Sabbath observance, involving synagogue attendance and subsequent family meals together, and families make a strong effort to pass on their traditions to the next generation.

The community is distinct from the surrounding population—both the European (i.e., French) and the Polynesian (i.e., the indigenous population of the territory). Their position as outsiders is conspicuous, given the high degree of Christian observance among the Polynesian community. There is some resentment from Polynesians against the Jewish community for their commercial success—which

can be interpreted as exploiting the local population and the territory's resources—and for their detachment from the local community and its concerns. As the main issue in French Polynesia involves efforts by Polynesians to gain greater autonomy, including eventual independence, Polynesian perceptions of the Jews as both outsiders and French people makes their future as a community less secure.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cowen, Ida. 1971. *Jews in Remote Corners of the World*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- “French Polynesia (Primarily Tahiti): The Jewish Community.” International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies: Jewish Cemetery Project. Jewish Gen.org Web site. [www.jewishgen.org/cemetery/asia-pac-ind/tahiti.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/cemetery/asia-pac-ind/tahiti.html) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Golub, Alex. 2006. “Jewish in Polynesia.” Inside Higher Ed Web site. <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2006/04/17/golub> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Lucotte, Gerard. 2003. “Paternal European Ancestry in French Polynesia Detected by Y-Chromosome Haplotypes.” *Human Biology* 75 (1): 129–133.

## Jews in New Zealand

*Stephen Levine*

---

**General Population:** 4,100,000

**Jewish Population:** According to the 2001 census, there were 6,336 Jews; generally estimated today at 6,500.

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Auckland and Wellington

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Originally, Jewish immigrants to New Zealand were British. This was followed by pre- and postwar European immigration and then Hungarian, Russian, and South African immigration. There is a current trend of New Zealand Jews emigrating to Australia. New Zealand Jewish community members also immigrate in high numbers to Israel.

**Languages Spoken:** English, Russian, Hungarian

---

### Historical Overview

**1840** The Auckland Jewish community is founded.

**1840s** Jews are on the first ships arriving to Wellington, the site destined to become the future capital of an independent state. Some Jews settle in the north, in Auckland, before the formal establishment of a British colony in 1840. New Zealand's Jewish population grows together with the British settlement in the country during the 19th century.

**1841** The first Jewish marriage is recorded.

**1843** The first organized Jewish service in Wellington is conducted on January 7, 1843 (the synagogue portion is *parsha Bo*) by the newly arrived leader of that

community, Abraham Hort. Some of Hort's family had preceded him to New Zealand.

1848 There are 61 Jews in a New Zealand colony of 16,000 settlers.

1860s New Zealand's first synagogues are built in the South Island communities of Hokitika and Dunedin. Other synagogues are erected in the small South Island provincial towns of Timaru and Nelson. Of these communal efforts little if anything remain. Other signs of abandoned Jewish life include, of course, grave-stones in South Island cemeteries.

1863 Julius Vogel, an open and identified Jew, is elected to the New Zealand Parliament.

1925 Francis Henry Dillon Bell, Abraham Hort's grandson, becomes New Zealand's prime minister.

1950s New Zealand's Reform or Progressive congregations are established in Auckland (Beth Shalom) and Wellington (Temple Sinai).

1956 The Hungarian uprising brings further groups of Jews to New Zealand.

1970s and 1980s The relaxation of restrictions against emigration by the Soviet Union in due course brings hundreds of ex-Soviet Jewish families to New Zealand.

In New Zealand, from colonial times to the present, the Jewish community has never had the capacity to grow to become a significant demographic element nationwide. Although census data and communal records document a Jewish population representing less than 1 percent of the total, nevertheless the Jews of New Zealand have managed to maintain an identity and a presence while contributing in important ways to the settlement, development, and prosperity of the country.

Jewish life has been geographically concentrated, limited for the most part to a few urban or provincial centers, in a country with a low population density and a significant farming sector. The largest Jewish communities in New Zealand are found in the country's main cities, Auckland and Wellington, although over the years there have been Jewish communities elsewhere in the country.

The broad demographic trend in New Zealand has been for the population to move north—from the South Island to the North Island and, within the North Island, from the southern part to Auckland and its environs. Jews have also followed these trends, leading to a less balanced distribution of Jews and Jewish communities. The congregations in Dunedin and Christchurch are the longest-lasting South Island communities. They retained at least nominal Orthodoxy until the late 20th century before moving first to Reform and then to virtual disappearance.

The Jews of the North Island have consolidated themselves in Auckland and Wellington. A synagogue in Hastings disappeared and mini communities in other provincial cities (including Palmerston North and Hamilton) have not developed. The Auckland and Wellington Orthodox congregations, established in the 19th century, have evolved over the years, expanding communal facilities while at the same time adapting to changing membership numbers.

The history of New Zealand Jewry is also a record of changing patterns of worldwide Jewish migration. The earliest Jews came from Britain to settle in a lightly

populated colony. Subsequent emigration to a self-governing New Zealand came from the European continent in response to growing anti-Semitism. New Zealand did not take a welcoming attitude toward Jews seeking a refuge from Nazism, however, and only a small number of Jews were admitted to the country during the pre-war period or even subsequently. There is little doubt that anti-Jewish prejudice, though seldom publicly expressed, played an important part in decisions taken by immigration officials to deny entry. Even some of those who were admitted to New Zealand after fleeing Germany were classified as “enemy aliens”: their activities were restricted, their professional qualifications unrecognized, and their actions subject to some surveillance.

Even so, over a period of decades (encompassing two world wars) New Zealand’s predominantly Anglo-Jewish community acquired a more pluralistic character, as Jews from continental Europe brought different cultural interests and culinary tastes as well as distinct languages, traditions, and customs. The Hungarian uprising of 1956 brought further groups of Jews to the country, and Soviet Union’s relaxation of restrictions against emigration in due course brought hundreds of ex-Soviet Jewish families to New Zealand during the 1970s and 1980s. The failure of the New Zealand Jewish population to grow as a result of these developments reflects the tendency of many migrants to subsequently move on to Australia as well as the lack of Jewish background (and linguistic obstacles) among many of the Jewish émigrés from formerly communist states, who were not religiously observant. The 1990s brought Jews from South Africa, many of whom followed the same path as earlier waves of migrants—living in New Zealand, their first destination, for a while before moving on to countries with more dynamic economies or (for some) larger and more vibrant Jewish communities.

Against this broad background of more or less stable Jewish numbers—with immigration balanced against emigration and assimilation—the Jews of New Zealand have made contributions to the country out of proportion to their size. In the 19th century, one of New Zealand’s most significant public figures, Julius Vogel, became, first, New Zealand’s treasurer (a position he held for 10 years, as governments came and went) and then, subsequently, the country’s premier—a position he held twice (from 1873–1875, and again in 1876), giving New Zealand a Jewish head of government at a time when Jews had few opportunities for political advancement anywhere else.

When Vogel was first elected to the New Zealand Parliament (in 1863) his Jewish identity was in evidence, as he took the oath while wearing a hat with his hand on the Jewish Bible—the Five Books of Moses. A knighthood was conferred upon him during a visit to England in May 1875. Subsequently, Sir Julius Vogel can lay claim to being New Zealand’s first diplomat: he was appointed the colony’s overseas representative—the agent-general—to London in 1876, a position he held until 1880.

New Zealand has had another premier with Jewish origins. Abraham Hort’s third daughter, Margaret, married Sir Francis Dillon Bell, and one of their sons, Francis Henry Dillon Bell, became both mayor of Auckland and prime minister of New Zealand. His appointment in May 1925 to the highest position in the New

Julius Vogel was New Zealand's only practicing Jewish prime minister.  
(Alexander Turnbull Library/  
National Library of New Zealand)



Zealand government was the first time a New Zealand-born person had attained that position in what was then still a very new country, a nation of immigrants.

Other Jews have also held high elective office. The first mayor of Auckland (the country's largest city), Philip Phillips, was Jewish. In the 20th century, Sir Dove-Meyer Robinson served for many years as Auckland's mayor, while Wellington also had a Jew as its mayor, Ian Lawrence. In general, little attention is paid in New Zealand by either the public or the news media to the religious affiliations or practices of the country's politicians, either in local government or at the national level.

Many Jews have contributed to New Zealand's civic life in a variety of ways. Abraham Hort was involved in forming the Wellington Fire Brigade. His grandson, William Hort Levin, played the central role in establishing Wellington's Public Library, a major amenity to this day, as well as the city's harbour board. The town of Levin, north of Wellington, is named for him. The long-serving Wellington rabbi, Herman Van Staveren—the community's rabbi for more than 50 years—was regularly elected to the Wellington Hospital Board. Sir Michael Myers reached the highest post in the New Zealand judicial hierarchy, serving with distinction as the country's chief justice from 1929 to 1946, representing New Zealand, along with its prime minister, at the founding of the United Nations at the 1945 postwar conference in San Francisco. It is also relevant to note that these activities were complemented by congregational and community involvements, as Michael Myers also served as president of the Wellington Hebrew Congregation and president of the Wellington Jewish Social Club.

Important contributions to New Zealand's commercial life were also made by Jewish residents of the country. In international terms perhaps the most significant of these came from members of the Nathan family. The Nathan family, beginning with Joseph Edward Nathan (who arrived in New Zealand in 1856), established

commercial activities that culminated in the creation of a product registered as Glaxo in 1906. Today, Glaxo is one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world. Joseph Edward Nathan (who was president of the Wellington Hebrew Congregation) served as president of Wellington's chamber of commerce, and other Jews likewise have held that position. Another company with an international reputation, Fisher and Paykel, manufacturers of various household appliances, was founded in 1934 by two New Zealand Jews, Woolf Fisher and Maurice Paykel.

New Zealand's Jews also supported moves to establish a Jewish homeland in the land of Israel, and some members of the community migrated there during the pre-state period. The only president of the State of Israel to visit New Zealand, Chaim Herzog, said during his 1986 visit that New Zealand Jewry had the highest rate of aliyah (migration to Israel) of any English-speaking country. The New Zealand government's stance toward Israel has been more equivocal, its attitude oscillating from warm support at the outset to a much more critical stance, reflecting, in part, New Zealand's dependence on oil and trade, which gives its relations with Arab nations an importance and sensitivity not matched by the country's relations with Israel. The Jewish community's decades-long support for Israel was reflected in its provision of funds to purchase a home for the Israeli ambassador in the early 1980s. The home was sold, however, when Israel downgraded its representation to New Zealand in 2002, reflecting both Israeli budgetary constraints and the cooling of relations between the two countries.

### Contemporary Overview

The New Zealand Jewish community comprises about 6,000 people, principally located in two North Island urban areas, Wellington (the New Zealand capital) and Auckland (the country's largest city). The community includes religious institutions (both Orthodox and Progressive/Reform) and other communal facilities. There is relatively little anti-Semitism, although relations between New Zealand and Israel at times contribute to a degree of anxiety among some members of the Jewish community.

New Zealand's Jews are not strongly distinguished from New Zealand society. Most Jews are of Ashkenazic background, and a high proportion of native-born New Zealand Jews have their family origins in the United Kingdom. New Zealand's Jews face little if any overt discrimination and share the same broad interests as the rest of New Zealand society (including, for instance, a passion for the national game, rugby football). Few Jews in New Zealand are outwardly distinguishable from non-Jews (i.e., most Jewish men do not wear a yarmulke, or kipa, outside the synagogue). There is no resident Habad community and there are no yeshivas (Jewish seminaries) in New Zealand. There are also usually no Hasidim living in New Zealand (apart from occasional visits from overseas yeshiva students and the presence, in Auckland, of a Habad rabbi who had previously served as rabbi to the Wellington Hebrew Congregation).

Orthodox congregations are maintained in Auckland and Wellington, and substantial synagogue and communal facilities are available to the members. Each

congregation offers kosher foods for its members through the operations of a kosher shop. Nearly all of the kosher food available in New Zealand is imported from other countries, principally Australia, Israel, and the United States. The Orthodox congregations in these two cities also run Jewish day schools that have educational and child care facilities beginning from preschool age up until high school. At the other end of the generational spectrum, facilities are also available for elderly members of the community, involving care for senior citizens (including the provision of kosher food). The Orthodox congregations also have a chevra kadisha (burial society), and there are Jewish sections in the municipal cemeteries in at least the largest cities.

Progressive (or Reform) congregations are well-established in both Auckland and Wellington. In New Zealand's South Island, there are smaller groups of Jews and, in general, the absence of sufficient numbers to provide more than a nominal network of activities. Jewish visitors to New Zealand increase the numbers available to take part in communal activities, however, and this is particularly the case in the South Island, which is especially attractive to tourists. For instance, the resort town of Queenstown, renowned for its ski fields and other scenic attractions, hosts a very large Passover Seder for the first night of the holiday, attended by many of the young Israelis enjoying a holiday there.

There is substantial assimilation among New Zealand's Jews, as the social and cultural barriers separating them from the largely secular (or only nominally Christian) non-Jewish population are very few. Although many may identify as Jews (in terms of background) there is a high proportion of noninvolved Jews in the country, particularly among the younger population. Many of the more actively committed young Jews of New Zealand leave the country to live a more satisfying Jewish life with like-minded people, migrating either to Israel or to the Jewish communities of Australia (principally Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth). There is also considerable migration to Australia among older Jews, and retirement communities of ex-New Zealanders are found along Australia's east coast (in the state of Queensland).

As with New Zealand generally, so, too, the country's Jews are to some extent dependent on support from the wider world. Organized New Zealand Jewry, always aware of the small numbers of congregants and community members, give support to would-be immigrants, providing advice, employment opportunities (if possible), and even financial support (if necessary, though within limits). As noted, much of the country's kosher food (including its beef) is imported from Australia. Often, for a berith (a circumcision), it is necessary to bring in a mohel (the person who performs the circumcision) for this commandment to be carried out correctly (that is, according to Jewish law). The country's rabbis are and always have been imports as well; whether Orthodox or Progressive, rabbinical appointees have had to be brought in from the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, and Israel.

The New Zealand Jewish community, although small, seeks to take a full part in international Jewish activities. In this the community resembles the country and its regime, seeking to play a role in world affairs larger than might be expected given its size and remote location. Both Orthodox and Progressive congregations maintain international linkages and affiliations. The Orthodox congregations, for

instance, use rabbinical courts (beth din) in Australia when necessary, and consider themselves broadly subject to the authority of the chief rabbi of the commonwealth, situated in London.

The organized community is substantially pro-Israel, and Zionist organizations of various kinds (including the Women's International Zionist's Organization and a nationwide Zionist Federation) are an important part of New Zealand Jewry's communal framework. From pre-state times to the present the Jewish National Fund has been a part of New Zealand Jewish life, and blue boxes (for donations) are found in many homes and gifts of trees (to be planted in Israel) are an integral part of honoring people (both Jewish and non-Jewish) on special occasions.

The nationwide monthly Jewish newspaper, the *New Zealand Jewish Chronicle*, is published under the auspices of the Zionist Federation; it prints stories from and about Israel (as well as about local community functions and activities). Prayers for the State of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces are an accepted part of synagogue services. There may also be prayers for fallen Israeli soldiers as part of Yizkor (memorial) services. The Orthodox and Progressive Jewish communities often join together for commemorations of Israeli Independence Day (*Yom Ha'atzmaut*), attended by resident Israelis (who in many instances are not formally members of any congregation and frequently may be little involved in communal affairs). There are also communal commemorations of *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) attended by Holocaust survivors (and their descendants) who live in New Zealand.

Congregations generally offer prayers for the government of New Zealand (and for the British royal family, whose head is also the New Zealand sovereign or head of state). The prayer with which the New Zealand Parliament opens its daily proceedings, however, is not inclusive of the country's Jewish population, as it is an overtly Christian prayer. A challenge to this prayer from a number of New Zealand Jews has taken the form of a petition calling for the language of the prayer to be revised. The petition is under consideration by a parliamentary committee.

There is, at present, no resident Israeli ambassador to New Zealand. After the 2005 New Zealand election the two governments agreed to reestablish an embassy in Wellington and the return of a resident ambassador is anticipated. The Muslim population of New Zealand has been growing, but thus far there has been little if any conflict between Muslim and Jewish communities. On the contrary, the two communities have at times offered mutual support in difficult circumstances and, more broadly, there is a commitment (among some communal leaders) to at least intermittent dialogue. There is also dialogue among some Christian and Jewish leaders, sustained through the existence of local and nationwide councils of Christians and Jews. A historic moment occurred in May 1995 when, on Jerusalem Day (*Yom Yerushalayim*), a silver medal from the State of Israel was presented to the Catholic Archbishop of New Zealand, Cardinal Thomas Williams, to commemorate the Vatican's recognition of the State of Israel, and at the same time serving as a token of appreciation for the friendship between New Zealand's Catholic and Jewish populations.

New Zealand's Jews currently play little role in the country's politics. No major city has a Jewish mayor, and there are presently no Jewish members of Parliament.

There are, however, Jewish participants in New Zealand cultural activities, including members of the national orchestra. Jews are also among the scholars at the country's universities. From time to time the Jewish communities devote themselves to Jewish cultural and scholarly activities, inviting overseas speakers and artists and organizing concerts, lecture programs, film series, and other such functions. There are also distinctive programs for young people, including holiday camps and youth groups (such as Bnei Akiva and Habonim) as well as study/experience programs (ranging from a few weeks to an entire year) in Israel. These programs attract Jewish participants across the entire country and from all sectors, including Orthodox, Progressive, nonaffiliated, and Israeli. There are also Jewish youth groups at New Zealand's universities.

The Jewish community is represented as a whole by the New Zealand Jewish Council, formed to represent and defend all of the country's Jewry in the public arena. In addition, regional councils in Wellington and Auckland (and, at times, in the South Island city of Christchurch) try to respond to locally based problems (such as anti-Israel or anti-Jewish letters to the editor).

In 2004, desecrations of Jewish cemeteries in Wellington led to a parliamentary resolution, unanimously passed, deploring the incidents and denouncing anti-Semitism. At other times Jews have complained of anti-Semitism on radio talk programs as well as statements showing a lack of understanding of the events of the Holocaust. A newspaper cartoon that criticized the 2006 war in Lebanon by showing a desecrated Torah scroll aroused particularly strong feeling.

### Selected Bibliography

- Beaglehole, Ann. 1986. *A Small Price to Pay: Refugees from Hitler in New Zealand, 1936–1946*. Wellington, New Zealand: Allen and Unwin.
- Gluckman, Ann, and Laurie Gluckman, eds. 1990, 1993. *Identity and Involvement: Auckland Jewry, Past and Present*. 2 vols. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press.
- Goldman, Lazarus Morris. 1958. *The History of the Jews in New Zealand*. Wellington, New Zealand: A. H. and A. W. Reed.
- Levine, Stephen, ed. 1995. *A Standard for the People: The 150th Anniversary of the Wellington Hebrew Congregation, 1843–1993*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Hazard Press.
- Levine, Stephen. 1999. *The New Zealand Jewish Community*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Levine, Stephen. 2007. "Jews" *Te Ara: the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/NewZealanders/NewZealandPeoples/Jews/en> (accessed May 7, 2007).
- Weiss, Mara. 2008. The Jewish Virtual History Tour: New Zealand. [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/New\\_Zealand.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/New_Zealand.html) (accessed May 7, 2007).
- Wittman, Livia. 1998. *Interactive Identities: Jewish Women in New Zealand*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press.

## Contributions of Jewish Individuals in New Zealand: 1840s to the Present

*Leonard Bell*

---

The numbers of people officially identified as Jewish living in New Zealand has always been small: 61 in 1848, 326 in 1861, 1,611 in 1901 (when the population of New Zealand was about a million), 3,611 in 1951 (of a total population of about 2 million), 6,636 in 2001 (of a total population of about 4 million), to about 8,500 in the 2006 census—so small, actually and relatively, that non-New Zealanders have expressed surprise on learning there are any Jews in the country at all. Yet Jews have contributed to and affected New Zealand society and culture in politics, the professions and commerce, education, the arts, and public or civic service, both in the past and present and out of all proportion to their numbers. A recent book on the makers of New Zealand, though, included just one person of Jewish birth, Julius Vogel, in its list of the supposedly top 100 personages in New Zealand history, and he was not identified as Jewish.

Julius Vogel (1835–1899) was a journalist and newspaper editor before becoming one of the most important and influential parliamentarians; he served as treasurer and then prime minister in 1869–1876, a crucial period of colonization in which immigration was boosted and huge investment was made in public infrastructure, for which Vogel was primarily responsible. Other publically prominent politicians, whether in national, city, or local government, include Samuel Shrimski (1828–1902), Arthur Myers (1867–1926), Mark Silverstone (1883–1951), Ernest Davis (1872–1962), and Dove-Meyer Robinson (1901–1989). Shrimski, sometime mayor of Omaru, a member of Parliament from 1876, and a member of Legislative Council is best remembered for his educational and human rights concerns—for instance, he vigorously opposed compulsory religious instruction (effectively meaning Christian instruction) in state-funded schools and passionately defending the human rights of Chinese fellow residents in a racist political climate. Myers, also a prominent businessman, was an innovative and highly regarded mayor of Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand, from 1905 to 1909, and then a member of Parliament and sometime cabinet minister, including finance minister, from 1910 to 1921. Auckland has had four other Jewish mayors: Philip Aaron Phillips (1871–1874), Ernest Davis (1935–1941), Colin Kay (1980–1983), and, most notably and often controversially, the longest-serving Dove-Meyer Robinson (1959–1965 and 1968–1980). Popularly known as “Robbie,” he was a colorful, politically independent character, prescient and far-sighted in environmental matters, most notably in measures protecting the city’s stunning harbors from sewerage contamination. Davis, another “man of the people,” made a big mark, as a brewery tycoon, a philanthropist in diverse local affairs, and an early and influential supporter of the emerging Labour Party. Jews featured prominently in developing the labour movement and the Labour Party in the early 20th century. For instance, Mark Silverstone, who initially

advocated revolutionary socialism, in fact worked to unify the labour movement across the “left” spectrum. A promoter and teacher of worker’s education, the economically astute Silverstone was appointed to the board of directors of the Reserve Bank when Labour first won the government in 1935.

If anything linked these politically diverse people it was their good citizenship. Numerous Jews have been particularly active in local government, civic service, and public philanthropy. For example, Lulah Baume (1871–1934) promoted public education for all, was involved in women’s and children’s rights organizations, and advanced women’s participation in national and local politics. These activists were motivated by their sense of right rather than party affiliation. Another pioneering women’s rights advocate was Ethel Benjamin (1875–1943), New Zealand’s first woman lawyer and the first (1897) to appear as counsel in any case in the British Empire. The legal profession has had many prominent Jews, including two chief justices: Michael Myers (1873–1950), who served from 1929 to 1946, also had a major role in framing the constitution of the International Court of Justice, and Thomas Eichelbaum (born 1931), who served from 1989 to 1999.

There were also prominent Jews in the field of medicine. For instance, Louis Barnett (1865–1946), who was the first New Zealander to become a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, was an eminent surgeon and long-time professor of surgery at Otago University. Peter Gluckman (b.1949), founder and director of the Liggins Institute at the University of Auckland, is one of the world’s leading medical researchers, notably in fetal development and brain cell activity.

Influential Jewish academics would be too numerous to list. The historian Peter Munz (1922–2006) and the Marxist-informed economist, Wolfgang Rosenberg (1915–2004), founder of the radical political periodical, *The New Zealand Monthly Review*, were both refugees from Nazism and were both influential and at times provocative, inside and outside academia. The most famous internationally would be the philosopher Karl Popper (1902–1994), another refugee. He lived in New Zealand from 1937 to 1945 where his impact was enormous, and where he wrote his most influential book, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945). Other major writers include the poet Charles Brasch (1909–1973), who founded *Landfall*, still the most important literary periodical in New Zealand, in 1947 and remained its editor until 1966. In addition, Karl Wolfskehl (1869–1948) spent the last 10 years of his life in Auckland, where, continuing to write in German, he produced three major poem cycles as well as individual poems, published as *Sang aus dem Exil* [Songs from Exile] in 1950.

In the visual arts, the most renowned figures have been in the fields of photography, architecture, and film. Frank Hofmann (1916–1989) introduced the ideas and practices of Central European modernist “New Photography” to New Zealand, while Marti Friedlander (born 1928) is still highly productive and has garnered increasing international recognition. Frederick Newman (1900–1964), who had worked in Austria, France, and the Soviet Union before World War II, is best known as the architect of many of New Zealand’s postwar hydroelectric power stations, the largest manmade structures in the country then. Henry Kulka (1909–1971), long-time architect for Fletchers, the biggest housing construction company then,

and designer (privately) of many superb domestic dwellings, had been the closest associate in Austria of Adolf Loos, the preeminent Central European modernist architect and polemicist.

The major personalities of Jewish descent in film would include the director Vincent Ward (born 1956), who has worked in Hollywood as well as in Australasia and whose mother was a refugee from Germany. In addition, the producer (also president of the Auckland Hebrew Congregation) John Barnett (born 1945) has been a most influential figure in film and television over the past 25 years as a founder of South Pacific Pictures, the owner of the country's largest film and television production company, the producer of a succession of award-winning and financially highly successful movies (including *Whale Rider*), and promoter of New Zealand film globally.

New Zealand music was transformed by Jewish refugees from Nazism, including the composer Georg Tintner (1917–1999). In addition, Frederick Turnovsky (1916–1994) founded a number of chamber music societies beginning in 1950, was a founding member of the New Zealand Opera Company in 1953 and the Arts Advisory Council in 1960, and was a promoter and benefactor of the arts generally. The latter was facilitated by his successes as a manufacturer (of leather goods) and a businessman (he was the first New Zealander to become a member of Lloyds). His commercial acumen led to his leadership roles in the Manufacturers Federation and various national development entities, culminating in his chairmanship of the state's Development Finance Corporation from 1973 to 1976.

Of the many successful and publicly prominent businessman and merchants it is sufficient to note just a few of the most prominent. David Nathan (1816–1886) was an early settler in Auckland and founder of what became a family business dynasty. Bendix Hallenstein (1835–1905), a pioneer clothing manufacturer in Dunedin and founder of the still-operating nationwide clothing chain, Hallensteins, was also an enlightened employer and was politically active, locally and nationally. Woolf Fisher (1912–1975), with Maurice Paykel (1916–2002), created in 1934 the now internationally well-known Fisher and Paykel, manufacturers of washing machines, refrigerators, and other electrical goods, including the world's first dishwasher geared to kosher requirements. Nathan and Fisher, like Turnovsky and the other prominent Jewish businessmen listed here, were public benefactors, believing that those with the financial means should assist socially beneficial causes.

The historically most important rabbis, who were also significantly involved and well-known in the wider society, were Hermann van Staveren (1849–1930), head of Wellington's Orthodox congregation from 1878 to 1930, and otherwise engaged in various hospital and charitable boards, and Alexander Astor (1900–1988), Auckland's Orthodox leader from 1931 to 1971, who was active in societies addressing the welfare of women and children, the disabled, and the disadvantaged. In these respects, Lesley Max (born 1945) is an important and influential figure in New Zealand now. She directs the Pacific Foundation for Health, Education, and Parent Support, geared primarily to assisting and mentoring disadvantaged children so that they can realize their potential; a dedication that she links directly to the Jewish tradition of justice for all.

The question of who is, or can be, regarded as Jewish is problematic. For instance, Francis Henry Dillon Bell (1851–1936) was one of the most dominant and multitalented men in the country's public life: prominent lawyer; founder of the *Colonial Law Journal*; Wellington's mayor in the 1890s; sometime chief justice; member of Parliament; cabinet minister; and acting prime minister in 1921, 1923–1924, and in 1925, before becoming, briefly, the first New Zealand-born prime minister. He had a Quaker father and a Jewish mother who had disconnected from Judaism, yet his Jewish lineage was known and regarded as important for his social being. And the present National Party "shadow" finance minister and leader of his party, John Key (born 1961), though reportedly christened in the Anglican Church, had a Jewish mother, Ruth Lazar, who was a refugee from Nazism as a teenager.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bade, James, ed. 1998. *Out of the Shadow of War: The German Connection with New Zealand in the Twentieth Century*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Dalziel, Raewyn. 1986. *Julius Vogel: Business Politician*. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press & Oxford University Press.
- Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. 1990–2000. 5 vols. Wellington, New Zealand: Department of Internal Affairs.
- Goldman, Lazarus Morris. 1957. *The History of the Jews in New Zealand*. Wellington, New Zealand: A.H. & A.W. Reed.
- Kerr, Donald, ed. 2003. *Enduring Legacy: Charles Brasch, Patron, Poet & Collector*. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press.
- Max, Lesley. 1990. *Children: An Endangered Species? How the Needs of New Zealand Children Are Being Neglected: A Call for Action*. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin.
- Turnovsky, Fred. 1990. *Turnovsky: Fifty Years in New Zealand*. Wellington, New Zealand: Allen & Unwin.

# North America

## Jews in North America

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

**General Population:** United States, 282,125,000; Canada, 32,813,544

**Percent of Population:** United States, 2.2 percent (6,155,000 people); Canada, 1.2 percent (393,660 people)

**Jewish Population by State/Province:** United States: Alabama, 9,000; Alaska, 3,400; Arizona, 81,500; Arkansas, 1,700; California, 999,000; Colorado, 73,000; Connecticut, 111,000; Delaware, 13,500; District of Columbia, 25,500; Florida, 620,000; Georgia, 93,500; Hawaii, 7,000; Idaho, 1,100; Illinois, 270,000; Indiana, 17,500; Iowa, 6,100; Kansas, 14,000; Kentucky, 11,500; Louisiana, 16,000; Maine, 9,300; Maryland, 213,000; Massachusetts, 275,000; Michigan, 110,000; Minnesota, 42,000; Mississippi, 1,500; Missouri, 62,500; Montana, 800; Nebraska, 7,000; Nevada, 77,000; New Hampshire, 10,000; New Jersey, 485,000; New Mexico, 11,500; New York, 1,657,000; North Carolina, 26,500; North Dakota, 450; Ohio, 149,000; Oklahoma, 5,000; Oregon, 32,000; Pennsylvania, 282,000; Rhode Island, 16,000; South Carolina, 11,500; South Dakota, 300; Tennessee, 18,000; Texas, 131,000; Utah, 4,500; Vermont, 5,500; Virginia, 66,000; Washington, 43,000; West Virginia, 2,300; Wisconsin, 28,000; Wyoming, 400. Canada: Newfoundland and Labrador, 140; Prince Edward Island, 55; Nova Scotia, 2,120; New Brunswick, 670; Quebec, 89,915; Ontario, 190,795; Manitoba, 13,040; Saskatchewan, 865; Alberta, 11,085; British Columbia, 21,230; Yukon Territory, 35; Northwest Territories, 25

---

As Eastern Europe became too inhospitable to Jews, the waves of immigration to North America increased and Jewish people and culture, born and nurtured in several unique circumstances was relocated to new shores. These Jews met other earlier waves of Portuguese and Spanish Jewish migrants and fused to create a new Jewish identity, singular to North America. This relocation and transformation is a remarkable story. North America's Jews are going through what will likely be considered a golden age. More remarkable is that the North American experience is not unique; it was one of many such relocations and blossoming having taken place in Jewish history. An ominous question could be asked: When or if Jewish life in America fades, as it has in other countries, what migration and relocation routes are available? This possibility lurking under the surface may be a factor in Jewish people's attitudes toward Israel and other regions of the world.

### **Culture, Science, and the Humanities**

The blossoming of North American Jewry has taken place on a number of levels. Most important are the attainments of individuals who are of the Jewish faith or ethnicity in business or intellectual endeavors. Whatever may be attributed to the achievements in sciences, arts, literature, cinematography, computing, industry, and trade, it is without question an outstanding expression of Jewish peoplehood. Other achievements may be attributed to national-level and community-level

Jewish organizations and cooperation and still others to the political influence of the American Jewish lobby.

The achievements of the Jewish community in North America have become symbols throughout North American popular culture. Jewish directors and producers have dominated the film industry, large Jewish corporations are perhaps known as the engines driving society's economic situation, and so on. The freedom for North American Jews to declare their Jewishness and to observe Jewish custom and religion has created in North American society one of the most successful chapters in the history of the Jewish Diaspora. At the same time, some may wonder if the Jews in North America have led such successful lives as a result of embracing Jewish heritage, or succumbing to a basically national desire to live the American dream.

Nevertheless, Jewish contributions to North American culture are great. Perhaps some of the strength lies in the power of the numerous U.S. and Canadian Jewish organizations that are located throughout North America and represent powerful, accountable, and organized bodies that maintain a primary focus on the concerns of North American Jews. In North America, there are approximately 5,300 such organizations and committees. In spite of this, internal community involvement in North American society is often at the expense of cultural and social interaction in general society.

### **Present Economic Conditions**

Jews in North America generally represent a wealthy class of citizens, a class that has reached the upper echelons of society. North American Jews are well educated, active members of society. They hold positions in government and business and are powerful and influential. Although, presently it seems not to be the case, in previous decades in the United States and Canada, Jewish philanthropic organizations have been important in developing educational, cultural, and religious programs and science and technology businesses, and they have been active across a host of other disciplines and industries. However, with heightened global economic tensions and numerous other factors philanthropic organizations may not feel confident about their previous level of philanthropic involvement. The rising cost of living and the costs of providing community activities and education, which are vital to the continued success and strength of the community is very high, and although groups like the United Jewish Communities have been successful in raising amounts as high as \$860 million to provide such services, costs may be a burden for many.

### **Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions**

In Canada, Jewish education is widespread. Around 90 percent of Jewish children in Canada receive a Jewish education, either through a Jewish day school, a yeshiva day school, or a supplementary Jewish education program. Enrollment is lowest among Conservative, Reform, and nondenominationally affiliated Jews. Orthodox Jews represent the largest group active in Jewish education and religious activity. As many as 100 percent of Orthodox Jews in America have received some Jewish education,

and up to 99 percent are involved in yeshiva day schools. Informal Jewish education in North America is a focus of the Jewish community, and activities such as summer camps, youth groups, and trips to Israel provide a group-oriented approach to learning about the Jewish heritage. At the same time, funding issues limit the scope of programs offered, and difficulties recruiting qualified educators have become a major cause of the shrinking size of the Jewish community in North America.

Active organizations exist, such as the Coalition for the Advancement in Jewish Education, the Jewish Education Service of North America, and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, although their level of impact on the problems continually facing the community may not be clear, they have been established within the past 15 years to address what is deemed a crisis in Jewish education.

### **Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems within the Community**

North America's Jews seem to share a strong connection with Israel, but at the same time many now believe anti-Semitism in North America is disguised as anti-Israelism. North American Jews have a strong perception of anti-Semitism, although there are fewer reports of real experiences with anti-Semitism than in many other countries. In any case, anti-Semitic activity is on the rise in North America. In the United States, anti-Semitic incidents have tripled, and in Canada, incidents seem to be rising at 3 percent a year. Several different factors and groups are mainly responsible: neo-Nazi activity, hate campaigns by other hate groups on the extreme Right, the growing support for Islamic fundamentalist activity, and the sentiments of anti-Israelism.

## **Jews in Canada**

*Avi Goldberg, Randal F. Schnoor, and Morton Weinfeld*

---

**General Population:** 30,007,094

**Jewish Population:** 329,995 (by religion), 348,605 (by ethnic origin)

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 1.1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Toronto, 179,100; Montreal, 92,975; Vancouver, 22,590; Winnipeg, 14,790; Ottawa, 13,445; Calgary, 7,950; Edmonton, 4,920

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The Jewish population is represented by British immigrants in mid-1700s; Russian, Polish, and Romanian immigrants in late 1800s; European Holocaust survivors in the late 1940s; North African immigrants (primarily from Morocco) in 1950s; Soviet/Russian, Israeli, and South African immigrants in the 1970s and 1980s; and Russian, Ethiopian, and Latin American immigrants in the 1990s and 2000s.

**Languages Spoken:** English, French, Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, Spanish

---

### **Historical Overview**

**1608** Samuel de Champlain founds the French colony of New France, located in what is now the Quebec region of Canada.

- 1760 After the British gain control of Montreal, a small Jewish population surfaces in the area. Several prominent Jews are members of the British military at this time: Emmanuel de Cordova, Aaron Hart, Hananiel Garcia, and Isaac Miramer.
- 1768 Canada's first synagogue, Shearith Israel, is built in Montreal. The Jewish population numbers only around 200.
- 1840s Jews from Western and Central Europe establish small communities in Hamilton, Kingston, and Toronto.
- 1847 Abraham de Sola arrives in Montreal to serve as the city's spiritual leader, a position he holds with prominence for 35 years.
- 1850s The gold rush on the West Coast brings small numbers of Jewish traders, merchants, and wholesalers to British Columbia.
- 1862 Congregation Emanu-El is completed in Victoria, British Columbia. It is the oldest synagogue in continuous operation in Canada and has been established as a Canadian Heritage Site.
- 1870s The Canadian Jewish population exceeds 1000. Jews live primarily in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.
- 1880–1900 Canada receives approximately 10,000 Jewish immigrants. Sizable numbers of Russians, Poles, and Romanians bring a distinctively Eastern European flavor to the growing community.
- 1890s A number of anti-Semitic articles are published during the Dreyfus Affair in Montreal's French-language *La Vérité* and English-language *True Witness* and *Daily Chronicle* newspapers.
- Early 1900s Daily Yiddish newspapers make their appearance in all three major Canadian cities: Montreal's *Keneder Adler*, Toronto's *Yiddisher Zhurnal*, and Winnipeg's *Dos Yiddishe Vort*.
- 1900–1910 In this period, 52,000 Jewish immigrants enter the country. Most are from Russia and Eastern Europe. The settlement is concentrated in the larger metropolitan areas, such as Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Vancouver.
- 1919 The Canadian Jewish Congress is founded to serve as a voice for the growing Jewish population.
- 1922 Canada's Jewish Immigrant Aid Society is founded.
- 1930s The Canadian Government imposes severe restrictions on immigration, refusing entry of any Jewish refugees fleeing Nazism in Europe.
- Late 1940s The Canadian government liberalizes its immigration policy. Approximately 40,000 Holocaust survivors immigrate to Canada, settling primarily in Montreal.
- Late 1950s North African Jews immigrate to Montreal and Quebec City where they have the advantage of speaking the French language. The 1956 Hungarian uprising brings about the emigration of approximately 4,000 Jews to Toronto.
- 1970 Bora Laskin becomes the first Jew appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.
- 1970s and 1980s Soviet/ Russian, South African, and Israeli Jews begin to arrive in Canada in significant numbers. Because of political instability in Quebec, several thousand Jews move from Montreal to Toronto.

- 1984 James Keegstra, a high school teacher in Alberta, is charged under the Canadian anti-hate law with unlawfully promoting anti-Semitism.
- December 12, 2003 Irwin Cotler is appointed minister of justice and attorney general of Canada.
- January 2004 The Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy is founded.
- March 19–21, 2004 A weekend-long rash of anti-Semitic vandalism is perpetrated on a Toronto Jewish cemetery, a Jewish school, and a number of area synagogues.
- April 4, 2004 A Jewish school in the Saint-Laurent neighborhood of Montreal is set on fire by an arsonist.
- March 1, 2006 Marshall Rothstein is appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

## Contemporary Overview

### Industries, Trades, and Professions

Canada's economy is strong and Canadian Jews are disproportionately employed across, and influential within, the full spectrum of professional, business, and human service sectors. Jewish professional success flows from high levels of postsecondary education relative to the Canadian average, and from sustainable subeconomies built on commercial interaction between predominantly Jewish industries and clients. Whereas Jews were historically excluded from Canada's wealthiest economic and social circles, the 21st-century Canadian economy counts Jewish chief executive officers among its top companies. Demonstrating the success of Canada's Jews in entering Canada's contemporary economic elite, 20 percent of individuals appearing on a list of the wealthiest Canadians in 2000 were Jewish.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Jews contribute to culture in their own communities by holding annual Jewish music, film, and food festivals; by producing Jewish theater and art; and by publishing Jewish periodicals in multiple languages. Beyond the community, Jews influence Canadian culture through individual artists whose work, at times, has expressed a Jewish sensibility. Prominent Jewish authors and poets, such as Leonard Cohen, Matt Cohen, Anne Michaels, and Naim Kattan, produce work that is critically acclaimed within Canadian cultural communities.

Jews are well-represented in Canadian universities in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities and have also been instrumental in developing Canada's entertainment and media industries. Names like the Asper family of CanWest Global, Garth Drabinsky, Harold Greenberg of Astral, Robert Lantos of Alliance Atlantis, Moses Znaimer, and film director David Cronenberg, among others, have made innovative contributions to Canadian television, theater, and film production.

### Religious Denominations

Canadian Jews belong to synagogues affiliated with the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstruction movements. Though 11 percent of all Jews in 2001 called

themselves secular or atheist, many of these still engaged in practices such as fasting on Yom Kippur or hosting a Passover seder. Across all categories of Jewish identification, ritual observance is significantly higher among Jews in Canada than among those in the United States.

Although ultra-Orthodox communities thrive in Montreal and Toronto, Jews in Vancouver, Edmonton, and Toronto can also join synagogues that offer a traditional-egalitarian religious space. Hybrid synagogues like Or Shalom in Vancouver and the First Narayever in Toronto have grappled directly with the challenges of integrating nontraditional Jewish families (same-sex and intermarried couples) into their minyanim.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Jewish education systems are well-attended across Canada, and a variety of institutions coexist within many Canadian Jewish communities. Religious and cultural orientations of Canada's Jewish schools include Yiddishist, Zionist, Hasidic, and Modern Orthodox. Illustrating the connection between Canadian Jews and Jewish education, it was estimated that 90 percent of Jewish children in Toronto in 1990 had received some form of Jewish education.

Jews in Canada are represented by a professionalized national network of communal organizations, with the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) standing as the leading Jewish organization in Canada. The CJC has a loose regional structure and holds triennial conventions and elections in which regional constituent organizations participate. B'nai Brith, a national fraternal organization made up of individual lodges, has challenged the CJC's jurisdiction by aggressively petitioning the Canadian government on matters relating to anti-Semitism and human rights. The Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy works to increase the level of nonpartisan professional advocacy for Israel and for other Jewish causes directed toward the Canadian government and media.

The bulk of Jewish communal organization takes place at the local level. In Canadian cities, welfare federations are responsible for collecting general communal funds and disbursing them to a variety of service, social, cultural, and recreational agencies. Federations are run by volunteer lay boards and professional staff, and involvement in communal governance yields status and influence within the community.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Canada's criminal code and constitution set "reasonable limits" to speech that willfully promotes hatred against identifiable groups, and early in the 21st century, many studies of Canadian attitudes demonstrate declining levels of negative attitudes toward Jews. Despite the existence of empirical data to the contrary, Canadian Jews still report feeling anti-Semitism in their country. In a 2003 survey, about 30 percent of respondents reported that they had experienced actual anti-Semitism in public places in the previous three years.

Reflecting global political developments, the new battleground for anti-Semitism in Canada centers on the Middle East, as Jews in Canada have wondered whether

criticism of the State of Israel has become a “respectable” way for non-Jews to engage in an anti-Jewish discourse. In 2003, 30 percent of Canadians expressed sympathy for Israel, 20 percent for the Palestinians, and 47 percent did not know. These data conform to a decades-long shift away from higher support for Israel within the general Canadian populace.

University campuses have been the site at which many of the Jewish community’s concerns have played out. At York University in Toronto and Concordia University in Montreal, student organizations that promote Palestinian human rights have verbally clashed with Jewish student organizations and have drawn international headlines with protest tactics and messages that have blurred the line between criticism of Israeli government policy and the denial of the legitimacy of the Jewish state. Most Jews in Canada interpret these events as new forms of anti-Semitism in consequence if not in motivation.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Canada’s Jewish communities maintain a comfortable balance between ethnic particularism and full participation in the wider society. Assimilation remains a concern for Jewish community leaders, but intermarriage rates are less prevalent among Jews in than among other ethnic groups. With higher rates of individuals over the age of 65 than in the overall Canadian average, an aging population challenges assimilation as a top demographic concern for Jewish communities. The social service needs of rapidly aging populations in Winnipeg and Montreal are putting increasing pressure on Jewish leaders and organizations to respond.

Internal Jewish migration has established Toronto as *the* Jewish city in Canada. The declining Jewish population in Montreal, due to the ebbs and flows of the nationalist movement in Quebec, has been a bitter pill for community leaders to swallow, leaving them searching existentially and practically for ways to ensure a confident future for Jews in the city that historically symbolized the center of Canadian Jewish life. Although Toronto’s Jewish community is vibrant, it is conceivable that the shifting of political and economic energy to western Canada, which is occurring in the wider Canadian society, will find its equivalent within the Jewish geographic landscape as well.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abella, Irving, and Harold Troper. 2000. *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948*. 3rd ed. Toronto: Key Porter.
- Klein, Ruth, and Frank Dimant, eds. 2001. *From Immigration to Integration. The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Millenium Edition*. Toronto: Institute for International Affairs, B’nai Brith Canada.
- Menkis, Richard, and Norman Ravvin, eds. 2004. *The Canadian Jewish Studies Reader*. Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Red Deer Press.
- Tulchinsky, Gerald. 1992. *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community*. Toronto: Lester.
- Tulchinsky, Gerald. 1998. *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community*. Toronto: Stoddart.
- Weinfeld, Morton. 2001. *Like Everyone Else . . . But Different: The Paradoxical Success of Canadian Jews*. Toronto: McClelland Stewart.

## Judeo-Portuguese in the Anglo-American Colonies

*Joseph Abraham Levi*

---

The year 1954 marked the tricentenary of Jewish presence on North America soil. During the first half of the 17th century, there were reportedly 12 Jews residing in the Dutch, British, and French colonies of North America as well as the crypto-Jews (Marranos) of the Spanish provinces of Florida and New Mexico.

Aside from a short English occupation (1763–1783), Florida belonged to Spain between 1513 and 1819, when it was finally ceded to the United States. New Mexico belonged to the Mexican territory under Spanish rule. With the independence of Mexico in 1821, New Mexico became part of the new Mexican state until the United States seized the territory after the Mexican War (1846–1848). Later, with the Gadsen Purchase (1853–1859), the United States bought the area for \$10 million.

When the first Jews arrived in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam in 1654, the number of Europeans living along the Atlantic coast, from present-day Maine to Florida, was still very small: almost 75,000. New Amsterdam was founded in 1626 by the West India Company, which had many Jewish stockholders who were particularly involved in the financial and administrative sector of the company. In 1654, New Amsterdam, which was famous for being an important center of fur trade and for the easy accessibility of its harbor, had almost 8,000 inhabitants.

Despite the fact that the island was under Dutch possession, most of the inhabitants of New Amsterdam were British citizens. The theocratic colonies to the north of New Amsterdam, including Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, where Protestantism was the norm, had no Jewish residents. The future state of Connecticut, for example, did not receive its first contingent of Jews in 1635.

Generally speaking, Jewish presence in the Anglo-American colonies can be divided into four phases of immigration: (1) the Iberian, that is, the Sephardic communities of the Portuguese and Spanish Diasporas; (2) the Ashkenazi of German language and culture; (3) the Ashkenazi of the Slavic-Romanian/Moldavian and/or Hungarian areas; and (4) the Judeo-American, which began in 1921 and ended in with the conclusion of World War II.

The first phase, the Iberian, covering almost two centuries (ca. 1654–1840) and is also seen as the rise and decline of Sephardic Jewry. In fact, one of the major differences between the North American diasporic communities and their counterparts in the Caribbean and South America rests on the fact that the latter two were completely dominated by the Sephardim—and there was only a small Ashkenazi presence. In contrast, although nearly all were of Sephardic origin, the Jews of the North American colonies eventually saw their supremacy threatened by the Ashkenazim who, starting from the middle of the 19th century, became the uncontested leaders of the North American arena, a position they have retained to this day. Incidentally, concrete evidence points to the fact that since their arrival on American

soil, most of the Ashkenazi discriminated against the Sephardim—as well as any other Jewish branch different from the Ashkenazi—considering them inferior and, very often, as if they were not Jewish at all.

The first period can further be divided into two phases: the colonial period (1654–1776)—which can also be subdivided in the Dutch period (1654–1664) and the English period (1664–1776)—and the first national period (1776–1884). The Dutch period (1654–1664), witnessed the first presence of Jews of the Diaspora on North American soil. During the Dutch period, the Sephardic community was the model of Judaism in the Dutch colony, and this model was also adopted by the Ashkenazi. The English period starts with the British occupation and ends with the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Already, during the first decades of the 18th century, the ethnic component of the North American Jews will see some changes: from now on it will be Ashkenazi, first of German language and culture, and then Slavic, Baltic, Romanian/Moldavian, and/or Hungarian. However, the Sephardic rite—be it Portuguese, Spanish, or Ladino (Judeo-Portuguese and/or Judeo-Spanish)—at least until the middle of the 19th century, will remain the norm for many New York synagogues, thus becoming the pillar of local Jewish communities.

The second phase, the Ashkenazi of German origin, which starts in 1841 and ends in 1920, is also known as the rise and dominance of the German Jew. The Napoleonic wars in Europe (1804–1814) prompted massive immigrations of German Ashkenazim to the United States. Already in 1825 the German Ashkenazi separated from the Shearit Israel of New York and formed the B'nai Jerusalem, the first congregation of Ashkenazi rite of the city, thus becoming the center for the Jewish community of German language during the entire 19th century.

The third phase is almost concomitant with the second period, lasting for more than half a century (ca. 1852–1920). It saw the rise to power of the Ashkenazim of Slavic, Baltic, Romanian/Moldavian, and/or Hungarian origin, followed by their political decline.

The first contacts of Holland with North America date back to 1609 when the United Company of the East Indies gave the English captain Henry Hudson the task of finding a route to Asia through the polar seas. Departing from Texel, Holland, Hudson arrived in North America in 1611 where he encountered the river that later bore his name. The following year, sponsored by the English, Hudson reached the straight and bay of Hudson; hence, the English claimed the area as theirs.

Hudson's accounts, particularly his commentaries on the possibility of establishing a lucrative fur trade in this area, piqued the attention of 13 Dutch businessmen, who soon received a royal decree granting them full commercial rights over New Amsterdam, which at this time was made up of New Amsterdam proper and would soon become the headquarters for all operations, as well as present-day New England and eastern Canada. Fort Nassau, New Amsterdam, built in 1614, was the second permanent European colony in North America. Jamestown, Virginia, founded in 1607 by John Smith (ca. 1580–1631) and other English settlers sponsored by the London Company, was the first.

Many of the shareholders of the company were Jews, and it is mainly thanks to their financial support that Holland succeeded in maintaining this small colony in

North America. For nine years the Dutch continued their fur trade with the indigenous populations, thus increasing the company's profits. In 1621, the peninsula of Manhattan was bought for 60 Dutch florins. In 1625, another fort was built in Manhattan, Amsterdam. To avoid confusions, the city next to it was therefore named New Amsterdam. During the next 20 years, this little hamlet would grow into a full-blown colonial settlement with more than 2,000 inhabitants. In 1664, 15,000 people lived in the capital. In the same year, however, England took over the entire Dutch colony. In exchange Holland received Suriname on April 15, 1668, which had already been in Dutch hands since 1657. Obviously, the Dutch were more interested in the revenues from the sugar plantations and the incipient transatlantic slave trade than in a small, though lucrative, European colony in North America. Religiously speaking, New York soon became the pattern of the new nation: a confluence of peoples and religions coexisting in the name of freedom from any kind of oppression.

Many scholars who used to believe, and some still believe, more than 5,000 Jews lived in Brazil during the time of Dutch occupation (1637–1644). According to the Portuguese historian Luís de Meneses, third Count of Ericeira (1632–1690), who, in his *História de Portugal Restaurado* (*History of Restored Portugal*, 1679), gives as one of the major reasons for Recife falling so easily into Portuguese hands the fact that the Jews, for fear of losing their capital, implored the Dutch to surrender to the Portuguese. Meneses thus pointed at the “cowardliness” of the Jewish people, always ready to defend their own interests, at the cost of the entire population.

Obviously, the reasons for the total subjugation of the Dutch to the Portuguese forces are many. Since December 20, 1653, a Portuguese fleet had been anchored along the coast of Recife and the city was also surrounded by the Portuguese army. Furthermore, thanks to the Anglo-Dutch Wars (1652–1654), the Dutch lacked all mechanisms of defense. On January 15, 1654, protected by the Portuguese navy, the Governor of Pernambuco, Francisco Barreto de Menezes, decided to attack the Dutch fortifications along the coast. In a few days the forts of Altenar, Amélia, Cinco Ponto, and Rego fell into Portuguese hands.

Among the terms of the Dutch capitulation—signed on January 26, 1654—Artigo 4 guaranteed the settlers now residing in Portuguese land full equality, as if they were Portuguese subjects. As for their religion, they had to be treated as any foreigner living in Portugal. However, according to Artigo 6, those who did not wish to remain in the Portuguese colony and who resided in Recife or Maurícia, had up to three months to leave the territory. In 1654, the Portuguese Crown named Francisco Barreto de Menezes (1616–1688) governor of Pernambuco and, in 1656, governor general of Brazil, holding office in this capacity until 1663, when he finally returned to Portugal. The governor of Pernambuco treated the Jews now under his jurisdiction very magnanimously, seeing that their human rights were guaranteed and respected at all times. In fact Barreto's attitude toward the Jews was absolutely exemplary, to such a degree that in the history of the Sephardic Diaspora Governor Barreto de Menezes will also be known as *ha-sidei umot ha-olam* (the just Gentile of the world).

Twenty-three Jews, together with a group of Dutch Calvinists—also known as Netherlanders, among whom was the famous Calvinist pastor and preacher from

the island of Itamaracá, Pernambuco, Dominus Johannes Polhemiu—arrived in New Amsterdam in September 1654. These 23 Jews were members of six families, guided by 4 men and 2 widows: Abram Ysrael de Piza (or Dias), David Israel (Faro), Assar (Asher) Levy, Moses Lumbroso (Ambrosius), Judith Mercado (Judicq de Mereda), and Ricke Nunes. These diasporic Jews were thus divided: 4 men, 6 women, and 13 children or adolescents up to age 12 years.

In November 1654, another contingent of Brazilian Jews left Recife on the frigate *Valck* destined for Martinique; however, a violent storm, forced them to cast anchor in Jamaica, a territory that still belonged to the Spanish. The Brazilian Jews were imprisoned by the local colonial authorities. On November 14, representatives of the Dutch Jewish community asked the king of Spain and the Dutch consul in Cadiz and San Sebastian to intervene on behalf of their coreligionists who were unjustly detained. Because most of the prisoners were Dutch citizens—either from Amsterdam or born in the Dutch colony of Brazil—the ill-fated Jews should have been immune to the Spanish Inquisition. Moreover, thanks to an earlier peace agreement between the two European nations, these Jews were de facto free men and women.

During this time the Jews in Jamaica were indeed numerous; their presence is in fact attested since the beginning of the 16th century. Right after Jamaica was turned over to England in 1655, all those who practiced Judaism were protected by the laws of Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), the English ruler. Cromwell knew very well that Jewish presence in British America was going to be advantageous to England, both on a short-term and a long-term basis, namely: trade between the Caribbean and the North American colonies, as well as reinforcement against Spanish threats in the area. Having the Jews as their allies, fierce enemies of the Spanish, was undoubtedly going to give England ammunition in conquering lands under Spanish occupation, the ultimate dream of the British colonial empire. Cromwell skillfully used the Jews to increase British economic power in the West Indies, particularly in newly acquired Jamaica. As for the Jews, they willfully accepted the idea of being thus used.

Jews who wished to leave the Portuguese colony could take along their wealth; hence, they desired to transport as much as they could. Unfortunately, the governor could not meet their demands, and the only concession he could grant them was the guaranteed protection to Christians (both Catholic and Protestants) and Jews—the latter born into the faith—who, given that they were still waiting for appropriate transportation, happened to still reside in Portuguese soil past the due date.

As for the “heretics,” or rather, Christians who by their own free will converted to Judaism, as well as the conversos—Sephardic Jews who were either forced to or willingly converted to Christianity for fear of repercussions or expulsion—they were vulnerable to the Portuguese Inquisition. Unfortunately, Governor Barreto did not have any authority over the latter institution; thus, he could not offer them any kind of immunity. The sons of these heretics, that is, the crypto-Jews (Marranos) who returned to Judaism, for the very fact of being born into the faith before their arrival to Brazil, or because they were originally from the former Dutch colony in Brazil, were completely immune to any inquisitorial threats. It was thanks to

Governor Barreto, who put at their disposal Portuguese ships for their return to Holland, that all those who openly professed Judaism could safely leave Brazil. All in all, almost 150 Jews left former Dutch Brazil destined for Holland and thence back to the New World, this time directed toward the Dutch Antilles, Suriname, and Dutch North America (New Amsterdam).

The year 1654 is therefore the beginning of the first European settlement on North American soil, which also included a group of Dutch Jews. The land that was colonized was New Amsterdam, future New York City, a colony that then belonged to the Dutch empire. A few days before September 7, 1654, the French vessel *St. Cathrien*, commanded by Captain Jacques de la Motthe, dropped anchor in the docks of New Amsterdam. Among the Dutch refugees there were 23 Jews—men, women, and their children, all from Recife.

The controversy over the origin of this ship is still very much alive. Scholars favor different and contradictory theories, as in the case of the controversy over the departure for Jamaica and thence to Spain, the problems concerning the aforementioned letters of protest, and the innumerable references to Jews with the same name in New Amsterdam to disprove its Brazilian provenance.

Nevertheless, it is known that Captain de la Motthe declared that the Dutch refugees left Cape Santo António, a promontory in the Bay of Salvador da Bahia, then called António Vaz, where the Dutch built the fort of Maurícia, which was linked by bridge to Recife, the only port at the time. The archives of the New York court contain reference to a dispute between two passengers on board of the *St. Cathrien*, which mentions the passage between Gamonike and New Amsterdam. One would have to assume, then, that this vessel came from Jamaica or that at least it called at the port of this island. Most likely Gamonike is a corruption of the French word *Jamaïque* (Jamaica). Samuel Oppenheim, however, suggested that the word Gamonike, also written Gamoniké, is the incorrect rendering of Tamarica or Tamaraca, present-day Itamaracá, a province to the north of Pernambuco, and, he did succeed at locating Cabo Santo António. Egon Wolff and Freida Wolff do not agree with this interpretation of events. After performing serious investigations, even if ultimately not being able to propose an alternative place to Jamaica, the Wolffs concluded that these 23 Jews arrived in New Amsterdam from Suriname. According to these scholars the shipwrecked Jews of the *Valck* were prisoners and not free citizens, as were their coreligionists in Gamonike, the latter being deeply involved in the local and international/transcontinental trade. However, the explanations offered are not very clear.

Most likely Cape Santo António—“C. de S. Anthonio” in the documents of the time—is not the Brazilian promontory, but rather, its homonym off the coast of Cuba, someplace near Jamaica and Mexico. In fact, right after the Jews arrive in New Amsterdam, an intense correspondence between the Spanish Crown and the Dutch colonial authorities began. The reason of the dispute apparently was the capture of a Spanish vessel by Dutch corsairs. The maps of the time show that the aforementioned Cape Santo António, off the Cuban coast, is in a strategic location between the West Indies, the route to New Amsterdam, and the Gulf of Mexico. The fact that the Jews were on board a French ship confirms the theory that they sailed

from the West Indies, a place under strong French influence. As for the reasons why these Jews left Jamaica perhaps the political situation of the time, the ever-present English hostilities, and, most of all, piracy, were mainly responsible for their departure. In fact, the strategic position of the island made it a very coveted place, particularly by unscrupulous pirates and corsairs—mainly of Spanish, French, and/or Dutch origin—always looking for easy booty. Furthermore, both the *Historie ofte Jaelyck Verhael van de Verricht ighen der Gerctroveerde West Indische Compagnie* and the *Descripcion de las Indias Occidentales de Antonio de Herrera* mention the Cuban Cape Santo António. In addition, none of the Dutch documents of the time confirm that these Jews were originally from Brazil. On the contrary, all the references testify that they came from the West Indies.

As for the 1644 diasporic Jews, at least two of them, Jacob Barsimson and Solomon Pietersen, asked the authorities to allow these refugees to remain in the Dutch colony. Besides them, many Amsterdam Jews, among whom stand out the parnasim—that is, the elders of the Portuguese Jewish Community, the *Nação Portuguesa*—and those with commercial interests in the Dutch West India Company, testified on behalf of these 23 Jews.

Many were the letters of protest, written by members of the Dutch Jewish community, against the abuses and, most of all, the fact that Peter Stuyvesant (1611–1672) governor of the Dutch colony in North America and Curaçao, did not respect the former concessions bestowed on the Jews residing in the Dutch territories overseas, from Brazil and Curaçao to New Amsterdam.

A few years after their arrival in North America in 1655, the Jews united with their coreligionists residing in the area, thus forming the first Jewish community in New Amsterdam. Even if protected by Dutch laws, mainly regarding civil and political matters, Jews still did not have the right to publicly profess their religion. The ancient biases and prejudices were then being transplanted in the New World, and the Jews were thus prevented from serving the Lord, either in a synagogue or in public congregations.

Jews and Portuguese (also known by their collective name *Nação Portuguesa* (Portuguese nation)—maybe because at this time the two were almost synonymous—were also not allowed to have commercial ties with Fort Orange and South River, in present-day Albany and Delaware, respectively. Furthermore, members of both ethnic-religious groups could not hold any public office, nor could they be retailers. The only concessions were that they could practice their religion at home and that they had the right to build a house anywhere in New Amsterdam (Letter of the Director of the Dutch West India Company to Peter Stuyvesant, May 13, 1656).

Most certainly, then, the first Jews who settled in New Amsterdam came directly from Brazil, though stopping first at Cape Santo António, in all likelihood in present-day Cuba. Furthermore, there is a chance that another group of Jews, possibly many, also came from the Caribbean, tired of the abuses and commercial restrictions that the Europeans imposed upon them, and finally arrived at the shores of New Amsterdam.

As for the Brazilian refugees, it is possible that they either fell into Portuguese hands on January 15, 1654, or that between January and August of the same year

they found refuge in Gamonike, perhaps present-day Jamaica, whence they finally reached the coast of New Amsterdam.

Chronologically speaking, though, these “Dutch” Jews were not the first Jews in North American soil. Before their arrival a few Jews were recorded in New Amsterdam, as well as in the Anglo-American colonies of Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Virginia, and the Carolinas. In 1652, a small group of Dutch soldiers, more than half Jews, was sent to New Amsterdam by the Dutch West India Company.

A 1658 document states that the Portuguese Jew Jacob Lumbrozo (d. 1666) was found guilty of blasphemy. The colony of Maryland, founded in 1634, adopted religious freedom for all its citizens; however—as in any other Anglo-American dependency—this privilege was only directed at Christian denominations and not to Judaism. Nevertheless, Lumbrozo, maybe because of his enormous wealth and, above all, given the fact that he was also a doctor and a businessman, managed to avoid punishment. In fact, on September 10, 1663, Lumbrozo also received full Maryland citizenship. Nevertheless, Maryland was among the last states to grant full civil and legal rights to its Jewish subjects.

In 1685, as a consequence of the Nantes Code, that is, the *Code Noir*, many Jews and Huguenots took refuge first in England and then to either the Anglo-American colonies or, farther north, to Canada. A few others went to the Antilles—mainly the Bahamas and Jamaica—and/or Brazil.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Martin A., and Abraham J. Peck, eds. 1993. *Sephardim in the Americas. Studies in Culture and History*. Tuscaloosa: American Jewish Archives, University of Alabama Press.
- Daly, Charles Patrick. 1893. *The Settlement of the Jews in North America*, edited by Max James Kohler. New York: Philip Cowen.
- Finn, James. 1841. *Sephardim; or, the History of the Jews in Spain and Portugal*. London: J.G.F., and J. Rivington.
- Katz, Israel J., and M. Mitchell Serels, eds. 2000. *Studies on the History of Portuguese Jews from Their Expulsion in 1497 Through Their Dispersion*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press.
- Levi, Joseph Abraham, ed. 2002. *Survival and Adaptation: The Portuguese Jewish Diaspora in Europe, Africa, and the New World*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press.
- Marcus, Jacob Rader. 1975. *Early American Jewry*. 2 vols. New York: Ktav.
- Markens, Joseph. 1888. *The Hebrews in America*. New York: Arno Press.
- Masserman, Paul, and Max Baker. 1932. *The Jews Come to America*. New York: Bloch.
- Meijer, Jaap. 1954. *Pioneers of Pauroma. Contributions to the Earliest History of the Jewish Colonization of America*. Paramaribo: Eldorado.
- Oppenheim, Samuel. 1909. “The Early History of the Jews in New York, 1654–1664. Some New Matter on the Subject.” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 18: 1–91.
- Pool, David de Sola. 1952. *Portraits Etched in Stone; Early Jewish Settlers 1682–1831*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Scopino, Aldorigo Joseph, Jr., ed. 1997. *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in America*. Carlisle, UK: Discovery Enterprises.
- Wiznitzer, [Aharon] Arnold. 1954. “The Exodus from Brazil and Arrival in New Amsterdam of the Jewish Pilgrim Fathers.” *Publications of the Jewish American Historical Society* 44, no. 12: 80–97.

- Wiznitzer, [Aharon] Arnold. 1954. "The Number of Jews in Dutch Brazil, 1630–1654." *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 24: 107–114.
- Wolff, Egon, and Frieda Wolff. 1978. "Mistaken Identities of Signatories of the Congregation Zur Israel, Recife." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 12: 91–107.
- Wolff, Egon, and Frieda Wolff. 1981. "The Problem of the First Jewish Settlers in New Amsterdam, 1654." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 8: 169–177.
- Wolff, Egon, and Frieda Wolff. 1981. "The Twenty-Three Jewish Settlers of New Amsterdam." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 8: 169–177.

## Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jews in the United States

*Marc D. Angel*

---

The early Jewish communities in North America were established by Sephardic Jews of the Western Sephardic tradition. They were descended from crypto-Jews of the Iberian Peninsula who had returned to Judaism in Western Europe, notably in Amsterdam. Some had been living in South America and the Caribbean Islands before arriving in North America; others came directly from Europe.

The first Jewish congregation—Shearith Israel—was founded in 1654 in New Amsterdam (which became New York in 1664). This remained the only Jewish community on the continent until the mid-18th century, when congregations were formed in Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Newport, Rhode Island. Another congregation was established in Richmond, Virginia, shortly after the American Revolutionary War.

Although there is evidence of a crypto-Jewish presence in the American Southwest during the 17th century, there were no openly practicing Jewish congregations. Jewish traditions, such as they existed, were maintained secretly.

Although the first six congregations followed the Sephardic rite, a relatively large number of Ashkenazim were also members. The two groups worked together, married each other, and were buried side by side in Jewish cemeteries. The Jewish population was small, and the Jews recognized the need to maintain unified communities.

The colonial congregations laid the foundations for American Jewish life. They struggled for and won civil rights; they participated actively in the political and economic life of the colonies. Jews fought in and supported the cause of the American Revolution and felt honored to be among the founding generation of the United States.

During the 19th century, the vast majority of Jewish immigrants to the United States were of Ashkenazic background. German Jews arrived in large numbers mid-century, and masses of East European Jews arrived during the 1880s and thereafter. Many new congregations sprouted up throughout the United States, all of them

Ashkenazic. By the latter 19th century, Reform congregations began to flourish, and by the early 20th century the Conservative movement was underway. The ancient Sephardic congregations in New York and Philadelphia maintained the Sephardic custom (and do so to this day); the congregation in Newport, which had faded after the American Revolution, revived during the late 19th century; most of its members were Ashkenazic, and the Ashkenazic rite became dominant. The congregations in Savannah, Charleston, and Richmond also became Ashkenazic Reform congregations.

During the first quarter of the 20th century, approximately 35,000 Sephardim arrived in the United States, primarily from Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Syria. By 1926, it was estimated that 50,000–60,000 Sephardim were living in the United States, about 40,000 of them in New York City. The primary area of settlement for most Sephardim during this period was New York's Lower East Side. By the 1920s, the more affluent Sephardim moved to other neighborhoods throughout New York, such as, Harlem, New Lots, West Bronx, Bay Parkway, and Flatbush.

Sephardic congregations also developed throughout the United States, including Seattle; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Savannah; Atlanta; Miami; Chicago; Indianapolis; Detroit; Rochester, New York; and Highland Park, New Jersey. As a rule, Sephardic congregations followed their own traditions and did not affiliate with the Reform or Conservative movements. Because Sephardim tended to traditionalism, those congregations that chose to affiliate with a national movement joined the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. Indeed, the Orthodox Union was founded through the efforts of the Sephardic rabbi of Shearith Israel in New York, Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes. Mendes served as the Union's first president.

The Sephardic arrivals were not a monolithic group. Turkish and Balkan Sephardim spoke Judeo-Spanish, Greek Jews spoke Greek, and Syrian Jews spoke Arabic. Sephardim formed congregations and benevolent societies based on their cities of origin in the old countries. During the first half of the 20th century, there was a vibrant cultural life in Judeo-Spanish, and a number of Ladino weekly newspapers appeared over the years. The first was *La America*, edited by Moise Gadol, which ran from 1910 to 1924. The most successful was *La Vara*, which ran from 1922 to 1948. These newspapers not only included news reports, but also opinion pieces, humor, poetry, and fiction. Judeo-Spanish dramatic presentations were also popular, as were programs featuring Ladino songs and stories.

Sephardim of Judeo-Spanish and Greek backgrounds experienced a loosening of sociological bonds as they became more Americanized. Although members of the immigrant generation tended to live in neighborhoods with high concentration of fellow Sephardim, this tendency diminished in subsequent generations. By the late 1950s and 1960s, Sephardim—like other middle-class Americans—were moving to newer sections of town or to the suburbs. Most were receiving university educations. By the 1970s and 1980s, most Sephardim of Judeo-Spanish background did not live within easy walking distance of synagogues of their own tradition. Members of the third (and subsequent) generations no longer speak Judeo-Spanish,

or did so with little fluency. Many married Ashkenazic—or even non-Jewish—spouses. In spite of these trends, though, Sephardic congregations of Judeo-Spanish origin continue to flourish, and several have recently enjoyed a revival of interest and activity. They have attracted non-Sephardic members who find the Sephardic traditions to be beautiful and meaningful.

Syrian Jews have tended to remain concentrated in particular neighborhoods. Although Arabic is seldom spoken fluently by the younger generations, Syrian Jews have succeeded in maintaining their traditions and have a strong infrastructure of synagogues, schools, and social agencies. They have significant concentrations in Flatbush (Brooklyn, New York) and Deal, New Jersey, and there is a growing community in Aventura, Florida. Syrian Jews have been the most cohesive Sephardic group over the generations in America.

By the end of the 20th century, the Greek Jewish community had essentially blended in with other Sephardim. One synagogue of Greek tradition continues to operate on the Lower East Side of New York, but it is more of a museum than a living community.

During the 1930s and 1940s, a trickle of Sephardim were among the European Jewish refugees from fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and other European countries that came under Nazi occupation. During the 1950s and 1960s, a wave of Middle Eastern Jews arrived, primarily from Arab countries and Israel. Large centers emerged in the New York area and in Los Angeles, and others were scattered throughout the country. During the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of Iranian Jews sought haven in America, and many settled in New York and Los Angeles. During this period, thousands of Bukharian Jews arrived among the immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

The American Sephardic/Middle Eastern Jewish community has grown to 250,000–300,000. They are a highly diverse group, including people whose families have been in America 350 years as well as those who have recently arrived. Many are straying from their Sephardic and Jewish roots, while others are growing more intense in their religious and cultural commitments.

Since the early 20th century, attempts were made to form national organizations for the promotion of Sephardic life. Among these were the Federation of Oriental Jews (1912), The Union of Sephardic Congregations (1929), and the Central Sephardic Jewish Community of America (1941). They enjoyed limited success, and only the Union continues today. It publishes Sephardic prayer books (translated and edited by Rabbi David de Sola Pool) and other works of religious interest. In 1972, the American Sephardi Federation (ASF) was organized, and it continues to operate from headquarters at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. Sephardic House, a national cultural organization founded in 1978, became the cultural arm of ASF in the early 2000s.

Sephardim have played a growing role in American Jewish life, although they are still generally underrepresented in communal and national Jewish organizations. The dominant Ashkenazic community—itself quite diverse—has made varying degrees of effort to understand Sephardic culture and to include Sephardim in

their Jewish consciousness. On their part, many Sephardim have felt more comfortable working within their own communities than in the broader Jewish community.

Jews of Sephardic/Middle Eastern background have made significant contributions to American life. Among the most prominent were Uriah P. Levy, who rose to the rank of commodore in the American Navy during the 19th century; the 19th-century poet, Emma Lazarus, whose poem "The New Colossus" is affixed to the Statue of Liberty; and Justice Benjamin Nathan Cardozo, who served on the United States Supreme Court (1932–1938). Sephardic/Middle Eastern Jews can be found today as heads of major American corporations, civic office holders, respected members of the liberal professions and academia, and leading patrons of the arts.

The Sephardic/Middle Eastern population in the United States has been increasing; rates of Sephardic/Ashkenazic marriages are rising; and Sephardim and Sephardic culture are gaining more prominence in the general community. It is to be expected, then, that the Sephardic/Middle Eastern component of American Jewry will grow in significance in coming years.

### Selected Bibliography

- Angel, Marc D. 1982. *La America: The Sephardic Experience in the United States*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Sutton, Joseph A. D. 1979. *Magic Carpet: Aleppo in Flatbush*. New York: Thayer Jacoby.

## Jewish Women of the Early American West

*Jeanee Abrams*

---

Jewish women in the early American West were central to the region's economic, political, social, and cultural growth and development. These women were often strong-minded and independent and played an integral role in settling American's western frontier as well as promoting Jewish continuity as they built new lives in a region that offered them a host of possibilities. Some were the wives, daughters, and sisters of the members of Jewish merchant elite who had the means and leisure time available for prominent involvement in civil life and social welfare issues, largely through work in women's clubs and organizations. But many more western Jewish women performed daily work within their households that not only often contributed to family income but also played a part in founding the philanthropic institutions, houses of worship, schools, and libraries that helped civilize the raw West and constructing communities where social order and Jewish family life could flourish.

Within five years of the beginning of the gold rush in 1848, more than 5,000 Jews migrated to California in search of opportunity, joining members of a variety

of religious and ethnic groups. After 1858, when most of the California mining sites had been appropriated, gold seekers migrated to new strikes in Colorado, Nevada, Montana, Idaho, and Oregon. Jews also fanned out across other nearby states and by 1920 numbered about 300,000 in the West.

Particularly in early western boomtowns, where growth was often rapid and chaotic and the number of women was small, mutual assistance was critical and western women often enjoyed more equal status than women in other regions of the country. Domestic skills, for example, commanded top dollar and encouraged many women to become seamstresses and food purveyors or to pursue hotel and boarding house ventures. These paths were successfully followed by western Jewish women like Mary Ann Cohen Magnin in California, the guiding hand behind the upscale women's clothing store, I. Magnin and Company; Anna Freudenthal Solomon in Arizona, who ran a successful hotel for nearly 25 years; Jeanette Hirsch Meier of Portland, Oregon, who after her husband's death presided over the largest department store in the far West; and Regina Moch of Nevada, who operated a thriving restaurant, which supported her after the death of her husband in a local fire.

As time passed, the innovative environment of the West offered western Jewish women the possibility of greater access to higher education, professional positions, and entry into formal politics. Jewish women benefited from the region's generally liberal attitude toward education for females, where in 1900 the percentage of young women enrolled in high school was the highest in the West and the University of California became a coed institution as early as the 1870s. It is noteworthy that women's suffrage came earliest to the American West. By 1900, women could vote in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho, and by the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, women in every western state, with the exception of New Mexico, had already been enfranchised. Unsurprisingly, in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century, Jewish women across America were highly visible in the vanguard of social welfare and progressive reform endeavors, commerce, higher education, and the professions, as well as in the maintenance of Jewish life. However, considering their modest numbers, the level of involvement of Jewish female pioneers in the early American West is particularly striking.

The region produced many notable figures, including Frances Wisebart Jacobs, Denver's "Mother of Charities" and the impetus behind the founding of the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives (NJH) in 1899 as well as the Charity Organization Society, forerunner of the national United Way; educator Mary Goldsmith Prag, the first Jewish woman to serve on San Francisco's Board of Education, and her daughter Florence Prag Kahn, the first Jewish congresswoman in America; Seraphine Eppstein Pisko, who became the executive director of NJH in 1911, probably the first Jewish woman in the United States to head a national organization; pioneer social worker Ida Loewenberg of Oregon; Felice Cohn, one of Nevada's earliest female lawyers, who played a major role in the state's suffrage movement; writer Selina Solomons, the activist president of San Francisco's Votes-for Women-Club, and journalist Belle Fligelman Winestone, who were instrumental in securing the right of women to vote in Montana and California, respectively; Jessica Peixotto, who

Florence Prag Kahn was the first Jewish woman to sit in the U.S. Congress. Widowed in 1924, she was elected to replace her husband as a Republican U.S. representative from California. She served until 1937.  
(Library of Congress)



received a PhD at the turn of the century and in 1918 became first female full professor at the University of California-Los Angeles.

The West offered unprecedented opportunity to Jews, and Jewish women were quick to take advantage of new opportunities. Given their often relatively small numbers within western communities, their influence was significant, and they pushed public boundaries in ways their eastern counterparts often did not. Many Jewish women and men arrived in the West just as settlements were being founded or soon after, easing their social, political, and social integration. They were often welcomed as partners in building a new social order. Yet even as they were part of the larger western community, on the whole early western Jewish women retained their distinctive religious and ethnic times. Jewish women were not only activists who contributed to the West's overall development, but they also contributed fundamentally to developing and maintaining Jewish communal life and played an especially critical role in sustaining Jewish identity. The migration of Jewish women to western communities often heralded the organization of Jewish institutions. Most western Jewish communities featured Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Societies, which were dedicated to charitable projects, and many women, such as Therese Marx Ferrin in Arizona and Bertha Frank Meyers in Wyoming, were instrumental in building synagogues and the fund-raising apparatus to carry on these religious institutions. They played a pivotal part in sustaining and transmitting Judaism both in their roles within the home and in their support of synagogues, religious schools, and Jewish and general philanthropic endeavors. As active community builders in a variety of domestic roles in 19th-century American frontier settlements, Jewish women in the West were poised to take advantage of unprecedented opportunities in a new and dynamic region, where they had new political rights, greater freedom, and options that were not yet always available elsewhere in the country.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abrams, Jeanne. 2006. *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the West*. New York: New York University Press.
- Kahn, Ava F., ed. 2002. *Jewish Life in the American West*. Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage.
- Toll, William. 1998. "Pioneer Jewish Men and Women of the American West." In *Creating American Jews: Conversations about Identity*, edited by Karen S. Mittleman. Philadelphia: National Museum of American Jewish History.

## Great American Jewish Thinkers and Their Attitudes toward Diaspora

*S. Daniel Breslauer*

---

American Jewish thinkers from colonial times through the present, whether Zionist or non-Zionist, have sought to understand their lives in the Diaspora and their relationship to the land of Israel as an ideal, to the condition of Jews throughout the world, and, since the late 19th century, to the idea of an independent Jewish state, expressing their views in often controversial and emotional ways precisely because they affirmed the Diaspora as a positive factor in Jewish existence. Much of the writing concerning views of the Diaspora focuses on American Zionism and its distinctiveness from conventional Zionism (Cohen 1975; Ursofsky 1975; Cohen and Liebman 1990). Almost unanimously, American Jews "reject the Israeli notions of exile" and find the traditional Zionist view of Diaspora life to be "precarious, distorted, and incomplete" unacceptable (Cohen and Liebman 1990, 93). Differences among views have been associated with the major religious movements in American Judaism—the Reform movement that came to prominence in the 19th century; the Conservative movement and the Orthodox movement, both of which developed in the beginning of the 20th century; and the Reconstructionist movement, which although initiated in the beginning of the 20th century grew to fruition only in the latter half of it. More recently the idea of Diaspora or exile has been advanced as a central motif in human self-understanding and postmodern theories of identity (see the discussion in Anderson 1983 and Biale et al. 1998). Despite this diversity, the vast majority of American thinkers affirmed the value of the Jewish Diaspora. From the earliest Jewish leaders in the New World through contemporary American Jewish thinkers life in the Diaspora generally, and in the American Diaspora in particular, has been affirmed as an integral part of Jewish existence. During the colonial period through the American Civil War, the general view espoused considered Diaspora Judaism a valid replacement for the ancient Israel-centered faith, as American Jewish leaders became impatient with the "Palestinian messengers" in America (Baron 1971, 158–266). American Jews hailed America as a new Zion, and their places of worship as a new Jerusalem. This trend has continued and, especially

among Reform Jewish thinkers, has found recent proponents. Later generations of Jewish thinkers, including Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist, tempered this positive view of Diaspora with an acknowledgment of the importance of the land of Israel and the historical memories of the Jewish people. American Jews became reluctant to reject Zionism after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Even so, an affirmation of Zionism was usually combined with a declaration of appreciation, loyalty, and validation for Jewish life outside the land of Israel and particularly for the Diaspora Jewish community within the United States. This legitimation of the Diaspora took many forms. Some thinkers emphasized the creativity of Jews in the Diaspora; others saluted the international perspective and universalism cultivated by those living outside Israel, and still others considered landlessness a political benefit for the Jewish people. Finally, more recent thinkers have claimed to find in the sense of exile and alienation cultivated by Diaspora living an expression of an existential reality. All modern people can be considered in exile and displaced persons. As such, the Jew in Diaspora symbolizes the marginalization necessary for true moral perspectives. This view has evoked criticism.

Emma Lazarus (1849–1887), best known for her poem “The New Colossus,” which is inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty, wrote a poem on the Jewish New Year celebration of 1882 in which she envisioned the Jewish Diaspora flowing in two directions—homeward toward Zion and westward toward the United States (Lazarus 1882, 51–52). Lazarus’s writings and activism emphasized both of these views of the Jewish dispersion. She celebrated the new life Jews were building in the New World. She rejected Longfellow’s poem concerning the “dead” Jews in the Newport Jewish cemetery and imagined a creative, positive future for American Jewry. She also considered the Jewish Diaspora to be a community of interrelated people for whom the more prosperous (those in the United States, for example)



Portrait of Jewish American poet, essayist,  
and proto-Zionist Emma Lazarus.  
(Library of Congress)

had responsibility for those undergoing suffering (those in Russia, for example). She wrote poems and prose epistles and met with European leaders to advocate improving the condition of Jews, creating a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, and facilitating immigration to the United States. These themes recur throughout the history of American Jewish thinking about Diaspora.

Reform thinkers in the 19th century, like Max Lilienthal (1815–1882); Isaac Mayer Wise (1819–1900), who was credited with “founding” American Reform Judaism and creating its central institutions; and Max Kohler (1843–1926), who succeeded Isaac Meyer Wise as president of the Reform rabbinical seminary, Hebrew Union College, claimed that America was the new Zion because the soul of Judaism was spiritual not nationalistic. These thinkers were resolutely anti-Zionist and advocated Diaspora Judaism as the sole expression of true Judaic values (see the citations in Plaut 1965). Later Reform thinkers modified this view. By the 1970s, Reform Jews had accepted Zionism while still maintaining a positive affirmation of the creativity of the Jewish Diaspora in America. Rabbi Eugene Borowitz (b. 1924) provides a good example of contemporary Reform Jewish thinking about the Diaspora and Zionism. Borowitz, like Lazarus, recognizes the need for a Jewish home to which refugees from oppression can turn. He sees God’s saving hand in the success of the Jewish state against its enemies. Nevertheless, he claims that the true creativity of Judaism lies in the Diaspora. Only the covenant with God provides Jews with their religious identity, and the most energetic and legitimate expression of that covenant is being carried out by the Jews living outside the Land of Israel. The Diaspora is typified by confident survival; separate, holy living as expressed by carrying out God’s commandments; and service to humanity (Borowitz 1975). Support for the Jews living in Israel represents one way Diaspora Jews fulfill their obligations to other Jews, but other duties also serve this purpose. Borowitz emphasizes the desirability of a Jewish Diaspora as part of the divine plan.

Unlike the Reform movement in American Judaism, the Conservative movement and the closely related Reconstructionist movement (begun by Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, 1881–1983, and breaking from the Conservative movement when it established its own seminary in 1968) maintained the centrality of the Land of Israel and the Zionist ideal almost from its inception. Despite differences of perspective, thinkers from this movement affirmed the necessity for and importance of a Jewish state in Israel. These thinkers also agreed that a strong and creative Jewish Diaspora was also essential for the survival of the Jewish people. The differences between Conservative Jewish thinkers, however, were not inconsequential. Comparing the thinking of Mordecai Kaplan and Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972) shows those differences.

Kaplan maintained that the Jewish people had evolved a religion of “ethical nationhood”—an idea he expressed in his earliest writings but developed most fully in a book devoted to it exclusively (Kaplan 1970). Kaplan argued that modern Jews have lost their sense of communal unity. Because they can choose their beliefs, practices, and expressions of Jewish identity, Jews no longer recognize their communal responsibilities. In the past, common behavioral and ideological norms unified all Jews. Kaplan believed modernity had destroyed that type of unity. Jews needed to

construct a new bond to unite the disparate individuals of modern times. He thought involvement in the affairs of the Jewish state would create such a bond and provide a locus of common concern that Jews living in that state or outside it would share.

Because Kaplan considered American democracy the hallmark of modernity he also emphasized that this new Jewish unity would be marked by democratic inclusiveness. He called for a world Jewish organization involving all Jews, wherever they lived, in the policies of the Jewish state. Diaspora Jews need to cultivate a sense of awareness of their unity and spiritual identity with each other and with Jews in Israel. Creating a democratic polity that gives voice both to those within and outside Israel will stimulate that awareness. Diaspora is a fact of Jewish existence with which the State of Israel must reckon. The creation of a transnational constitution for a transnational unity would be an example of an ideal of international cooperation that Jews could give to humanity—it would be a lesson for non-Jews no less than Jews.

Abraham Heschel agreed with Kaplan that the relation of Diaspora Jews to those in Israel is a model all nations could use (Heschel 1967). For Heschel, however, Diaspora Judaism provides a spiritual unity and sense of communal responsibility rather than political identity. He writes of Israel as the trunk of a tree whose branches are the Diaspora—just as the trunk will die if the branches wither, so, too, the Jews of Israel need the Jews of the dispersion. Although Israel satisfies the needs of the Jewish community and polity, Judaism as cultivated within and outside Israel answers the needs of the individual. Heschel rejects political identity as the basis of Jewish unity and speaks of “dual residence” rather than “dual citizenship.” Jews may reside in more than one place; their political affiliation is less central than their



Abraham Heschel, 20th-century Jewish theologian. (Library of Congress)

acceptance of responsibility for all other Jews. This universal concern for all Jews stimulates what he calls “new concepts in international relations”—based on shared responsibility despite different political affiliations (Heschel 1967, 210).

A more recent look at Diaspora sees it in existential terms. Zionism was wrong to reject Diaspora Judaism because creative and vibrant Jewish identities flourished in exile (see Boyarin 1992). Many writers identify modernity with a sense of alienation, marginality, and exile. When, as Michael Gluzman (1998, 235) points out, “exile turned into an emblem of modernism,” the Jew became the ideal representative of the modern condition. From this perspective, Jews have an advantage in the world created in the late 20th century: they have a model by which to understand and cope with spiritual dislocation. Other writers, however, reject this valorization of Diaspora because traditionally Jews look upon exile as an evil that will be eventually be overcome (Galinsky 1998). The debate between these two views suggests the importance of Diaspora as a modern concept and its tension with traditional Jewish conceptions of exile.

### Selected Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict. 1983 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.
- Baron, Salo. 1971. *Steeled by Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Borowitz, Eugene B. 1975. “The Jewish People Concept as It Affects Jewish Life in the Diaspora.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 12: 553–586.
- Boyarin, Jonathan. 1992. *Storm from Paradise: The Politics of Jewish Memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cohen, Naomi W. 1975. *American Jews and the Zionist Idea*. New York: Ktav.
- Cohen, Steven M., and Charles S. Liebman. 1990. *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israel and American Experiences*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Galchinsky, Michael. 1998. “Scattered Seeds: A Dialogue of Diasporas.” In *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, edited by David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susan Heschel, 185–211. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gluzman, Michael. 1998. “Modernism and Exile: A View from the Margins.” In *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, edited by David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susan Heschel Berkeley, 231–253. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. 1967. *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.
- Kaplan, Mordecai Menahem. 1970. *The Religion of Ethical Nationhood: Judaism's Contribution to World Peace*. New York: Macmillan Company.
- Lazarus, Emma. 1882. *Songs of a Semite: The Dance to Death and Other Poems*. Repr. Upper Saddle River, NJ: The Gregg Press, 1970.
- Plaut, W. Gunther. 1965. *The Growth of Reform Judaism: American and European Sources until 1948*. New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism.
- Urofsky, Melvin I. 1975. *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor.

# The Jewish Diaspora in America: Social Integration, Political Liberalism, and Attachment to Homeland

*Uzi Rebhun*

---

The United States accounts for approximately two-thirds of contemporary Diaspora Jewry. Its Jewish community had already become a paramount demographic pillar in the late 19th and early 20th centuries owing to the mass immigration of East European Jews into the country. After overcoming various social barriers, these immigrants, and especially their descendants, experienced unprecedented upward mobility and successfully integrated into the social mainstream. Today, Jews in the United States are highly concentrated in the upper strata of the socio-economic ladder. They hold key positions in the political arena and are salient in the national media and major cultural industries. Thus, they have significantly contributed to the greatness of this country (Lipset and Raab 1995).

These processes of integration and mobility have encouraged certain general characteristics among the Jews, such as an emphasis on self-fulfillment, individualism, and materialism as well as a distancing from communal commitments. Moreover, the environment in which Jews operate, including schools, workplaces, residential neighborhoods, and places of entertainment, is composed of people of different faiths. Such intensive interactions are likely to involve informal social ties that can develop into intimate or even formal familial relationships.

As they attempt to integrate into the local structural mainstream, many Jews wish to maintain distinctive ethnic and religious behaviors. This apparent tension affects various domains of the multifaceted structure of Jewish identification. An important component most relevant to the discussion of Jewish Diasporism is the relationship to the “homeland,” namely Israel. Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has constituted a major anchor of social, cultural, and political connection and an important base for Jewish communal life in the United States. Not only is it seen as a component of institutional affiliation, but it is often conceptualized as a distinct measure of Zionism and “Israeliness.” Attachment to Israel further involves the aspect of dual commitment to place of residence and country of ancestry.

## A Scientific Context

Because of large-scale labor migration and other types of international movements, ethnonational Diasporas are growing elements in many countries, not only in the West, but also in such labor migration countries as the Persian Gulf states, a factor likely to continue into the early 21st century. Not only is the number of Diasporas increasing, but members of ethnic minorities are also experiencing cultural revival in their host countries, strengthening communal activities, and expanding political and financial ties to their homeland. Host countries do not demand full assimilation

and are today more open and sympathetic toward close mutual relationships between ethnic minorities and their countries of origin. The increasing legitimacy given by homelands to their Diasporas is likely to result in a more equal loyalty and relationships between the different segments of a given people (Sheffer 2001).

In the second context, that of developments in the role of ethnicity and religiosity among white Americans, different perceptions are to be found, ranging from assimilation to cultural revival. Evidence in support of the former school of thought, which largely coincides with the classical models of conformity and melting pot, consists of the reduced structural and cultural cohesion in the modern achievement-oriented social environment of the United States. This includes, inter alia, upward social mobility among different white ethnics, residential proximity of people with different faiths, large-scale intermarriage, the adoption of local fashions and tastes, and major holidays becoming part of the national civilian culture. A counterargument posits the persistence of ethnocultural cohesion. Ethnicity is strongly anchored in American society; numerous social and political institutions serve specific groups, and different ethnic groups are still characterized by significant distinctions regarding many structural attributes. Ethnicity is a functional element for survival needs and a structural framework providing opportunities for members of a given group.

In a somewhat moderate version of assimilation, Herbert Gans discusses symbolic ethnicity and religiosity. According to this perception, the new ethnic behaviors and affiliations, though more publicly visible than earlier ones, are nonetheless merely symbolic expressions of concern with group consciousness. Among white Americans, these forms of identification reflect aspirations for self-fulfillment but lack structural cohesion and are detached from the practice of an ongoing ethnoreligious culture. Hence, they neither demand strong commitment nor do they penetrate everyday lifestyles. Beside rites-of-passage events and home-centered ceremonies through family dinners on major holidays, this symbolic identification includes strengthening ties to an "old country" and making pilgrimage to religious sites. Similarly, according to Matthew F. Jacobson in his monograph *Special Sorrows* (1995), occasional ethnoreligious expressions among people of Diasporic nationalism are likely to be translated into political activism during times of unrest overseas.

The third context is largely embodied in the terms "exile" and "Diaspora," which are used alternatively to refer to Jews who live outside the State of Israel. Normally, exile has a negative connotation; it suggests displacement from a homeland, residence under a foreign government, and social and economic hardship. Exile is a negative existence as against the unequivocal ideal of Zion. By contrast, the term "Diaspora" is used to express a more neutral perception, or even sympathy, to Jewish existence outside its sovereign state.

During the British Mandate and in the first years after the foundation of Israel, many Israelis held an assertive attitude toward negating the exile and were hostile to stories of Jewish success in America. Today, many Israelis still view the Diaspora as a "reflection of Jewish weakness [and of] an unhealthy economic and social life," seeing the unprecedentedly high "figures of assimilation and intermarriage among America Jews as proof of the failure of Jewish life in the Diaspora" (Beker 2000).

Nevertheless, individualism and materialism are important in modern society, and with the expanding phenomenon of emigration from Israel there is more openness and tolerance toward the Jewish Diaspora today. On the other hand, the opposite extreme attitudes may also be found among Diaspora Jews. Given the socioeconomic achievements of American Jews, Jacob Neusner has argued that rather than Israel, America is the Jews' Promised Land. Similarly, the non-Jewish British historian Paul Johnson observed "that the expansion and consolidation of United States Jewry in modern times was as important in Jewish history as the creation of Israel itself; in some ways more important" (as cited in Beker August 21, 2000). As Beker summarizes this view, Israel provides the Jewish people with political sovereignty and serves as a home for communities at risk; yet, from a historical perspective, Jews have never been so influential in shaping the policies of the world's greatest superpower.

Most Jews, both in Israel and in the United States, would probably locate themselves somewhere between these extremes of the "Israel-Diaspora" continuum. In this regard, it should be noted that an overwhelming majority (96 percent) of Israelis feel a sense of connection to their fellow Jews around the world. Likewise, about two-thirds of Israelis recognize the importance of Diaspora Jews for the survival of Israel, and an even larger number share the "reciprocal proposition that the Jewish people in the Diaspora would not be able to survive without the existence of the State of Israel" (Levy et al. 1997). A recent survey among American Jews reveals that slightly more than half agreed to the statement according to which Israel is essential for Jewish life in America, and three-quarters rejected the argument that Israel no longer needs the philanthropy of American Jews (Cohen 1999).

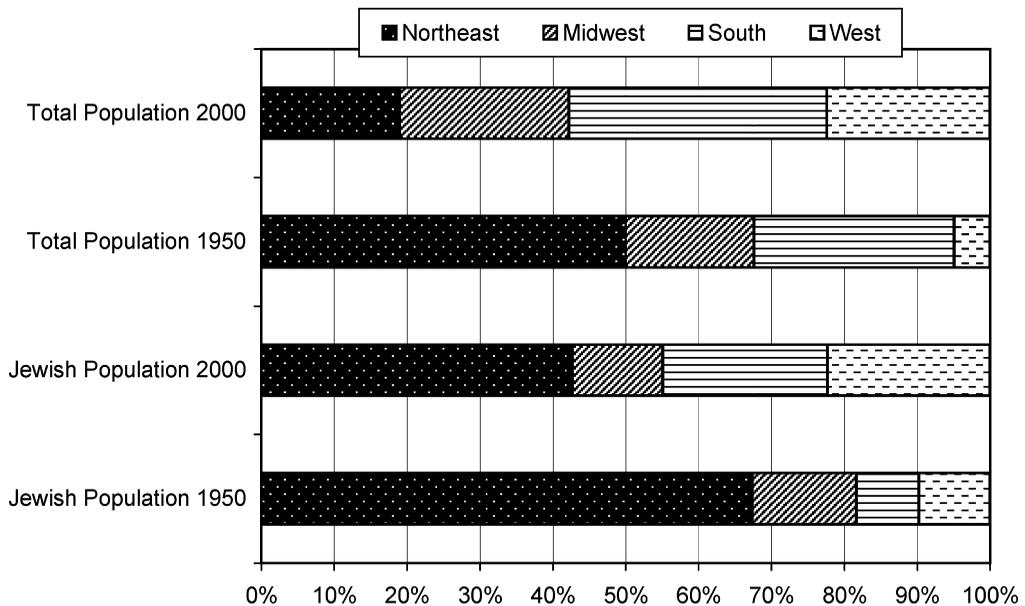
## Socioeconomic Mobility and Family Patterns

### Geographic Mobility and Dispersion

Around the middle of the 20th century, well after the termination of the mass immigration to the United States, the Jews were still heavily concentrated in the northeastern part of the country; approximately two-thirds of the Jewish population lived in the Northeast, although the Northeast as a whole represented slightly more than one-quarter of the total American population (Figure 1). The Midwest was the second preferred area of settlement: 14 percent of America's Jews lived in the Midwest, although the Midwest population was 29 percent of the total U.S. population. A relatively small proportion of Jews lived in the South (8 percent) and the West (9 percent); these areas represented 31 percent and 14 percent of the overall U.S. population, respectively. At this stage, Jews began to move westward, but not to the same extent as did the non-Jewish population.

This movement developed primarily during the second half of the 20th century. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Northeast began to lose something of its attractiveness for the Jews, and this tendency accelerated over the next three decades until, by 2000, only 43 percent of the total Jewish population was to be found in the Northeast. True, among the overall American population the percentage of those

**Figure 1** Distribution of Jewish and Total Population in the United States by Region, 1950 and 2000



living in the Northeast also declined, but that decrease was much more moderate. During the period 1950–2000, the proportion of Jews living in the Midwest decreased by about one-fifth to 12 percent. By contrast, the proportion of the Jewish population in the South and the West grew by a factor of two and a half. Whereas in 1950, in these two regions together lived only 18 percent of the Jewish population of the United States, by 2000 already 45 percent of the Jews were concentrated there and were equally divided between the two regions. Although non-Jews also move within the country, recently the Jewish pace of movement has been greater. This has resulted in the growing similarity of their geographical distribution to that of the American population in general. The index of dissimilarity between the geographical distribution of Jews and that of the total American population, indicating the percentage of people from one group that would need to alter their place of residence in order to resemble the geographic dispersion of the second group, reached a high of 41 percent in 1950 and has been constantly decreasing, to 37 percent in 1970 and 24 percent in 2000.

Alongside these changes in geographic distribution, the Jewish population has become more widely dispersed. A substantial portion of the growth of Jewish population during the 1940s and 1950s occurred outside the traditional regions of Jewish settlement. Concomitantly, the proportion of Jews living in large metropolitan areas declined. Hence, today one finds a larger number of concentrations of Jewish population, but each one contains a smaller number of Jews.

The decline in Jewish population density is further reflected in the subjective evaluations by Jews of the ethnoreligious character of their neighborhoods (Figure 2). In 1970, some two-thirds of all Jews in the United States said that they lived in

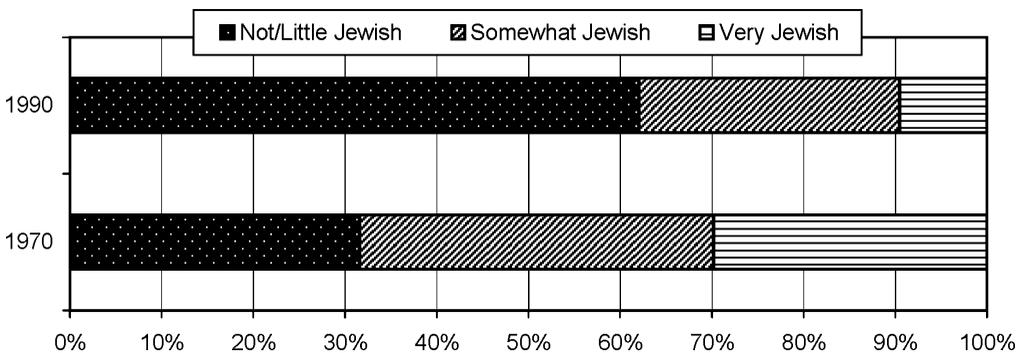
neighborhoods that were “somewhat” or “very” Jewish, whereas in 1990 this was true for only 38 percent. This tendency away from Jewish residential clustering consistently appears from the three complementary perspectives of intergenerational change, as seen in the variations between different generational cohorts at a given time; periodic change, as seen in the differences between similar generational groups at different points of time; and life-cycle change, as the same cohort passes from one stage of life to the next. Overall, through different types of migration and dispersion, Jews have consistently enhanced their physical proximity to the non-Jewish population. This indicates a spatial integration of Jews within the host society that may often be a preliminary stage to different types of assimilation.

Educational Achievement, Occupational Composition, and Income

The extraordinary social and economic mobility of Jews was abetted by the fact that achieved, rather than ascribed, characteristics determine the status of the individual in modern American society, and this is coupled with the recognition of education as a central social value. Perhaps more than any other ethnic or religious group in the United States, the Jews have exploited their civil freedom and economic opportunities to become concentrated within the upper layers of the educational and professional structure (Lipset and Raab 1995). The Jews are the group with the highest educational level in the United States today, and among the outstanding groups in the history of the world.

Substantial differences in the education level of Jews and Americans in general were already evident in the mid-20th century (Table 3). More than twice as many Jews as non-Jews aged 25 and over were college graduates (17 percent and 7 percent, respectively). These differences were maintained in subsequent years, so that in 1970 one-third of Jews had college degrees versus 11 percent among the overall white population. In 2000 this proportion rose to 62 percent and 26 percent, respectively. The differences in terms of those with advanced academic degrees are even more striking. Overall, even though both Jews and the overall white population have raised their educational levels, over the past three decades the pace of

Figure 2 Jewish Character of Residential Neighborhoods: American Jews, 1970 and 1990



**Table 3 Percentage with Academic Education Among Jews and Total Whites Aged 25 Years and Older, 1957, 1970, and 2000**

Year	Jewish Population	Total White Population	Ratio of Jews to Whites
1957 <sup>a</sup>	17.3	7.0	2.42
1970 <sup>b</sup>	32.9	11.3	2.91
2000 <sup>c</sup>	62.2	26.1	2.38

<sup>a</sup>Goldstein 1969, 1981.

<sup>b</sup>For Jews, the authors' own data analysis of the 1970–1971 NJPS; for total white population, Goldstein 1981.

<sup>c</sup>For Jews, the authors' own data analysis of the 2000–2001 NJPS; for total white population, U.S. Census Bureau: American FactFinder.

employed in white collar jobs (including professional, managerial, and clerical and sales positions), whereas the corresponding percentage among all American men was only 35 percent. By 1970, the proportion in these positions among both subgroups had increased to 89 percent and 42 percent, respectively. Since then the proportion of white collar workers among Jewish men remained stable, but among all employed white men it continued to increase to slightly more than half in 2000. The recent tendencies among Jews may indicate an increase in the number of craft-people and service workers, deriving either from changing economic opportunities or changing value systems and life styles. However, within the broad category of white collar workers, the gap between Jews and non-Jews in the percentage of professionals has increased, while the percentage of those employed in managerial positions has converged. Overall, the ratio of Jews to total population in white collar occupations declined from 2.18 in 1957 to 2.12 in 1970, and down to 1.74 in 2000. Among women, differences between Jews and total whites also declined; the respective ratios were 1.51, 1.42, and 1.22 (Table 4).

In accordance with the different employment structures of Jews and (non-Hispanic) whites, the income level of Jews is higher. Nevertheless, the increase in higher education among total whites and the decrease in differences in occupational composition have reduced the Jewish income advantage. The difference in median real income (before taxes) between Jewish households and urban, non-Hispanic white households diminished by nearly half—from \$15,748 in 1969 to \$8,570 in 1989 (Walters and Wilder 1997). The decrease in the income advantage of Jews was observed in different types of households, according to age, gender, and number of working members in the household. This tendency of narrowing income gaps between Jews and non-Jews continued over the last decade of the 20th century from a 34 percent difference in the median income of Jews and all U.S. households in 1990 to a 29 percent difference in 2000 (Kotler-Berkowitz et al. 2003).

The occupational structure of the Jews indicates absolute freedom in the choice of occupation and kinds of economic activity. The tendency toward less ethnic con-

change was greater among total whites, thereby narrowing somewhat the differentials between the two subpopulations. It should be noted that both Jewish men and women participate in this process, albeit the pace of change was far more rapid among the latter, thus reducing the differences in level of education by gender among American Jews.

Education is closely related to occupation. Thus, it is not surprising to find a considerable concentration of Jews in the upper strata of the employment hierarchy (Table 4). Already in the late 1950s slightly more than three-quarters of Jewish men were

centration and greater heterogeneity among members of the second and third generation of Jewish immigrants turned again into concentration because “the Jews begin to reach the upper limit of occupational mobility relatively early” (Glazer 1958, 146). These patterns of concentration may distinguish Jews from other Americans by a large measure of structural unity. As Goldscheider and Zuckerman argue in *The Transformation of the Jews* (5), this profile not only enhances the interaction of Jews with one another, but it also makes them partners in political goals, economic interests, social values, and cultural styles, which may strengthen Jewish cohesion. Likewise, there has been a reduction in the percentage of Jewish households with a low income, which may facilitate a greater degree of communal involvement (Walters and Wilder 1997). Alternatively, a more concerned perception will focus on the question of what will

happen at the end of this social mobility. The tendency toward greater socioeconomic homogeneity between Jews and the total population reduces the relative advantage of the former, and hence their status and power in various social and political arenas. This may also lead to a certain degree of economic uncertainty, with all the implications that may have on organizational involvement and contributions to Jewish causes. One ought to follow the interrelationships between the human resources and relative economic wealth of the Jews and their group identification, while also taking note of the fluid macro conditions in the American economy.

### Interfaith Marriage

An inevitable result of structural integration is amalgamation, that is, marital assimilation. The frequency of mixed marriage is a central test of the degree of cultural and spiritual integration between the ethnoreligious components of a given society. Because marriage is an enduring and extremely intimate phenomenon, mixed marriages are an excellent expression of social distance enabling assessment of social boundaries between subpopulations as well as the willingness of

**Table 4 Percentage in White-Collar Occupations among Jews and Total Whites Aged 25 Years and Older by Sex, 1957, 1970, and 2000**

Year	Jewish Population	Total White Population	Ratio of Jews to Whites
1957 <sup>a</sup>			
Men	77.5	35.5	2.18
Professionals	(20.3)	(9.9)	(2.05)
Women	82.7	54.9	1.51
Professionals	(15.5)	(12.2)	(1.27)
1970 <sup>b</sup>			
Men	89.2	42.0	2.12
Professionals	(31.7)	(15.0)	(2.11)
Women	92.8	65.1	1.42
Professionals	(30.8)	(16.3)	(1.89)
2000 <sup>c</sup>			
Men	89.4	51.3	1.74
Professionals	(53.0)	(19.8)	(2.67)
Women	92.3	75.6	1.22
Professionals	(51.4)	(28.5)	(1.80)

<sup>a</sup>Source: Goldstein 1969. Population aged 18 years and older; total population includes nonwhites.

<sup>b</sup>Source: For Jews, the author's data analysis of the 1970–1971 NJPS; for total white population, Goldstein 1981. Total white population includes persons aged 16 years and older.

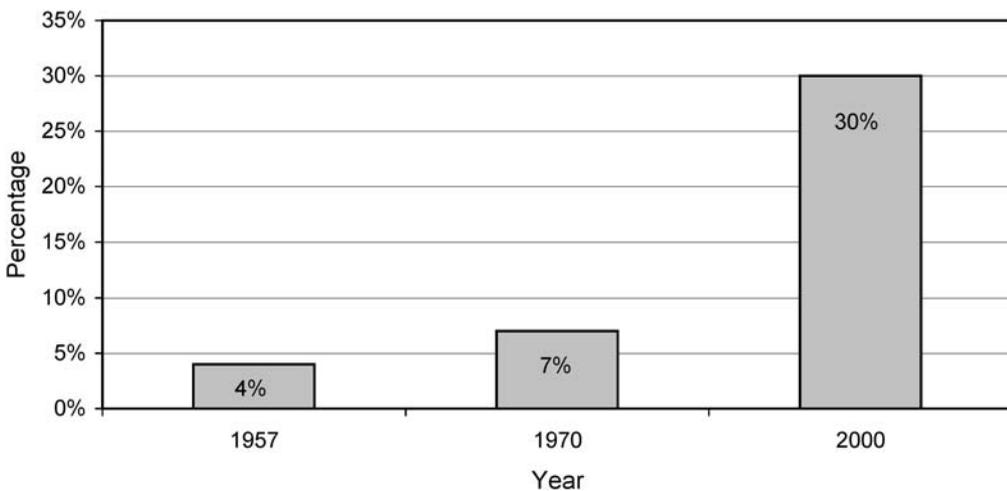
<sup>c</sup>Source: Chiswick 2005.

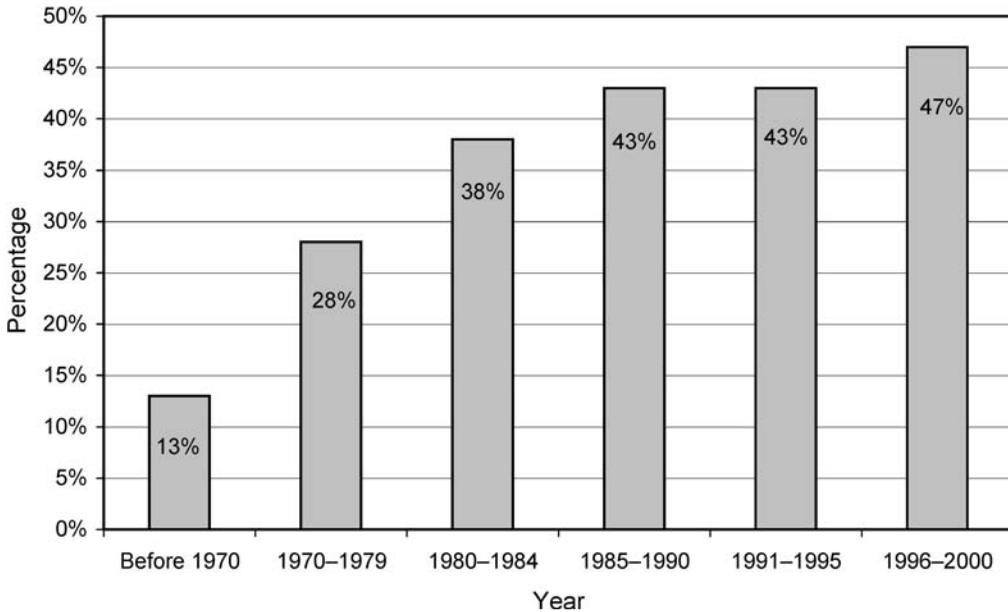
members of a group and those outside it to accept one another in long-term and equal relationships.

Until the middle of the 20th century, mixed marriage was a rare phenomenon among American Jews. The involvement and integration of Jews within the general society did not ipso facto involve assimilation. Only some 4 percent of all Jews who were married in 1957 had a spouse who was not born Jewish and had not converted to Judaism. By 1970, this rate had increased to about 7 percent. However, this average reflects very different patterns according to marriage cohort, varying from 2 percent among those who married during the first quarter of the century, to a maximum of more than one-fifth among those who had married during the preceding five years, that is, 1965–1970. Jewish heterogamy increased over the next three decades, reaching an overall level of 31 percent of all currently married Jews in 2000 (Figure 3). Again, there is a distinct difference depending on year of marriage (Figure 4): intermarriage rates increased from 13 percent among those married before 1970 to as high as 47 percent of those married in 1996–2001 (Kotler-Berkowitz et al. 2003). This suggests that marriage to people of a different faith had become the norm rather than the exception, representing the abandonment of a long history of endogamous marriage among Jews.

The increase in mixed marriages reflects social and spiritual changes among American Jews, which were part of a wider all-American phenomenon. These include, among other things, an increase in secularism and a weakening of religious commitment; an increasing emphasis on individualism, including the individual freedom in the choice of a marriage partner; the feasibility of civil marriage; and the increasingly salient role of all women in Western society, which has greatly increased the tendency of Jewish women to intermarry and contributed disproportionately to the overall growth of this phenomenon among American Jews. From a demographic-structural viewpoint, the mid-20th century was characterized by great fluctuations in birthrates, from a low during the late 1930s and early 1940s to

**Figure 3 Jewish Intermarriage in the United States, 1957, 1970, and 2000**



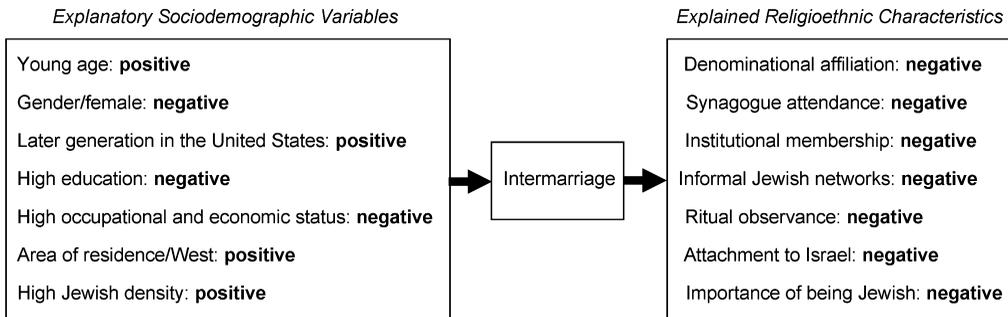
**Figure 4 Jewish Inter-marriage in the United States by Year of Marriage**

the subsequent postwar baby boom. Those born during these years reached marriageable age during the past three decades and, as bridegrooms are on the average several years older than brides, this created a gender imbalance in the Jewish marriage market.

Several individual characteristics also constitute determinants of endogamous versus mixed marriage (Figure 5). The increase in the number of mixed marriages among the later marriage cohorts corresponds to the growing tendency toward exogamy among young people, which are also found in later generations in the United States. Despite the growing tendency of Jewish women toward mixed marriages, at the close of the 20th century the overall Jewish population was still characterized by a lower rate of mixed marriage among women than among men. All other things being equal, the high socioeconomic status of belonging to a professional occupation and having high income reduces the probability of mixed marriage. The arrival of a large number of Jews at the highest social and economic levels increases the frequency of contacts among Jews and creates an amenable environment for various kinds of social contacts, including marriage. The high educational and professional profiles of increasing numbers of Jews also influence the similarity of worldviews and attitudes in the political and cultural realm, as well as types of preferred leisure activities, which may modify the levels of mixed marriage.

Differences in marriage patterns also exist in relation to geographic characteristics. The intermarriage rate in the West is almost twice as high as in the Northeast. Surprisingly, it has recently become clear that there is a tendency toward higher rates of mixed marriage in places with high Jewish density (Figure 5). This somewhat unexpected finding can be explained by the fact that the largest concentrations of

**Figure 5 A Schematic Presentation of the Direction of Factors Involved in the Sociodemographic Causes and Religioethnic Consequences of Jewish Mixed Marriage in the United States**



Source: Adapted from Rebhun and DellaPergola 1998; Rebhun 1999.

Jews are also the main centers of large non-Jewish populations, which are to an increasing extent the metropolises of the West and are no longer the highly concentrated urban areas of traditional Jewish settlement, such as New York. And even within these cities of traditional settlement themselves, the Jewish population is far more scattered than it was in the past, a situation that increases the intensity of social contact between Jews and non-Jews. Moreover, the recently developed areas of the western United States are characterized by cultural diversity and supportive, progressive attitudes toward social mixing and unions between people of different origins.

The high rate of mixed marriage among Jews reflects successful integration and acceptance by the majority society. It also carries definite implications for group continuity. From a demographic-quantitative perspective, mixed marriage seemingly does not have a direct impact on the size of the Jewish population: the number of Jews leaving Judaism is very similar to the number of those joining it. Nevertheless, it does have long-term effects, as only about one-third of the offspring of the mixed couples are raised as Jews, a far lower number than is necessary for generational replacement of the Jewish side. Moreover, from a cultural-qualitative perspective, mixed marriages weaken the connection through reduced communal involvement and group values. Along a wide spectrum of identificational patterns, whether religious observance, institutional affiliation, or involvement in informal Jewish social networks, it is clear that mixed marriage erodes Jewish cohesion (Figure 5).

## American Jewish Liberalism

### Explanations of Jewish Liberalism

The spectrum of worldviews and ideologies found in the United States today regarding political, social, and economic issues may be classified along a continuum ranging from liberalism to conservatism. Each outlook, liberal or conservative, has in turn moderate and radical variants, and in the middle are those who define themselves as middle of the road. Ideology, as an attitudinal structure, serves to interpret and construct political reality.

Traditionally, Jews played an active and even outstanding role in the leadership of liberal and socialist movements and parties in the United States. A significant portion of them adhered to a liberal political ideology, or one leaning toward the socialist Left. The deep roots of Jewish liberalism, and its part in the Jewish self-definition, extends throughout the entire 20th century. Although there is a broad consensus regarding the liberal profile of most of the Jews, social scientists offer a variety of interpretations for this phenomenon. One theory explains it in terms of a historical development, in that the contents of this ideology served the Jews well, in the practical sense (Cohen 1958; Walzer 1986). From the time of the French Revolution, Jews have found their allies in liberal circles, as they did in circles of the radical socialist Left that developed from the end of the 19th century both in Europe and the United States. Jews understood that they could advance in societies with liberal regimes, in which social and economic mobility was determined by achievement, and discrimination was legally forbidden. Classical liberalism emphasized the principle of individualism that legitimized the rights of minorities, including the Jews, and encouraged their full integration within local society. Because liberalism is also at the center of the American ethos, loyalty to its principles provides Jews with the means for proving their full identification with the United States.

A second theory sees the source of Jewish liberalism in Judaism's religious values. Three basic principles connect religion with the social agenda: the study of Torah that leads to intellectualism, universalism and tolerance; charity (*tzedakah*) as a Jewish imperative that brings in its wake support for the welfare state, rights of minorities, and progressive taxation; and a this-worldly emphasis, expressed in a dynamic approach that fosters activism and the desire to shape and improve society (Fuchs 1956). More generally, Jewish values and the religious characteristics of its communal life are strong predictors of Jewish liberalism (Legge 1995). The third explanation (first suggested in 1960) is sociological, and it suggests that the source of Jewish liberalism lies in the dissonance between the Jews' high socioeconomic attainments and the limited degree of their social acceptance (Lipset 1960). This lack of consistency in Jewish status creates a feeling of marginality that is translated into support for liberal and even radical movements that challenge the social order and the cultural establishment that oppresses them. Yet a fourth theory concerning the political socialization of the Jews claims the transmission from one generation to another of the pro-liberal historical lesson; "We propose that the contemporary ideology of Jewish elites is a product of political socialization. Jewish liberalism is part of a family of liberalism that developed in response to European conditions. The tradition persists despite the changes that have taken place in American society in recent years" (Lerner et al. 1989, 331). The liberal tradition is thus transmitted from one generation to another through the institution of the family, which functions as the primary agent of socialization. If the elites, whose socioeconomic status gives them interests that on occasion contradict the liberal outlook, nevertheless identify with it, all the more so for other social classes.

The fifth theory, the sociocultural one, interprets liberalism as the reaction of Jews who desire the option of education and modernity but reject its implications (Liebman 1973). The source of Jewish liberalism lies in the values of those Jews who,

while alienated from the religious tradition, find themselves interacting with other Jews, and this interaction plays an important role in their liberalism. The Jewish commitment is not toward liberalism, which has a message that is essentially one of internationalism, welfare society policy, and civil liberties, but toward enlightenment and the optimistic belief that human reason can create a good and progressive society that does not grant religion a role in the decisions of the state. Yet another theory sketches a framework of political behavior based on a perception of Jewish political interests (Medding 1977). These include both micro-political interests, namely of survival (in the case of American Jews, this means primarily the physical existence of the State of Israel), full participation in social life, religious freedom and patterns of particularist-group organization, and economic interests matching their occupational structure as well as macro-political interests, namely those relating to issues of legislation and organization of the social order in such a way as to allow the realization of the micro-political interests and guarantee their continuity.

### Trends in Political Orientation and Voting Patterns

How did the liberal ideology of American Jews find expression in political action and voting patterns in presidential elections? The political preferences of American Jews during the 20th century were fashioned largely by developments within the American political scene (Rosenberg and Howe 1976). It should be noted that Jews are a very politically aware group, and their rate of participation in presidential elections (80 percent) is much higher than that of the general population (50 percent). Thus the total number of Jewish voters comes to about 4 percent of the total electorate, even though their proportion in the overall population is less than 3 percent (Fischer 1981). Moreover, the concentration of Jews in six of the largest states with large numbers of electoral votes (New York, California, New Jersey, Florida, Illinois, and Pennsylvania), enhances the importance of the Jewish vote and renders the Jews a sector to be courted by politicians. Contributions to political parties give the Jews economic power, and the fact that they occupy focal positions in the shaping of public opinion—in teaching, the written and electronic media, and the legal and political systems—strengthens their position as an influential political factor (Fischer 1981; Lefkowitz 1993).

Since the end of World War I, an increasingly large proportion of Jews has voted for the Democratic Party, their rate of support reaching its peak in the 1930s and 1940s, when more than 90 percent of the Jews gave their vote to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In those days the platform of the Democratic Party, in both foreign policy (involvement in World War II and later support for creating the State of Israel) and domestic policy (massive involvement in social and economic life and laying the foundations for the modern welfare state), corresponded with Jewish interests. A liberal-democratic coalition developed comprising various ethnic groups, including Jews, blacks, and Italians, whose common interest was protecting the weaker members of society and helping marginal groups. During the early 1960s, cooperation and an alliance between Democratic Jews and blacks strengthened in connection with the struggle for civil rights.

In all of the elections from 1932 on (with the exception of the 1980 election after President Jimmy Carter's term), between 65 percent and 90 percent of American Jews voted for the Democratic candidate; in every election from 1924 on, Jews voted for the Democrats at a rate of about 25 percent more than the rest of the population (Lefkowitz 1993; New York Times 1996; CNN 2000; Pew Research Center 2004). Notwithstanding the considerable increase in support for the Republican Party in the 1972 elections, in which 35 percent of the Jews voted for Richard Nixon (at the end of his first term as president, during which he had demonstrated a sympathetic approach to Israel), the Democratic candidate George McGovern nevertheless received the majority of the Jewish vote.

Since the late 1960s, a certain decline in Jewish support for the Democratic Party has taken place. Several factors led to this change: (1) the awareness of black people has grown, as has tension with whites in general, including Jews, over issues of quotas, affirmative action, and the accomplishment-based system (Lipset 1972; Rosenberg and Howe 1976); (2) the crisis in secular liberal thought after World War II and the turn toward extreme Leftism, as opposed to traditional liberalism, were involved in the growth of the New Left. The American Left as a whole was flooded by radical elements opposed to the establishment and was distanced from Jews to the point of hostility toward Jewish interests (in reality, after the Six-Day War, this hostility included Israel as well, which was now understood to be an established state with substantial economic and political resources, that is, from the United States and its Jews) as opposed to growing sympathy for the Arabs and Palestinians, who were now seen as weak, unfortunate, and underdeveloped (Lipset 1971); (3) the ascent of the New Right and the Religious Right whose pro-Israel bias saw the state in religious terms as the stronghold of opposition to the undemocratic Arab world, alongside alliance with the United States in its struggle against communism; (4) the breakdown of the liberal-Democratic coalition that was created in the days of Roosevelt and the New Deal and served as the basis for the consensus and cooperation in the liberal camp that championed a social policy of a socialist orientation (Kristol 1988); and (5) the number of independent candidates, who were mostly breakaways from the Democratic party, grew (Schneider 1981).

Despite the aforementioned tendencies, some of which are related to more transient developments in the overall social and economic configuration of the United States, the Democrats retained the support of a definite majority of American Jews. Among other ethnic groups and age groups, the move toward the Republican Party was far greater. The fluctuations in the political support of American Jews were influenced by worries regarding support of Israel, racial politics, and the empowerment of religion in public life. The growth in Jewish support of the Republican Party that began in 1972 declined between 1980 and 2000. The two presidential elections of 1996 and 2000 gave evidence of the ongoing liberal tendency, as 8 of every 10 Jews gave their vote to the Democratic presidential candidate. The feeling that Jewish life in the United States is relatively secure did not weaken the sense of a need to support the universal interests of equality and social justice. Alternatively, it can be argued that despite their social integration, the Jews have maintained a high degree of awareness of belonging to a uniquely defined subgroup, perhaps

involving some degree of uncertainty about “the security of their own achievements” as well as “skepticism regarding the Republican Party’s willingness to accept as permanent the ‘Civil Rights revolution’” (Kristol 1990, 112). The elections of 2004 revealed a slight reverse in Jewish political preference: 25 percent of Jewish voters voted for George W. Bush, up from 19 percent in 2000 (Pew Research Center 2004). Future presidential elections will show whether this was a passing phenomenon reflecting support for Bush policies against terrorism or a real shift in Jewish political behavior associated with the structural changes of a growing proportion of Orthodox Jews and the increasing rate of Jews living in interfaith households as well as changes in self-interest toward more materialistic economic and specific public policy (Windmueller 2003).

### Political Orientation and Sociodemographic Attributes

In 2000, slightly more than half (56.5 percent) of the Jews in the United States held a liberal (including extremely liberal and slightly liberal) political stance; the remaining Jewish population was equally split between those who described themselves as being in the center of the political map (middle of the road), and conservative (including extremely conservative and slightly conservative [Table 5]). This political profile is quite different from that of the overall American population, which is characterized by a definite tendency toward being conservative (42 percent) or middle of the road (28 percent), and only 29 percent hold a liberal political stand (author’s online data analysis of the 2000 American National Election Study).

Within America’s Jewish community there are also interesting differences in political attitudes based on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Fewer Jewish men than Jewish women have liberal political orientations (50.9 percent versus 61.6 percent, respectively); a relatively high proportion of the men described themselves as being conservative. This difference may be explained, among other things, by the greater interaction of Jewish men with their non-Jewish counterparts in the workplace or residential neighborhoods. There is also correlation between age and political ideology: younger Jews, especially those in their thirties and early forties, tend more toward the liberal end of the American political map.

Insofar as political ideology reflects a wider worldview relating to issues of social justice, equal rights, the institution of marriage, and so on, one may assume that a higher proportion of the married will be middle of the road or conservative as opposed to the unmarried, who will have more liberal political tendencies. These conjectures are confirmed by empirical evidence: whereas 21.5 percent of the married people were middle of the road and another 24.9 percent described themselves as conservative, the corresponding figures among the unmarried (singles) were 19.7 percent and 18.7 percent, respectively (Table 5). Among the former group, only 53.6 percent were liberal, versus 61.6 percent among the unmarried. The fact that a more liberal political ideology is likely to be correlated with a break with traditional social relations, among other things in relation to the institution of marriage, is expressed in the high percentage (61.1 percent) of liberal Jews among the divorced and separated. Dismantling the family framework is justified by adopting and

**Table 5 The American Jewish Population (Aged 18 Years and Older) by Sociodemographic Characteristics and Political Orientation, 2000 (in Percent)**

Sociodemographic Characteristics	Political Orientation <sup>a</sup>		
	Liberal	Middle of the Road	Conservative
Political orientation	56.5	21.1	22.4
Gender			
Male	50.9	22.3	26.8
Female	61.6	20.1	18.3
Age			
18–29 years	56.2	22.1	21.7
30–44 years	59.4	19.4	21.3
45–64 years	55.1	18.5	26.3
65+ years	55.9	26.0	18.2
Region of residence			
Northeast	53.0	21.7	25.3
Midwest	58.6	19.0	22.4
South	55.7	22.7	21.6
West	63.2	19.3	17.4
Marital status			
Married	53.6	21.5	24.9
Single	61.6	19.7	18.7
Divorced/separated	61.1	19.2	19.7
Widowed	57.7	24.8	17.5
Education			
High school or less	43.5	23.8	32.7
1–3 years of college	53.0	22.2	24.7
Baccalaureate degree	58.6	21.2	20.2
Advanced degree	64.8	18.4	16.8
Occupation			
Blue collar	36.5	25.9	37.6
Clerical/sales	54.7	19.3	26.0
Managers	51.6	22.9	25.5
Professional	61.3	18.6	20.1
Annual income			
Up to \$30,000	60.8	15.9	23.3
\$30,000–\$59,999	60.2	17.1	22.8
\$60,000–\$99,999	63.7	19.3	17.0
\$100,000 and over	52.6	23.2	24.2

<sup>a</sup>Liberal includes extremely liberal, liberal, and slightly liberal; conservative includes extremely conservative, conservative, and slightly conservative.

Source: The author's data analysis of the 2000 NJPS.

adhering to a liberal worldview as a mechanism of psychological self-strengthening (cognitive dissonance).

Higher education increases the probability of adhering to liberal positions (Table 5). As education is a key factor in occupational mobility, it implies professional status, which is also associated with a liberal political orientation. By contrast, people in the highest income category are disproportionately middle of the road and conservative; it is likely that many of these are self-employed businesspeople who work in high-technological industries with their political preference reflecting a somewhat capitalist-oriented economic view.

## American Jewry and Israel

### Israel in the Mind of American Jews

The establishment of the State of Israel introduced a new dimension into American Jewish existence. The attitude toward Israel in American Jewish consciousness and identification has undergone transformations since then—particularly after the Six-Day War, in the wake of both external and internal events on the Israeli political front since the late 1970s, and in light of internal social tendencies within the local Jewish community. As background to an analysis of these processes one should note, as Alan Ezrachi suggested, that most American Jews were born in the United States and therefore have no personal memories or nostalgia connected with Israel, which is conceptualized not as an “old country” but rather as a “symbolic homeland.” Moreover, the attitude to Israel is not necessarily a function of knowledge or familiarity with it: most American Jews are not acquainted with the various trends within Israeli culture or with its political life, their support of Israel being a symbol of Jewish self-identification; nor does it have anything in common, generally speaking, with Zionism or with a Jewish national self-definition (Cohen 1987).

Israel is perhaps the largest part of the symbolic core of American-Jewish religion and identity, support of Israel being a central component in defining the boundaries of the American-Jewish collective and consensus. From a functional viewpoint, Israel contributes to the cohesion and definition of the Jewish collective, as it does to personal identity. To borrow from Edward Shils’ concept regarding center and periphery, the importance of Israel lies in its being an elective center for those Jews who see themselves as Zionists and express concern for Israel. Such an approach is consistent with the perception of Israel as a major factor in the framework of Jewish macropolitical interests.

A considerable portion of the personal, and in particular institutional, Jewish time (which is quite limited) is connected with Israel: meetings, consultations, and lobbying among bodies that help Israel on the local, national and international level; campus activity; demonstrations; reading newspapers and listening to news about Israel; and visiting Israel. There is also extensive involvement with Israel in the Jewish educational system as a tool for deepening Jewish identity. As they attempt to shape secular patterns of identity and interest in their ethnoreligious group, American Jews have found that their relationship to Jewish organizations and institutions—and through their means also support of Israel, both material

and emotional—serves as a central element of identity and continuity (Goldscheider 1989). Attitudes to Israel are likewise motivated by bureaucratic considerations, as they provide legitimacy for the Jewish-American organizational structure that provides employment, power, and prestige to those close to it.

Many Jews perceive Israel as a home and a refuge. “Many American Jews see Israel in the psychological sense as a ‘parachute’ or ‘safety net,’ in the event that American society will again not see them as desirable citizens” (author’s translation of Goldscheider 1989, 40). But Israel is much more than a physical and psychological haven for American Jews: it is also a home port for Jews from all over the world, such as the Jews of the Soviet Union and other oppressed communities, that helps alleviate the guilt feelings of American Jews for not doing enough to bring them to the United States. Israel as home connotes security. The feeling that Israel is a haven of security appears primarily among the older Jewish population in urban areas. Support for Israel is always a kind of counterbalance against the limitations of acceptance into American society. But today there seems to be greater acceptance by the surrounding society, and American Jews are less troubled by the issue of their dual loyalty to the United States and Israel (Don-Yehiya 1991).

Over the course of time, after the extraordinary romance after the Six-Day War, a certain distancing and weakening has become evident in the connection between American Jews and Israel. This has become particularly noticeable since the end of the 1970s, and it may be attributed to several causes: (1) as a liberal social-democratic public, American Jews were more comfortable with the Labor Party that had been in power continuously from the creation of the state until the political turnabout of 1977, with the election of Menachem Begin as prime minister; (2) over the course of time, more representatives of Oriental Jewry have penetrated the political leadership, which made it more difficult for them to find a common language with American Jewry and led to a certain degree of distance and alienation; (3) the Lebanon War of 1982 led the Jewish establishment to draw a distinction between support of and loyalty to Israel, which remained strong, and their support of a current government’s policy, which was no longer automatic (in general, American Jews today feel freer to adopt independent views with regard to Israel and to criticize Israel’s positions and policies; this is truer of the Jewish public generally, among younger people, and among those who are more politically liberal than it is of the Jewish leadership) (Don-Yehiya 1991); (4) there is discomfort with Israel’s handling of the Palestinian uprisings, both the previous one of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the present Intifada; (5) tension surrounds the issues of “Who is a Jew?” and the lack of recognition by the Israeli rabbinic establishment of the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel (the ideologies with which an absolute majority of American Jews identify); and (6) there have been other incidents, such as the Irangate affair, the relations between Israel and South Africa during the apartheid period, and the Pollard affair, in which an American Jew working for an American intelligence agency was discovered to be spying for Israel.

American Jews distinguish between support for Israel and adherence to the classical Zionist position, meaning immigration (aliyah) to Israel. They likewise distinguish between concern for Israel and support for Israel’s policies. Nevertheless,

at times of unrest overseas, identification with their symbolic homeland strengthens and, during the period since the outbreak of Al-Aksa Intifada in September 2000, there has been a renewal of political and public activity on behalf of Israel and a strengthening of Jewish identification generally. Thus, for example, the proportion of American Jews who identify to a certain or a considerable degree with Israel grew from 72 percent in January 2001 to 82 percent in October 2006 (Ha'aretz 2001). Likewise, the year 2001, despite the economic difficulties in the world and specifically in the United States, was one of the most successful years ever for State of Israel Bonds, which succeeded in raising the highest ever sum—21 percent greater than that of the previous year (Basok 2002). The State of Israel Bonds organization sells government bonds to private people and institutions, the monies received going to Israel's development budget, thereby expressing the connection between the purchasers and the State of Israel. Nevertheless, the voices of reservation and discomfort with some of Israel's activities in the West Bank and Gaza have not been silent.

### Patterns of Identification and Intergenerational Differences

The distancing from Israel is also a consequence of intergenerational changes and transformations in the demographic and social profile of American Jews. Members of younger generations have not needed to deal with the challenges of their own absorption as Jews into American society. They did not live through the terrible period of the Holocaust, nor did they experience the great excitement of the creation of the State of Israel. Recent years have been characterized by increasing rates of intermarriage and the weakening of relations to Jewish institutions and organizations, which cannot but eventually lead to erosion in American Jews' support for Israel.

To the question, "How emotionally attached are you to Israel?" slightly less than 30 percent of Jews below the age of 45 reported a very strong attachment to Israel, as opposed to 40 percent among the elderly (Table 6). At the other end of the identification spectrum, 15.3 percent of the youngest group reported no emotional attachment to Israel, a proportion that decreases with increase in age, to only 7.9 percent among the oldest group. Similarly, approximately one-fourth (23.3 percent) of the youngest Jews stated that caring about Israel is not at all important, or perhaps only a bit important, to being Jewish as opposed to a far lower rate (13.3 percent) among the older group. One and a half times as many elderly, compared with the youngest, consider caring about Israel to be strongly involved with being Jewish—61.2 percent and 41.2 percent, respectively.

Also in the behavioral area, a smaller percentage of younger people have visited Israel at least once. This difference, of course, reflects the cumulative effect of the opportunities for traveling abroad that naturally increase with age—among other factors this is due to better economic conditions, more free income, and the lessened responsibility for small children. It should be noted, however, that a comparison with earlier empirical evidences (not shown here) suggests that in each age group the rate of those who had ever visited Israel increased over time. Because there is a strong and positive relationship between visits to Israel and emotional attachment, there are evidently polarizing processes among young Jews in which one segment weakens the emotional and behavioral relations to Israel and another segment

**Table 6 Ties to Israel, by Age: American Jews in 2000**

Ties to Isarel	Age				
	Total	18–29	30–44	45–64	65+
Attachment to Israel					
Not at all	10.9	15.3	14.3	8.6	7.9
Not very	20.2	23.3	24.6	21.2	12.9
Somewhat	37.3	31.8	34.6	40.0	39.7
Very	31.6	29.5	26.5	30.1	39.5
Being Jewish: Caring about Israel					
Not at all	7.1	8.9	8.3	6.6	5.3
A little	12.2	14.4	16.7	11.1	8.0
Somewhat	35.4	35.6	39.9	39.6	25.5
A lot	45.3	41.2	35.1	42.7	61.2
Visits to Israel					
No visits	61.5	67.4	67.5	64.6	48.0
One visit	21.2	16.8	18.2	18.2	30.9
Two visits	6.7	6.4	4.2	6.8	9.1
Three visits or more	10.6	9.4	10.1	10.4	12.0

Source: The author's data analysis of the 2000 NJPS.

strengthens them, thereby somewhat modifying the overall process of the eroding identification with Israel.

The weakening in the relationship with Israel is further documented by comparative data from the late 1980s until 1997 (Cohen 1999). These findings indicate a decline in the intensity of emotional ties to Israel and in the degree of closeness to Israeli Jewish people. In the area of philanthropy, contributions to Israel have experienced a recent drop; there are several indexes of this, including the overall sum given to Israel (in real terms adjusted for inflation) and the percentage of the total amount of money given to Israel as against that given for the needs of the local community. Part of the explanation of these transformations in philanthropy is rooted in the feeling that today Israel is capable of caring for its own needs, and that the local community poses critical challenges in ensuring group continuity. Even though Israel still plays a leading role in the feeling of group belonging, the overall changes by age group and over time lead to the conclusion that American Jews today are more distant from Israel than in the past.

### Scenarios for Future Developments

Whether judged by their residential preferences, educational and occupational composition, or tendency toward interfaith marriage, it is clearly evident that Jews are successfully integrated into the social American mainstream. At the same time, however, they exhibit a unique political orientation different from that of the general American population; as Milton Himmelfarb has noted, Jews enjoy an economic

status similar to that of the Episcopalian WASPs (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants), but their voting patterns resemble those of low-income Hispanics (Kristol 1990). The various interpretations proposed for Jewish liberalism are based on their history, the values of Jewish religion, or their characteristics as a minority group. This suggests that Jews in early 21st-century America maintain their support for universal interests such as quality and social justice. From a different point of view, it can be argued that despite their social integration, Jews maintain their consciousness of belonging to a defined minority with some degree of uncertainty about the security of their social achievements.

Most American Jews, as well as their predecessors, were neither born in Israel nor have ever lived there, yet Israel constitutes a major component in their multifaceted Jewish identity and their organized communal activities. Over time, the expressive and instrumental ties to Israel have somewhat weakened. This results, among other things, from social and political changes in Israel, as well as from intergenerational change, as an increasing number of American Jews have not witnessed the major events in world Jewry of the past half century, including the Holocaust, the establishment of the State of Israel and the Six-Day War. Despite these trends, a significant proportion of American Jews feel a definite and even strong attachment to Israel, which strengthens, albeit temporarily, at times of crisis in their symbolic homeland.

In the very near future, the dominant minority relations between American Jews and Israel is anticipated to change. Assuming no unanticipated, dramatic change, the different demographic behaviors of the two communities, identificational trends, and the magnitude of international migration, by the end of the first decade of the new century a plurality of the total world Jewish population should live in Israel, and an absolute majority by the middle of the century. These demographic evaluations, together with the increasing military and economic strength of Israel and, by contrast, the domestic challenges of ethnoreligious continuity confronting American Jewry, are expected to enhance Israel's position in the long-standing partnership between the two major pillars of world Jewry. Likewise, from a local point view, even if the number of American Jews remains stable, the total American population is constantly rising, including ethnic groups such as the Muslims; thus, the decline in the relative size of the Jewish population might result in a relative weakening of their electoral power and their political influence and lobbying for Israel.

As their integration into the general society becomes even deeper, a growing number of Jews view America as their homeland. This growth may well continue in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks because of local pressures, either latent or visible, for stronger and more explicit expressions of national American identity on the part of members of ethnonational Diaspora communities. As the term "Diaspora" embodies a certain degree of attachment to another place, the frequency of its usage may decline somewhat. Under such circumstances, the issue of dual loyalty to America and another homeland may arise, and this could become relevant for Jews, particularly if Israeli policies and those of the United States are at odds, given the continued instability in the Middle East.

Finally, the social structural changes and the alterations in the relationship of American Jews to Israel have important policy implications. The Jewish community must adjust its organizational patterns and activities to mesh with the dynamic social and cultural preferences and lifestyles formed by the open and pluralistic mood in early 21st-century America. Under such circumstances, Jewish identificational patterns may be transfigured, but a strong and coherent attachment to the Jewish heritage must maintain its distinctiveness from other faiths. The legitimacy of ethnic and religious differences, which is part of the ethos of today's multicultural United States, must turn these complicated challenges into new opportunities to ensure the strength and long-standing vitality of the American Jewish Diaspora.

### Selected Bibliography

- "After the Disaster: Support for Israel—Listening Carefully to the Government." 2001. *Ha'aretz*, November 16, 7A.
- Basok, Motti. 2002. "Peak in Bonds' Sales in 2001—About 1.1 Billion Dollars." *Ha'aretz Daily Newspaper*, January 2, C2.
- Beker, Avi. 2000. "Lieberman and the Jewish Condition." *Jerusalem Post*, August 21, 6.
- Cohen, Steven M. 1987. *Ties and Tensions: The 1986 Survey of American Jewish Attitudes toward Israel and Israelis*. New York: American Jewish Committee.
- Cohen, Steven M. 1999. "Did American Jews Really Grow More Distant from Israel, 1983–1997? A Reconsideration." In *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*, edited by Allon Gal, 352–373. Beer-Sheva and Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press and Publishing House of the World Zionist Organization.
- Cohen, Warner. 1958. "The Politics of American Jews." In *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, edited by Marshall Sklare, 614–626. New York: Free Press.
- Don-Yehiya, Eliezer. 1991. "Solidarity and Autonomy in Israel-Diaspora Relations." In *Israel and Diaspora Jewry: Ideological and Political Perspectives*, edited by Eliezer Don-Yehiya, 9–27. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press.
- Fischer, Alan M. 1981. "Jewish Political Shift? Erosion, Yes; Conversion, No." In *Party Coalitions in the 1980s*, edited by Seymour M. Lipset, 327–340. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies.
- Fuchs, Lawrence. 1956. *The Political Behavior of American Jews*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Glazar, Nathan. 1958. "The American Jews and the Attendance of Middle Class Rank: Some Trends and Explanations." In *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, edited by Marshall Sklare, 138–146. New York: Free Press.
- Goldscheider, Calvin. 1989. "'Who is a Jew'—Why Are American Jews in Uproar?" [Hebrew]. *Gesher: Journal of Jewish Affairs* 119: 37–45.
- Goldscheider, Calvin, and Alan S. Zuckerman. 1985. *The Transformation of the Jews*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jacobson, Matthew F. 1995. *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kotler-Berkowitz, Laurence A., et al. 2003. *The National Jewish Population Survey 2000–01: Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population*. New York: United Jewish Communities.
- Kristol, Irving. 1988. "Liberalism and American Jews." *Commentary* (October): 19–23.
- Kristol, Irving. 1990. "The Liberal Tradition of American Jews." In *American Pluralism and the Jewish Community*, edited by Seymour M. Lipset, 109–116. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Lefkowitz, Jay P. 1993. "Jewish Voters and the Democrats." *Commentary* 95 (April): 38–41.

- Legge, Jerome S. 1995. "Explaining Jewish Liberalism in the United States: An Exploration of Socioeconomic, Religious, and Communal Living Variables." *Social Science Quarterly* 76: 124–141.
- Lerner, Robert, Althea K. Nagai, and Stanley Rothman. 1989. "Marginality and Liberalism among Jewish Elites." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53: 330–352.
- Levy, Shlomit, Hanna Levinsohn, and Elihu Katz. 1997. "Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews." In *The Jewishness of Israel*, edited by Charles S. Liebman and Elihu Katz, 1–37. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Liebman, Charles S. 1973. *The Ambivalent American Jew: Politics, Religion and Family in American Jewish Life*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Lipset, Seymour M. 1960. *Political Man: The Social Basis of Politics*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Lipset, Seymour M. 1971. "The Socialism of Fools: The Left, The Jews and Israel." In *The New Left and the Jews*, edited by Mordechai S. Chertoff, 103–131. New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation.
- Lipset, Seymour M. 1972. *Group Life in America: A Task Force Report*. New York: The American Jewish Committee.
- Lipset, Seymour M., and Earl Raab. 1995. *Jews and the New American Scene*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Medding, Peter Y. 1977. "Towards a General Theory of Jewish Political Interests and Behaviour." *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 19: 115–144.
- Pew Research Center. 2004. *Religion and the Presidential Vote*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- Rosenberg, Bernard, and Irving Howe. 1976. "Are the Jews Turning toward the Right?" In *The New Conservatives: A Critique from the Left*, edited by Irving Howe and Lewis A. Coser, 64–89. New York: New American Library.
- Schneider, William. 1981. "Democrats and Republicans, Liberals and Conservatives." In *Party Coalitions in the 1980s*, edited by Seymour M. Lipset, 179–231. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies.
- Sheffer, Gabriel. 2001. "Israelis, Israel and the Jewish Diaspora in the Last Decade" [Hebrew]. *Kivunim Hadashim (New Directions): Journal of Zionism and Judaism* 5: 148–170.
- Walters, William H., and Esther I. Wilder. 1997. "American Jewish Household Income, 1969 and 1989." *Journal of Economic and Social Measurement* 23: 197–212.
- Walzer, Michael. 1986. "Is Liberalism (Still) Good for the Jews?" *Moment* (March): 13–19.
- Windmueller, Steven. 2003. *Are American Jews Becoming Republic? Insights into Jewish Political Behavior*. Jerusalem Viewpoints, No. 509. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

## American Jews and Radicalism

*Gerald Sorin*

---

Jews have been overrepresented in most radical movements in America, including socialism and communism, since as early the 1890s. Although the vast majority of Jewish Americans have *not* been radicals, an important minority helped shape the American Left in the modern period. Jews, although only 3 percent of the population of the United States, provided about 15 percent of the membership of the Socialist

Party (SP) through the 1920s and about 40 percent of the Communist Party (CPUSA) rank and file in the 1930s. And right through the beginning of the 21st century, despite their remarkable social mobility, a substantial proportion of Jewish Americans continued to adhere to the political philosophy of left-liberalism.

The leadership of radical movements has also been disproportionately Jewish. Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger, each of whom served as national chair of the SP after World War I, were Jews. And the only Socialists ever elected to Congress were Jews: Berger from Milwaukee and Meyer London from New York.

The SP's most successful institutions were also Jewish. There was, first and foremost, *The Jewish Daily Forward*, which had a circulation of nearly 300,000, making it the largest Socialist paper in America. *The Forward* was, in addition, a major financial contributor to SP causes and election campaigns. Also closely tied to the SP was the *Arbeiter Ring* or Workmen's Circle, a mutual-aid organization of Jewish laborers that grew to more than 80,000 members by 1924. The United Hebrew Trades, a confederation of largely Jewish labor unions, was also saturated in socialism. This was especially true for the needle-workers' unions, like the International Ladies Garment Workers and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, whose leaders, including David Dubinsky and Sidney Hillman, were affiliated with the SP.

The CPUSA was also often led by Jews, including Benjamin Gitlow and Jay Lovestone (born Jacob Liebstein), both of whom served as the party's general secretaries in the late 1920s. And throughout the 1930s and 1940s, more than 33 percent of the Central Committee of the CPUSA were of Jewish background. Moreover, the *Freiheit*, the party's Yiddish-language paper, was not only the first Communist daily published in the United States, but it had, for some time, an even larger circulation than the English-language *Daily Worker*. The Jewish People's Fraternal Order was the largest ethnic bloc in the CPUSA's umbrella organization, the International Workers' Order. Several unions with huge Jewish memberships were strongly influenced by communism, including the American Federation of Teachers and the Fur and Leather Workers' Union, whose president, Ben Gold, was a Jew and an avowed Communist.

Jewish radical movements in America were in large part products of two or three generations of East European Jewish immigration. The great mass of gainfully employed Jews in Eastern Europe had been small businesspeople and independent craftspeople for generations. The development of working-class consciousness among them began in earnest only in the late 19th century when large numbers of petit bourgeois Jews suffered precipitous economic displacement and were forced to work for wages. The making of the Jewish working class continued, and intensified, with immigration to the larger American cities, where most Jewish newcomers confronted an even more highly industrialized environment than they had begun to experience in Eastern Europe. Subjected to intense economic pressures, living in poverty, and uprooted from a traditional way of life, the immigrants were also exposed, especially in New York and several other large cities, to a growing left-wing culture. Here the implications of Jewish proletarianization were articulated and reinforced by the activities of a remarkable group of radical intellectuals and organizers—Jewish young men and women, mostly former students—who provided leadership and a persuasive and attractive socialist critique of capitalism.

Born in 1901, the SP attracted Jews in increasing and disproportionate numbers. In 1908, Jews made up about 39 percent of SP membership in Manhattan and the Bronx, New York. At the very same time the socialist-led Workingmen's Circle was also enrolling record numbers of Jews. And by 1908, the organization boasted 10,000 Jewish members, the vast majority of whom were sympathetic to socialism.

Even more important to the socialist movement was the *Jewish Daily Forward*, edited by Abraham Cahan at its founding in 1897, and again from 1903 to 1951. The *Forward* quickly changed the somewhat formal language of the paper to the Yiddish of the streets and shops. If "you want the public to read this paper and assimilate Socialism," Cahan told his staff, "you've got to write of things of everyday life, in terms of what they see and feel." Despite their cosmopolitanism and class-war vocabulary, then, the "liberated" radical leaders and Jewish labor militants did not secede from the ethnic community. Union organizers, intellectuals, journalists, and political activists, in their efforts to mobilize the Jewish proletariat, tried to synthesize the essential values of Jewish culture with the modern goals and values of the socialist movement. They consistently wove biblical references, Talmudic aphorisms, and prophetic injunctions into their socialist appeals. They wrote and spoke particularly about the concept of *tzedakah* (righteousness and social justice), and implicitly drew on the obligation of *tikkun olam*, the commandment to repair or improve the world. In all they emphasized communal responsibility and secular messianism. And they helped Jewish workers in their struggle to create new identities out of traditional materials in a modern context.

Visions of proletarian solidarity would dim over time to be overshadowed by the remarkable upward mobility of Jewish immigrants and their children. In the meantime, the Socialists furnished the Jewish labor movement with important vehicles of worker education and mobilization—the United Hebrew Trades, the Workmen's Circle, and the *Jewish Daily Forward*. With these institutions the East European immigrants built the first consciously Jewish power base in America. With that base, the socialist movement, between 1909 and 1917, set out, often successfully, through strikes and union-building to solve some of the more practical problems of the workers.

One of the more remarkable dimensions of American political culture from 1917 to about 1924 was Jewish attraction to the Soviet revolution. The Communist regime in Moscow seemed eager to recruit Jewish talent, and the hope of progress and modernity inherent in Communist ideology found resonance in Jewish political life in America. It was estimated that in the 1920s, Jews in the United States gave 4–5 percent of their votes to Communist candidates, at the same time they were giving approximately 12–15 percent to Socialists, both figures substantially higher than the national average. About 15 percent of the members of the CPUSA in the 1920s were Jewish. And in 1924 a small but determined Communist group, with the help of numerous sympathizers, had gained control of three locals of the heavily Jewish International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

Abetted by the "united front" policy of making alliance with other left-leaning and liberal groups (which in New York were also disproportionately Jewish) and a strategy of infiltrating Jewish organizations, the Communist Party increased its

Jewish membership to an estimated 40 percent during the Depression. Yet by the mid-1920s, much of the enthusiasm of the Jews for Communism was already dissipating. Lenin had earlier ordered an end to anti-Semitic movements in Russia and the Ukraine that had left 75,000 Jews dead between 1918 and 1920. But this did not exempt the Jewish bourgeoisie from being considered “class enemies” of the revolution; and the general antibourgeois, antireligious policies of the Soviets under Stalin continued to create desperate conditions for Russian Jewry, including the wanton destruction of Jewish cultural and religious institutions and the imprisonment of thousands of Jewish leaders.

The ravages against Jews in the Soviet Union, coupled with the drive of Communists in the United States to co-opt Jewish unions and cultural institutions, continued to diminish Communism’s mystique. And between 1926 and 1930 the Jewish unions distanced themselves from the more radical left-wingers, and so did the vast majority of ordinary Jews. Communist support of Arab riots in Palestine in 1929, the purge trials of the 1930s in Moscow, and the Non-Aggression Pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, also cut into Jewish support of the Communists. CPUSA membership dropped by more than a third in 1939; and most of those who departed were Jews, virtually all of whom had been attracted to the party in the 1930s because they believed it to be the only effective enemy of fascism.

Many Jewish writers had also had leftist leanings in this era. Yiddish-speaking secularists such as Chaim Zhitlowsky; a champion of Jewish cultural nationalism, Nachman Syrkin, the foremost spokesman for labor Zionism; Shmuel Niger, the literary critic; and Hayim Greenberg, essayist and editor, constituted a small cadre of Yiddish intellectuals who manifested a strong interest in Jewish national resurgence, but most expected that resurgence to come associated with, or through a synthesis with socialism. Sidney Hook, Horace Kallen, Harry Wolfson, Lewis Mumford, and others associated with Elliot Cohen’s *Menorah Journal* were also inclined to support a “humanistic social order.” And a third group of Jewish writers on the left, the New York Intellectuals; included Philip Rahv, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Meyer Shapiro, Harold Rosenberg and Irving Howe. They expressed themselves mainly through *The Partisan Review* and later *Dissent* magazine, and they were held together by their utter revulsion against the Soviet experiment under Stalin, with which some of them had initially flirted; but they clearly maintained their socialist sensibilities, especially in the face of the strident anti-Semitism of the Right in the 1930s. If this last group of cosmopolitan intellectuals were on their way to losing varying degrees of their Jewish identity, there was still something familiarly Jewish in their penchant for a kind of Talmudic argumentation in their assumption of the inherent worth of intellectual pursuits and in their left-leaning proclivities.

A good number of Jewish writers of fiction were also on the left in the 1930s, several had been radicalized by the Depression and its attack on the American Dream. Henry Roth joined the CPUSA in 1933. Mike Gold who had joined some 10 years earlier became even more enthusiastic in the 1930s, especially about enlisting writers and artists for the revolutionary struggle. And Daniel Fuchs, Samuel Ornitz, and Edward Dahlberg, under the influence of the socialist realism school, were harshly judgmental of the low level of class consciousness and the high level of materialism and exploitation they perceived in American and Jewish society.

These accounts hint at the temporary character of Jewish radicalism. And indeed, by the middle of the 20th century, with the decline of anti-Semitism, the intensification of Jewish economic and social mobility, increasing acculturation, and even assimilation, and given the excesses of the Communists here and abroad, Jewish political values changed. Jewish movement to the Democratic Party began as early as 1912, but loyalty consistently manifested itself most powerfully in the 1930s during the Depression and New Deal (sometimes called by its enemies the “Jew Deal”). The Socialist Party lost virtually its entire Jewish mass base in 1936 when Socialist union leaders like David Dubinsky and Sidney Hillman took the lead in forming the American Labor Party in New York, and gave their backing to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Continued support for Roosevelt’s programs led many one-time Jewish Socialists, and even Communists, to become liberal Democrats. And Jews, whether former socialists or not, gave Roosevelt an extraordinary proportion of their votes, always hovering around 90 percent; and they were the only ethnic group in the United States to increase its support for him and the liberal policies of his administration over the four elections through 1944.

Jews continued to be a unique force in American politics, often exhibiting the capacity to vote and act beyond both their class interest and the narrow interests of their group. In the early 1960s, even as the Jews proved to be the most economically successful ethnic group in America, a substantial percentage of the radical New Left was Jewish. And the Jewish presence, and indeed leadership, in the movements for civil rights and women’s equality, and against the Vietnam War, was manifestly obvious. Later, emerging tensions between blacks and Jews, partly generated by different economic and social mobility rates and partly by the politics of ethnic identity, increasingly challenged what had actually been a relatively uneasy and unequal alliance from the start. And the New Left’s increasing hostility toward Israel discouraged an enduring revival of radicalism in the Jewish American community. Nonetheless, the political vision of Jews, even into the fourth generation, remained focused on social justice, urban welfare, civil rights, civil liberties, and internationalism. These values reflected a distinctive American faith that was equated with the left wing of the Democratic Party. But it was a faith held so tenaciously by Jews, a substantial majority of whom were still connected to the traditions of communal responsibility, mutual aid, *tzedakah*, and *tikkun olam*, that liberalism could be seen as the political ideology of Jewish American ethnicity.

### Selected Bibliography

- Frankel, Jonathan. 1981. *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jew, 1862–1917*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Glazer, Nathan. 1961. *The Social Bases of American Communism*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Howe, Irving. 1976. *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made*. New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich.
- Moore, Deborah Dash. 1981. *At Home in America: Second Generation Jews in New York*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sorin, Gerald. 1985. *The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1880–1920*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

## American Jewry's Response to the Holocaust

*Rafael Medoff*

---

Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933 filled American Jews with apprehension, but Jewish leaders were divided over how to respond. Some major U.S. Jewish organizations, notably the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith, opposed anti-Nazi rallies and boycotts. They preferred that Jewish intervention be limited to behind-the-scenes contacts with political officials, far from the public limelight. These groups were dominated by German-born or German-descended American Jews, who feared that public Jewish protests could arouse domestic anti-Semitism and endanger the socioeconomic success they had attained in America.

The American Jewish Congress, which had been established as an activist and nationalist alternative to the American Jewish Committee, was dominated by Jews of East European origin or descent who were less acculturated and thus more comfortable raising Jewish concerns in the public arena. The American Jewish Congress's founder and leader, Rabbi Dr. Stephen S. Wise, derided his American Jewish Committee rivals as "sh-sh Jews" because of their timidity in speaking out against the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe. During the 1930s, the American Jewish Congress organized "Stop Hitler Now" rallies and led the movement to boycott German goods.

Rabbi Wise was the most prominent and influential Jewish leader of the era. A dynamic speaker and energetic organizer, he also cochaired the World Jewish Congress and was prominent in the Reform rabbinate. In addition, his early support of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal gave Wise greater access to the White House than other Jewish leaders enjoyed.

Along with Wise's power and prestige came conflicts of conscience. He was privately disappointed by Roosevelt's refusal to criticize the persecution of German Jews, but said nothing publicly so as not to embarrass the president. Wise opposed a planned Senate resolution in 1933 expressing sympathy with German Jewry, for fear it would implicitly cast aspersions on Roosevelt. Wise initially refrained from endorsing a boycott of German goods in deference to the administration's opposition to the boycott, although he soon reversed his position in response to pressure from the American Jewish Congress rank and file.

Many German Jews hoped to escape Hitler by immigrating to the United States, but the Roosevelt administration, most of Congress, and most of the public opposed such an influx. American Jewish leaders believed there was no chance of changing that sentiment. Nativists had designed the U.S. immigration quota system to reduce immigration from the countries from which undesired immigrants, especially Jews and Catholics, had previously come in large numbers. The annual quota for Germany and Austria combined was 27,370 and for Poland was 6,542. Even those meager allotments were almost always underfilled, because the State



Zionist Stephen Wise, one of the founders of the American Jewish Congress, 1928. (Library of Congress)

Department actively discouraged would-be immigrants through a maze of requirements that many applicants were unable to fulfill. During the period of the Nazi genocide, from late 1941 until early 1945, only 10 percent of the quotas from Axis-controlled European countries were used—meaning that almost 190,000 quota places were unfilled.

Jewish leaders refrained from seeking any liberalization of America's tight immigration quotas. They feared any effort to bring in more refugees would arouse domestic anti-Semitism and could provoke Congressional restrictionists to further tighten the quotas. Proposals to settle refugees in American-controlled territories not governed by the immigration quota system, such as the Virgin Islands and Alaska, were blocked by the administration. Mainstream Jewish leaders declined to endorse those proposals.

Many American Jews saw British Mandatory Palestine as the answer to the German Jewish crisis, but in 1939, London severely restricted Jewish immigration in response to Palestinian Arab violence. American Jewish leaders opposed the British restrictions, but refrained from protesting vigorously because of their sympathy for England's stance against Hitler. Rabbi Wise believed American Jews should "march shoulder to shoulder with England in the war against fascism, even if the Zionist cause suffered." Some Jewish groups feared a public ruckus over Palestine might be perceived as a Jewish attempt to drag America into overseas conflicts.

The refugee crisis intensified in the spring of 1938 after the German annexation of Austria, but a U.S.-hosted international refugee conference, held in Evian, France, that summer offered little hope. The attendees reaffirmed their unwillingness to

liberalize their immigration quotas. Jewish leaders refrained from directly criticizing the U.S. stance at the conference.

In November 1938, Nazi storm troopers carried out the nationwide *Kristallnacht* pogrom against Germany's Jews. Roosevelt recalled America's ambassador from Berlin and extended the visitors' visas of the 12–15,000 German Jewish citizens who were temporarily in the United States, but he opposed increasing immigration. In the months to follow, the Wagner-Rogers bill to admit 20,000 German Jewish refugee children outside the quotas was debated in Congress, but ultimately buried in subcommittee. The S.S. *St. Louis*, a German steamship carrying 930 Jewish refugees, was turned back from America's shore in June 1939. Jewish organizations refrained from publicly protesting. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the community's main vehicle for overseas relief aid, arranged for the refugees to be taken in by four European countries, but most were sent to countries that were overrun by the Germans the following year.

Despite the hardships of the Depression, American Jewish financial aid to European Jews grew during the Hitler years. The Joint Distribution Committee increased its charitable assistance to endangered communities in the 1930s and financed the sheltering and emigration of Jews during the war period. The American Zionist women's organization Hadassah financed Youth Aliyah, a program that brought young European Jews to Palestine. The Vaad ha-Hatzala, an American Orthodox relief group, was established in 1939 to aid Polish rabbis and students who fled to Lithuania after the German invasion of Poland.

Throughout 1941–1942, Allied governments and American Jewish leaders received reports of massacres of Jews in German-occupied territories. An August 1942 telegram from the World Jewish Congress representative in Switzerland, Gerhart Riegner, reported Hitler's intention to systematically annihilate all of Europe's Jews. At the State Department's request, Rabbi Wise refrained from publicizing the Riegner telegram while U.S. officials sought to authenticate the information. Three months later, the administration confirmed the information and Wise made it public. At a meeting with Jewish leaders in December, Roosevelt condemned the mass murders, but offered no practical measures to aid the refugees.

Resigning themselves to the seemingly hopeless situation, American Jewish leaders initially accepted the president's contention that nothing could be done to aid European Jewry except to win the war. By early 1943, dissident voices began questioning the Jewish leadership's stance. Periodicals such as *The Reconstructionist* and *The Jewish Spectator* urged Jewish leaders to actively challenge Allied refugee policy. Students at Conservative Judaism's Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) organized a Jewish-Christian inter-seminary conference to raise public awareness and promote rescue. The JTS students also persuaded the Synagogue Council of America—the umbrella group for Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues—to undertake a seven-week nationwide campaign among synagogues to publicize the plight of Jews in Europe. This effort concluded with a day of memorial meetings in synagogues and churches around the country to publicize the massacres.

The most significant of the dissident protest groups was led by Hillel Kook, a Zionist emissary from Palestine who used the pseudonym Peter Bergson. The

Bergson Group promoted rescue of refugees through unorthodox tactics. It sponsored more than 200 newspaper advertisements; lobbied Congress; staged a theatrical pageant called "We Will Never Die," which was viewed by audiences totaling over 100,000; and organized public rallies, including a march by 400 rabbis in Washington, DC, just before Yom Kippur in 1943. It also mobilized numerous intellectuals, entertainers, and other celebrities to call for rescue.

Some Jewish leaders feared Bergson's vociferous protests might spoil American Jewry's relations with the administration or provoke anti-Semitism. Some were also concerned that Bergson was usurping the Jewish leadership in the eyes of the public. Rabbi Wise and other Jewish leaders tried to persuade the prominent supporters of Bergson's group to sever their ties and urged U.S. officials to get rid of Bergson by drafting or deporting him.

At the same time, the Jewish leadership undertook its own efforts to promote rescue. In March 1943, eight major Jewish organizations established the Joint Emergency Committee on European Jewish Affairs. It organized protest meetings around the country, and its leaders met with Allied officials. However, when the U.S. and Britain announced plans to hold a conference in Bermuda on the refugee problem, the Joint Emergency Committee's request to attend was denied. Like the Evian conference of 1938, the Bermuda gathering consisted largely of officials reiterating their governments' existing positions.

Bermuda shocked many American Jews, more than 90 percent of whom had voted for Roosevelt each time he ran for reelection. As immigrants or children of immigrants, they appreciated the protection Roosevelt's social and economic policies afforded the working class. Their support for the president was cemented by his criticism of Hitler and his aid to England, especially when most Republicans embraced isolationism. But in the wake of Bermuda and the closure of Palestine, there was growing uneasiness in the community over the Allies' refugee policy.

In response, grassroots American Zionist activists in the summer of 1943 rebuffed Wise's accommodationist approach toward the British and elevated the more militant Abba Hillel Silver to the leadership of their movement. Under Silver, Jewish and Christian Zionists around the country held rallies and lobbied U.S. officials to press the British to open Palestine. American Zionists regarded Palestine as the only real answer to the persecution of Europe's Jews.

In the autumn of 1943, the Bergson group initiated a Congressional resolution calling for creation of a government agency to rescue refugees. The hearings over the resolution became a matter of major controversy when State Department official Breckinridge Long gave wildly misleading testimony about the number of refugees who had already been admitted into the United States. The resulting criticism from the media, Jewish groups, and members of Congress gave the resolution additional momentum. In December, it was unanimously approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Meanwhile, senior aides to Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. discovered that State Department officials had been blocking transmission of Holocaust-related information to the United States and obstructing rescue opportunities.

They presented Morgenthau with a report exposing the State Department's actions and urged him to bring it to the president.

Morgenthau and the other Jews in Roosevelt's inner circle usually refrained from raising issues of Jewish concern with the president. Advisers such as Samuel Rosenman, Ben Cohen, and Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter believed it was inappropriate to bring narrow Jewish matters into the Oval Office. But the evidence uncovered by his staff changed Morgenthau's mind, and the impending congressional action on rescue gave him crucial leverage. At a meeting in January 1944, Morgenthau persuaded Roosevelt to avoid a public controversy over refugees by preempting Congress and creating a rescue agency. Days later, Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board.

Although understaffed and given meager funding, the board achieved much. It moved Jews out of dangerous regions, pressured Hungary to end deportations to Auschwitz, and sheltered Jews in places such as Budapest, where it financed the work of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg. Altogether, the board's efforts played a major role in saving about 200,000 Jews and 20,000 non-Jews.

The board sought to temporarily shelter refugees in the United States, but the president agreed to admit just one token group of 982. Board officials were likewise unsuccessful in their appeals to the War Department to bomb the railways leading to Auschwitz or the gas chambers. A number of Jewish leaders also privately urged the administration to undertake such bombings, but they were rebuffed. The War Department claimed such raids would constitute an unjustified diversion of military resources, even though U.S. bombers repeatedly bombed German oil factories less than five miles from the gas chambers.

Throughout the Hitler years, the Roosevelt administration refrained from seriously addressing Jewish requests to aid refugees except under sustained political pressure. Some Jewish leaders regarded the exercise of such pressure as an unconscionable breach of the community's traditional support for Roosevelt. Others in the Jewish leadership were too set in older modes of thinking to conceive new strategies for political action. "Of course the [Joint] Emergency Committee is inactive now," one American Jewish Committee leader wrote to a critic in 1943. "It is inactive because there isn't a single thing that I can think of it should do." At a time of unprecedented crisis, American Jews did not have many leaders who understood what should be done. Dissidents tried to fill that vacuum and succeeded in arousing public opinion and helping to bring about the creation of the War Refugee Board. Ultimately, however, the dissidents lacked the financial, political, and organizational resources to accomplish what a fully energized Jewish establishment might have achieved.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Feingold, Henry L. 1995. *Bearing Witness: How America and Its Jews Responded to the Holocaust*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Lookstein, Haskel. 1985. *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938-1944*. Bridgeport, CT: Hartmore House.

- Penkower, Monty Noam. 1994. *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn: From Catastrophe to Sovereignty*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Wyman, David S. 1984. *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945*. New York: Pantheon.
- Wyman, David S., and Rafael Medoff. 2002. *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust*. New York: The New Press.

## History of the Habad Movement in the United States

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

One of the ironies about Habad Hasidism in the United States is that the movement's sixth rebbe, Rabbi YY Schneerson had fervently discouraged the emigration of his Hasidim from Russia. Swearing blood oaths never to leave, he and the hard core leadership of the movement were eventually forced to flee to the United States in the 1940s, leaving a lot of activists there who were killed, deported, or repressed under the Soviet regime. While Soviet Hasidism hibernated, the American branch of this Russian Hasidic sect thrived in the United States and around the world. Many Hasidim had left Russia during Rabbi Shalom Dob Ber Schneerson's leadership or departed against Rabbi YY Schneerson's instructions or managed to flee when Rabbi YY Schneerson himself escaped, and they became the ideological and cultural infrastructure for the movement's resurgence. After a 20-year struggle against Soviet policy toward religion, Rabbi YY Schneerson came to the realization that he could do very little more for Russian Jewry; his position in Poland was dangerous and was not effective. He had maintained contact with Hasidim abroad, particularly in the United States, and despite the fact that America was portrayed among Orthodoxy by the derogatory term "the *treife medina*" (the impure country), it soon became a safe haven for Jewry and Hasidism. In the late 19th century, Habad Hasidim started to migrate to the United States, particularly the breakaway group of *malkhim*. During RaSHaB and Rabbi Schneerson's leadership, however, a steady flow of Hasidim arrived in the United States and created a loose framework of cooperation.

Rabbi Schneerson first visited America in 1929 and made up his mind to emigrate some time later. In 1940, he made his escape from Europe having been granted visa and safe passage for his entourage through war-torn Europe. He arrived in New York for the second time, settled there, and began to rebuild the Habad movement. His rise to eminence in the United States occurred in a number of stages until he achieved a status of consensus as the sole Habad rebbe presiding over the international Habad headquarters in New York. His rise to fame was by virtue of his lineage as sole successor of the Lubavitch dynasty coupled with his managerial talents, which were in great demand in the leadership turmoil of Soviet Russia. Were



Headquarters of the Habad-Lubavitch Hasidic movement, located in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, New York. (iStockphoto)

it not for Schneerson's dedication to public Jewish observance, which landed him in a Soviet prison with a death sentence lingering over his head, he might never have drawn the world's attention to his leadership. When Schneerson was arrested by the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) Communist police in May 1927, the efforts to get him released and repeal the death penalty passed upon him, catapulted him to international fame.

He became the focus of American Jewish and general political efforts. Although he spent only three weeks in Leningrad's Spalerno jail this was enough to gain him world renown as a Jewish activist and hero. Because of his enhanced status, complicated political and legal procedures demanding a collective effort from many people in both the Habad community and the American political arena were orchestrated on his behalf, securing his exit from war-torn Europe, along with his entourage of aides and relatives, to the shores of America.

His status was compared with that of the pope or a head of a religious hierarchy. On his first visit to America he met many senators and even President Hoover and was thus seen as a Jewish religious leader of the highest caliber. This served him in his own internal leadership status, attracting the attention and admiration of the various offshoots of Habad Hasidim in the United States, who subsequently recognized his leadership.

Habad Hasidim immigrated to many countries, including Western European countries, particularly France and Britain. They also made inroads into the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and of course, pre-state Israel.

When he entered office, Rabbi Schneerson made efforts to consolidate his leadership over these Habad communities. He wrote extensively to many international communities and cultivated relationships with senior activists in each community. In 1929–1930, he traveled extensively to the United States and Israel and formed alliances with the Habad Hasidim there. They appeared to be willing to accept his leadership from New York. Over time, Schneerson sent out communiques to other, smaller Habad communities, and most of those also came to accept his leadership.

Many of his contacts around the world were former students in the Lubavitch yeshivas who had since emigrated; some had even taken up rabbinic posts in communities throughout the United States. In 1923, Rabbi Schneerson wrote from Rostov to David Shifrin, a hasid in the United States, directing him, among other things, to establish a Habad organization there and offering specific and detailed advice on how this should be done. He continued his correspondence with other people directing them on different issues, including R' L.M. Lakshin, who had studied in the yeshiva of Lubavitch and had become a prominent American rabbi. In his letters he instructed that study groups and a society to help the absorption of migrant Hasidim should be established. He encouraged the study of Judaism and Hasidism in the day-to-day lives of the Hasidic faithful and members of these organizations. He asked that lists of all synagogues and study houses in every city, even the smallest, should be compiled as data. He paid attention to details of the American administration, suggesting that one person should be singled out for each task required, particularly for writing letters so as to endow them with a personal touch and sense of continuity. His instructions indicate the importance with which he viewed the duty of letter writing and network building.

The Habad organizations that were created in the United States in the 1930s relied on a constituency of sympathizers from the larger population of Jews around the United States. These people were Americans of Russian or Hasidic descent with affiliations to certain synagogues called *nusakh ha-Ari* synagogues. These Hasidic-oriented synagogues consisted of members with a Habadic background of some sort. The style of prayer they used was based on a formula that had been standardized by the movement's founder, Rabbi Shneur Zalman, into a siddur and used by Habad Hasidim and associated groups. The synagogues established might have had only minimal connections to the official Habad movement, but their historic and perhaps ritual affiliations were tied up with Habad culture. Although worshippers might have distanced themselves from their Habadic origins, some maintained varying degree of commitment or loose affiliations and sympathies for the movement. These synagogues and communities numbered approximately 200. They were used as a foundation for Habad activities and propaganda throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Rabbi Schneerson sought to utilize to the fullest the network of his yeshiva graduates and their strong fraternal bonds. As many traveled abroad he established a mutual help society in the United States. He himself arranged a *temimim* Old-Boys Society in Russia under the tutelage of his father, which helped graduates in the Soviet Union.

The numbers of Habad Hasidim and graduates from the Tomhei Temimim yeshiva who had immigrated to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, had been lower than the immigration of other Hasidic groups, because of Rabbi YY Schneerson's insistence that they remain in Russia. Despite this, there were sufficient numbers to warrant their coordination. By 1926, Rabbi Schneerson had corresponded with R' Eli Simpson and had encouraged him to establish the organization Ahi Temimim, which was effectively an old boys' network. It arranged to collect money and provided a spiritual force for Habad Hasidim and expatriates of the Habad yeshivas. The aims of *ahi temimim* were to unite all ex-Lubavitch yeshiva students, to learn Hasidut, to support each other materially and spiritually, and to help the Habad movement in the United States and Europe, with particular attention to the yeshiva in Warsaw. Finally the organization was to help the Habad rebbe in every way (i.e., financially).

This organization was both strategically clever and utilized an extensive network of people and their sense of allegiance to assist one another. It achieved a record of success by helping Habad scholars immigrate and then acclimatize to American society by finding them employment and a social network. In return, the Habad movement developed a sense of cohesion and community that revolved around their respect for Rabbi Schneerson. With a constant flow of Jews to America, the need for community leadership and religious functionaries, teachers, slaughterers, and rabbis increased. Members of the Habad network helped one another to gain access to these positions and these new arrivals became, in time, influential people themselves and contributed to the movement's growth. In this way Schneerson established himself as a rabbi and venerated leader of people who were themselves venerated. His leadership was thus enhanced even before he reached American shores.

The first Habad institution in the U.S was called Agudat Hasidim Anshei Habad (ACHACH or the Union of Hasidim—people of Habad), which was established in 1924. The organization's primary aim was to unite people of Hasidic origin in brotherly support. Despite the fact that this organization had a board of directors of some 60 rabbis (or community activists) from around the United States and Canada, its general membership was loose and in practical terms the organization was ineffective. It was eventually dissolved in 1952 to make way for a new organization that united the various institutions that had been established until then, particularly Agudat Hasidei Habad (AGuCH or Union of Habad Hasidim).

AGuCH was officially established in 1940, but it had functioned unofficially since the 1930s and had for the most part cooperated with ACHACH. Its constitution advocated renewing Habad Hasidic consciousness in the new land and promised help in organizing study groups for Habad affiliates. The organization collected money for Rabbi Schneerson for his work on behalf of Soviet Jewry and helped him gather public support during his arrests in Soviet Russia. The organization was instrumental in bringing Schneerson to the United States, first on a visit and later to live. AGuCH became the basic instrument for Habad's activities around the world, particularly under Schneerson's leadership.

Many non-Lubavitch Hasidim of Habad orientation lived in the United States, both Hasidim or Hasidic affiliates who traced their allegiance to the various dynasties

of Bobruisk and Nezhin, and *Malakhim*, who, although they did not have affiliations to European hasidism were Habad affiliates. The existence of a Bobruisk community was well known and there was a network of *ari* synagogues with a Habadic affiliation.

The Lubavitch followers of Rabbi Schneerson, however, were slower to immigrate to the United States because their rebbe had instructed them not to. Hence, it may be assumed that the Habad Hasidic organizations of ACHACH and AGuCH comprised Habad Hasidim from various Habad dynasties other than Lubavitch. This is evident from the names of these organizations—“Union of Habad Hasidim” and “Union of Hasidim—People of Habad—” which contain no reference to the partisanship of the various offshoots and dynasties, and the name “Lubavitch” does not appear either. This might have occurred because of the lack of Lubavitch influence on the organization at its initial creation or to intentionally to endow the organization with broad acceptability, so as to attract as wide an association as possible. In any way one looks at it, it still indicates the desire to attract different varieties of Habad associates. It is appropriate to note that in contrast to the aforementioned policy, the contemporary Habad movement makes no effort to disguise its Lubavitch affiliation. Today the terms “Lubavitch” and “Habad” are commonly interchanged in general conversation and official documents. This contrasts with the politically sensitive attitude of the 1930s Habad organizations toward the various offshoots and their desire to maintain a nonpartisan umbrella organization for common activities.

Interesting questions still remain: Sid these organizations comprise and represent different Habad dynasties? Was the Lubavitch component in these organizations always the strongest element or did it only later gain dominance?

Divisions between sects were mended and disappeared over time, particularly by the end of Rabbi Schneerson's 1929 visit to the United States when he appeared to convince his critics of his integrity. He was received on that first visit by thousands of people and hailed as a Jewish hero of international standing. The reception for him took place at the docks and had been advertised as a massive Jewish event, as a Jewish hero and zaddik was arriving. Many dignitaries and rabbis came to meet him. Pictures of Schneerson were printed in bulk and distributed so as to show what he stood for. Articles were written about him, and in general he gained a large public reception. After these events the movement appeared to become both more united and more supportive of Schneerson as their undisputed leader. This is apparent from a number of sources, including letterheads from official Habad stationery, newspaper articles, letters and advertisements indicating stepped-up Habad activities.

On arrival, Rabbi Schneerson went to pains to reiterate the need for internal unity and solidarity. This he had also expressed in letters and communiques. It was likely that he was referring to the need for unity among the dynastic divisions within Habad. The complete lack of any mention of the term “Lubavitch” in institutional contexts is remarkable considering the fact that there were attempts to bring none other than the Lubavitcher rebbe to preside over them. A feasible explanation is, as mentioned, a deliberate effort to avoid partisan politics. If this is so then a

certain paragraph in the AGuCH constitution that reiterates the commitment to the Habad movement “over and above partisanship and politics” could be understood in reference to internal Habad politics and partisanship in the movement itself. Schneerson even made kindly gestures toward the *Malakhim* breakaway sect, indicating his attitude of inclusiveness.

More regular Habad activities began to take place on Jewish and Hasidic festivals according to Rabbi Schneerson’s instructions. There were public advertisements of these events in the Jewish press. Preparations to establish a yeshiva were made, and this was eventually inaugurated with 20 students in East Flatbush on the day and in honor of Schneerson’s second arrival in New York.

The amalgamation of the American Habad movement was possible, not necessarily because of the magnitude of Rabbi Schneerson’s leadership as much as the weakness of the Habad movement and its limited American representation. This left American Hasidism with little realistic choice but to merge in unity under a single rebbe. The destruction of European Jewry left the remnant of Hasidim in the United States and in the Holy Land as the largest surviving group. The lack of any viable alternative to Schneerson’s leadership was the main reason for this unanimous election. Even if descendants of other Habad rebbes could be located and brought to the United States, their stature and public exposure could not compare with that of Schneerson.

Rabbi Schneerson came with some of his family and aides. He proceeded to initiate the same organizational activities as he had done in Russia. Although he was sick he was nevertheless unrelenting. He appointed his close aides and relatives to administrative functions including his older son-in-law, Rabbi Shmaryahu Gurary. He worked through the existing institutions while creating new organizations for different duties.

He remained for a time in a hotel until a synagogue and house were purchased for him at 770 Eastern Parkway in the then upper-class neighborhood of Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The neighborhood comprised well-to-do middle-class Americans and Jews; among the latter were recognized scholars and Hasidic rebbes. From there, he began his consolidation of the movement. The home at 770 became the world headquarters for the Habad movement, drawing attention and support from Habad elements worldwide.

Rabbi Schneerson’s time in the United States was short-lived—he passed away in 1950—but his accomplishments in reconsolidating the Habad movement were mostly due to his own personal efforts and vision. He left the movement at a potential crossroads: to continue on without a rebbe, to appoint an officer or officers in charge of the movement but not a rebbe per se, or to appoint a rebbe with full rights and privileges that accompany that status.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, his youngest son-in-law, emerged as the next Habad-Lubavitch Rebbe and developed the Habad movement in unprecedented terms to what it is today, with thousands of centers and disciples around the United States and in every country where even small groups of Jews live or visit. The movement is unparalleled in the history of Jewish life and is a unique Diaspora phenomenon.

### Selected Bibliography

- Berger, Rhonda Edna. 1977. *An Exploration into the Lubavitcher Hasidic Leadership Alliance Network*. New York: Yivo Institute for Jewish Research.
- Deutch, Shaul Shimon. 1997. *Larger than Life: The Life and Times of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson*. Brooklyn, NY: Chasidic Historical Productions.
- Ehrlich, M. Avrum. 2004. *The Messiah of Brooklyn: Understanding Lubavitch Hasidism Past and Present*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV.
- Fishkoff, Sue. 2005. *The Rebbes Army: Inside the World of CHabad-Lubavitch*. New York: Schocken.
- Mintz, Jerome R. 1968. *Legends of the Hasidim—An Introduction to Hasidic Culture and Oral Tradition in the New World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mintz, Jerome R. 1992. *Hasidic People*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## Modern Jewish Orthodoxy in America

*Chaim I. Waxman*

---

The Orthodox make up about 10 percent of American Jewry, but for a variety of reasons, their significance far exceeds their actual numbers. The condition of American Orthodox Judaism underwent radical changes from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 21st century. In 1887, Rabbi Moses Weinberger (1854–1940), who emigrated from Hungary to New York City in 1880, wrote a pamphlet in Yiddish, *Jews and Judaism in New York*, which was a broad, stinging critique of the condition of traditional Judaism in New York. Weinberger warned those who anticipated becoming rabbis in the United States that the chances of successfully fulfilling their rabbinic aspirations were poor to nil, and they might be better off remaining in Europe. Likewise, Rabbi Jacob David Wilowsky (1845–1913), an outstanding Talmudic scholar and communal rabbi in Slutsk, Belarus, addressed a meeting of the Union of Orthodox Congregations, in New York City in 1901, and was quoted as condemning any Jew who came to America, “for here, Judaism . . . is trodden under foot. It was not only home that the Jews left behind them in Europe; it was their Torah, their Talmud, their *Yeshebahs* [sic], their *Chocomim* [sic]” (*American Hebrew* 1901).

Orthodox attitudes changed during the early decades of the century. Immigration from Eastern Europe between 1881 and 1923–1926 significantly increased the size of the Jewish population in the United States as whole, especially in the Middle Atlantic states (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). The dramatic increase in the Jewish population and the fact that the only form of Judaism known to most of the immigrants was the Orthodox version meant the early decades of the 20th century were viewed as very positive for American Orthodox Judaism. Orthodox Jewry founded a number of educational institutions, including elementary and secondary day schools and, in 1928, Yeshiva College, which was later transformed into Yeshiva University. Increasing numbers of Orthodox Jews were convinced that Orthodoxy was the wave of the future in American Judaism.

During the 1940s, however, it became increasingly apparent that larger numbers of second-generation Jewish youth were defecting from the Orthodoxy of their parents and, as sociologists W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole suggested, the rate of defection from religious tradition among second-generation Jews was much more obvious than the defections among other groups. As a result, the religious subsystem was in a state of disintegration. Some 10 years later, Marshall Sklare, the dean of American Jewish sociology, averred that “Orthodox adherents have succeeded in achieving the goal of institutional perpetuation only to a limited extent; the history of their movement in this country can be written in terms of a case study of institutional decay” (Sklare 1955). Although he limited his observation to institutional decline, there was strong evidence indicating that the Orthodox were also declining in numbers and, as recently as the mid-1970s, it appeared they would continue to decline.

A combination of processes changed much of this. For example, there was what the historian Jeffrey Gurock calls “the winnowing of American Orthodoxy”; that is, although the first half of the century witnessed defections from Orthodoxy, the community that was left was much more religiously committed and active. In addition, there was increased Jewish immigration from Europe just before and after the Holocaust, which included a disproportionate number of Orthodox—even a number of rabbinic leaders who had been heads of advanced rabbinical seminaries, *yeshivot gedolot*, in Eastern Europe, as well as many members and some leaders of a variety of Hasidic sects, perhaps most notably, those of Habad-Lubavitch and Satmar. Together, they inspired the reestablishment of Orthodoxy as they conceived it, including their advanced yeshivas, in a number of major American cities and their environs.

A major effort in this venture was the establishment of the National Society for Hebrew Day Schools, Torah Umesorah, which was founded in 1944 by Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz. The society’s objective was encourage and help found Jewish day schools—elementary and high schools that would provide intensive Jewish education along with a quality secular curriculum—in cities and neighborhoods across the country. The number of day schools grew tenfold and enrollments grew almost as much between the years 1940 and 1965; the rate of growth accelerated between then and 1975. These day schools and yeshiva high schools were located in 33 states across the country and, by 1975, every city in the United States with a Jewish population had at least one day school, as did four of five cities with a Jewish population of between 5,000 and 7,500. Among cities with smaller Jewish populations, one of four with a population of 1,000 Jews had a Jewish day school.

Although day schools had been viewed as parochial and shunned by the non-Orthodox, they subsequently became recognized as valued institutions within Conservative and Reform Judaism as well. Although the rate of day school education among the Orthodox continues to far outpace the rates among the non-Orthodox, by the 1990s, non-Orthodox day schools were the fastest-growing phenomenon in the American Jewish community as a whole. In part, the increased enrollments have been spurred by growing empirical evidence indicating that day school education correlates with almost all measures of Jewish identity and identification,

and for many of those measures, the correlation is much higher than it is with other types of Jewish education.

During the second half of the 20th century, a series of vibrant Orthodox Jewish suburban communities developed across North America. Much of their success is a result of the combination of the socioeconomic affluence of their constituents as well as the religious commitments that require them to live within a single neighborhood. Orthodox religious law prohibits driving on the Sabbath, setting the framework for a communal structure in which its members are in close physical proximity with one another.

Some Orthodox Jews who were sufficiently modern so as to have achieved relatively high educational and economic status, and who internalized modern conceptions of aesthetics and social organization, moved to the suburbs and built small communities that subsequently attracted larger numbers of Orthodox Jews once communal foundations existed. In contrast to the stereotype of Orthodox Jews as concentrated in the lower socioeconomic strata, many are fairly affluent. As a group, their annual family incomes continue to be lower than Conservative and Reform Jews, but compared with the North American population, they have above-average incomes.

During the late 1970s and 1980s, American Orthodoxy took a turn to the right in the sense of becoming more punctilious in ritual observance, as a result of both internal and larger societal developments. Demographics played a role in that the ultra-Orthodox or Haredi component of the American Orthodox population increased and became a highly significant proportion of the consumers of kosher food, and manufacturers had to cater their wares to their demands. In addition, many of them, especially the Hasidic portion of the community assumed leading roles in producing kosher foods and, naturally, introduced their more stringent standards into those areas. Today the entire Orthodox population has little option but to comply with the more rigorous standards. It is the old capitalist law of supply and demand at work.

Another source of the increased punctiliousness lies in the impact of the vast network of day schools, yeshiva high schools, post-high school yeshivas, and *kollelim* in cities throughout the United States since World War II, as already discussed. There has been a radical increase in both the extent of and levels of traditional Jewish learning among Orthodox Jews in the United States, to the point where at least 12 years of yeshiva day school education is the norm, and a significant number of the graduates of those institutions continue their studies for a year or more in yeshivas and seminaries in Israel or the United States.

There has been a dramatic increase in adult Jewish learning in the Orthodox community, as is evident in the popularity of the Art-Scroll Schottenstein Edition of the Talmud as well as translations of many other Judaica texts. It is also suggested by the remarkable increase in attendance at the celebrations of the *Siyum Hashas*, the conclusion of the seven-year cycle of daily Talmud study. The first public *Siyum Hashas* was held in 1968 and attended by about 700 people. The figures rose to 3,200 in 1975; more than 5,000 in 1982; about 26,000 in 1991; 70,000, which includes those who participated via satellite, in 1997; and more than 100,000, including participants via satellite, in March 2005.

Evidence suggests that increased Jewish knowledge leads to a greater awareness of Halacha/traditional Jewish law to changes in behaviors that may have been widespread in the community but are not Halachically sanctioned. For example, during the first half of the 20th century, many Orthodox synagogues held dinners and balls that included mixed-gender dancing, frequently with nonspouses. Likewise, it was quite typical for Orthodox Jews to eat dairy, fish, or meals at restaurants that had no kashruth supervision. With increased Jewish knowledge, such behavior is now much less common and widely frowned upon in the American Orthodox community.

In addition, socioeconomics and technological developments play a role. This is most obvious in the food industry where food production has become much more complex. Products with ingredients that were well-known in the past and may not have required special supervision, frequently require supervision today because the ingredients are much less well-known. Also, the increased socioeconomic status of the Orthodox affords them the ability to be much more punctilious than they had previously been.

Finally, American society as whole has become much more overtly religious since the 1970s, and the forces of “strong religion” have been on the rise in America and many other societies. Therefore, it is no surprise that American Orthodox Jews became more overtly Orthodox and punctilious in their behavior.

The Orthodox continued to strengthen their ties with Israel during the second half of the 20th century, and the empirical evidence shows that, by all measures, the extent of Orthodox Jews’ attachments to Israel greatly exceeds that among the non-Orthodox, and differences between them are sharpest with respect to the most demanding measures of involvement with Israel, be it receptivity to aliyah (immigration to Israel) rather than simply having pro-Israel feelings, having closer ties with individual Israelis, or possessing fluency in Hebrew rather than just a rudimentary knowledge of it. In addition, although emotional ties to Israel have weakened among non-Orthodox baby boomers, they have intensified among Orthodox baby boomers. Some of this may be because Orthodoxy has been the only officially recognized form of Judaism in Israel, a factor that may also have contributed somewhat to the distancing of the other segments of American Jewry from Israel. However, the intensification of emotional ties to Israel is more likely because Orthodox Jews travel to Israel more so than do others. Indeed, it is a norm today within the Orthodox community, especially among the Modern Orthodox, that yeshiva high school graduates go to Israel to spend a year learning in a yeshiva or seminary.

Another industry that has developed dramatically since World War II is that of English-language Orthodox publishing. The largest publishing company is ArtScroll and Mesorah Publications, pioneered by Rabbis Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, which publishes a wide array of translations, including its very popular prayer book, the ArtScroll Siddur, as well as hagiographic biographies, commentaries, and a range of children’s books, among others. Critics have argued that ArtScroll censors its books to present only *haredi*, or strict theological accounts and perspectives, but, by the turn of the century, most observers agree that, whatever its faults, ArtScroll revolutionized Jewish learning in America and raised its level to

unprecedented heights by bringing many remote sacred texts to the attention of the public at large in attractive editions. In addition, it played a key role in popularizing daily Talmud study by publishing an English-language translation of the Talmud. One public manifestation of this phenomenon was a series of major celebrations, comprising more than 25,000 Jews who completed the entire Talmud by studying a page each day for approximately seven and a half years. In September 1997, the 10th celebration of *Siyum Hashas* (completion of the *Shas* [Talmud]) sponsored by Agudath Israel included a satellite hookup to both Madison Square Garden in New York and the Nassau Coliseum in Nassau County, New York.

By the close of the century, it not only seemed acceptable to be Orthodox, but it almost appeared to be the popular way to be Jewish. As suggested, this dramatic turn was precipitated by a variety of internally Jewish as well as broader societal developments. Among the more dramatic manifestations of this phenomenon were the nomination of Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, a public and proud Orthodox Jew, for the vice presidency of the United States on the Democratic ticket in the 2000 election campaign; and the election of Orthodox Jews to mayorships of American cities in which Orthodox Jews are not the majority, including Lawrence, New York; Springfield, Englewood, Lakewood, and Teaneck, New Jersey; and Miami Beach, Florida. Clearly, not all American Orthodox Jews feel completely at home in America; on the other hand, being Orthodox no longer has the stigma it once did, and Orthodox attitudes toward America have become much more positive. As for their impact on American Judaism, their influence is much greater than their actual numbers, in part because they are much more intensively and extensively involved in dimensions of Jewish identity and identification, such as performing rituals, belonging to synagogues, attaining Jewish knowledge, making charitable donations to Jewish causes, visiting Israel, and expressing international concern for Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

- Gurock, Jeffrey S. 1997. *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav.
- Gurock, Jeffrey S. 2005. *Judaism's Encounter with American Sports*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Sarna, Jonathan D., ed. 1982. *People Walk on Their Heads: Moses Weinberger's Jews and Judaism in New York*. New York: Holmes and Meier.
- Sklare, Marshall. 1955. *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Warner, W. Lloyd, and Leo Srole. 1945. *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups*. Yankee City Series, vol. 3. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Waxman, Chaim I. 2003. "From Institutional Decay to Primary Day: American Orthodox Jewry Since World War II." *American Jewish History* 91, nos. 3 & 4 (September and December): 405–421.

# Denomination and Jewish Identity in America

*Chaim I. Waxman*

---

American Judaism comprises a number of different branches that can be properly labeled “denominations,” in that each has its own rabbinic seminary or seminaries, rabbinic organization or organizations, and synagogue or temple organizations. The major American Jewish denominations are Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. In addition, both Reconstructionist and Traditional Judaism have rabbinic seminaries and rabbinic organizations, but they represent very small percentages of America’s Jews. About 2 percent of affiliated American Jews identify as Reconstructionists. Traditional Judaism is much smaller and is essentially made up of traditionalist Conservative Jews who are opposed to what is viewed as the modernist strides of Conservative Judaism and modernist Orthodox Jews who are opposed to what is viewed the shift to fundamentalism within Orthodox Judaism.

Ostensibly, denominational choice is simply a reflection of one’s position on a continuum ranging from religious traditionalist to religious modernist: the Orthodox are the most traditional, the Reform the most modern, and the Conservative somewhere in between. This was, in fact, the way many Jews viewed it, and it was well expressed in typical responses given to Marshall Sklare when people were asked what they mean when they say they are Conservative: “Now—I’d guess you’d call it middle of the road, as far as [not] being as strict as the Orthodox, yet not quite as Reformed as the Reformed,” or “I don’t like the old-fashioned type, or the Reform. I’m between the two of them” (Sklare 1972, 208).

Evidence indicates that denominational affiliation is actually complex and reflects much more. Income status has historically been related to denominational status, and it was frequently the case that denomination was as much a reflection of income status as of religious ideology: the higher income status was Reform, the middle was Conservative, and the lower was Orthodox. This has changed somewhat, but it is still the case that the Reform have annual family incomes of about \$10,000 more than do the Conservative who, in turn, have similarly higher incomes than the Orthodox (Waxman 2001, 34–35).

Denomination correlates with synagogue membership: the Orthodox are most likely to belong and the Reform least likely. Denomination also clearly correlates with ritual performance. Table 7, for example, shows the correlation between denomination and frequency of synagogue attendance: the Orthodox have the highest and Reform the lowest. The same pattern manifests itself with respect to having a Passover Seder and fasting on Yom Kippur.

Denomination also correlates with a variety of family factors, such as marital status, including intermarriage, and number of children. Of the three major denominations, the Orthodox have the highest percentage of married and the lowest percentage of divorced, separated, single, and never married. For the Reform, it is the opposite, and the Conservative are between but more similar to the Reform.

**Table 7 Percent of Synagogue Attendance by Denomination, NJPS 2001**

	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform
Less than once a month	23	58	72
About once a month	9	15	15
2–3 times a month	7	12	8
About once a week	28	11	5
Several times a week	11	3	1
Every day	22	1	—
Total	100	100	100

The Orthodox also have the highest rate (96 percent) of in-married, compared with 87 percent for Conservative and 74 percent for Reform marrieds. The Orthodox also have the highest number of children per household; the Conservative have fewer and are much closer to the Reform, who have the lowest.

The Orthodox are much more likely to contribute philanthropically to Jewish causes, to be members of a Jewish community center and other Jewish organizations, to read Jewish newspapers and books, to use Jewish audio and visual material, and to use the Internet for Jewish information. Reform Jews are least likely to do any of these. Visits to Israel and emotional attachment to Israel also correlate with denomination.

Finally, denomination correlates with a series of attitudes toward Jewishness and Jewish peoplehood. For example, whereas more than 90 percent of Orthodox strongly agree that they have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people, only 74 percent of Conservative and 56 percent of Reform do. Orthodox are more likely than Conservative and Reform to agree that Jews in United States and Jews elsewhere share a common destiny. Orthodox are also most likely to have a very positive feeling about being Jewish and to strongly agree that they have a clear sense of what being Jewish means to them.

Although the data do not indicate which is cause and which is effect, that is, whether identifying with a particular denomination leads one to have a stronger sense of religious and ethnic identity or, rather, it is the strength of one religious and ethnic identity that leads one to identify with a particular denomination, it is quite clear that there is a high correlation between denomination and Jewish identity, and denominational identification is not related to matters solely within the religious realm. The more modern one is, the greater one's sense of one's own autonomy and self-determination, and the less they will subject themselves to authority beyond themselves, be it theological or group authority, and the less they feel loyalty to groups beyond themselves, be they religious or ethnic groups. It would appear that this also has implications for Diaspora groups in terms of the degree to which individuals feel themselves to be a part of such groups.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Elazar, Daniel J., and Rela M. Geffen. 2000. *The Conservative Movement in Judaism: Dilemmas and Opportunities*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

- Kaplan, Dana Evan. 2003. *American Reform Judaism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Lazerwitz, Bernard, J. Alan Winter, Arnold Dashefsky, and Ephraim Tabory. 1997. *Jewish Choices: American Jewish Denominationalism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Liebman, Charles S., and Steven M. Cohen. 1990. *Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Sarna, Jonathan D. 2004. *American Judaism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

## Syrian Jews in New York

*Sarina Roffe*

---

The Jews from Aleppo and Damascus, Syria, immigrated to the United States as part of the vast immigration from the region spurred by economic decline and political changes in their status. In the years before and after World War I, approximately 20,000 Jews from the region were processed through Ellis Island and settled in New York. Most settled in Brooklyn, where they established a communal infrastructure of synagogues, mikvahs, yeshivas, social service organizations, community centers, and a variety of support groups. Today, this community has grown to include Sephardic Jews from Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and other countries who live in New York and New Jersey. All of these groups have agreed to be under the umbrella of Aleppan rabbinic leadership.

The community is unique in that it has remained cohesive and retained much of its Middle Eastern culture, such as naming practices, religious observance, and respect for its spiritual leaders, while at the same time assimilating in terms of dress, education, and language. Unlike other Jewish communities in America, the Syrian and Near Eastern Community—dubbed “Aleppo in Flatbush”—has a low intermarriage rate, estimated at less than 5 percent, because of a rabbinical edict that forbids marriage to converts who convert only for the purpose of marriage.

### Initial Settlement

The Syrian Jewish community in New York originally consisted of two groups, Jews from Aleppo and Jews from Damascus. At first the convergence of the two groups was not easy. The Aleppan Jews thought themselves superior, largely because of their history in Aleppo as a center of Jewish learning. The Aleppans, or *Halabis*, followed the traditions of *Aram Soba*. The Damascene Jews, or *shammies*, prayed in a different house of worship. The two groups lived side by side, socialized and intermarried.

In 1911, a dozen or so Syrian Jews, united under the name Kehillat Shaare Sedek, formed a burial society and built a synagogue on the Lower East Side. A Talmud Torah for the children opened from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. daily and on Sunday

mornings. Members of the community, most of them businessmen, taught the classes. There was no rabbinical leadership until the arrival in 1910 of Rabbi Yitzhak Shalom zt'l, who helped thousands of Aleppan immigrants as they established themselves in the New World. By the mid-1920s, the community moved en masse to the Bensonhurst area of Brooklyn.

### Rabbinical Leadership

In 1933, Rabbi Jacob S. Kassin, a Talmudic and Kabbalistic scholar, was hired as chief rabbi of the Brooklyn community by a committee led by the late Aleppo-born Raymond Beyda, Rabbi Yitzhak Shalom, and Shlomo Grazi. As chief rabbi of Brooklyn's Syrian Jewish community, Rabbi Jacob Kassin handled all aspects of the community's spiritual growth from the Talmud Torah and synagogue services to life cycle events. Rabbi Jacob ran the beth din, decided cases, and established the community's Rabbinical Council. Rabbi Kassin reorganized the *Kahal* (congregation) and established a firm and stable foundation that carries the community today. Rabbi Kassin resisted modernization yet supported accommodation of American conditions.

During his 62-year tenure, Kassin revived Sephardic heritage, culture, tradition, and customs, as well as an awareness of Sephardic identity and Judeo-Arabic culture. During a time when many large Jewish communities were weakened by intermarriage, Brooklyn's Syrian community was strengthened. One of Kassin's most significant contributions was his decision to issue a takkanah against marriage to converts in 1935.

### Occupations

When the Syrian Jews came to America, they were limited in what they could do to support their families. Most had no more than an eighth-grade education, and they did not know Yiddish or English, so factory jobs were not desirable. Many became peddlers, an occupation that allowed them to observe the Sabbath, or small shopkeepers. They sold household items, linens, doilies, curtains, and tablecloths. Both commercial and kin ties bound the immigrants from Aleppo and those who remained in Syria.

It was common for Aleppan men with rabbinic training to work as merchants, rather than as judges or full-time scholars, considering it ideal to earn a living through secular means. Unlike East European Jews, who chose education as the path to success, Syrian Jews believed trade rather than secular education was the road to socioeconomic mobility. Therefore, Syrian Jews opened family-operated retail establishments and favored employing other members of the community.

Some Syrian Jews formed wholesale companies or began to manufacture clothing. Importing children's clothing from the Far East became a tremendous source of income, particularly in the years before and after World War II. Evidence of this is found today as the owners of manufacturing companies such as Catton Bros. (children's clothing), Baby Togs, Jet Set, and Jordache jeans all bear Syrian surnames.

Some opened stores at beach resorts up and down the East Coast where they sold linens, handkerchiefs, and tablecloths and later expanded to include souvenirs, costume jewelry, sweatshirts, and T-shirts. These summer store ventures declined by the 1980s, when the community became more observant as a whole.

After World War II, Syrians expanded from the garment business into the electronics business and opened chains of stores like Nobody Beats the Wiz or wholesale outlets like Soundesign. Republic National Bank was owned by an Aleppan, as well as chain stores like Duane Reade, Rainbow Shops, and others. Before long the shoe and blue jean industries were dominated by Syrian Jews who sold to K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Sears, and J.C. Penney stores.

As of 2006, most community members seek professional careers or careers in businesses that allow them to not work on the Sabbath, such as wholesale industry. Although retail is still a thriving career choice, to be successful a college degree is still preferred for substantive growth to occur.

### Communal Institutions

As the Syrian Jewish community grew, it established its own clearly defined infrastructure. The community established a cemetery (first in Queens, then on Staten Island), two synagogues, a Talmud Torah (a place for Jewish learning), and a ritual bath on 67th Street near 20th Avenue. The Damascene Jews prayed at Ahi Ezer Synagogue, and the Aleppan Jews prayed at Magen David Synagogue, which was built in 1921. Their cohesiveness is evidenced by a multitude of synagogues, yeshivas, high schools, mikvahs (ritual baths), a community center, social service organization, an old age home, and several community-subsidized senior citizen apartment buildings.

Parents, concerned that their culture and religion not be compromised by secular influences, control social liaisons and marriages. Religious observance of kashruth, holidays and the Sabbath, as well as *tzedakah*, *hesed*, and other mitzvah, is expected.

Sephardic Bikur Holim, the community social service agency, operates in a modern building and handles government entitlements, mental health referrals, career services, and medical referrals, to name a few. Teen volunteer programs encourage *chesid* in terms of tutoring, visits to the elderly, delivering challah on Friday afternoons, and delivering food to the elderly and homebound. Other services include blood donation, big brother/big sister program, health screenings, respite for expectant mothers on bed rest, a kosher soup kitchen, and free clothing for children donated by community manufacturers. Support groups are operated regularly to cover issues such as surviving cancer, smoking, caregiving for the sick, parenting, infertility, socialization for children, and issues related to parenting a child with a disability.

To help businesspeople succeed, a community institution—Sephardic Angel Fund—operates on the model of the Small Business Administration. Successful businesspeople are matched with young entrepreneurs and help them with business plans, budgets, achievable goals, and funding.

The Sephardic Community Federation was formed in 2003 as a political action committee to oversee donations by community members to political campaigns, apply for government funding of community institutions, and lobby for legislation that benefits the community as a whole.

## Education

Until the late 1950s, most Syrian children attended public school, and boys received their Hebrew education from a Talmud Torah (a place for Jewish learning), at the *k'nees* (Arabic for synagogue). The first Syrian Jewish day schools—Magen David Yeshiva, which was primarily Aleppan, and Ahi Ezer Yeshiva, which primarily served the Damascene Syrian community—opened in the mid-1950s.

Talmud Torah education, with its after-school Jewish study programs, was virtually eliminated from the community by the late 1960s. Yeshiva education reduced non-Jewish influences and marked a turning point in the religious educational system. This gradually influenced more Syrian Jews to become more observant than the previous generation, a trend that has continued until today. As the community grew, other yeshivas opened to meet the demand for different religious and educational philosophies as well as economic situations. Today there are more than a dozen community yeshivas, as well as high schools.

Most parents in the first and second generations did not consider a college education necessary or desirable for their children. Many feared secular influences and as most sons went into family businesses, the argument for higher education as an economic necessity was nil. Over time the attitude toward higher education was reversed and today most young people from the community seek careers by attending college. The community now boasts painters, artists, dentists, psychiatrists, physicians, attorneys, writers, decorators, real estate professionals, journalists, bankers, photographers, social workers, and even a Harvard physics professor. Many of these professionals remain in the community where the community's cohesive nature guarantees a strong client base.

## Where They Live

The insular nature of the community causes them to live together in the same neighborhoods, shop in the same shops, and vacation together. This continues their strong tradition of intramarriage.

After leaving their initial residences on the Lower East Side, the Syrian Jews first lived in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. As they began to prosper, the wealthier members purchased homes in the Ocean Parkway section of Brooklyn in the 1950s. In just a few years, the entire community had abandoned Bensonhurst and became clustered around Ocean Parkway.

As the community grew, so did its wealth. In the late 1950s, the community opened Shaare Zion Congregation, with a magnificent domed sanctuary and social hall in Brooklyn on Ocean Parkway between Avenue T and Avenue U. Just a block away, Ahi Ezer opened its doors with another large synagogue. Dozens of smaller

synagogues have opened in the ensuing years to accommodate the community's growth and to absorb Egyptians, Lebanese, Persians, Iranians, Moroccans, and eventually, the last of the Syrian Jews who were permitted to emigrate in the early 1990s.

### **Takkanah: Rabbinic Edict against Marriage to Converts**

In 1935, Rabbi Kassin and four other community rabbis signed a takkanah, or rabbinical edict, against marriage to converts who converted solely for the purpose of marriage. Such marriages were not to be recognized or accepted by the community. The edict was based on an earlier edict issued in Buenos Aires by Rabbi David Setton. Rabbi Kassin was particularly concerned about the sincerity of the conversions and the need to guard Jews against assimilation. The takkanah was reaffirmed in February 1946, May 1972, June 1984, and November 2006, when it was signed by both the rabbi and president of each community synagogue, yeshiva, and community organization. The signatures to the takkanah indicated that it had community agreement and, more importantly, community enforcement. The issue of conversions of adopted children was not addressed by the takkanah and appeared never to have arisen.

In the takkanah, the term “protect our identity and religious integrity” is used as justification for the takkanah, implying that marriage with a convert or non-Jew would compromise the identity of Syrian Jews as well as their motivation to practice religious Judaism. Saying the community had to preserve its “religious integrity” assumed that those who converted for the purpose of marriage were not sincere and that their influence would cause a community downfall.

The original takkanah also took away the right of community rabbis to perform conversions of people who wanted to marry into the community. The consequences of transgressing the takkanah included having the marriage of a Syrian Jew and a convert publicly announced; advising community members not to allow marriage to the children of converts, whether male or female; denial of burial in the community cemetery; and refusal to allow the children of converts to attend a community yeshiva or to have their bar mitzvahs in a community synagogue.

The community insists the takkanah has held it together and strengthened it, but there are no verifiable demographics to support this theory. Many community members have moved to other environs where there is less stringent observation of their religious observance and practice. Syrian and Near Eastern communities have strong presences in Los Angeles, Seattle, Atlanta, Miami, and Chicago, to name a few, where there is no takkanah against marriage to converts.

### **Conclusion**

In 2007, the Sephardic communities of New York and New Jersey were estimated at approximately 80,000 individuals. Family size averages four to five children per couple, all of whom attend yeshiva, where there is a dual curriculum. Because of the large size of extended families, weddings and bar mitzvahs tend to be very large; 400 people is considered a small affair in a community where weddings can include up to a thousand people.

Families who have been in the United States for three or four generations tend to be more assimilated, especially in terms of education. Newer immigrants, such as the last few thousand Syrians that arrived in the early 1990s, tend to cling to Old World values such as having their daughters marry before they finish high school.

Over time, the community has become much more religious and fragmented. Limitations to yeshiva size caused more yeshivas to open, each with their own value system. Some yeshivas extend their stringent rules (use of television, computers, which newspapers could be read) to home life and places where children could socialize. Some would only allow children to socialize within the school itself. The more centrist yeshivas, such as Magen David and Yeshiva of Flatbush, both of which are coed, practice Modern Orthodoxy.

The lack of a professional class in the community's early years caused a reliance on Ashkenazi teachers, whose influence over time on Sephardic yeshiva education has caused a loss of Judeo-Arabic culture and tolerance. Yet the community's presence and cohesiveness is impressive, even compared with religious Ashkenazic Orthodox communities. It has a strong infrastructure that meets the everyday needs of all community members.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Deshen, Shlomo, and Walter Zenner. 1982. *Jewish Societies in the Middle East: Community, Culture, and Authority*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Roffé, Sarina. 2006. "An Analysis of Brooklyn's Rabbinical *Takana* Prohibiting Syrian and Near Eastern Jews from Marrying Converts." Master's thesis, Touro College.
- The Spirit of Aleppo*. 1986. Sephardic Archives, Sephardic Community Center.
- Sutton, Joseph A. D. 1979. *Magic Carpet: Aleppo-in-Flatbush*. New York: Thayer-Jacoby.
- Sutton, Joseph S. 1988. *Aleppo Chronicles*. New York: Thayer-Jacoby.
- Zemer, Moshe. 1988. "The Rabbinic Ban on Conversions in Argentina," *Judaism* 37: 84–96.
- Zenner, Walter P. 2000. *A Global Community: The Jews from Aleppo, Syria*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Zenner, Walter P. 2000. "Reinterpretation of a Tradition by a Transnational Elite: The Rabbis of the Aleppan Diaspora." Unpublished paper.

## **Jewish Women's Contributions to Contemporary American and Jewish Life**

*Sylvia Barack Fishman*

---

Jewish women's lives in 20th- and 21st-century America altered patterns of historical Jewish antecedents, partaking of culture-wide social trends, especially first-wave feminism, obtaining the right to vote (suffrage), and second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1960s, which aimed to guarantee women educational, occupational, political, and social equality. These transformations affected demographic

realities—education, occupation, marital status, fertility levels, and social networks. Equally dramatically, Jewish women successfully worked to expand their roles in the realms of Judaic scholarship, religious leadership, Jewish life-cycle events, liturgy, synagogues, Jewish organizations, voluntarism, and philanthropy. Jewish women provided much of the leadership and grassroots support for feminism and feminist changes. Women's activism also revitalized Jewish connections within the lives of Jewish women and men.

### **Educational Achievement, Feminism, and Labor-Force Participation**

Sweeping social changes provided impetus and context for transformations in women's roles. Twentieth-century Jewish girls and women took advantage of American educational opportunities far more than women of other ethnoreligious groups: in New York in 1910, at a time when Jews made up about 19 percent of the population, 40 percent of the women enrolled in night school were Jewish. By 1934, more than 50 percent of New York female college students were Jewish. American Jewish women continued to pursue disproportionately high levels of secular education throughout the 20th century. In the 1960s, Jewish women emerged as feminist leaders, from Betty Friedan, whose critical book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) became the bible of the movement, to feminist activists with Jewish connections like Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, Shulamith Firestone, Vivian Gornick, and many others. On a grassroots level, Jewish women were among the most likely to join feminist consciousness-raising sessions and to change their lives in accordance with feminist ideals of independence, assertiveness, and self-actualization. Before second-wave feminism Jews were the ethnoreligious group most likely to acquiesce



Few Jewish women played as important a role in the rise of the feminist movement as Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and cofounder of the National Organization for Women. (Library of Congress)

to the American middle-class norm of homemaker-mothers, dropping out of labor force with the birth of their first child and devoting their excellent educations to volunteer work. However, with the advent of second-wave feminism in the 1960s Jewish women increasingly began to take jobs for pay outside the home. By the year 2000, four of five American Jewish women under age 65 across the spectrum of American Judaism had completed a bachelor's degree and more than one of three had a graduate or professional degrees. Today, most American Jewish women are employed for pay even when they have young children at home. Indeed, except for the ultra-Orthodox, religiously traditional women are as likely as other groups of American Jewish women to have earned advanced degrees and to work outside the home in a professional capacity.

### Jewish Feminism

Feminism with a distinctive Jewish focus became differentiated from the generalized movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it was part of an overall Jewish awakening. Exploration of Judaism as a religious culture from a feminist perspective was encouraged by the protest movements and youth culture, which advocated "doing your own thing," including celebrating ethnic differences. This was reinforced by American Jewish feelings of pride immediately after the 1967 war in the Middle East. In a parallel development, American Jewish intellectuals and artists had become extremely influential and were increasingly exploring and emphasizing their own Jewishness. Jewish feminists began to turn their attention toward the Judaic cultural heritage and contemporary Jewish societies and institutions with the publication of Trude Weiss-Rosmarin's "The Unfreedom of Jewish Women" (*Jewish Spectator*, October 1970), which examined "the inequality of Jewish marriage laws"; and Rachel Adler's "The Jew Who Wasn't There" (*Davka*, Summer 1971), which contrasted male and female models of Jewish piety. In the early 1970s, Jewish women's prayer and study groups were being formed in St. Louis, Baltimore, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and New York. Women from the New York Havurah (one of the new egalitarian worship and study groups that developed on college campuses and spread into Jewish communal settings) evolved into Ezrat Nashim, made up primarily of women who identified as Conservative Jews and were interested in Jewish women's scholarly and public leadership roles. For many, the impact of Jewish feminism was epitomized by the movement of women into public religious leadership roles: In 1972, the Reform movement ordained the first female rabbi, followed in 1974 by the Reconstructionist movement. In 1985, urged on by Ezrat Nashim and a determined group of rabbis, the Conservative movement's first woman rabbi was ordained. Today, women are a large proportion of rabbinical and cantorial candidates, and they serve as professionals in numerous Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform American congregations.

### A Spectrum of Transformed Judaisms

The two most sweeping impacts of changing women's roles center on the relationship of women to their Jewish cultural and intellectual heritage: (1) the inclusion of

females in Jewish education; and (2) the inclusion of gender and women's issues in research. For much of Diaspora Jewish history boys marked their bar mitzvah with celebrations, and girls seldom did. Boys were far more likely to be sent to religious schools than girls, and many girls received no formal Jewish education. In contrast, when bat mitzvah celebrations became ubiquitous in American communities across the denominational spectrum, the gender gap narrowed, disappeared, and by the turn of the 21st century had actually reversed itself—today, girls are slightly more likely than boys to be enrolled in Jewish educational activities at the elementary school ages, and dramatically more likely to continue through the teen years. In Orthodox communities, it has for several decades been normative for girls to attend Jewish day schools for 12 years and then a one-year program of advanced Jewish study in Israel between high school and college. In non-Orthodox, adult, Jewish educational settings, women now outnumber men two to one.

Increasing numbers of women are Judaic studies scholars, teaching and publishing in fields ranging from the Bible, the Ancient Near East, rabbinics, Jewish history, ancient and modern Hebrew literature, Jewish thought, Zionism, Israel studies, and the sociology of contemporary Jewish communities. Moreover, Judaic studies fields themselves have been transformed by insights provided when gender becomes an analytical tool. Paying attention to the lives and sometimes the writings of women in historical Jewish societies has added more than an understanding of women—it has deepened the overall comprehension of the Jewish experience, including the centrality of Jewish domestic life to the transmission of Jewish culture historically.

### **Jewish Women as Brokers of Increased Jewish Engagement**

Over the past half-century, the increasing involvement of American Jewish women in public Judaism, including synagogue and ritual settings, and their increasing access to Judaic texts, has generated new levels of excitement and participation for men and women. Mature women studying Hebrew, trope Torah and Haftorah reading, and Jewish history in preparation for adult bat mitzvahs, for example, have often been the impetus for innovative synagogue and communal educational programs—programs that are open to all. Women in Reform temples proudly donning Israeli hand-crafted *kipot* (head coverings) and *tallitot* (prayer shawls) have reintroduced this distinctive ritual garb in environments that discouraged them for decades. Contemporary feminist scholarship has shown how important women's domestic Judaism was in many earlier periods of Jewish history. In a change from past patterns, sociological study of the American Jewish community shows that today women's involvement is powerfully influential in rescuing public Jewish rituals and customs, along with Jewish texts and traditions. In sociological language, women increasingly serve as "brokers," connecting not only other women but also men to their Jewish cultural heritage.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Baskin, Judith, ed. 1991. *The Jewish Woman in Historical Perspective*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

- Fishman, Sylvia Barack. 1993. *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community*. New York: Free Press.
- Friedan, Betty. 1963. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Norton.
- Kaplan, Marion. 1991. *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family and Identity in Imperial Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Jewish Renewal in America

*Shaul Magid*

---

The Jewish Renewal movement is one of the most recent and creative expressions of Judaism's continued attempt to mold itself to the contours of modernity. It is, in many respects, an indigenous American religious movement, but is expanding into a global Jewish phenomenon. This multifaceted development in contemporary Judaism is hard to categorize. It has the audacity of a reformation, the passion of a revival, and the optimism of a renaissance. Its critique and reconstruction of Judaism not only occupies the realm of ideas but also reaches down to the organizational structure of Judaism in the Diaspora.

For most of the 20th century Judaism in America has developed along denominational lines. Each denomination has its own autonomy, its own rabbinical academies, and its own fund-raising apparatus. The disestablishment clause in America has enabled American Judaism to develop its own institutional and spiritual apparatus without any serious threat of the hegemony of one community over the other. Renewal emerged from this denominational bedrock but has challenged the denominational structure. It is, perhaps, the prelude to, or first fruits of a postdenominational Judaism in America, growing out of the dissatisfaction many Jews have with the present ideological and practical structure of Judaism in the Diaspora (North America in particular).

### Origins

Many factors contribute to the breakdown or transformation of denominational Judaism in America and the emergence of a new approach to religion and culture. Three of the most prominent direct factors are (1) the maturation of American Jews who did not experience firsthand the devastation of European Jewry in the Holocaust; (2) the rise of a generation of Jews (many second-generation Americans) who were disaffected from the materialism and spiritual vacuity of mid-to-late 20th-century American Jewish life; and (3) the shock waves of the American counterculture, including the importation of Far Eastern religions to the American continent. More specifically, it is impossible to pinpoint the beginning of Jewish Renewal in one seemingly benign event.

In 1948, the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Schneerson (d. 1950) decided to inaugurate the missionary wing of his movement (only missionizing to Jews)

by sending emissaries to college campuses. He asked two young disciples, Zalman Schachter (later Schachter-Shalomi) (b. 1924) and Shlomo Carlebach (1924–1994) to attend a Hanukkah party at Brandeis University (which opened its door that very year) in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts. Schachter-Shalomi and Carlebach took various Hasidic books, tapes, and religious paraphernalia and attended the party intending to spread the message of traditional Judaism. Both were raised in Europe, studied there, and were refugees from the war, Carlebach escaping before the war and Schachter-Shalomi afterward. What they experienced that winter night at Brandeis University was the extent to which young American Jews lived in an intellectual universe that left no room for tradition the way they envisioned it. They both understood the extent to which unadulterated Hasidism simply could not be sold to an American audience raised on liberal democratic ideals. Schachter-Shalomi and Carlebach did different things with that realization, both of which contributed to Jewish Renewal, but the spark of what would become a new Jewish movement may have been ignited that evening. The first fruits of Schachter-Shalomi's meditation on those and other events was published as *Fragments of a Future Scroll* in 1975.

## Influences

In many ways Jewish Renewal is a good example of late 20th-century religious syncretism in America. It does not intend to start a new American religion or subreligion (like Scientology, Mormonism, Southern Baptism, or Seventh-Day Adventism). Yet, in opposition to other extant Jewish denominations, it freely adopts ideas and practices from other religions, incorporating them into its developing Jewish model of worship. It is theologically anti-Orthodox (in the more formal use of the term) and seeks to create a spiritual context that can be used by Jews and non-Jews alike. In this sense, it is very much a product of American life in that it exercises a kind of eclectic creativity, reaching beyond the confines of its own tradition, fully taking advantage of a society where freedom of religious expression is a matter of law.

The influences of Jewish Renewal are not limited to Judaism. Influences include an amalgam of classical Jewish pietism, medieval Kabbalah, Hasidism, the western instantiation of Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, Christian monasticism, American pragmatism, Jewish Reconstructionism, religious existentialism, and progressive American political activism and environmentalism.

The most direct and prominent influence on Jewish Renewal is Hasidism, a Jewish pietism from the late 18th-century Eastern Europe that transformed world Jewry in the past two centuries. Both Schachter-Shalomi and Carlebach were trained in the Hasidic tradition and used Hasidic literature as the basis of their Renewal approach. Schachter-Shalomi, who is the architect of this movement, views the message of Hasidism as one that can be revamped, revalued, and de- and re-contextualized to complement an era of Jewish inclusiveness and tolerance. In many ways Martin Buber's modernization of Hasidism as Jewish existentialism plays an important role here, as does Abraham Joshua Heschel's use of Hasidism as a source for his theology of pathos. In his writings Schachter-Shalomi acknowledges his debt to Buber and Heschel yet seeks to take their initiative in a different

direction. He does not relate to Hasidism as a movement, but as an approach to Judaism, something that can be revalued and used to express contemporary sensibilities. Although Hasidism is a usable model for this movement, some Renewal thinkers also view Hasidism as limited because of its unwillingness to extend its provocative teachings to their logical conclusion. This logical conclusion, what Schachter-Shalomi calls a “paradigm shift,” is the ideological foundation of Jewish Renewal and will be discussed later.

Although American Judaisms have become fully comfortable with American life in the 20th century, in many respects the particularistic nature of Judaism and its relationship to peoplehood have prevented it from engaging in global issues as part of its devotional life. Reform and Reconstructionist Judaisms do contribute to global concerns, but their social activism is not as integrated into their devotional practices as in Renewal. A good example is the environmental movement in America. One of Renewal’s original leaders, Arthur Waskow, has played a prominent role in contemporary environmentalism. His most popular works on these ideas are *Seasons of Our Joy: A Modern Guide to the Jewish Holidays* (1982) and *Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4000 Years of Ecology and Jewish Thought* (2000).

Another major area of Jewish Renewal is ecumenism and the use of other religious traditions and teachings to enhance and revise existing Jewish practice. Although modern American Judaisms often engage in ecumenical dialogue (before 9/11 almost exclusively with Christians) they usually do not integrate the practices of other religions into their religious life. This speaks to the cautious way in which modern Judaisms view the “other,” even in a free democratic society. Schachter-Shalomi is an ordained Sufi teacher and many of Jewish Renewal’s constituency practice and teach various forms of meditation, either adapted to Jewish sensibilities or not. This raises yet another internal debate in this community that is common in fledgling religious movements. Should external influences be “Judaized” or made “kosher” or should other rituals and traditions be practiced without any Judaizing process? Elat Hayyim, the Jewish Renewal retreat center in upstate New York, holds regular meditation retreats as well as more traditional Jewish festival retreats and workshops. Serious engagement with other religious traditions, including inviting masters of other religious disciplines to speak at seminars and retreats and adapting some of their practices, illustrates Renewal’s attempt to break out of the insular framework of traditional and even progressive Judaism.

Another important influence on Jewish Renewal is American pragmatism viewed through the lens of Mordecai Kaplan’s Reconstructionist Judaism. Reconstructionism argues that Judaism is, first and foremost, a civilization. Jewish law is viewed as a system of folkways that Jews developed to give themselves a unique identity as a people. These folkways are essential to maintain and protect as the people’s identity is dependent on them. However, Jewish ritual and practice must conform to the sensibilities of the people and not be foisted upon them as “commandment.” This notion of Jewish practice came to be known as “post-Halachic” Judaism, a Judaism devoted to practice but one not based on unalterable and commanded law. Kaplan’s battle was with liberal Reform Judaism, which he believed had abandoned law and practice completely, and with Conservative and Orthodox

Judaism, which were, in his view, living a law that was outdated, both in form and substance. Kaplan's influences included John Dewey and Emile Durkheim. His approach was rational and pragmatic and not generally metaphysical.

Another important factor in Renewal is its engagement with Islam. Renewal members, Schachter-Shalomi in particular, were early and continuous supporters of dialogue with Palestinian Muslims, mostly Sufis, and were quite successful in opening lines of communication between Jews and Muslims on matters of spirituality and politics. This was the case in the 1960s when there was almost no serious Jewish-Muslim dialogue. As progressive leftists, most sympathize with the plight of the Palestinian civilian population and view Israel as an occupying power in the territories. Organizations like the New Jewish Agenda, the Abraham Fund, and Seeds of Peace, while not formally a part of Jewish Renewal, are influenced by it. Renewal's stance on the crisis in the Middle East illustrates where it opts out of a fervent messianism (severing it from its Lubavitch Hasidic roots that now, with the Jewish settler movement, represent the most virulent examples of Jewish messianism) and rejects the ultra- or hypernationalism so common in Diaspora Judaism. Instead, Renewal lobbies for a softer utopian vision where barriers between peoples are to be made more transparent rather than more opaque.

## Ideology

Jewish Renewal is founded on a reformist ideology couched in a revivalist pietism. Like many such movements in the history of religions, its agenda is both apostolic and subversive. Its claim to have retrieved an internal meaning of Judaism is used to counter the status quo of what Judaism has become. In this sense it is also, to use more contemporary language, countercultural. The reformist predilection of Jewish Renewal is captured in the aforementioned paradigm shift. The idea is not new, but is creatively adapted to the contours of the contemporary world. The basic notion of paradigm shift is that history can be divided into distinct historical epochs, each of which contains particular spiritual paths, even within one particular religious tradition. An analysis of the messianism of Jewish Renewal, born from a tempered reading of contemporary Lubavitch (Hasidic) messianism, is a desideratum in scholarship. What is also important here is that this doctrine was also foundational for the heretical Jewish movement of Sabbatai Zevi in the 17th century.

## Impact

The impact of Jewish Renewal is already profound yet, given that we are still in the midst of its full disclosure, still somewhat unknown. It is important to note that although Renewal was fed by the Baal Teshuva movement (new returnees to Judaism) in the late 1960s to mid-1970s (on this see Janet Aviad, *Return to Judaism* [1983]), Renewal is not a part of that movement—in fact, in many ways it is its opposite. The Baal Teshuva movement was a movement of disenchanting Diaspora and Israeli youth who turned back to traditional Judaism as an alternative to the vacuous materialistic lives of their upbringing. The endgame of this movement was

a return to Orthodoxy and a basic rejection of Western values. Renewal is not a return to the past but a reconstruction of a future built on tradition but not bound to it. Although many young Jewish seekers passed through Renewal on their way to Orthodoxy, those that stayed created a Judaism that was decidedly not Orthodox and not accepting of the hegemonic claims of Orthodoxy's leadership.

Jewish Renewal has affected all Jewish denominations in North America, from Orthodoxy to Reform. Orthodoxy absorbed Renewal's focus of joyful worship and the music of Carlebach (who really was not formally part of Renewal, but floated freely between Jewish communities), some of the Hasidic teachings of Schachter-Shalomi, and the use of meditation and contemplative prayer developed by some Renewal members. Conservative and Reform Jewish communities in North America have seen the rise of smaller prayer quorums (called havurah-style communities) emerge in their larger synagogues by members who desire a more intimate and less formal prayer service. Classes in Hasidism and meditation exist in many suburban American synagogues, largely because of the impact of members who attended Renewal retreats and brought the message of Renewal to their own communities. Secular Jews who had only negative views of Judaism as antiquated and irrelevant have found Renewal sympathetic to their needs and supportive of their own secular Jewish choices. Some of these Jews have found a political home in Renewal because it represents their politics and is decidedly and openly "Jewish," but is not patriarchal, overly nationalistic, or xenophobic. In short, Jewish Renewal is leading a grassroots renaissance in Judaism, undermining tradition while espousing it, offering a progressive message that better suits the pre-multiculturalism of Reform and offers a non-Orthodox piety and meta-legal alternative to Conservative Judaism.

The recent JewBu (Jewish-Buddhist) phenomenon is, in many ways, an extension of Jewish Renewal. This largely amorphous community consists of Jews who have taken on Buddhism as a religious and spiritual path, some attaining high ranks in Buddhist circles, who have taken their vocation and turned back to Judaism in an attempt to integrate Buddhist practice with Jewish worship. These practitioners and teachers have had an impact on Jewish communities by giving workshops throughout America and in Israel.

There has been a tendency to conflate Jewish Renewal and Neo-Hasidism. They are, in fact, quite different. Neo-Hasidism was originally a literary movement among enlightened and ex-traditional Jews in the early part of the 20th century who used Hasidism as a template for a kind of modern Jewish romanticism. Figures such as the Hebrew and Yiddish writer Yehuda Leib Peretz, the novelist and poet Shalom Ash, and the philosopher Martin Buber are counted among this circle. Contemporary Neo-Hasidism is, perhaps, a second wave of that phenomenon, one that adopts the general tenor of Hasidic spirituality as a resource for contemporary Judaism. One example of Neo-Hasidism would be the appearance of secular and contemporary adaptations of Hasidic music among some Israeli musicians in the 1970s. Unlike Jewish Renewal, present-day Neo-Hasidism has no discernible ideology, nor is it a constructive critique of Jewish life. It is primarily an artistic utilization and romanticization of a deeply theological movement. Religiously, it adopts certain

Hasidim modes of worship to enhance Jewish ritual and practice. Neo-Hasidism is popular in all Jewish denominations as it does not demand any reordering of fundamental principles. It largely exists in the popularity of Hasidic texts and more prominently in music accompanying the liturgy. In this respect, the father of second-wave Neo-Hasidism is Carlebach whose music and Hasidic teachings have inspired Jews throughout the world. In opposition to Schachter-Shalomi and Jewish Renewal, Carlebach and Neo-Hasidism have no real ideological or organizational agenda. Although Jewish Renewal surely is a part of the more amorphous Neo-Hasidism, it is not identical to it.

Jewish Renewal in Israel is just taking root, and it is still too early to tell how it will affect Israeli society. Orthodoxy's hegemony in Israel and the deeply rooted secularism of Israeli Zionism will force Renewal to alter its diasporic message. Renewal communities are beginning to emerge in Israel, joining secular Israel's fascination with Far Eastern spirituality with Neo-Hasidic Jewish ritual and worship. Festivals held in rural areas on Jewish festivals like Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) complete with drum circles, meditation, dancing, and the sounding of the shofar (ram's horn) are becoming commonplace. A new Israeli Renewal is surely emerging but, to date, it is still in its embryonic stages.

### Selected Bibliography

- Magid, Shaul. 2004. "Rainbow Hasidism in America—The Maturation of Jewish Renewal—A Review Essay." *The Reconstructionist*, Spring.
- Magid, Shaul. 2006. "Jewish Renewal, American Spiritualism, and Postmonotheistic Theology." *Tikkun Magazine*, May/June.
- Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman. 1993. *Paradigm Shift*. Northvale, NJ: Aronson.
- Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman. 2003. *Wrapped in a Holy Flame*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman, with Daniel Seigel. 2005. *Credo of a Modern Kabbalist*. Victoria, BC, Canada: Trafford Publishing.
- Weissler, Chava. 2005. "Meanings of the Shekhina in the Jewish Renewal Movement." *Nashim* 10.

## Jewish Studies in American Universities

*Judith R. Baskin*

---

Jewish studies, also called Judaic studies, is the academic teaching of aspects of Jewish religion, history, philosophy, and culture, as well as associated languages and literatures, at the undergraduate and graduate level in institutions of higher education. The significant expansion of Jewish studies in American universities is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although the Hebrew language was included in the curriculum of several of the earliest colleges to be established on the North American continent in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was taught as part of a theologically oriented curriculum designed to help potential Christian clergymen understand

their religious heritage. Some instructors, such as Judah Monis, who taught at Harvard University between 1722 and 1760, were Jews or of Jewish heritage.

Jewish studies at American universities were truly established in the 1890s under the influence of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. This post-Enlightenment European Jewish movement, dedicated to promoting the rational, scientific, and critical study of Jewish religion, history, and culture, reshaped Jewish learning into an academic endeavor that was compatible with the scientific methodologies of the German university. Although pervasive anti-Semitism tended to deny Jewish studies a secure place in the European university curriculum, *Wissenschaft* found an institutional home in the academic rabbinic seminaries of Central Europe. In late 19th-century United States, however, chairs in Jewish studies were established in a number of major secular universities, most often with the active financial support of members of local Jewish communities.

Many of the founders of these positions, who tended to be connected with Reform Judaism, hoped that recognition of the centrality of Jewish knowledge and scholarship in the development of Western thought would hasten Gentile acceptance of American Jews. Certainly, the establishment of these positions, often in Semitic languages and literatures, played a role in legitimizing the Jewish and Judaic presence in American life and delivered the message that the Jewish literary and cultural heritage belonged in the university curriculum.

There was a rapid growth in Jewish studies in North American colleges and universities in the last third of the 20th century. The traumas of the Six-Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, as well as increasing discussion of the Shoah, inspired in many Jewish young people a desire to learn more about their identities and heritage. The unprecedented number of Jewish baby boomers who descended on college campuses beginning in the mid-1960s also played a role, as did the growing number of Jews in the professoriat. Another factor was the assertiveness of other ethnic groups on the American campus, including African Americans and Latinos, in advocating for academic courses that explored and analyzed their particular historical and cultural backgrounds. Jewish students and faculty, who were rediscovering the richness of their own tradition, pressed universities to offer academic courses on the Jewish experience. The establishment of the Association for Jewish Studies in 1969 was another indication of the growth of academic Jewish studies in late 20th-century North America. By 2005, this organization had more than 1,500 members, most of whom were teaching in institutions of higher education.

A wide variety of organizational and structural approaches in the teaching of Jewish studies, depending on individual circumstance in any given institution, characterizes the field in North America. In recent years, the free-standing Jewish or Judaic studies program or department that awards undergraduate and graduate degrees in Jewish/Judaic studies has become common. A significant number of Jewish studies programs require Hebrew language and literature study for undergraduate majors and graduate students. In some cases students must study Classical Hebrew language and texts; in others, Modern Hebrew is required. The result has been a proliferation of Hebrew language study across North American institutions of higher education to a degree that would certainly not have occurred without the

linkage of Hebrew to Jewish studies. Several Jewish studies programs also offer instruction in Yiddish language and literature.

Before the 1970s, most scholars and teachers of Jewish studies in North America were men, many of whom had moved into the academic world after completing rabbinic training. A noteworthy change in Jewish studies in North America in the decades between 1975 and 2005 is the number of women who have entered the field and climbed the academic ladder from graduate students to professors in every area of Jewish studies scholarship. Concurrently, teaching and scholarship in Jewish studies have become more aware of gender as an intellectual category of analysis and the necessity to consider the constructions and consequences of gender in explicating the Jewish experience.

Jewish studies have continued to thrive and expand in a variety of North American institutions of higher learning in the first decade of the 21st century, in significant part through the philanthropy of individual donors. The growth of personal wealth in this era, together with increasing communal concern about strengthening of Jewish identity at a formative period in young people's lives, has led to a proliferation of endowed faculty positions, programs, and Jewish studies centers, both at public and private research universities that offer graduate degrees, and at institutions with a primary focus on undergraduate education. Certainly not all positions in Jewish studies in North America are dependent on outside funding. However, the investment of philanthropic resources to finance Jewish studies has been a significant boon for colleges and universities and for the field itself.

Although definitive data as to the number of positions, programs, and departments was not available in 2006, an unofficial listing of directors and chairs of academic Jewish studies entities of one kind or another numbered over 70 individuals. Information from recent Jewish population surveys indicates that as many as 40 percent of Jewish undergraduates in North America have taken at least one course in Jewish studies.

Changing demographics in the early 21st century indicate an ongoing decline in the absolute numbers of Jews in the larger population, including student populations. The future of Jewish studies in North American universities will depend on the field's continuing appeal to a larger constituency. In 2006, numerous students who took courses and chose undergraduate majors and graduate training in Jewish studies were non-Jews who came to the field out of intellectual curiosity. Similarly, increasing numbers of scholars and faculty members who research in Jewish studies are not themselves Jews.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Biale, David, M. Galchinsky, and S. Heschel, eds. 1998. *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Davidman, Lynn, and S. Tenenbaum, eds. 1994. *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Garber, Zev, ed. 2000. *Academic Approaches to Teaching Jewish Studies*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Ritterband, Paul, and H. S. Wechsler. 1994. *Jewish Learning in American Universities: The First Century*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

## American Christian Attitudes to the Jewish Diaspora

*Yaakov Ariel*

---

Since the 17th century, Christian thinkers in America have expressed themselves extensively on the role of the Jews in God's plans for humanity, including the purpose of the Jewish dispersion among the nations and the prospect of the Jewish restoration to Zion. Those issues have occupied American Christians more than Christians in most other nations. In contrast to other Christians, American Protestants have paid little attention to traditional Christian claims that the Christian Church inherited God's promises to Israel. Especially Puritan, Pietist, and evangelical writers, have looked upon the Jews as heirs to biblical Israel and as a people that were destined to regain their position as a favored nation in their ancestral homeland. At the same time, Puritan ministers welcomed Jewish settlement in America because they expected the Jews to spread to all corners of the earth before the messianic times unfolded. They also welcomed the opportunity to evangelize Jews.

While viewing the Jews as heirs to biblical Israel, the Puritans understood their own experience in America in biblical terms, viewing their migration from Europe to America as equivalent to the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, and their arrival in New England as the settlement of Canaan. Looking upon themselves as a community in covenant with God and as builders of a new Zion they wished to create a perfect Christian society that would serve as a light unto the nations, and they paid little attention to the actual realities of the Zion on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. This attitude changed at the turn of the 19th century. After the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, a new interest spread among American Protestants in the prospect of the imminent arrival of the Messiah as well as in the possible millennial meaning of political events taking place in Europe and the Near East. The developments in Palestine encouraged theologians, such as George Bush, a congregational minister and professor at New York University, to claim that the Jewish return to Palestine was imminent.

Although Americans were influenced in their relation to the Jews by their millennial faith, Jews were more welcomed in America than in most other Christian nations. They did not rid themselves easily of stereotypical images of Jews, but the Protestant biblical faith made Christians more accepting of Jews and Jews have therefore found a friendlier and more accepting Christian atmosphere in America.

Different American Christian groups followed different paths. Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, followed in the footsteps of the Puritans, viewing America as Zion. In the *Book of Mormon*, which the Latter-day Saints consider to be part of the canon of sacred scriptures, America is promoted as the Promised Land, blessed by Jesus himself. Smith, however, also considered the Zion in the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean to be a Promised Land for the Jews. Although Smith expected the descendents of Joseph, identified with the Latter-day Saints, to congregate in the American Zion at the fullness of

time, he believed the Jews would accept the Christian Mormon faith before the Messiah arrived and would congregate in their ancestral homeland, the Zion in the East. In 1841, Smith sent an envoy, Orson Hyde, an elder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to bless the Holy Land and pray for an end to the Jewish dispersion.

William Miller, a Baptist minister who stirred a large movement of millennial expectations in America in the 1830s–1840s, took very little interest in the Jews, their dispersion, and the prospect of their restoration to Zion. The Adventist Church, which carries the Millerite messianic tradition, has also seen no importance in the dispersion of the Jews or in their return to Zion. In the Adventist understanding, the messianic event happens in Heaven and there has been no meaning to such terms as “Diaspora” or “Zion.” A similar understanding has been adopted by the Watchtower Tract Society, whose members are known as Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Mainstream conservative Protestants, on the other hand, have deepened their interest in the prospect of Jewish national restoration. In the later decades of the 19th century and during the 20th century, millions of conservative Protestants have adopted a messianic faith named dispensationalism, which divides human history into distinct eras, for each of which God has a different plan for humanity. Meshing well with the conservative Protestant critique of contemporary culture, dispensationalism has served as a philosophy of history that explains where humanity is heading and how the various political, social, and cultural developments fit with God’s plans. The adoption of the dispensationalist messianic faith in America of the latter decades of the 19th century by conservative Protestants has strengthened their understanding that the Jews were destined to go back to Palestine and build a commonwealth there. The large influence of dispensational millennialism on the American mind, however, did not create a movement that called upon the Jews to leave America and move to Palestine. If anything, it helped facilitate the acceptance of Jews in mostly Christian America. However, Jews were supposed to return to their ancestral homeland in the fullness of time in “unbelief,” without having accepted Jesus as their Savior, and establish a political entity there. Dispensationalists and evangelicals, in general, have therefore offered support to the Zionist movement and the State of Israel and have derived much reassurance from the development of the Jewish national movement in the 20th century.

Parallel to the rise of a conservative evangelical camp in American Protestantism, a liberal wing has also developed within American Christianity, which took a very different approach to the Jews and their diasporic existence. The liberals adopted a progressive millennial faith, which insisted that humans should not wait for divine intervention and the arrival of a Messiah to solve the problems of the earth, but should work toward building the Kingdom of God on Earth on their own. The liberals therefore did not consider the Jews to play a crucial role in the events that would bring about the messianic age. However, the liberal relation to Jews also went through a historical transformation in the 1930s–1980s, which has affected their relation to the Jewish diasporic existence and to the prospect of the Jewish restoration to Palestine. Moving away from the traditional replacement theology, Reinhold Niebuhr, a proponent of Christian realism, was one of the first Christian

leaders to suggest that Jews were not in need of the Christian Gospel, but had a spiritual and moral tradition of their own to sustain them. In the 1930s, Niebuhr raised his voice against the persecution of Jews in Europe, and in the 1940s, he and other liberal Protestant ministries organized to promote the establishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. Niebuhr's pioneering advocacy of a fundamental change toward Judaism and the Jewish people gained more ground in America in the 1950s–1960s, gradually becoming the norm among mainline Christian leaders. During the 1960s–1980s, major American churches have adopted resolutions that recognize the Jews as a legitimate religious community in covenant with God. They do not view the Jewish dispersion among the nations as a punishment by God for refusing to accept Jesus as their Messiah. If anything, they have asserted that Jews have been victims of Christian persecution.

Since the 1950s, American Catholicism has also gone through major changes in its relation to the Jewish Diaspora. Abandonment of old-time Catholic understanding of the Jews as a dispersed people began in America even before the Ecumenical Catholic Council of Vatican II in the early 1960s. As early as the 1890s, James Cardinal Gibbons supported the Zionist initiative. Although a number of Catholic priests, such as Father Charles Coughlin, promoted anti-Semitic propaganda in the 1930s, and in the 1940s American Catholic leaders rejected attempts to build a Jewish state in the Holy Land, by the 1950s American Catholics stood in the forefront of Jewish-Christian dialogue in America, became supporters of Israel, and came to view Jewish dispersion as a historical development rather than a justified punishment.

After the Six-Day War in 1967, evangelical Christians became Israel's most ardent supporters, while liberal American liberals were less than pleased by Israeli policies. However, both liberals and conservatives collaborated with Jews in the 1970s–1980s in the struggle to allow Soviet Jews to leave the Soviet Union and immigrate to Israel or America.

In sum, American Christian thinkers have paid much attention to the fate of the Jews. The strong influence of Puritan, Pietist, and evangelical theology on American Christians has worked to change and transform old Christian attitudes toward the dispersion of the Jews. Although some American Christians continue to hold to replacement theology, most have given up on that component of the Christian faith and have come to see the Jewish dispersion in new light.

### Selected Bibliography

- Ariel, Yaakov. 1991. *On Behalf of Israel: American Fundamentalist Attitudes towards Jews and Zionism*. New York: Carlson.
- Cherry, Conrad. 1998. *God's New Israel*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Dinnerstein, Leonard. 1991. *Anti-Semitism in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Feldman, Egal. 1990. *Dual Destinies*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Grose, Peter. 1983. *Israel in the Mind of America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Malachy, Yona. 1978. *American Fundamentalism and Israel*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University.
- Weber, Timothy P. 2004. *On the Road to Armageddon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

# American Zionist Activities and Organizations

*Matt Silver*

---

## History of Zionist Organization Dynamics in America

The origins of organized Zionist activities in the United States are found in the turmoil that upset Jewish life in Eastern Europe in the 1880s and in the array of political movements and parties that coalesced during this formative moment of Jewish politics. The idea of Jewish nationalism was not on the minds of the mass of Jewish immigrants who streamed into the United States as a result of poverty and persecution in Eastern Europe and who sought opportunity and a new life in the *Golde-nah Medinah* of America. Nonetheless, the Hibat Zion Eretz Israel settlement movement, which consolidated in Eastern Europe in the early 1880s, won followers in the United States; and in the middle of that decade, when Joseph Isaac Bluestone and Aaron Simcha Bernstein founded a Hoveve Zion society in New York, Zionism in this pre-Herzlian period gained marginal organized footing in the United States.

Before Herzl issued his programmatic call for a Jewish state in 1896, notions of Jewish return and resettlement of the ancestral homeland of Eretz Israel occasionally surfaced in the writings and activities of American Jewish religious and lay leaders, and philo-Semites. However, whether a figure such as the New York–based publicist and politician Mordechai Noah can be considered a forerunner of organized Zionism in America is open to debate (Noah's famous call for organized Jewish settlement related to upstate New York, not the Holy Land). The leading religious figure of mid-19th-century Jewish America, Rabbi Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia, displayed considerable sympathy toward schemes to empower Jewish restoration in Eretz Israel; but such an inclination led to no genuine organized activity. Nor did fringe figures, such as the Jewish convert Michael Boaz Israel, originally Warder Cresson, who endured extreme personal hardship while pursuing dreams of Jewish restoration in Eretz Israel, generate any viable form of organized pre-Herzlian Zionism.

With the publication of Herzl's manifesto, organized Zionist societies began to sprout in localities across the United States. One city that led this emerging Zionist movement was Baltimore, where one local Jewish leader, Dr. Aaron Friedenwald delivered addresses in support of the Hibat Zion movement a few years before Herzl's appearance (Friedenwald's son Harry, along with Harry's childhood Baltimore friend Henrietta Szold, were destined to become leaders of organized Zionism in America). Baltimore sent an official delegate (Dr. Shepsal Schaeffer) to the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland; he was joined by three other Americans at this landmark Zionist event.

Undeniably, however, organized Zionism in America developed with a tempo and character that disappointed Jewish nationalists in Europe. Before World War I, the movement in America was hampered by internal dissent and leadership issues.

More seriously, the ideology of Jewish nationalism was perceived widely in American Jewish communities as being at variance with accepted norms and patterns. Even before Herzl's rise, variations on the theme of "America is Zion" had been developed in synagogues and by Jewish publicists. As world Zionism organized under Herzl's charismatic leadership, organized Jewish movements in America, such as Reform Judaism, adopted an explicit anti-Zionist position, objecting to the conceptualization of Jewish identity in national terms and stressing civic and patriotic commitments to the United States.

The Federation of American Zionists (FAZ) was founded in New York on July 4–5, 1898, and affiliated with the World Zionist Organization. Richard Gottheil, a professor of Semitic languages at Columbia University, was the first FAZ president (he was succeeded by Baltimore ophthalmologist Harry Friedenwald in 1904). From its start, the FAZ enjoyed no better than a sporadic organizational record. In its first year, it grew from 25 to 125 local societies, and 10,000 persons paid the shekel membership fee. Such membership surges before World War I proved to be short-lived. For instance, between 1898 and 1914, an estimated three-fourths of Zionist societies in New York operated for no longer than two years. Citing inept administration, lack of funds, ideological rivalry with anti-Zionist groups, and other factors, American Zionism historian Melvin Urofsky concludes that pre-World War I Zionism in America could hardly claim to have been a success.

This situation changed dramatically during World War I. Wartime dislocation and America's prolonged status as a neutral state encouraged the world Zionist movement to headquarter temporarily in the United States, under the guise of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs. The general wartime climate, which was favorable to ideas of self-determination and the rights of small peoples, contributed to the growing popularity of Zionism in America; and the status of Zionism was boosted immeasurably after the British issued the Balfour Declaration in November 1917, supporting the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Sociologically, the stage was set in America for a newly assertive Zionist movement thanks to the mass immigration of around 2 million Russian Jews between the early 1880s and early 1920s. Unlike their German Jewish predecessors in the United States, these East European Jews tended to conceptualize Jewish identity issues in collective terms, and they were more receptive to Zionist ideas.

As much as any other factor, scholars attribute the impressive growth of American Zionism in this period to the leadership of Louis Brandeis, who presided over the reorganization of the movement as the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA, founded in 1918). In prewar years, while rising to fame in America as a "people's attorney," Brandeis had negligible affiliation with Jewish life. His conversion to the Zionist cause can be attributed to a number of factors: his admiration of the democratic capacity and communal cohesion of masses of East European Jewish immigrants, criticism of prevailing "melting pot" ideologies to which Brandeis was exposed partly via contacts with Horace Kallen, and possibly also feelings of estrangement from Boston's elite Brahmin society and various opportunities attendant to ethnic leadership in the United States. Whatever his innermost motives, Brandeis's leadership had an electric, galvanizing effect on American Zionism.

Louis Brandeis became chairman of the Federation of American Zionists in 1914.  
(Library of Congress)



Brandeis's well-known Zionist slogan—"To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists"—significantly allayed double loyalty anxieties among Zionist-inclined American Jews. Continuing with his Zionist efforts even after he was confirmed as a Justice to the Supreme Court in June 1916, Brandeis instilled discipline and enthusiasm in the ZOA. Flanked by impressive American Jewish associates such as jurists Julian Mack and Felix Frankfurter, Brandeis presided over a ZOA that claimed some 200,000 members at the end of the war and sponsored significant medical relief and economic reconstruction efforts in British-controlled Palestine.

Organized Zionism flagged in America during the interwar period, as a result of general isolationist trends in American culture and the concurrent Americanization of Jewish immigrants. In the immediate postwar years, the ZOA under Brandeis's leadership engaged in a debilitating power struggle against Chaim Weizmann and his followers. Among other demands, Brandeis called for the depoliticization of the Zionist movement and for strict control over its finances. When his platform was roundly defeated at the ZOA Cleveland Convention in 1921, Brandeis and his associates dramatically resigned from their posts in the organization, and their departure marked the start of decline in ZOA activity and membership. In the last year of the 1920s, ZOA membership stood at a paltry 18,000 shekel-paying members.

Hadassah, the Woman's Zionist Organization of America, stood out as a notable exception to this trend of American Zionist decline in the interwar period. Hadassah, founded in 1912, drew upon American Progressive influences, wartime transformations in gender roles, and the vision and leadership of Henrietta Szold while focusing its activity on social welfare and medical projects in Mandatory Palestine. In the period when ZOA rosters thinned, Hadassah's membership leapt from 11,000 in 1922 to 27,000 in 1932. During the later Depression years, Hadassah continued to grow (it had 86,000 registered members in 1942), and it responded cogently



Henrietta Szold, one of the founders of Hadassah, and president of the American Zionist Medical Unit. (Library of Congress)

to the crisis in Europe by redirecting its efforts to the “Youth Aliyah” program for resettling young Jewish Holocaust refugees in the Yishuv.

In the interwar period, world Zionist leaders, most notably Chaim Weizmann, reasoned that American Zionism might be reenergized via the mobilization of wealthy American Jews who were mostly of Central European origins. During the war years, men like banker Jacob Schiff and attorney and Jewish communal leader Louis Marshall operated as “non-Zionists” in that they refused to affiliate formally with Jewish nationalism out of opposition to the Jewish state formula. These American non-Zionists nonetheless devoted considerable time and resources to educational and economic development projects in Mandatory Palestine; and through the 1920s, Weizmann negotiated arduously with Marshall, finally reaching an agreement for Zionist/non-Zionist collaboration in the expanded Jewish Agency. In the 1930s, the practical effects of this effort were largely nullified by the Great Depression, but the importance of this group of “non-Zionists” toward the rejuvenation of organized Zionist activity in America was illustrated at the end of the decade and then in the World War II years.

In response to the Holocaust, sympathy for the Jewish state formula soared among Jews in America. When well-established American Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Committee, abandoned the old non-Zionist opposition to political Zionism and supported calls for the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth or state in Eretz Israel at the 1942 Biltmore Conference and the 1943 American Jewish Conference, Zionism became an accepted component of organized American Jewish communal life.

By the end of World War II, distinctions between non-Zionists and Zionists no longer seemed tenable. In impressive efforts of political lobbying and marshalling of resources for the Jewish state-in-the-making, American Jews en masse became supporters of the Jewish state formula. The new tone was set at the American Jewish Conference by impassioned Zionists such as Cleveland Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver; groups like the American Council for Judaism, which upheld old anti-Zionist positions, were roundly rejected as fringe elements.

### **Current Zionist Organization Dynamics in America**

After the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, Zionism in a general sense of pro-Israel activity became a mainstay in a vast array of American Jewish organizations. Some such organizations focus primarily on pro-Israel activity, either by providing resources or by advocating in favor of foreign policy initiatives favorable to Israel; other organizations undertake pro-Israel activities as one component of their work. Though it is difficult to generalize about the intensity level of activities implemented by all these organizations, in a broad sense there has been some fluctuation in commitment levels to Israel in historical periods subsequent to 1948. Some studies point to relative disinterest in Israel affairs among American Jewish communities in the 1950s; generally, there is a consensus that pro-Israel activity accelerated during the 1967 Six-Day War; recently, some studies have pointed to the waning of organized American Jewish commitment to Israel as a consequence of disputes about Israeli policy in territories won in the 1967 war, "Who is a Jew" debates, and other factors. However, on the whole, as already discussed, the pre-1948 dynamics created a situation in which pro-Israel orientations are consensual in American Jewish life, and hence Zionism became integrated as a vital component in organized communal activity. In fact, some scholars have suggested that organizational activity in Israel's support has become an ideological staple in the "civil religion" of American Jewry.

Compared with the immediate, post-1948 period, pro-Israel organizational activity in the United States became a far more sophisticated and professional endeavor by the final years of the 20th century. As much as any other organization, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) symbolizes this transition. As it took shape as a pro-Israel lobby on Capitol Hill toward the mid-1950s, the organization's work was largely that of one energetic American Zionist, I. L. Kenen. By the early 1980s, AIPAC had left these humble origins far behind. Its success mobilizing U.S. government support for Israel fascinated observers who ruminated about the "Jewish lobby" as a model ethnic interest group in the United States, just as scholars wondered whether AIPAC's command of tens of thousands of members and its impressive professional management represented a qualitative change toward a new Jewish politics in the Diaspora.

Despite the quantitative leaps in the budgets and scope of activities of pro-Israel American Jewish organizations and qualitative changes in terms of professionalism and lobbying specialization, organized Zionist activity in the United States has followed a consistent set of guidelines since Israel's establishment in

1948. These guidelines could never have been formulated in a contractual agreement between American Jewish organizations and the State of Israel, but they have nonetheless been well understood by American Jews and Israelis. The 1950 exchange of letters between American Jewish Committee president Jacob Blaustein and Israel prime minister David Ben-Gurion was one noted attempt to clarify these guidelines—but in actual fact, the rules really required no explicit elaboration.

Zionism in the American Jewish context in no way precludes U.S. citizenship commitment and patriotic devotion to America. Rather than aliyah immigration, pro-Israel organizations in America have demonstrated their commitment to Zionism via philanthropy and concerted lobbying and advocacy efforts in Washington and elsewhere in the United States. Significant conceptual debates about the meaning of Jewish identity and experience continue to divide Zionists in America and Israel (for instance, American Zionist organizations have long resisted the conception of Jewish life in America as *galut*, exile), but among the American Jewish organizations themselves there is little controversy about the conceptualization of Zionism as the mandate to undertake pro-Israel philanthropic and advocacy activities.

A strong indication of the impact of Zionism on organized American Jewish life is the number of member organizations of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations that deal substantively with pro-Israel activity. A partial list of these organizations follows (the Conference has 52 member organizations):

- *Ameinu*: The successor of the Labor Zionist Alliance, Ameinu has a 100-year history and works for a progressive Israel and America.
- *America-Israel Friendship League*: A nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening ties between the two democratic states, the United States and Israel.
- *American Friends of Likud*: A group supporting the right-wing party that has been a leading force in Israeli politics since 1977.
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee: The prominent force of advocacy in support of Israel in the United States, AIPAC has 100,000 members in all 50 states.
- *American Zionist Movement*: The American affiliate of the World Zionist Organization, the AZM is a coalition of Zionist groups and individuals
- *Americans for Peace Now*: The American support branch of the Israeli peace movement Shalom Achshav
- *AMIT*: This group supports Israeli youth from diverse backgrounds and bolsters frameworks of academic achievement, religious values, and Zionist commitment,
- *Association of Reform Zionists of America/World Union North America*: The Zionist arm of the Reform movement and an affiliate of the Union for Reform Judaism.
- *Bnai Zion*: Founded in 1908, Bnai Zion is a charitable organization that supports humanitarian projects in Israel and the United States.

- *Development Corporation for Israel/State of Israel Bonds*: Since 1951, Israel Bonds sales have helped Israel's Finance Ministry support projects in key sectors. Bond sales have exceeded \$25 billion.
- *Emunah of America*: Chapters and divisions around the United States support Israel's largest religious Zionist educational and social welfare organization.
- *Friends of the Israel Defense Forces*: Supports social, educational, and recreational programs and facilities for Israeli soldiers and supports bereaved relatives of fallen soldiers.
- *Hadassah, Women's Zionist Organization of America*: The largest women's and the largest Zionist membership organization in the United States, Hadassah has more than 300,000 members.
- *Jewish National Fund*: The JNF was created by the fifth Zionist Congress in 1901 as a national fund to purchase land in Palestine. Over the past century, the JNF has planted more than 240 million trees and developed more than a quarter million acres of land throughout Israel
- *Mercaz USA*: The Zionist membership organization of the Conservative movement, Mercaz USA represents Conservative Jewry within the World Zionist Organization.
- *NA'AMAT USA*: This group has pursued its goal of supporting the women and children of Israel for the past 80 years.
- *National Committee for Labor Israel*: Supports Israel's labor sphere; working with the American labor movement and Jewish communities, the organization supports Labor Zionist institutions.
- *Religious Zionists of America*: The American branch of the World Mizrachi/Hapoel Hamizrachi movement, the RZA cultivates religious Zionist commitments among American Jews. The RZA supports affiliate religious Zionist organizations, including the Bnei Akiva youth movement.
- *WIZO*: The Women's International Zionist Organization is a nonpartisan movement dedicated to the advancement of the status of women, support of all sectors of Israeli society, and encouragement of Jewish education in Israel and the Diaspora
- *Zionist Organization of America*: The ZOA has a national membership of 30,000 and chapters across the United States. Today, it works to strengthen U.S.–Israeli relations via educational activities, public affairs programs, and Israel advocacy on Capitol Hill, campuses, and elsewhere

### Selected Bibliography

- Berman, Aaron. 1990. *Nazism, the Jews and American Zionism 1933–1948*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Kaufman, Menahem, 1991. *An Ambiguous Partnership: Non-Zionists and Zionists in America, 1939–1948*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.
- Rosenthal, Steven. 2001. *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*. Hanover, NJ: Brandeis University Press.
- Urofsky, Melvin. 1975. *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press.

## American Jews and the State of Israel

*Chaim I. Waxman*

---

Before the Six-Day War of June 1967, Israel played a rather limited role in the lives of American Jewry and the organized American Jewish community. Beginning with the eve of that war, Israel became an integral, if not the central component of the organized American Jewish community. In the listing of National Jewish Organizations published at the end of each volume of the American Jewish Year Book, the centrality of Israel in the listed objectives and activities of most of them is readily apparent. Communal leaders have largely been strongly pro-Israel and actively involved with the society and its people; most state that they feel very close to Israel, visit Israel, and identify as Zionists. In one survey (Cohen 1990), more than half stated that, at some time, they seriously considered living in Israel.

Israel has also become an integral part of the synagogue service of American Jewish denominations. Most standard American Jewish prayer books now incorporate some prayers for the State of Israel as part of the weekly service. Thus, the official prayer book of the American Reform Movement, *Sha'arei Tefillah* (Gates of Prayer), published in 1975, is radically different from its predecessor, the Union Prayer Book, in many ways, not the least being its inclusion of a prayer for the State of Israel as part of the weekly and holiday service. The movement's holiday liturgy, as set down in *Gates of the Seasons* (1983), incorporates Israel's Independence Day, *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, into the religious calendar and the ritual service. The *Weekday Prayer Book*, sponsored by the Conservative Judaism's rabbinic organization, the Rabbinic Assembly, was published in 1961 and included a new, third *Al Hanisim* prayer, for *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, in the same part of the service where there are *Al Hanisim* prayers for the miracles of Hanukkah and Purim. In 1985, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism published *Siddur Sim Shalom: A Prayerbook for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays*, which includes the *Tefila lishlom Hamedina*, the prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel, as part of the prayer service. Although the most popular edition of the Orthodox Art-Scroll siddur does not contain any reference to the State of Israel, the Rabbinical Council of America edition, representing centrist/Modern Orthodoxy, does. In addition, there is an abundance of data substantiating that the Orthodox have the most extensive and deepest attachments to Israel.

Israel has also become increasingly central in the realm of American Jewish education. If, in 1968, Israel was taught as a separate subject in less than half of all Jewish schools, including all-day, weekday afternoon, and one-day-a-week schools under Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, communal, and secular auspices, by 1974, almost two-thirds of the school curricula listed Israel as a separate subject and reported increased attention paid to Israel in all subject areas. Anecdotal evidence and personal observation convey the strong impression that this pattern has further intensified over the years. As for the role of Israel in American Jewish education, its increased importance is evidenced in a wide variety of ways, not the least of them being that Israel is today a major source for curriculum materials in the

field of Jewish education. In certain respects, the biblical vision, *ki mitzion tetzei tora* (From Zion shall Torah flow), has been realized, for example, in the publication of *Judaica* and a wide variety of Jewish curriculum materials.

Although Israel plays a central role in the organized Jewish community, its significance to the American Jewish population appears to be declining. The American Jewish community and the American Jewish population are definitely not one and the same with all of their major differences. Indeed, although the overwhelming majority of American Jews assert that their Jewishness is important to them, a majority are not affiliated with the American Jewish community. They are not members in any Jewish organization; they do not subscribe to any Jewish publication; and they are not members in any synagogue or temple—even those they do not attend.

As for their connections with Israel, evidence suggests that although most American Jews identify as pro-Israel, more than two-thirds have never visited Israel and about 40 percent have no intentions of ever visiting there. More than half state that they are only somewhat or not at all emotionally attached to Israel, and Israel is of less emotional significance to younger Jews than it is to their elders.

Despite mass communications, the Internet, and the so-called “global village,” most American Jews are quite uninformed about even some of the very basic features of Israeli society and culture. This has implications, not only for Israel but also for the American Jewish community. The two are mutually dependent on one another. Israel may need American Jewry’s economic and political support, but the American Jewish community needs Israel, if for nothing other than to legitimate many of its institutions and organizations. As American Jews are distanced from Israel they are distanced from the community as well, and vice versa.

One communal manifestation of the distancing from Israel is in declining philanthropic contributions. American Jews are contributing far less to Israel. The central philanthropic agency of the American Jewish community is the United Jewish Communities (UJC), which emerged from a merging of what had previously been the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Israel Appeal, and the United Jewish Appeal (UJA). The community’s fund-raising activities have long been centralized in a combined UJA-Federation appeal, and the cause of Israel has also helped raise funds for local communal needs. Aside from special “Israel Emergency Appeals,” such as those undertaken in the summer of 2006 as a result of the Hezbollah rocket attacks on northern Israel, the proportion of UJC funds going to Israel has declined over the years. In addition, the amount of philanthropic giving in the community has also declined. Both Israel and the organized American Jewish community have been adversely affected by the distancing from Israel.

As for the source of the emotional distancing from Israel, it appears to be rooted in a broader phenomenon in American Jewry and, indeed, in modern society, namely, declining communal involvement as individualism and personalism have increased. The declining emotional attachment to Israel among American Jews appears to be part of their broader, overall declining sense of peoplehood. This also manifests itself in the decreasing numbers who agree that Jews in the United States and Jews around the world share a common destiny and in decreasing numbers who admit “a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people.” Although the reasons

for this are complex, it may be attributed partly to the increased rates of intermarriage in the United States. Numerous studies indicate that the non-Jewish spouses of intermarried couples, children of intermarriages, and even converts identify less with Jewish peoplehood than with Jewish religion.

In addition, for several decades, in the United States social scientists have been writing of a decreasing sense of community and civic involvement and increasing individualization and atomization in American society. More recently, Robert Putnam argued, with considerable supportive data, that Americans are increasingly detached from social groups such as community groups and are less likely to be involved in civic activities. They are less likely to join PTAs, unions, political parties, and a host of other social groups, and this, he argues has serious implications for the future of American society. Most recently, it has been found that Americans have fewer close friends today (two friends), than they had a decade ago (three friends), and the number who say they have no one to discuss important matters with has doubled to one in four. The weakening bonds of friendship result in, among other things, fewer people turning to friends for help in crises, fewer neighborhood watchers to prevent crime, fewer visitors for the hospitalized, and a declining number of participants in community groups.

Among the religiously traditional, on the other hand, the ties to Israel are very strong and have been intensifying. More than 70 percent say they are very emotionally attached to Israel; more than 80 percent have been to Israel at least once; and 25 percent of the Orthodox respondents who visited Israel did so more than five times, which far exceeds the percentages of the non-Orthodox.

In addition, the percentage of Orthodox among American *olim*, immigrants to Israel, has increased significantly, and it is currently suggested that about 80 percent are Orthodox. In addition to the ideological motivation for aliyah, there are social-psychological, economic, and structural factors that contribute to the higher rate of aliyah among the Orthodox. They are more typically individuals whose Jewishness takes precedence over other aspects of their identities, and their aliyah is an attempt to more fully live their lives as Jews within the family of Jews. In addition, there is strong evidence that the Orthodox are disproportionately affected by the high cost of Jewish living—they have larger families and lower incomes than the non-Orthodox, and their ideological commitments compel them to join synagogue, to send their children to private day schools, and to contribute to a variety of other Jewish communal institutions. As a result, the major organization promoting American aliyah, *Nefesh B'Nefesh*, and the American branch of the Israel Aliya Center are now directing their messages to Orthodox families with small children, the most likely candidates for aliyah, and emphasizing the economic incentive of aliyah. Although their income will invariably be lower in Israel, their “costs of Jewish living,” including synagogue memberships and yeshiva tuitions, will be substantially lower. When this is coupled with what appears to be a growing pattern, namely one of the heads of family among American *olim* retaining his or her employment in the United States and commuting from Israel at varying intervals, the economic incentive of aliyah among American Orthodox is even greater.

Along these lines, the American Orthodox educational structure socializes, explicitly or implicitly, to stronger ties to Israel, if not aliyah, via a pattern that has

developed since the second half of the 1950s. Today, it is almost a norm for both male and female Orthodox high school graduates to spend a year or more of study in Israel. The figures vary, but in a number of the Israeli institutions in which these students study there is an aliyah rate of about 20 percent. In addition, evidence strongly suggests that the experience also intensifies attachment to Israel for those who do not make aliyah.

During his tenure as chancellor of conservative Judaism's Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Ismar Schorsch spelled out what he saw as "the core values of Conservative Judaism" (Schorsch "The Sacred Cluster"). He suggests that the life of the American Conservative Jew "is a dialectic between homeland and exile. No matter how prosperous or assimilated, they betray an existential angst about anti-Semitism that denies them a complete sense of at-homeness anywhere in the diaspora." Empirically, his suggestion is correct not only for Conservative Jews but also for the overwhelming majority of those who identify as Jewish. Though few of them have personally experienced anti-Semitism, the majority are concerned about it. That "existential angst," however, is not sufficient to motivate to aliyah. The drive for that appears to lie in religio-ethnic ideologies and drives that are more deeply rooted and ingrained in Orthodox Judaism.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Steven M. 1990. *Israel-Diaspora Relations: A Survey of American Jewish Leaders*. Ramat-Aviv, Israel: Israel-Diaspora Institute.
- Ellenson, David. 1996. "Envisioning Israel in the Liturgies of North American Liberal Judaism." In *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*, edited by Allon Gal, 117–148. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Rebhun, Uzi, and Chaim I. Waxman. 2000. "The 'Americanization' of Israel: A Demographic, Cultural and Political Evaluation." *Israel Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring): 65–91.
- Tobin, Dodi, and Chaim I. Waxman. 2005. "The Transatlantic Commuter—Living in Israel, Working in the States." *Jewish Action* 66, no. 2 (Winter): 44–48.
- Waxman, Chaim I. 1989. *American Aliya: Portrait of an Innovative Migration Movement*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Waxman, Chaim I. 1996. "Weakening Ties: American Jewish Baby Boomers and Israel." In *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*, edited by Gal Allon, 374–396. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

## The Portrayal of American Jews in Israeli Literature

*Matt Silver*

---

Throughout the first half century of Israeli statehood, the Israeli novel maintained a consistent Zionist position toward the American Diaspora. American Jewish life has rarely, if ever, been depicted in the Israeli novel as an intrinsically viable identity

solution in modern Jewish life. Instead, it has been regarded as a mostly unhappy asylum for symbolically representative Israeli characters who are the self-declared or objective victims of cultural or political impasses in Israel.

Though some texts express sustained, explicit attacks on American Jewish life, more typically the criticism conveyed by Israeli novels that are wholly or partly set in the American Diaspora is implicit. Israeli authors who place their characters in the American Diaspora do not delve particularly deeply into the local landscape of, say, California or New York and focus instead on the characters' offshore ruminations about Israeli life. At best, the American Diaspora provides these characters with a margin of emotional respite and material comfort; but the plot focus remains placed on their ability, or inability, to reconnect with Israeli life. Passing references to loose ends and chronic problems in American life (e.g., political corruption in the Watergate era, race relations, and perceived excesses of 1960s protest movements) outbalance rather mechanical allusions to dynamics of pluralism, creativity, and pro-Israel commitment in American Judaism or American Jewish organizations.

Through the end of the 1990s, plot dynamics and character representation in Israeli literature were not structured in ways that might evoke a sense of positive creative tension, or partnership with American Jewry. Instead, Israeli authors regarded the pre-1948 *halutz* pioneering norms and the 1948, 1967, and 1973 wars as the prime constituent elements of Jewish identity. In moderately ironic or impatiently disinterested modes, they related to facets of American Jewish identity as being existentially subordinate to these Israel-based, Jewish-identity building blocks.

Analyzed briefly, works by three respected Israeli authors, Nathan Shaham, Eli Amir, and Hanoach Bartov, substantiate these generalizations about attitudes toward the American Diaspora in Israeli literature.

Shaham's tale "Streets of Ashkelon," which serves as the title of a collection of stories published in 1985, argumentatively segregates Israeli literature from Jewish creativity in the Diaspora, particularly America. The story's claim, implicit in its title, is that complex or sorrowful realities of Jewish existence cannot be rendered with honor and meaning in non-Jewish languages, in Gentile societies.

The narrator, a Holocaust survivor who struggles unsuccessfully for years to depict her life story and vision in prose, finally finds popular success with a sensitive memoir of her Warsaw childhood that elusively refrains from cataloguing Nazi barbarity. Her narration is laced with sarcastic jibes at the assimilated American Jewish intellectual set of New York as well as an acutely uncomfortable recognition that her own literary success owes much to the popularization of the Holocaust in American culture, as in a recent American TV mini-series (such popularization is dismissed as the "pornography of suffering" by one of the characters in the novella).

"Streets of Ashkelon" focuses remorselessly on the ambiguities of the intentions and ambitions of a survivor-writer in America. Shaham's plot construction damningly associates the circulation of Jewish truths in a commercialized Christian society with adulterous betrayal and dishonor. The narrator, an attractive, late-middle-aged woman, divulges graphic details about her past to a young, ambitious non-Jewish writer; in the bedroom, these horrible secrets arouse her lover, and he

quickly incorporates them in a best seller whose mediocre literary quality is conveniently overlooked by opportunist American Jewish critics.

Although it raises profound, vexing questions about the status of Jewish creativity and experience in non-Jewish cultural settings, Shaham's story also reflects specific, rather stereotypical, perceptions of America and American Jewish life that are current in Israeli literature. American urban reality is presented as street violence, and American individualism is depicted as narcissism (the key minor character in the novella, also a survivor-writer, has lost her only child in a subway mugging; the Gentile Holocaust popularizer becomes interested in the subject while looking in a mirror, and so on).

Other tales in Shaham's 1985 collection accelerate this attack on the American Diaspora. One corrosive story, "Ask Not, Zion," which is set in a small middle American town, depicts the souring of a prosperous American Jewish community's initial welcoming of a young Israeli couple. The two visitors energetically serve the community's organizations and institutions, but their efforts unravel. Petty bickering and corruption in the American Jewish community, senseless street violence in the town, and dubious uncertainties in the character and past of the male Israeli visitor, breed tragedy. Just as the collection's title story argues that Jewish writing in the American Diaspora cannot culturally do justice to the truths of the Jewish past, this final tale in Shaham's book suggests that Israeli good-will ambassadors cannot practically serve American Jewish needs. The final tale in Shaham's work parallels critiques in post-World War II American Jewish literature, such as works written by the young Philip Roth; yet it also aggressively transplants in the American Jewish setting denial of the Diaspora motifs found in depictions of late 19th century and early 20th century East European Jewish life rendered by early generations of Hebrew writers.

In a more sustained, less polemical vein, the Israeli writer Hanoah Bartov has, in works set in the American Diaspora, associated his characters' emotional infidelities with crises in Israeli culture and Zionist ideology. His last novel, *From End to End* (2003), a moving depiction of an Israeli couple's lifelong relationship, is centered squarely in defining Israeli experiences such as the 1948 Independence War and kibbutz communes. The plot mechanics (including the heroine's tawdry affair with a sailor) superficially rely on American props, but the novel contains highly suggestive contrasts between American Jewish suburbanization in the 1950s compared with the Israeli setting of economic rationing, *ma'abarot* tent towns, and war expectation in that era. Such contrasts remain to be explored fully in Israeli fiction.

An earlier Bartov work, *In the Middle of the Novel* (1984), depicts a self-imposed, three-year American exile at the end of the life of a journalist-writer named Balfour Shuv, whose life experiences (childhood in an unmemorable Israeli town, an unimaginative, religious father, volunteer enlistment in the British army during World War II) are threaded throughout a number of Bartov's novels. Shuv spends his last three years in a depressed, drunken, angry funk, shuttling between houses of friends and relatives on the East and West coasts; from afar, he privately settles old scores with fixtures of his life in Israel, including a brother named Meir, a more successful writer. This unsuccessful American end to Shuv's life is deliberately depicted in a

cloudy, indefinite manner. His son, a newly religious history graduate student who has no interest in America, and a former lover, an American Jewish woman whose knowledge of Israel is grounded superficially in Leon Uris's *Exodus*, recover secret tapes of Balfour Shuv's last reminiscences; but the creative relationship between this last testament of the writer's life and the American setting in which it was produced remains curiously mysterious to these two would-be literary executors.

Bartov's *In the Middle of the Novel* contains mildly ironic depictions of aging North American Jews who claim that their New World prosperity means nothing compared with their few years as pioneers in kibbutz communes in the pre-1948 period (characterizations that anticipate the later brilliant satire of the Israeli writer Meir Shalev) and brief, provocative criticisms of radicalized 1960s American Jewish culture. Yet the overall thrust of Bartov's fiction is to keep the American Diaspora at a distance, even when the protagonist is ostensibly situated in it during climactic stretches of a novel. Perhaps more than any Israeli writer of his generation, Bartov conjures the prevailing image in Israeli fiction of the American Diaspora as a melancholy halfway house for characters who are temporarily or permanently unable to come to terms with past or present iconic Israeli experiences.

More optimistic renderings of the American Diaspora do not challenge this basic sense that Israelis live in emotional exile in it. A telling recent text in this respect is Eli Amir's *Shaul's Love* (1998). The novel is unique because it describes the full or partial realization of the American Jewish dream and the full or partial breakdown of the Israeli social utopia, while remaining emotionally committed to life in Israel.

The protagonist, a computer expert born in a poor Jerusalem neighborhood to a Sephardic, seventh-generation Eretz Israel family, strikes gold in America by anticipating, and then participating in, the late 20th-century Silicon Valley high-tech boom. Shaul Bar Adon leaves Israel in the early 1960s for studies in Stanford after failing to realize the Israeli dream of Ashkenazi-Sephardic union. Shaul's engagement to the love of his life, Haya, is broken off because of the unaccommodating attitudes of her Holocaust survivor parents. Shaul finds unimaginable wealth in America, and his positive attitude toward Jewish rituals and norms there reflects his own optimistic personality and inclusive orientation toward Jewish experience. However, the embracing depictions of Passover seders and other aspects of American Judaism in *Shaul's Love* remain perfunctory. The focus of Shaul's emotional energy remains Israel. He dedicates his wealth toward projects that commemorate and promote inter-ethnic solidarity in Israeli culture, and the novel ends with his return to Jerusalem.

Generally, Amir's fiction (as seen in the novels *Scapegoat* [1983] and *Farewell, Baghdad* [1992]) depicts a search to integrate the past experiences and present needs of Jews from Arab lands in Israeli culture. Although consciously abandoning negative denial of the Diaspora themes, *Shaul's Love* conceptualizes the American Diaspora as a positive resource to be used in this existential search for Jewish solidarity and inter-ethnic union in Israel. Hence, like other Israeli novels, its orientation toward the American Diaspora is instrumental, not essentialist. The Israeli novel is unwilling or unable to conceptualize American Jewish-Israeli interaction

as something more than a resource for Israel—that is, as an intrinsically valuable norm or identity endpoint.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Bartov, Hanoach. 1978. *Whose Little Boy Are You?* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Shaham, Nathan. 1983. *The Other Side of the Wall: Three Novellas*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Shaked, Gershon. 2000. *Modern Hebrew Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Yudkin, Leon. 1992. *Beyond Sequence: Current Israeli Fiction and Its Context*. Northwood, UK: Symposium Press.

# Latin America and the Caribbean

## Jews in the Caribbean and the Guianas

*Mordechai Arbell*

---

General Population: 50,800,000

Jewish Population: 1,888

Percent of Population: 0.008 percent

Jewish Population by City: Puerto Rico, 2,500; Cuba, 700; Curaçao, 300; Jamaica, 300; the U.S. Virgin Islands–Saint Thomas, 300; Dominican Republic, 250–300; Suriname, 200–250; Bahamas, 200; Aruba, 150; Martinique, 130; Guadeloupe, 100; Barbados, 40; Haiti, 20–30; French Guiana–Cayenne, 20; Cayman Islands, 15–20; Trinidad and Tobago, 10

---

### Historical Overview

The Spanish-Portuguese Jews saw in the Americas the promise of a new life, one free of the anti-Jewish legacy of Europe. Those who had been forcibly converted to Christianity, the “new Christians” or conversos (in Hebrew *anusim*), thought that by settling on the American continent they were putting a safe distance between themselves and the Inquisition that had been constantly hounding them. They fled the atmosphere that sought to discern the slightest sign of Jewish religious observance. The Inquisition, however, followed them to the New World.

Portuguese Brazil was one of the New World countries in which the New Christians concentrated. With the Dutch occupation of Bahia (*Ciudad de San Salvador de la Bahia de Todos Santos*) in Brazil in 1624, equal rights to Jews were proclaimed by Governor Wilkens. At least 200 New Christians returned to Judaism there and constituted the first group of authentic Jews in the New World. Unfortunately for these Jews, the Dutch occupation lasted only one year. In 1625, the Portuguese recaptured Bahia and initiated cruel vengeance against those who had reconverted.

When the Dutch captured Recife, Brazil, in 1631, the New Christians, well aware of what had happened in Bahia, did not rush to return to Judaism. But Portuguese Jews from Holland, Hamburg, and other places in Europe did settle there, and they formed organized Jewish communities in Recife and neighboring Olinda. In fact, they settled all over the Dutch Brazilian province of Pernambuco as well. Some of the Jewish settlers specialized in sugar plantations and cultivating other tropical products; others were merchants who traded with New Christians in Portuguese Brazil and the Spanish colonies in the Americas. Often their mercantile contacts were their own relatives.

The white population in Dutch Brazil reached 5,000 in the 1640s, a very impressive number for the colonies in America at that time. The number of Jews among them is contested by historians. Some maintain they were the majority of the white population; others put their number between 1,500 and 2,000. This active Jewish center attracted famous Amsterdam hakamim (rabbis)—among them Isaac Aboab da

Fonseca and Moses Rafael d'Aguilar—to settle there. The number of Jews in Dutch Brazil was almost equal to the number of Jews in Amsterdam. All this came to an end with the Portuguese reoccupation of Dutch Brazil in 1654. After heroic Jewish defense against the Portuguese came the Jewish exodus from Recife (Pernambuco) to Amsterdam, the Guianas, and the Caribbean. Others went to New Amsterdam (New York)—laying the foundation of that community. The new Portuguese governor, Francisco Barreto de Menezes, was surprisingly lenient to the Jews. Though “the Jews who had been Christians, being subject to the Holy Inquisition” had to leave within a period of three months, he permitted them to retain all their movable property and their ships in Recife harbor. It follows that the Jewish exiles from Dutch Brazil could leave with a large part of their belongings.

Another important settlement site for New Christians was the Spanish colony of Jamaica. The governorship of this colony was given to Diego Colón, who managed to obtain the right of his father Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus) to the island. Diego's son Louis succeeded his father, and the title was subsequently inherited by his sister Isabel Colón. During the governorship of the Colón family, permission was given for Portuguese New Christians to settle in Jamaica. The English occupation of the island came in 1655 under General Venables, and he decided to expel all the Spaniards to Santo Domingo and allow the Portuguese to remain. It is not surprising that after one year of English occupation many of these Portuguese petitioned to erect a synagogue in Port Royal, the capital of Jamaica at that time. Details about these crypto-Jews are extremely scarce, and their number is unknown. Before the English conquest they did not appear as Jews or New Christians, and not all of them returned to Judaism. Those who did readopt Judaism did not all do so at the same time. From sources available one may, however, assume that the first Jews arrived in Jamaica after 1530.

In the 17th century the European colonial powers became aware of the financial and economic possibilities of the Americas, and the Dutch, English, French, and Danish authorities initiated a policy of colonization for all the American territories not already occupied by Spain or Portugal. Their main interest was in the so-called “Wild Coast” (the Guianas) and the Caribbean islands.

The colonial powers saw in the Jews who had left Brazil a favored population for settling the Guianas. The Jews' success in establishing sugar plantations (both growing and marketing sugar), cultivating other tropical products, shipping, and banking as well as their knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese and their adaptability to tropical conditions (owing to their experience in Brazil), all resulted in a series of efforts to attract them.

#### Jews in French Guiana—Cayenne

On September 12, 1659, the Dutch West India Company (Amsterdam Chamber) granted David Nassy and his partners, Jewish exiles from Brazil, the right to be patroon (governor) of a Jewish colony in Cayenne (today French Guiana, at that time in the Netherlands' hands). The grant was for an exclusively Jewish settlement. The Jews were given “Liberties and Exemptions,” including freedom of conscience and the right to build a synagogue and open a school. This Jewish settlement was

established in Remire, and the exiles from Brazil were joined by Spanish Jews arriving from Leghorn, Italy, directly or through the island of Tobago. At that time Tobago was the scene of armed clashes between Dutch and Latvian forces as well as cruel attacks by the Arawak Indians. The Jews who had intended to settle in Tobago went on to Cayenne. In a short time a sugar mill was built and a community founded. Apart from sugar cane, the Jews produced dyes from indigo and roucou and experimented with cacao and other tropical products. Remire was the scene of idyllic Jewish life, but this was cut short by a French invasion in 1663, headed by Lefebvre de la Barre and Alexandre Prouville de Tracy.

The Dutch quickly capitulated, but in the surrender document the French had to promise to give freedom of religion to the Jews in Remire, estimated at between 300 and 400 people. Nevertheless, most of them trekked to neighboring Suriname, at that time in English hands, and settled in what is called the “Jewish Savanna” (*Joden Savanne* in Dutch).

In 1667, the English general Henry Willoughby attacked Cayenne, occupied Remire, and destroyed the settlement. He also ordered that the French settlers be left to their fate and that the remaining Jews, estimated at 50–60 persons, be taken on board the English ships. When amazed English officers asked why French Christians were forced to fend for themselves while Jews were brought safely aboard, the general answered, “It is necessary for the Jews to be transported for reasons fit to be given to his Majesty.” In fact, the English needed the Jews for their sugar plantations in Suriname and Barbados.

In 1992, a group of about 20 Jewish families from North Africa and Suriname founded a community, numbering about 80 persons, in Cayenne. Jewish life is assisted by Habad.

#### Jews in Guiana: Pomeroun

The settlement of Pomeroun was typical of the growing competition for Jewish settlers in the entire area. Among the state papers of the then English secretary of state, John Thurloe, is a 1657 report written by the English agent in Leghorn, Charles Longland, in which he says:

It seems that the States of Holland are making a plantation Betwixt Surinam and Cartagena in the West Indies, wherein they go very wisely and politickly to work, aiming chiefly at a trade there with the Spanyard: for which purpose they have sent hether to invyte many families of Jews and granted them many privileges and immunities. Spanish is become now the Jews mother tongue, not only in these parts, but throughout the Turkish dominions, in which respect they will be very useful to the Dutch in their plantations; and many opportunities may present them to converse with the Spanyard . . .

The settlement mentioned in the letter is the one on the Pomeroun River named New Middleburgh in the Dutch colony of Essequibo (today in the Republic of Guyana, formerly British Guiana). Here again, Jews from Brazil and Spanish-Portuguese Jews from Amsterdam; Hamburg, Germany; Leghorn, Italy; and Salé in Morocco began to settle in 1657. The settlement’s products—high-quality refined sugar and

vanilla prepared by a special technique—reached European markets and met with great success. This time, too, Jewish existence was short-lived. In 1666, an English attack destroyed the settlement and the Jews dispersed in the region, mainly to the Dutch island of Curaçao.

### Jews in Suriname

In 1652, Francis Lord Willoughby of Parham founded an English colony on the Suriname River and gave it the name Willoughbyland. He was the governor of the English West Indies, stationed in Barbados. Very anxious to have Jewish settlers, he tried to bring Spanish-Portuguese Jews from England. Supposedly few arrived and settled in Torarica, the capital of Suriname at the time, which is now abandoned. The Jewish exiles coming from Cayenne joined the first settlers and formed an exclusively Jewish settlement on the banks of the Suriname River, “the Jewish Savanna.” The English were well aware that after receiving the generous Dutch grant of privileges in Cayenne, the Jews would only be ready to settle if similar privileges were offered to them. As a result, on August 17, 1665, a “Grant of Privileges by the Governor, Council and Assembly of Surinam” was issued. In this document “persons of the Hebrew Nation” in Suriname were considered English born, with full freedom of religion, observance of Sabbath, and permission to have synagogues, schools, cemeteries, and a tribunal of their own. The document is exceptional in the history of the Jews in the British territories. Full equal rights for the Jews in Jamaica and Barbados not obtained until the 19th century.

After a massive Dutch attack on Suriname, the English surrendered on March 6, 1667, and Suriname became Dutch. In the treaties between England and the Netherlands, all English subjects were to be free to depart from Suriname. The Dutch refused to recognize the Jews as English subjects and opposed their evacuation. To attract them the Dutch governor, Captain Julius Lichtenberg, signed on October 1, 1669, additional special privileges by which the Jews obtained freedom of decision on ecclesiastical affairs, judicial freedom for litigation between Jews, a statement that the debts on property that had been seized by the Inquisition should not be liable to punishment for nonpayment, permission to work on Sundays, and free passage on that day. As a result, it is assumed that only a small group of Jews left Suriname for Jamaica with the English.

In 1685, on a hill overlooking the Suriname River, a town was built called “Jerusalem on the Riverside.” It had an impressive synagogue, Berakha ve Shalom (its ruins today are still very impressive). Around 1694, the population of the Jewish Savanna was 570 Jews, and they employed 9,000 laborers in 40 plantations. In the 18th century, the number had grown to 2,000 Jews in 115 plantations, and they employed tens of thousands of laborers. Plantations became villages with biblical names, such as Mahanaim, Succoth, Beersheba, Gilgal, Goshen, Carmel, Dothan, Moria, and so on. Jews constituted more than 50 percent of the white population of Suriname.

With the decline in sugar prices and liberation of slaves, Jews started moving to the capital of Paramaribo, gradually abandoning the Jewish Savanna. There they were

joined by Ashkenazi Jews from Germany and Rotterdam. A community of liberated slaves who had served the Jews was also formed to follow the Jewish religion; it took the name of *Darkhei Yesharim* (The Paths of the Just). The Jewish planters became shopkeepers, and their numbers began to decline.

One of the two synagogues in the capital Paramaribo, Zedek ve Shalom, founded in 1718, was transferred to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. It had followed the Orthodox Sephardi rite. The other synagogue, Neve Shalom, founded in 1734, served the Ashkenazi community but used the Orthodox Sephardi rite; today it serves both communities.

The Jewish Savanna is abandoned. The ruins of the synagogue, however, still exist beside the gravestones of the cemetery. An older cemetery from the 17th century still exists in the nearby jungle called Casipoera.

At the end of the 20th century, there were 200–250 Jewish persons in Suriname. Their community periodical, *Sim Shalom*, appears in Dutch. Israel maintains normal diplomatic relations with Suriname.

### Jews in Curaçao

In 1651, Jews started settling in the Jewish Quarter of Curaçao, several miles distant from the fortress that is now Willemstad, capital of Curaçao. The intention of the Dutch West India Company was to attract Jews from Dutch Brazil and to stem the flow of Jews from Brazil to Barbados. The Jews, headed by Isaac da Costa from Brazil, received the right to free exercise of their religion, the right to be protected, and the right to build a synagogue. Contrary to the situation prevailing in other Dutch possessions, the Jews had to accommodate themselves to some restrictions. They were treated as foreigners and were not even permitted to be within the fortress later than nine o'clock in the evening. The local authorities could not hide their distaste for the Jews. With Peter Stuyvesant's nomination as governor of Curaçao, he tried his best to limit the Jews' rights. (This anti-Jewish attitude persisted. Stuyvesant remained in charge of Curaçao even when nominated as governor of New Amsterdam.) All this could not prevent the Jews from transforming Curaçao into the central commercial center of the entire area. The proximity of Venezuela and Colombia facilitated the promotion of the so-called illicit trade with the Spanish colonies.

The Mikve Israel community was founded in 1659, and the Jewish cemetery was consecrated the same year. The first synagogue was dedicated in 1674 and coincided with the arrival of the first hakam (rabbi), Josiau Pardo of Salonika. The present-day synagogue was established in 1732.

Curaçao became the center of Jewish life in the Caribbean and was called "Mother of the Caribbean Jewish communities." The foundation of the yeshiva (rabbinical academy) Etz Haim ve Ohel Yahakob in 1674 gave spiritual guidance to the Jewish communities in the area. The bodies of Jews who died in places with no Jewish cemetery, such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Santo Domingo, were transported to the Jewish cemetery of Curaçao. The mohels of Curaçao attended to persons who arrived from Europe or other parts of the Americas with the aim of reconverting to Judaism. Some of the latter came directly from Spain and Portugal, among them a

Dominican friar, a Franciscan father, and a Catholic priest. Jews coming from Portugal continued to be circumcised in Curaçao until 1821.

The Jewish population of Curaçao continued to grow. Jews came from Amsterdam and Bayonne, France, exiles arrived from Pomeronia and Martinique, and conversos moved there from Spain and Portugal. By 1729, the Jewish population exceeded 2,000, about half of the total white population of the island. For this small island, these numbers meant overpopulation and led to Jewish emigration to other areas, but those new communities still viewed Curaçao as their center.

In 1693, a party of 70 Curaçao Jews joined the Jews from Barbados in Newport, Rhode Island. The Curaçao community helped finance the building of the Newport synagogue, which is today the oldest Jewish house of worship in the United States.

That same year, a group of Leghorn Jews left Curaçao for the Venezuelan coast. There they founded a Dutch-Jewish enclave in Tucacas that existed with its community and synagogue until 1720, when it was captured by Spanish forces. The Tucacas Jews managed to flee to Curaçao.

Curaçao Jews settled in the Dutch islands of Saint Maarten and Aruba; in the towns of Coro, Barcelona, Barquisimeto, Carabobo, Valencia, Carora, and Puerto Cabello in Venezuela; in Baranquilla, Cartagena, Rio Hacha, and Santa Marta in Colombia; in Saint Thomas and Saint Croix in the Virgin Islands; in Cap Haitien in Haiti; in the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Panama, and Cuba; and in New York and New Orleans. In each location, they remained attached to Curaçao, which in turn was connected to them and was sensitive to their needs.



Shaarei Tzedek Ashkenazic Orthodox Jewish Community synagogue in Willemstad, Curaçao. (Photo by Jono David)

Today the communal importance of Curaçao has diminished and with it the Jewish population. Reform Judaism came to Curaçao in 1863 and the Reform Temple Emanuel was dedicated in 1867, causing a rift and dividing Curaçao into two communities. The dispute resulted in many Jews distancing themselves from the community. The conflict continued for almost 100 years and resulted in damage to Jewish life. To save the situation, in 1964 the two communities merged to form the United Netherlands Portuguese Congregation Mikve Israel-Emanuel, which adopted Reconstructionist principles. In the 20th century, Ashkenazi Jews began settling in Curaçao. In 1969, the Ashkenazi community of Shaarei Tzedek was founded there and an Ashkenazi synagogue was built. In the early 21st century, Curaçao has about 300 Jews, and Ashkenazi Jews are the majority.

### Jews in Saint Eustatius

This very small island (10 kilometers long, 5 kilometers wide) is well situated geographically—400 kilometers south of Puerto Rico—so it could serve as the first station for ships crossing the Atlantic. It has a natural harbor in which more than 200 vessels could anchor. The Dutch used the island as a supply station between New Amsterdam in North America and New Holland (North Brazil) in South America. Jews began to settle on the island in 1722. By 1781, their number was estimated at 400 of a total of 800 free citizens. Jews came there from Amsterdam, Curaçao, Suriname, and North Africa. Whereas Curaçao specialized in commerce with the Spanish colonies in South America, Saint Eustatius ventured into global commerce. The Jewish merchants transformed it into the shopping mall of the Americas. It became the center of commerce between Europe and North and South America as well as between the different parts of the Americas: sugar from the French and Spanish colonies to Europe; meat from North America; flour from Scandinavia; corn from Venezuela; and raw materials, textiles, and porcelain from Europe. After 1760, between 1,800 and 2,700 ships were anchored at Saint Eustatius annually. In 1760 alone, the Saint Eustatius port received 3,551 ships, most of which were Jewish owned. The island became a center of stores and merchandise and was commonly called the “Golden Rock.” In 1737, the Jewish community of Honen Dalim was founded, and a synagogue was built on which Jewish life centered. The island’s undoing came when the Saint Eustatius Jews started to supply the American revolutionaries with arms and ammunition in their rebellion against England. The ships caught by the British off the coasts of Virginia and New England were Jewish owned. The future flag of the United States was recognized for the first time in Saint Eustatius. The British could not stem the flow of ships. Consequently, in 1781, the British admiral Rodney attacked and captured the island. All the Jewish men were arrested and exiled to other islands. All Jewish property was confiscated, and Jewish women and children were left penniless on the island. This action was severely condemned, even in the British Parliament. The exiled Saint Eustatius Jews found refuge in the Danish-held Virgin Islands. Some even reached Belize (British Honduras).

### Jews in Aruba

The first permanent Jewish settler in Aruba was Moses de Salomo Levi Maduro in 1754, who was authorized to farm but not to raise cattle. He was joined by other

Curaçao Jews. Between 1816 and 1826 they numbered 30 people. New immigrants from Eastern Europe reached Aruba in the 1920s. An Orthodox synagogue, Beth Israel, was founded in 1962. The new cemetery was established in 1942. Aruba currently has a Jewish population of some 200 people.

#### Jews in Sint Maarten (Saint Martin)

In the 18th century, there was a Sephardi Jewish population on Saint Martin. By the end of the century Jewish refugees settled on the island after the the English admiral Rodney destroyed the community in Saint Eustatius. In 1783, Jews found themselves numerous enough to form a community and build a synagogue. The congregation was short-lived: a disastrous hurricane and dwindling population brought an end to the community's existence.

#### Jews in Barbados

Spanish and Portuguese Jews from Dutch Brazil, Cayenne, Suriname, England, Hamburg, Germany, and Leghorn, Italy, came to Barbados a year after it was settled by the English in 1627. Jewish exiles from Dutch Brazil, recaptured by the Portuguese in 1654, were especially needed to transform the lagging economy of the impoverished island. The Jews introduced special modern methods of sugar refining in which Rafael de Mercado excelled. In 1654, the Jewish community of Bridgetown, the capital, was formed and the Nidhei Israel synagogue was built. Jews also developed commerce with the Spanish colonies using their knowledge of Spanish and the presence of their relatives living as conversos in those colonies.

The Jewish success stirred the enmity and envy of the local English colonists. This prompted the levy of special taxes on Jews and a decree prohibiting the Jews from employing Christian workers or slaves. They were also barred from having more than one slave, thus depriving them from of the opportunity to have plantations. The Jews, therefore, limited themselves to commerce in the towns of Bridgetown and Speightstown.

In 1739, the Jews left Speightstown after a mob of English colonists attacked and destroyed the Zemah David synagogue. In 1680, the Jews numbered 300, 2.5 percent of the white population; by 1750 they had increased to between 400 and 500, more than 3 percent of the white population.

Limitations on Jewish rights (Jews received full rights only in 1820) caused their gradual abandonment of the island. Jews left for the island of Nevis, for Newport, Rhode Island, and for England.

The Nidhei Israel synagogue was abandoned in 1928 when only one practicing Jew remained on the island. It was rededicated in 1987 by a group of Eastern European Jews and Jews from Trinidad who reached the island after World War II. The old Jewish cemetery containing some of the oldest Jewish graves on the American continent was also restored for use.

Barbadian Jews are organized in the Jewish Community Council, and by the end of the 20th century the population numbered 40 persons. Diplomatic relations between Israel and Barbados are normal.

### Jews in the Nevis

In 1671, when a separate British colonial administration, independent of the British administration in Barbados, was installed on the island of Nevis, Jews began to settle there. By 1724, the Jews (about 70 individuals) were one-quarter of the white population in the capital, Charlestown. Jews also lived on the plantations.

Colonial wars caused a gradual depopulation of Nevis, however, and by the beginning of the 19th century there were no Jews on the island. The abandoned Jewish cemetery exists, standing next to the old Jewish school, which Alexander Hamilton attended. According to documents there was also a synagogue on the island.

### Jews in Jamaica

The island of Jamaica was a Spanish colony. In the early 16th century, under the governorship of Columbus's granddaughter Isabel Colón and then her son Portugal Colón, permission was given to the "New Christians"—as Conversos were called—to settle on the island. Moreover, the Colón (Columbus) family governors did not install a tribunal of the Inquisition. The conversos, mostly from Portugal, settled in Santiago de la Vega (today called Spanish Town), but there is no estimate on the number of conversos who settled in Jamaica. In 1655, the English captured Jamaica, and the Portuguese conversos began returning to Judaism.

The Portuguese New Christians who had returned to Judaism were joined by Jews arriving directly from Spain and Portugal, sometimes passing first through France. The permission Oliver Cromwell gave for Jews to settle in England in 1656 also allowed Jews to settle in Jamaica. Jews from Amsterdam, along with those from Bordeaux and Bayonne, France, settled in Port Royal, the capital at that time.

British hopes for transforming Jamaica into the center of the Caribbean did not materialize. Therefore, to attract settlers, King Charles II signed the Windsor Proclamation, which awarded citizenship to those who would settle and plant in Jamaica. The arrival of Jews did turn Port Royal into a commercial center. In the words of Edward Long, for many years secretary of the governor: "The Jews' knowledge of foreign languages and intercourse with their brethren, dispersed over the Spanish and West Indian colonies, have contributed greatly to extend trade and increase the wealth of the island."

Port Royal also became the center of the buccaneer trading in which the Jews were very active. Jamaican authorities did not consider buccaneers to be outlaw pirates because they mainly attacked Spanish ships—the common enemy. Jews also excelled in the trade of gold and silver.

All of this came to an end on June 7, 1692, with a disastrous earthquake followed by a tidal wave that almost completely obliterated Port Royal, including its synagogue, Neve Zedek. The Jews moved to Santiago de la Vega, then to the newly built Kingston (the next capital), and then to Montego Bay, and in fact all over the island. From the 14 Jewish cemeteries found today in Jamaica, scholars know that Jewish communities existed also in Savanna la Mar, Port Antonio, Falmouth, Linstead, and elsewhere. Synagogues existed in Spanish Town and Montego Bay, but the main Jewish concentration later on was in Kingston. A mid-18th century census in

Spanish Town records the white population as Christians, 700; soldiers, 240; and Jews, 350.

Gradually, Kingston became the center of Jewish life. The Spanish-Portuguese Jews were joined by Ashkenazi Jews who constituted the so-called English and German congregation. The two communities had separate synagogues, but efforts were made to amalgamate them. Finally, in 1921, the two communities merged into the United Congregation of Israelites and into the Shaarei Shalom (Gates of Peace) synagogue.

The compromise included:

- The present Sephardi ritual was to be maintained except for the introduction of Ashkenazi customs in taking out the Scrolls of the Law.
- On Simhat Torah eve, circuits with the Torah scrolls should take place.
- The synagogue floor would be covered by sand.

The service today is Progressive, semi-Conservative, and semi-Reform. Parts of the service are read in English, and an organ has been installed in the synagogue. The hymn "*Bendigamos el Señor*" (Blessed be the Lord) is sung in Spanish. However, all other Sephardi traditional customs and rites are gradually disappearing.

Although Jews in Jamaica had freedom of religion, a series of restrictions prevented them from holding public office and voting. In addition, they were liable for special taxation. A prolonged struggle for equal rights continued until 1831, when those rights were secured. All that time the Jews could be first-class merchants but second-class citizens. From 1831 Jews began to play a more active role in the social, political, and economic development of Jamaica. In 1849, 8 of the 47 members of the Assembly were Jews; in 1866, 13. The house of parliament then adjourned on Yom Kippur.

Population figures indicate that in 1700 there were some 400 Jews in a white population of 7,000; in 1881, 2,535 Jews out of 14,432 whites; in 1957, 1,600 Jews out of 13,000. Over time, however, Jews moved from Jamaica to England, Panama, and the United States, and by the mid-1990s the Jewish population numbered fewer than 300.

The only synagogue active in the early 21st century is Shaarei Shalom in Kingston. Israel and Jamaica have normal diplomatic relations.

### Jews in Martinique

The first Jews settled in Martinique at the start of the 17th century, establishing themselves in Dutch commercial outposts on the island, despite its being French. In 1654, the governor of Martinique, M. de Parquet, overcame fierce opposition from the Catholic religious orders and admitted 300–400 Portuguese Jewish refugees from Dutch Brazil. These Jews founded plantations and sugar refineries and processed cacao and vanilla. The most famous of these Jews, Benjamin Dacosta de Andrade, found a method for transforming the cacao drink of the Indians of the continent into pellets and called them by the name of the drink: chocolate.

The Jesuit priests did not remain idle. They finally managed to convince the French king, Louis XIV, to issue the infamous Black Code, ordering the expulsion of

the Jews from the French islands in 1685. Most of the Martinique Jews then settled on the Dutch island of Curaçao.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Jews from North Africa and France settled in the city of Fort de France and formed the Association Culturelle Israelite de la Martinique. It maintains a synagogue and a community center, a Talmud Torah, a youth club, and a burial society. There is a store that sells only kosher products. The Jewish population is estimated at about 130 persons.

### Jews in Guadeloupe

The first Jewish group to settle the island consisted of three shiploads of refugees from Dutch Brazil in 1654, who were cordially received by the French governor of the island, M. Houel. The Jews initiated sugarcane plantations and sugar refineries, which accounted for the main exports. Civil unrest and ultimately English occupation caused an exodus of Jews to other Caribbean islands and Panama. Finally, the Black Code initiated by the Jesuit fathers and signed by Louis XIV of France ordered the expulsion of the Jews from all French islands in 1685. The only remnant of the first settlers is found in the story prevalent on the island that a Jewish refugee from Dutch Brazil named Pietre started a fish processing plant on the coast. The locals called it Pietre's Point, and it eventually became today's town of Pointe-à-Pitre.

In the second half of the 20th century, Jews from North Africa and France settled on the island. In 1988 the Or Sameah synagogue was founded, together with a community center, a Talmud Torah, a kosher store, and a cemetery under the name Communauté Culturelle Israelite de Guadeloupe. The current Jewish population is estimated at about 100 persons.

### Jews in Haiti

The first Jews came to Haiti from Dutch Brazil after its occupation by Portugal in 1654. They used their expertise in sugar growing and dispersed all over the French colony, working in small plantations., most of the Jews left. Despite the Black Code, Jews from Bordeaux and Bayonne managed to obtain special permissions called *lettres patentes* and still settled in the colony.

In 1717, David Gradis, founder of the Gradis Company of Bordeaux and supplier to the French colonies, opened offices in Cap Francais (today Cap Haitien), Saint Louis, Fonds-de-Isle de Vaches, and Leogan, and placed his Jewish friends and relatives in them. Sephardi Jews from Curaçao settled in Cap Francais, where they had a circumciser and a religious leader. Other Curaçao Jews settled in Jacmel, Jeremie, Les Cayes, and Port-au-Prince. Another Jewish concentration was in Jeremie, consisting mostly of French Sephardi Jews.

One of the most prominent Jewish families was Mendes France, which had plantations and workshops all over the colony (one of their descendants was Pierre Mendès-France, prime minister of France in the 1950s). Another prominent family was de Pas. In 1714, Dr. Michel Lopez de Pas was nominated *Medecin du Roy* (king's physician) and in 1723 served in the Superior Council.

The governor of the French windward island, nominated in 1763, Jean-Baptiste Charles Henri Hector Comte d'Estaing, became famous for levying heavy taxes on

the Jews and thus financing the building of roads and posts as well as maintaining the army with Jewish money. In 1765, the expulsion of the Jews from Cap Francais was averted at the last moment, when Compte d'Estaing understood that his anti-Jewish policy was not accepted by Paris.

As there was no special registration of Jews under the French administration, and no orderly Jewish congregations, it is difficult to assess the number of Jews living there. However, the Jews gradually left Haiti. The slave rebellion in 1804 did not cause a panicky exodus, as the new rulers were not anti-Jewish. Rather, the Jews abandoned Haiti for economic reasons.

In the beginning of the 20th century, Jews from Syria and Lebanon settled in Haiti and were joined by Eastern European Jews in the 1930s. The unsteady economic and political situation, however, caused an emigration of Jews, and by the end of the century, only 20–30 Jewish persons remained in Haiti. Haiti has normal relations with Israel.

#### Jews in the U.S. Virgin Islands: Saint Thomas and Saint Croix

On March, 11, 1671, the Danish West India Company was founded and took possession of the island of Saint Thomas. Danes, Dutch, English, French, Germans as well as a number of Jews settled there. A Portuguese Jew, Gabriel Milan, was nominated governor of the island on March, 10, 1684. His high-handedness alienated the planters, however, and he was denounced as a rebel. On March, 26, 1689, he was beheaded in Copenhagen. Various historians have accused the witnesses against him of anti-Semitism.

When the elector of Brandenburg entered as a partner of the Danes in Saint Thomas, in 1685 it was decided, upon his recommendation, that "Calvinists and Lutherans were to have free exercise of religion; Catholics and Jews were to be tolerated and allowed to hold private services, provided they permitted no scandals."

The island of Saint Croix was ruled by the Knights of Malta from 1651 to 1664 in the name of Louis XIV of France, but was abandoned and then finally purchased by the Danes in 1733. This resulted in the settlement, from 1740 on, of Portuguese Jewish families from France (Bordeaux, Bayonne). The assumption is that in the 1760s there was a synagogue in Saint Croix.

In 1796, the first synagogue was founded in Saint Thomas, where the Jewish cemetery dates from 1750. The Berakha ve Shalom ve Gemilut Hasadim (Blessing and Peace and Acts of Piety) synagogue was founded after Saint Eustatius was sacked by Admiral Rodney, and its Jewish refugees joined the French Jews in the Virgin Islands. The islands were attractive to Jews, and they were granted full rights on March 29, 1814. As of 1835, they were even permitted to intermarry with Gentiles.

Saint Thomas replaced Saint Eustatius as a commercial center. With its excellent harbor and strategic location it became a prosperous transshipment center, free port, and port of repair for sailing ships. Jews from Jamaica and Curaçao joined the existing community.

The 1837 census of the whites in Saint Thomas listed 250 Danes and Germans; 250 English, Scots, Irish, and Americans; 350 French and Italians; 150 Creoles; and 400 Jews, the largest group. In Saint Croix, 372 Jews were counted.

In the mid-19th century, winds of Jewish reform began blowing from Germany. The hakamim were ready to accept some changes without altering traditional Sephardi customs. This was not enough for the reformers, however. A new hakam, Nathan Nathan, from Jamaica was strictly anti-Reform. This led to quarrels and clashes and ultimately to the founding of a separate Reform congregation and the Reform Temple Beth Elohim (House of God). In 1875, a compromise solution was reached whereby the congregation became quasi-Reform, changing the Code of Laws approved by King Frederick VII in 1848, which stated that “the divine service shall continue to be of the Spanish and Portuguese Israelites.”

The year 1867 was one of calamity in Saint Thomas—a disastrous hurricane, an earthquake that brought a tidal wave, and epidemics damaged the island. The advent of steam shipping and finally the opening of the Panama Canal caused the Jews to abandon the island. Some Jews went to Florida in the United States, but the largest group moved to Panama. The current congregation in Saint Thomas is managed by American Jews who arrived after the United States acquired the islands (1917). The Jewish population today is put at 300; among them are three or four Portuguese Jewish families. The congregation representing the Jews in Saint Thomas is the Hebrew Congregation of Saint Thomas. In Saint Croix there is no organized community.

### Jews in Trinidad and Tobago

At the beginning of the 17th century the Duchy of Courland (the two western provinces of Latvia) started settling Tobago, and in 1652 a settlement was founded—Jekabpills. Shortly afterward Dutch settlers founded the settlement of New Walchern on the island. The Dutch started bringing Sephardi Jews, mobilized in Leghorn, Italy, to the island—a shipload in 1658 of more than a hundred, another in 1659 with 120 people, and a third one in 1660 with 152.

The competition between the Latvians and the Dutch as well as ferocious attacks by the Arawak natives did not enable the Jews to form a permanent settlement, and they were reduced to the utmost poverty. In his poems the famous Spanish Jewish poet Daniel Levi de Barrios described the death of his wife Debora on the island.

Ultimately, some Jews managed to return to Amsterdam, and others reached Cayenne. Only a small number remained in Tobago, and they also gradually moved to other Caribbean islands.

Trinidad, being Spanish until 1797 and then passing into English hands, had no organized Jewish community. Several Jewish families from Curaçao settled on the island. The most prominent are the descendants of Ydelfonso Avinum de Lima Semah de Varencia, who arrived from Barcelona, Venezuela, and today are one of the most influential families in the island economy.

### Jews in the Bahamas

The Bahamas were first settled by the English in 1620, but very few Jews settled there at that time. Still, a Jew, Moses Franks, served as attorney general and chief

justice of the islands in the 18th century. After World War I a few Jewish families from Poland, Russia, and United Kingdom settled in Nassau, the capital. Later Jews came to Freeport on the Grand Bahamas Island.

In Nassau, there is a Conservative synagogue named for the converso Luis de Torres, who served as Columbus's interpreter and was the first European to set foot in the New World. In Freeport there is a Reform congregation. The two congregations make up the United Bahamas Hebrew Congregation.

The Jewish population numbers about 200. The Bahamas maintains normal relations with Israel.

### Jews in the Cayman Islands

The very few Jews there have formed the Jewish Community of the Cayman Islands. In addition to the 15–20 Jewish residents, there are a number of Jews from abroad who spend part of the year in the islands owing to the financial and banking centers in them.

### Jews in Cuba

Cuba was the country with the largest Jewish population in Central America and the Caribbean. Until the Castro revolution in 1959, the Jewish population on the island was estimated as approaching 15,000.

The Jewish history of Cuba before the liberation from Spain (1898) is a history of Jewish conversos, some of them illustrious and romantic figures. Cuban Jewish history is the oldest in the Americas, and it was in Cuba that the first converso landed—Luis de Torres (1453–1520), who is also considered the first European to set foot on the American continent (on November 2, 1492). He served as an interpreter for Columbus as he knew Spanish, Arabic, and Hebrew and was designated to translate at the planned meeting with the “Gran Khan” that Columbus anticipated. Torres was impressed by the custom of the Indian population to smoke tobacco. He settled in Cuba and started growing tobacco for export to Europe. He died in Cuba.

In 1516, Fray Juan Quevedo, bishop of Cuba, was nominated to control the conversos arriving in Cuba, and in 1520 he was in contact with the Inquisition. The first converso burned at the stake in Cuba was the wealthy merchant Francisco Gomez de Leon, followed by numerous Portuguese conversos.

The Jews of the Caribbean introduced, through the conversos, the sugarcane that became the main source of income for the country. Sugar production was headed by Hernand de Castro, who was linked to his Jewish family members in Curaçao and Jamaica.

One of the most romantic figures was the artist and poet Dolores de Dios Porta. After becoming famous, she moved to Paris, returned to Judaism, became a very observant Jewess, and died in Paris in 1869.

Most of the conversos assimilated into the local population, and there remained very few Jewish families, holding foreign citizenship—British, those coming from Jamaica; Dutch, those coming from Curaçao; and Danish, those of the Virgin Islands. Most of those Jews, too, assimilated into the local population.

The first Jewish congregation was formed by American Jewish soldiers who participated in the war of liberation of Cuba between Spain and the United States, in 1904. The congregation was later named United Hebrew Congregation. One of the main leaders was Sergeant Frank Steinhard, who became chairman of the Electric and Tramways Company in Cuba.

A second wave of Jewish settlers began in 1907 comprising Jews from Turkey—many of them from the town of Silivri. In 1914, they established the Shevet Ahim congregation.

After World War I Cuba served as a transit point for Jews from Eastern Europe waiting for visas to the United States. Some remained in Cuba. Those who stayed in Cuba formed, in 1925, the Centro Israelita de Cuba. In 1926, Jewish leftists formed the Centrol Cultural (Kultur Farain). The two main religious groups established the Orthodox Adat Yisrael and Kneset Yisrael in 1929. Jewish leftists formed the Centro Israelita.

With the advent of Nazism in Germany and in Europe, Jewish refugees arrived in Cuba. Their integration was extremely difficult, and they were often assisted by American Jewish organizations. The Cuban authorities were not sympathetic toward the refugees. The plight of the Havana-bound refugees was dramatized by the refugees from Germany aboard the *St. Louis* who were denied admission to Cuba and had to return to their tragic fate in Germany in April 1939.

Apart from the communal organization, most Cuban Jews were very active Zionists, under the roof of the Union Sionista de Cuba, which encompassed He-Halutz, Hashomer Hatzair, Maccabi, Betar, and WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organization). Some leftist groups made up the Asociacion Juvenil Judia de Cuba (*Yugentfarain* in Cuba) and Comite Judio Anti-Nazi, supporting the Soviet Union's fight against the Nazis, and the pro-Soviet Comite Israelita Cubano de Ayuda a los Aliados. Cuba also had an active B'nai B'rith chapter. In addition there were organized communities in Camaguey, Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, Santa Clara, Artemisa, and Guantanamo.

Cuban Jews had a very active press, with many dailies, weeklies, and monthlies. In the beginning most were in Yiddish, but gradually they turned to using Spanish.

The first Jewish college was founded by the Sephardi Shevet Ahim in 1924—Talmud Tora Teodoro Herzl, and later on Colegio Yavne was founded. In 1943, the Yiddishists founded the colegio Shalom Aleijen. Most of the Jews, however, preferred to use the public schools.

The Cuban revolution of Fidel Castro was not directed against the Jews, but their economic stability was destroyed. The great majority of Cuban Jews emigrated, heading mostly to Miami and other cities in the United States. Some settled in Israel and in Panama.

The Cuban authorities maintain good relations with the community organized under the roof organization Comision Coordinadora de las Sociedades Religiosas Hebreas de Cuba. Under the community organization Casa de la Comunidad Hebra de Cuba there are four synagogues in Havana, two Sephardi and two Ashkenazi. The Patronato Synagogue also maintains a kosher kitchen. The Jewish school closed in 1975, but a Sunday school still operates. Kosher food and ritual items are imported. The Santiago de Cuba synagogue was rededicated in 1975.

The Jewish population at the end of the 20th century was about 700. Cuba voted in November 1947 against the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. After maintaining normal relations with Israel, ties were severed in 1973 and not renewed.

### Jews in Puerto Rico

The existence of conversos under Spanish rule has not yet been properly investigated. Upon the American occupation, however, there were no Jews on the island. Under the American rule, several American Jews were prominent there. In 1902, Leo Stants Rowe, codified the legal structure. Leo H. Hollander was the treasurer of the island in 1900 and introduced the Hollander Law on income tax. Robert Szold was attorney general 1914–1915, and Adolph Grant Wolf and A. Cecil Snyder were Supreme Court justices in the first half of the 20th century.

In 1941, the Jewish Welfare Board founded a center for Jewish soldiers, and a community center was established in 1942. In the 1950s and 1960s, Jews from the United States and Cuba settled mainly in the capital San Juan with others in Ponce and Mayaguez.

In San Juan there are two synagogues, one Conservative, the other Reform. There is also a community center. Chapters of Hadassah, B'nai B'rith, and Young Judea are active. Hebrew school classes are held in the community center. Kosher food is available. The Jewish population of Puerto Rico is estimated at 2,500.

### Jews in the Dominican Republic

Jewish history in Santo Domingo begins early. The historian of Spanish rule there, Carlos Esteban Deive, writes, "Santo Domingo was during the first decade of the 16th century practically in Jewish or Converso hands, sent to the island by three persons—Bishop Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, a Converso from Aragon; Lope de Conchillos, a Converso from the Jewish neighborhood of Calatayud and secretary to King Fernando; and Miguel Perez de Almazan, also king's secretary." The archives of the Inquisicion de Cartagena, Colombia, include several cases against conversos in Santo Domingo.

The destruction of the Jewish community of Saint Eustatius in 1785 and the British occupation of Curaçao in 1795 brought Jews holding Dutch citizenship to Santo Domingo, joined by Jews from Jamaica, Barbados, and Virgin Islands holding British or Danish citizenship. This angered the Spanish-Catholic hierarchy, led by the Archbishop Isidoro Rodriguez, which opened a series of instances of persecution and incitement starting in 1795.

With independence from Haiti, which had occupied Santo Domingo in 1841, a typical response of the first Dominican president, Pedro Santana, to a Spanish-instigated anti-Jewish petition from the city of La Vega states:

It is not the Dominican Nation that complains, you have been incited . . . The desire in the 19th century, in a free republic, to persecute peaceful individuals under the pretext of religion is a scandalous abuse of the teachings of Christ. Instead of listening to the voice of passions, listen to the voice of justice and gratitude . . . The Jews do not teach others their beliefs and do not conquer others for their religion . . .

In 1865, after the restoration from the second Spanish rule, the reconstituted Dominican government issued a document thanking Rafael de Mordecahi de Marchena and other Jews, Dutch subjects, for their help and supply of ammunition, for the fight for independence.

In 1881, the Dominican general and hero of the war against Spain, Gregorio Luperon, had a plan (unrealized) to invite Jews from the Ukraine suffering from pogroms to settle in the Dominican Republic.

The Caribbean Jews of Spanish-Portuguese origin who had settled in the Dominican Republic dispersed into various areas of the country, mainly in Santo Domingo, Puerto Plata, Monte Christi, and La Vega. They usually dealt in the purchase of agricultural products from the villages and supplied manufactured goods. They did not form an organized community, and during their second and third generations gradually assimilated into the local population. Local historians call this phenomenon the fusion of Sephardi and Dominicans. Dominicans of Jewish origin usually remain proud of their Jewish ancestry. Typical of this was President Francisco Henriquez y Carvajal, who took office in 1916. He was the son of a Jewish father and a converso mother and always mentioned his Jewish origin.

Many of the families that converted to Christianity became very prominent in Dominican life, among them the Naar, Senior, de Marchena, Lopez-Penha, Henriquez, Namias de Crasto, and de Castro families. Pedro Henriquez Urena became a major linguist; Federico Henriquez y Carvajal, writer of the play *La Hija del Hebreo* (The Daughter of the Jew); Haim Horacio Lopez-Penha, author of *Los Paisanos de Jesus* (Jesus' Countrymen); and the composer Enrique de Marchena, who wrote the symphony *Hebraicum* after his visit to Israel.

One of the historical moments in Dominican Jewish life came at the ill-fated Evian Conference that was convened in November 1938 to discuss the plight of refugees from Germany and Austria. The Dominican Republic was the only country to grant sanctuary to Jews, being ready to receive up to 100,000 Jewish refugees. For this purpose, the institution DORSA (Dominican Republic Settlement Association) was formed with the assistance of the Joint Distribution Committee. War conditions enabled only 663 refugees to reach the designated area of Sosua for their settlement. Several thousand Jews received Dominican visas but could not reach Sosua. With the visas, however, they could escape from the Holocaust.

There are two synagogues in the Dominican Republic, one in the capital Santo Domingo and the other in Sosua. A rabbi serves both of them. There is a Sunday school and a chapter of the International Council of Jewish Women. The bimonthly *Shalom* appears there. In Sosua, there is also a small Jewish museum.

Today there are about 250–300 Jews in the Republic. Israel and the Dominican Republic have full diplomatic relations.

# Jews in Central America

*Mordechai Arbell*

---

General Population: 173,162,000

Jewish Population: 20,000

Percent of Population: 0.037 percent

Jewish Population by Country: Panama, 5,000; Costa Rica, 2,500; Guatemala, 900; Belize, 100; El Salvador, 100; Honduras, 100; Nicaragua, 100

---

## Historical Overview

### Jews in Guatemala

Inquisition documents, mainly from Mexico, mention the presence of Jewish conversos in Guatemala during the Spanish colonial period. The production of coffee and other tropical products attracted Jews from Germany who began settling in Guatemala in 1870. At the same time, Jews of Spanish-Portuguese origin from the Caribbean arrived in Guatemala. Of note among them was Jacobo Baiz (1843–1899), who became a close friend and adviser of President Rufino Barrios and represented the republic in the United States. A small community was formed, and prayer services were conducted in a private house.

At the beginning of the 20th century, new Jewish settlers started arriving from Mexico and Cuba and were joined by Jews from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. A new wave of German Jews arrived with the advent of Nazism in Germany.

Guatemala was one of the few countries in Latin America that had legislation aimed at excluding Jews. In 1932, an expulsion decree was enacted against “peddlers”—aimed against Jews. This was followed by a 1936 ban on immigration from “Asian countries,” among which Poland was included.

In 1933, 70 Jewish families of German origin resided in Guatemala. They had well-based social and economic conditions and were organized in an association for social help—Sociedad de Beneficencia–Hilfsverein, which was later called Sociedad Israelita de Guatemala–Beth El Reform. Fifty families of Oriental Jews were associated in the society Maguen David in 1923, and 150 families of Polish and Russian origin established the mutual aid society initially known as Ezra, which is called Centro Hebreo today.

The anti-Jewish legislation was abolished in 1939 with World War II, when the Jewish population numbered about 800. After the war, Guatemala adopted a pronounced pro-Jewish attitude. Jews obtained influential positions in the academic and industrial worlds. Under the initiative of Dr. Jorge Garcia Grandados, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine recommended the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine and under President Juan Jose Arevalo and Jorge Garcia Granados, Guatemala was the first country to recognize the State of Israel and the first to open an embassy in Jerusalem. Later, under the weight of international pressure, the embassy moved to Tel Aviv.

The umbrella organization Consejo Central de la Comunidad Judia de Guatemala encompasses three congregations—German, Oriental, and Eastern European, each with its own synagogue—a B'nai B'rith lodge, a Maccabi club, a branch of WIZO (the Women's International Zionist Organization), and a Jewish kindergarten. By the end of the 20th century, the Jewish population in Guatemala numbered around 1,200, most in Guatemala City and some in Quetzaltenango.

### Jews in Belize

The Jewish history of Belize, formerly the colony of British Honduras, has not yet been thoroughly researched. It is known that after the destruction of the Jewish community on Saint Eustatius, several Jewish families settled in Belize at the end of the 18th century. The most prominent among them was the Bienveniste family. South of Belize City there is an old Jewish cemetery with tombstones dating from the 19th century where Jews from Hamburg are buried. Belize has been mentioned as a place of trade for Jamaican Jews. Worth mentioning among prominent Jewish citizens is Solly Wolffsohn (1855–1933), an exporter of Belize timber who was a member of the Municipal and Legislative Councils in Belize City.

In 1939, there was an effort by the newspaperman W. E. Simpson to open Belize to Jewish refugees and to form a Jewish state there. The British authorities, however, deported the 85 Jews who reached Belize. In 1940, another effort to settle Jews in Erictown was also frustrated.

In the early 21st century, there are very few Jewish families in Belize, and there is no organized community life. One of the Belize Jews serves as the honorary consul of Israel.

### Jews in El Salvador

Except for the occasional transit of Portuguese conversos, there were almost no Jews in the country until the first half of the 19th century, when Sephardim from France settled in the town of Chalchuapa. They were joined by Jews from Alsace who moved to the capital, San Salvador, in the second half of the 19th century.

Dr. Juan Lindo, son of a Jewish father, Joaquin Fernandez Lindo, was president of El Salvador from January 1841 until February 1842. Nicknamed "The Fox," he was founder of the National University and the education system of El Salvador. The same Juan Lindo was president of Honduras 1847–1852 (a rare case of a person serving as president of two different countries).

Herbert de Sola, a Jewish entrepreneur from Panama, settled in El Salvador in 1896 and initiated the development of coffee plantations and the export of processed coffee to Europe and the United States. This main export item of El Salvador made the de Sola family one of the most prominent in the country. The family was joined by Sephardi families from Panama, Curaçao, and Saint Thomas in the Virgin Islands.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe began arriving. In 1976, there were some 370 Jews in El Salvador, but during the long civil war that followed many left the country. One of the community's most prominent leaders, Ernesto Liebes, who also served as honorary consul of Israel,

was murdered by the guerillas. With the return of peace some families resettled in El Salvador. By the end of the 20th century there were about 120 to 150 Jews there.

The umbrella community organization is the Comunidad Israelita de El Salvador, established in 1944. A Jewish center was opened in 1945 and a synagogue in 1950. Since the 1980s, services have been conducted in a private house. A Zionist organization was established in 1945 and WIZO is also active there. Diplomatic relations with Israel are friendly, and El Salvador maintains an embassy in Jerusalem.

### Jews in Honduras

Inquisitorial archives show that there were some Jewish conversos in Honduras during the Spanish colonial rule. Dr. Juan Lindo, son of a Jewish father, Don Joaquin Fernandez Lindo, was president of the republic from 1847 to 1852. He is remembered for establishing the country's educational system and for building schools even in the smallest villages. As mentioned previously, he had earlier served as president of El Salvador. With the arrival of Jews from Germany, communal life formed under the name Jewish Relief Committee of Honduras. In 1947, the Jews numbered 129, of whom 85 lived in the capital Tegucigalpa, and the others in San Pedro Sula, Tela, Ceiba, and Porto Cortes. Most were from Germany and the others from Eastern Europe. The only synagogue is in Tegucigalpa. By the end of the 20th century the Jewish population had diminished to fewer than 100. There is a WIZO chapter. Former president Ricardo Maduro is the son of a Jewish father and a member of the very prominent Levy Maduro family of the Caribbean and Panama.

### Jews in Nicaragua

The first Jews arrived in Nicaragua in the mid-19th century from Germany and northern France, most of them coming after the European revolutions in 1848. After World War I they were joined by Jews from Central Europe, mainly from Hungary and Poland. Jews of the first immigration wave gradually lost contact with Judaism. Some were baptized, others assimilated.

In general the Jewish economic situation is satisfactory. Jews have been prominent in coffee plantations and industry, such as the Dreyfus and Teffel families.

Among the prominent citizens, of note is the newspaperman Adolph Delisle Straus, who died in New York in 1925. Originally from Bavaria, in 1867 he was a general in the Nicaraguan army. He represented the *New York Times* in Cuba and Mexico and was the only journalist in attendance at the execution of Emperor Maximilian in Mexico. Another prominent Jew was the writer Lazlo Pataki, who was very close to the Somoza family that governed Nicaragua in the 20th century.

In 1972, the Jewish population numbered 250. Most lived in the capital Managua, but others were in Leon, Granada, and Chinandega.

In the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake in 1972, in which most of Managua was destroyed, many Jews emigrated. With the advent of the Sandinista government in the last 10 years of the 20th century, the small synagogue was confiscated as well as other Jewish property. The Jewish community leaders were imprisoned, and most of the Jewish population left the country.

Until 1979, the central Jewish organization was Congregacion Israelita de Nicaragua. There was also a B'nai B'rith lodge and a WIZO chapter. After that year, the number of Jews dwindled to a mere 10 to 20 persons. With the ouster of the Sandinista regime, Israel and Nicaragua restored diplomatic relations.

### Jews in Costa Rica

Although Jews from the Jamaica were visiting the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica at the end of the 17th century, it is doubtful whether any of them remained, as it was under Spanish control. The Jewish visits coincided with the fairs of cacao collecting at which Jews purchased cacao and sold European merchandise. The trade reached such proportions that a series of restrictive measures was taken, such as the 1740 formal prohibition against dealing with Jews.

The first Jewish settlers in Costa Rica were Sephardi Jews from Curaçao, Jamaica, Panama, and Saint Thomas in the Virgin Islands, who had reached Costa Rica by the mid-19th century. A short time after their arrival, those Jews occupied high socioeconomic positions in the society that received them very warmly. Most prominent among them were the Maduro, Piza, and Suasso families. After World War I, Jews immigrated to Costa Rica from Turkey, the Middle East, Poland, and other countries in Eastern Europe.

The Spanish-Portuguese Jews kept in close contact with the Jewish community of Panama. By the end of the 19th century, there were about 17 family clans of Sephardi Jews, who gradually became assimilated into Costa Rican society. As the number of Polish Jews grew, they built their own synagogue, purchased land for their cemetery, and gradually excluded Sephardi Jews from their religious life. The Costa Rican authorities, seeing themselves as inundated by Jewish peddlers from Poland, became more negative toward Jews. Consequently, Costa Rica became one of the few countries in Latin America that enacted anti-Jewish legislation in the 20th century. The decrees were mainly against Poles, and the word "Jews" was not mentioned. In 1934, 100 percent of the peddlers were Jewish and special taxes were levied against them. In 1936, legislation limiting the entry of Poles to Costa Rica was put into effect. Only after the 1948 civil war did the anti-Jewish tension abate.

The leading communal organization is the Centro Sionista de Costa Rica, founded in 1930, which publishes a monthly bulletin. The Centro includes WIZO and other Zionist groups, B'nai B'rith, and the Jewish Women's Welfare Organization. A Jewish sport center is the venue of Jewish athletics.

San Jose, the capital, has one synagogue, Shaarei Zion, served by a rabbi. There is a burial society and a Jewish cemetery. The Haim Weizmann School, a primary and secondary institution, is attended by most Jewish children.

Costa Rica maintains full and cordial relations with Israel and has an embassy in Jerusalem.

### Jews in Panama

The isthmus of Panama serves as a transit route for merchandise and passengers between South and North America and has the easiest passage from the Atlantic to

the Pacific Oceans. Historically, the connection between the oceans was through the Chagres River or by land through Las Cruces trail. Those routes were replaced by the Panama Canal. Although in the Spanish colony Jews and conversos were always present on the surface and maritime routes through Panama, they also used the routes of the Galleon Trade from the Philippines to the American continent, which brought merchandise from China, Japan, and Indonesia to be transhipped through the Atlantic to Europe. The Galleon Trade to a large extent was in converso hands.

The converso presence in the city of Panama, itself founded by the supposedly converso conquistador Pedro Arias (*Pedrarias*) de Avila, had a Jewish place of prayer or a synagogue, camouflaged on one of the main streets of "Panama the Old," at the beginning of the 17th century.

Similarly, in 1602, the governor of the province of Veraguas, which included Panama, Juan Lopez de Sequiera, founded the city of David (the third largest in Panama). He was suspected of naming it for King David owing to his Jewish origin.

The first Jewish presence in the modern era was a Jewish capitalist from Guadeloupe, Augustin Salomon who, together with the Baron de Thiery, obtained a concession to construct an interoceanic canal in 1835. This endeavor failed.

During the California gold rush (1849–1853), Panama was one of the routes from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts of the United States. Some of the Jewish passengers traveling through Panama chose to remain there.

The disastrous year 1867 in Saint Thomas in the Danish Virgin Islands (today U.S. property), cursed by a hurricane, a tidal wave, and a cholera epidemic, sent a wave of Jews to Panama. They were joined by Jews, all of Spanish-Portuguese origin, from Jamaica, Curaçao, and other Caribbean islands.

In 1852, the Hebrew Benevolent Society existed in Panama. By May 1876, the Jews were numerous enough to found, under the leadership of Elias Nunez Martinez, the Kol Shearit Israel Burial and Charitable Society. In 1890, a Spanish-Portuguese congregation was formed in the city of Colon, Kahal Kadosh Yangakob (Yaakob). A synagogue was inaugurated in 1913. In Panama City a synagogue was inaugurated in 1935. The congregation had decided in 1926 to adopt the Reform prayer rite.

After the opening of the Panama Canal, Oriental Jews from Syria, Palestine, and North Africa began to settle in Panama and gradually became the majority of the Jewish population. Their congregation, Shevet Ahim, established its synagogue in 1945 following a strict Orthodox rite. They also founded the Agudat Ahim synagogue in Colon, and small communities in David, Chitré, and Santiago de Veraguas.

In the American Canal Zone, after World War I, under the leadership of Irwin Michlin, the Young Men's Hebrew Association society was founded for the Jewish employees of the Canal Zone and the American Jewish servicemen. Before World War II the Jewish Welfare Board formed a community and maintained a synagogue.

A small group of Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe, joined by Jews from Cuba and Costa Rica, formed the Beth El congregation with its synagogue (Conservative). The Oriental and Ashkenazi Jews in Panama deal mainly in commerce, and some became prominent in the textile industry. The Spanish-Portuguese



David Bajer, a Jewish immigrant from Poland, stands at the gate to a synagogue in Panama City, about 1950. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

continued with the Caribbean tradition of plantations, agro industry, shipping, and banking.

Among the prominent Jews in Panama were the following: David Henry Brandon, the founder and commander of the Firemen's Corps of Panama; Herbert de Castro, founder of the Panama Philharmonic Orchestra; and the poet Edward Maduro Lindo, who wrote the words of the patriotic "March of Panama." In addition, Aida de Castro, known in Panama as the "angel of Palo Seco," with her husband, Dr. Ezra Hurwitz, organized the leper colony in Palo Seco, treating victims of the disease and helping to eradicate it. Max Shalom Delvalle served as vice president and in 1967 became president of the republic. His nephew, Eric Shalom Delvalle Maduro, was also president, 1987–1988.

The representative body of the Jewish community is the Consejo Central Comunitario Hebreo de Panama. Panama has active B'nai B'rith and WIZO chapters.

Because most of the Jewish population has moved to Panama City, the synagogues in Colon, David, and Balboa Canal Zone have been closed. In the early 21st century, there were three active synagogues in Panama: Kol Shearit Israel, Shevet Ahim, and Beth El. There is a mikvah, and kosher food is readily available. There are two Jewish high schools with a total enrollment of 1,300 students, a Hebrew cultural center, and a Jewish sports center. At the end of the 20th century, with the arrival of several hundred Jews from Israel, the Jewish population grew to some 7,000–8,000 persons.

## Jews in Mexico

*Mauricio Lulka Pipco and René Dayán-Shabot*

---

General Population: 104,000,000

Jewish Population: Around 40,000

Percent of Population: 0.04 percent

Jewish Population by City: Mexico City metropolitan area, 37,000; Guadalajara, 550; Monterrey, 450; Cancún, 300; Tijuana, 200; other cities, 1,500

Languages Spoken: All speak Spanish. English, 72 percent; Hebrew, 39 percent; Yiddish, 17 percent; Arabic, 14 percent; Ladino, 4 percent

---

### Historical Overview

1518 The first Jews arrive with Hernán Cortés in the land of the Aztecs, among them Hernando Alonso, who participates in the conquest of cities such as Guajuato and Tenochtitlan

1528 Hernando Alonso is burned in the stake accused of being Jewish.

1571 The Inquisition is officially established in New Spain. Religious intolerance and the strong feeling of being persecuted diminish the presence of Jews.

1640–1649 The Inquisition persecution becomes especially intense, targeting the Jewish leadership.

After 1650 Exogamy, the absence of a communitarian structure, and the new generation's lack of knowledge about their religion, finally leads to assimilation of the crypto-Jews.

1820 The Inquisition is officially abolished.

1821 Mexico declares its independence from Spain. There are no Jews in the country.

1856 Laws allowing non-Catholic minorities to immigrate, obtain citizenship, and have freedom of worship are issued.

1864 Maximilian of Habsburg, Archduke of Austria, arrives in Mexico and, with the support of Napoleon III, becomes emperor of Mexico. Some Jews from France, Alsace, Belgium, and Austria arrive with him.

- 1900s Escaping anti-Semitism, a wave of Jewish immigrants who become the basis of today's Jewish community, arrive in the country. The first immigrants come from the Balkans, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Syria, and Lebanon; later, Jews from Central and East Europe arrive.
- 1912 Jews living in Mexico gather in a single organization called Sociedad de Beneficencia Alianza Monte Sinai to support immigrants coming to the country and to establish a Jewish cemetery, which indicates a strong commitment to remain in this land. The differences among Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Oriental Jews—several languages (Yiddish, Ladino, Arabic), variations in the interpretation of liturgy, rituals, eating habits, and particular customs of each region, as well as an emphasis in religious, cultural, ideological, and/or political issues—results in their gathering according to their countries of origin, rites, and particular customs. Today, the Sociedad de Beneficencia Alianza Monte Sinai (Orthodox) gathers Jews from Damasco, Syria and Lebanon.
- 1922 The Comunidad Ashkenazi (Ashkenazi Community) (Orthodox) is established by Central and Eastern European Jews.
- 1923 The first synagogue in Justo Sierra No. 83 (Monte Sinai) is inaugurated.
- 1924 The first Jewish daily school (Colegio Israelita de México) is founded.
- 1924 Plutarco Elias Calles, the newly elected president of Mexico, issues an invitation to the Jewish people to come to Mexico as law-abiding citizens, stimulating in an immigration wave that lasts until 1930.
- 1929–1930 The economic depression sparks attacks against foreigners. In October 1930, the National Anti-Chinese and Anti-Jewish league was founded “to counteract the cruel and bleeding action of the Jews, which destroyed commerce and the economical activities of the Mexicans.” Protests are generalized against the presence of Jews in the commercial life of the country.
- 1931 President Pascual Ortiz Rubio issues a decree expelling Jewish peddlers from the Lagunilla Market and proclaims June 1 as National Commerce Day, a date in which unions and businessmen groups protest against the Jewish presence in the market places.
- 1935 Anti-Semitism is influenced by European fascism and Nazism racial stereotype, as well as by the local right-wing groups who oppose the socialist character of President Lázaro Cardenas's regime (1934–1940). Las Camisas Doradas (The Golden Shirts) an anti-Semitic and paramilitary unit is founded by former revolutionary generals at the northern city of Mexicali by the group Acción Revolucionaria Mexicanista. A couple of years later the government bans it.
- 1936 The new General Law of Population favors restrictive policies that limit immigration to those accepted groups that would be easily absorbed into the population and would protect the economic interests of the citizens. Thus, the entrance of Russians, Poles, Turks, Jews, Hungarians, and Gypsies is specially limited.
- 1938 The Comité Central Israelita de México is founded to help Jewish refugees from Europe and cover the needs of immigrants coming from different regions of the world; it becomes the official representation of the whole Jewish community in Mexico.

- 1938 The Orthodox Comunidad Maguén David is established by Jews from Aleppo, Syria.
- 1941 The Orthodox Comunidad Sefaradí is formally organized by Jews coming from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans.
- 1944 As a partnership of the Comité Central and B'nai B'rith, Tribuna Israelita is created with the purpose of combating anti-Semitism.
- 1950 The Centro Deportivo Israelita (Jewish Sport Center) is established, as an institution that unites Jews from all the communities through sports and culture.
- 1957 Beth Israel Community Center (Conservative) is established by Jews from English-speaking countries who live in Mexico City.
- 1961 Bet-El Community (Conservative) is founded by Spanish-speaking Jews.
- 1963 The Yeshiva Keter Tora is founded
- 1965 The Nidje Israel Synagogue and Community Center of the Ashkenazi community is inaugurated as well as the Maguen David Synagogue.
- 1967 The Maguen David Youth Cultural Center is inaugurated
- 1968 The Lojamei Jerut, a Zionist youth movement of the Maguen David Community, is founded
- 1970 The Jewish School is founded in the city of Tijuana.
- 1971 The Ahaba Ve Shalom, a religious youth movement of the Maguen David Community, is founded.
- 1972 The Ashkenazi Community establishes the Bet Fila Cultural Center in Echegaray, State of Mexico.
- 1973 Beth Yaacov, a religious school for girls, is created.
- 1978 The Maguen David Hebrew School is inaugurated. The Maguen David Community inaugurates the Shaare Shalom Synagogue.
- 1979 The Yeshiva Keter Tora opens a high school and a women's school.
- 1989 The Maguen David Hebrew School opens its high school department. The Ashkenazi Kolel Bircas Shmuel is created.
- 1990 The Eliahu Fasja Synagogue of the Maguen David Community is inaugurated. The Jewish religion is officially registered.
- 1994 Kadima, an organization that helps integrate persons with disabilities into society, is created.
- 1997 Asociación Menorah, an organization to combat domestic violence, is founded, and Hatikva, an organization to help couples with infertility, is created
- 1999 Or Hajaim School of the Maguen David Community is created. Kol Hanisayon, an activity center for old people, is also established.
- 2002 Tribuna Israelita and the Tel Aviv University organize the 6th International Anti-Semitism Seminar in Mexico
- 2004 The International Jewish Movie Festival is inaugurated, with films regarding Jewish traditions, habits, culture, and perspectives.
- 2005 The Mexican Postal Service issues a stamp commemorating 100 years of the Jewish presence in Mexico.
- 2005 Tribuna Israelita publishes the book *60 Years After the Liberation of Auschwitz: Reflections of the Mexican Press*, an anthology of more than 30 articles published

in the national media by renowned Jewish and non-Jewish journalists and intellectuals.

2007 The Monte Sinaí Community inaugurates the Shar le Simcha Synagogue

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Job expectations in Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century, which were mostly agricultural, were uncertain. The economic situation of the immigrants was highly risky and limited because they arrived in the country without financial resources and with improper trade and professions for the Mexican environment.

At the beginning, most Jews were devoted to informal business as peddlers, an activity that required neither extensive knowledge of the language nor a great quantity of money. In the 1930s, the fact that they were only allowed limited trade in the marketplaces propitiated their participation in formal trade in stores downtown. The restriction to foreign trade because of the global crisis caused consumer goods to be manufactured locally, resulting in the creation of new industries and the diversification of activities. As a result, Jewish entrepreneurs made the transition from shops to small and eventually large industries, primarily in the textile and garment areas.

Thus, even though there were difficult years, a substantial economic growth was achieved, and Jews escalated to the middle and high social classes in Mexican society. The diversity among communities was also shown in the labor area. Among the Ashkenazim, a great number obtained higher education and became professionals; whereas the children of the Sephardic (including those from Middle East origin) basically continued with the commercial tradition.

The third generation, in general, gave birth to an intellectual, professional, and political class in the community. Nowadays, a significant number of Mexican Jews are active in several areas, such as industry and commerce, the academic world, politics, communications and the media, and the liberal arts, among others.

The active economic population (57 percent of the Jews compared with 42 percent of the national population) is primarily engaged in the following types of work: entrepreneur, 49.7 percent; private employee, 19.1 percent; professional practice, 18.2 percent; teacher, artist, and intellectual, 9.9 percent; private manager, 2.0 percent; and public servant, 1.1 percent.

Volunteer work is an important activity within the community. Around 25 percent of the Mexican Jews perform volunteer work in Jewish institutions and 5 percent in non-Jewish institutions.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Both at the community and individual levels, Jews have many opportunities to participate in Mexican society. Regarding visibility, there is no doubt that the Jewish community has a greater presence in the citizens' consultation bodies in several areas, such as social and economic development, human rights, and public safety.

Jews participate in several nongovernment organizations. At the same time, they also promote the creation of employment, training, education, and direct-help programs outside the community, as well as the construction of housing for marginal groups who live in high-risk zones, such as river and mountain slopes.

An increasing number of Jews excel in cultural areas, such as the fine arts, literature, dance, theater, movie, and television. There is a yearly Jewish Film Festival and a Jewish Theater Festival (Habima). The folkloric and contemporary Jewish dance festival, Aviv, stands out, and more than 1,500 kids and youngsters participate. At the same time, hundreds of activities at social and cultural level are held in community centers every week.

A variety of magazines and newspapers, reflect the different cultural, political, and ideological orientation of the communities.

### Present Economic Conditions

The economic crisis that has lasted since 1976 in Mexico has caused a low growth in gross internal product. Since 1994, the economic crisis has especially affected a wide sector of the Jewish community. To help those in economic need, the community has taken the appropriate measures. Consequently, the number of scholarships granted to students from the Jewish school network increased. At the same time, they created Fundación Activa, an institution that supports an employment agency and the Activa Business Center for the purpose of economically reactivating unemployed or low-income people and training and advising entrepreneurs. All of these factors show the economic deterioration that affects Jews the same as the rest of the population.

### Jewish Education

The extensive Mexican Jewish educational network includes a wide variety of options from which parents can choose the preferred system for their children: schools where Yiddish is taught, Montessori-type schools, Zionist Hebrew-oriented schools, schools of a religious nature, yeshivas, *kollelim*, and institutions where teaching is based on the English language. In spite of their methodological and ideological diversity, all of them are centered in Jewish values and teach Hebrew, and they adjust to the official programs dictated and recognized by Mexico's secretary of public education.

Today, more than 90 percent of the school-aged Jewish population (around 9,000 students) attends one of the 16 schools that integrate the educational network of the Jewish community in Mexico. Around 30 percent of the students receive some type of scholarship granted by the community. The schools are coordinated by Vaad Hajinuj, which also supports the Hebraic University, an institution of higher education responsible for the formation and the professional development of educators and specialists in Jewish studies who nurture the educational systems of Mexico. Around 37 percent of the community's children and youngsters participate in youth organizations (tнуot), which provide a proper frame for their integral development and reinforce their Mexican Jewish identity. As for university students, they

are active in their corresponding higher education centers and organize, together with Tribuna Israelita, the Jewish cultural workshops that allow their fellow students deeper knowledge about Judaism in general and the community in Mexico in particular.

### Religious Denominations and Assimilation

Most Mexican Jews define themselves as traditionalists. This means their Jewishness is basically expressed in their participation in Jewish institutions (schools and cultural organizations); in keeping certain religious rituals, like the annual attendance at synagogue during the High Holidays; or in keeping the religious celebration of significant moments in the Jewish life cycle, such as the berith milah, the bar or bath mitzvah, Jewish marriage, or burial rituals.

In the past few years, there has been a significant increase in religiousness, along with an increase in educational institutions of religious nature, for children as well as for adults. In a recent survey, when subjects were asked "As a Jew, you consider yourself . . .," the responses were as follows: very observant, 7.4 percent; observant, 17.3 percent; traditionalist, 62.3 percent; less observant, 8.5 percent; secular, 3.5 percent; and atheist, 1.0 percent.

Regarding religious practices, around 35 percent of Mexican Jews eat kosher food, supervised by three Orthodox communities: Maguén David, Ashkenazi, and Monte Sinai. In addition, 16 percent attend daily one of the 26 synagogues, *kollelim*, and/or midrashim; 49 percent attend Shabbat services; and 92 percent attend during the High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur).

Because of the community cohesion and the solid institutional organization, particularly the school network, the assimilation degree of Mexican Jews, measured through the mixed or exogamic marriages index, is one of the lowest in the whole Diaspora at 7.4 percent. In addition, 85 percent of interfaith marriage partners converted to Judaism, and 99 percent keep the Jewish religion at home.

### Communal and Political Institutions

More than 93 percent of the Jewish families in Mexico are affiliated with a community from which they receive a great variety of services covering their needs, including religious, cultural, social, welfare, and safety services.

Through the years, divisions and separation according to their geographical origin became more flexible and permeable. This transformation can be seen in the increase in marriages between members of different communities, which today surpasses 40 percent. During the last decade of the 20th century, intercommunity relations have also increased considerably in many areas, as is shown by the creation of several institutions that provide services to all members of the Jewish community.

Total percentage of members per community:

Maguén David Community—25.8 percent

Alianza Monte Sinai Community—21.6 percent

Ashkenazi Community—20.1 percent

Sephardic Community—8.7 percent  
Bet-El Community—8.6 percent  
Jewish Sports Center (CDI)—3.3 percent  
Beth Israel Community Center—1.5 percent  
Guadalajara Jewish Community—1.4 percent  
Monterrey Jewish Community—1.1 percent  
Cancun Jewish Community—0.8 percent  
Tijuana Jewish Community—0.4 percent  
Nonaffiliated families—6.7 percent

The percentage of the CDI members refers only to those who are not members of any community.

Even though each community maintains autonomy and independence, they all gather in the *Comité Central de la Comunidad Judía de México* (Mexico's Jewish Community Central Committee or CCCJM), which is the only authorized representative institution for authorities, political parties, media, nongovernmental organizations, and religious, academic, and intellectual groups of the Mexican society as well as for the Jewish communities and institutions outside Mexico. Its main objective is ensuring the security of the Mexican Jewish community in all fields and preserving a real and positive image of the community.

The CCCJM has three operational branches: *Tribuna Israelita*, the institution responsible for combating anti-Semitism and establishing communication channels with different sectors of the Mexican society, especially human rights groups, media, religious, and academic and intellectual institutions and individuals; the *Comité de Orden y Vigilancia*, which is responsible for the physical safety of the Mexican Jews and their institutions; and the *Comité de Acción Social*, which provides help to members of the community who are victims of crime and insecurity.

A wide range of Jewish women's organizations is gathered in the *Federación Femenina*, which coordinates their cultural, philanthropic, and social assistance activities. The *Consejo Mexicano de Mujeres Israelitas*, the *Voluntarias Judeo Mexicanas*, *WIZO*, and *Na'amat* have established support programs for different national social sectors, mainly in the educational and health areas.

New challenges for the community include substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, and health problems promoted the foundation of several intercommunal institutions. Among them are *Umbral*, an institution that deals with problems of addiction, such as smoking, alcoholism, illegal drugs, and eating disorders; *Kadima*, which is dedicated to socially integrating persons with disabilities; *Fundación Menorah* and *Erej* of *Na'amat*, which works to prevent domestic violence and assist its victims; the *Eishel*, which is a home for elderly people in the city of Cuernavaca with personalized services in medical care and social and cultural activities; as well as other institutions in Mexico City that provide services to elderly people who live at their own houses or with relatives. In the health area, *Ose* provides free or very low cost medication, as well as hospital services, for low-income people; *Dam* is an institution that collects blood and maintains blood banks in the main hospitals where members of the community seek attention; and *Hatzala*, which has five

ambulances strategically set in various areas of the metropolitan zone of Mexico City, plus a group of volunteer paramedics that can arrive in a matter of minutes to help any member of the community who suffers an accident or illness that requires emergency treatment. All of these organizations are intercommunal. This means they were created to serve all members of the Jewish community, regardless of the sector to which they belong.

### Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism

Even though anti-Semitism has never been an official policy in Mexico, there have been politicians who in different moments have made anti-Jewish declarations. The government has never supported formal discrimination or violent actions of significant dimension. Nevertheless anti-Semitism has been present in the Mexican society.

After eight years of intense lobbying, where the Central Committee and Tribuna Israelita played a fundamental role, in June 2003 President Vicente Fox promulgated the Federal Law to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination, previously approved unanimously by the Congress and the Senate. Article No. 4 rejects anti-Semitism and xenophobia in any of its forms. This law represents a great step forward in recognizing Mexico as a plural and diverse society, where respect for differences must be the rule and not the exception. Nowadays anti-Semitism in Mexico, in particular from left-wing groups, expresses itself mainly through graffiti and in the mass media. As a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, negative opinion against the State of Israel increased.

### Existential Problems of the Community

The Jewish Mexican community provides a deep feeling of belonging for its membership. This is undoubtedly reinforced by the community institutions that, since their origins, have tried, with relatively high success, to cover a great part of the individual's needs within a Jewish environment. A coordinated effort made by the families, schools, and community centers and institutions has been a key and essential factor in this task.

Nevertheless, the continuity of Jewish community in Mexico faces several challenges. First is the issue of poverty. The economic crisis through which the country is passing has affected the Jews, even though their cost of living is high with respect to that of much of the rest of the population. The number of families that are granted scholarships, medical assistance, and financial help has increased significantly since 1995.

Whoever wants to be part of the Jewish community has to cover membership fees and high tuition. To live in the zone where the community centers and schools are located requires the payment of costly rents. The communities and their institutions will have to implement creative solutions if they want to keep their members within the group and continue having a Jewish life.

Second is the issue of religious polarization. Since the last decade of the 20th century, there has been an increase in religiousness of some members of the

Jewish Mexican community. At a macro level this implies a strengthening among the religious groups, which, even though they are not the majority, can cause conflicts and internal ideological struggles. On the other hand, at the micro level, it may mean the fragmentation of those families where only one member becomes religious. This could bring internal conflicts that are difficult to solve.

## Contemporary Jewish Affairs

### Demographics

Of the 40,000 Jews in Mexico, 60.4 percent are married, 29.1 percent are single, 5.6 percent are widowers, 4.1 percent are divorced, and 0.8 percent are unmarried couples. The divorce rate is around 21 percent. Family is the core of Jewish life in Mexico. Family relationships are strong and close; in general, children stay at their parents' home until they get married. The average family has 3.3 persons.

### Zionism and Its Institutions and Israel

Zionism has exerted great influence at the community level. Nevertheless, in spite of the great identification with Israel (91 percent of Jews give great importance to Israel), the number of Mexican Jews who have made aliyah is relatively low: from 1948 to 2005, 4,000 people immigrated to Israel, and about half of them returned to Mexico.

More than 83 percent of Mexican Jews have visited Israel. This has been possible thanks to several programs, such as trips organized by the Jewish schools at the end of 9th grade (the third year of high school) during the summer with the purpose of getting acquainted with Israel, its people, and its environment. Furthermore, other trips are made for specific projects, such as the ones of sports events—the Maccabi Games—or academic training, particularly for teachers in the Jewish schools, tourism, and *hajshara* (one year in Israel at the end of high school)

Attachment to Israel is also shown in other forms. Far beyond the properly Zionist institutions like the Sojnut (the Jewish Agency), the Federación Sionista (Zionist Federation), the Keren Kayemet, and Keren Hayesod, there are several organizations that are undoubtedly linked to Israel, such as Associations of Friends of Universities and Hospital of Israel and women's organizations, such as WIZO and Na'amat, among others. As part of their work they support different projects implemented in Israel and promote cultural, scientific, and technological interchange between Israel and Mexico.

Within the educational environment, Jewish schools consider the link with Israel as one of the key elements in their ideology. The field of informal education includes the tnuot (youth movements) of Zionist philosophy.

## Selected Bibliography

- Bóksler Liwerant, Judit, ed. 1992. *Imágenes de un encuentro*. Mexico City: Tribuna Israelita, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Della Pergola, Sergio, and Susana Lerner. 1992. La población judía de México: Perfil demográfico, social y cultural, pueblo palestino. Jerusalem: Universidad Hebrea de Jerusalem, Colegio de México, Asociación de Amigos de la Universidad Hebrea de Jerusalem.

- Gleizer, Daniela. 2000. México frente a la inmigración de refugiados judíos 1934–1940. Conaculta, Mexico: Fundación Cultural Eduardo Cohén.
- Gojman de Backal, Alice. 2000. Camisas, escudos y desfiles militares. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Hamui Sutton, Alicia. 2003. “Transformación en la religiosidad de los judíos en México tradición, ortodoxia y fundamentalismo en la modernidad tardía.” PhD thesis, Universidad Iberoamericana, México.

## History of Jewish Migration to Mexico

*Adina Cimet*

---

Jews arriving in Mexico from different places sought to acclimatize themselves to the new environment. Individually, they adapted as quickly as they could, but collectively, they faced an additional and even conflicting objective: they had to address the internal diversity of Jewish immigrants and negotiate their multiple cultural differences before they could constitute themselves as a group.

For all immigrants, settling in a new location requires some healing from past experiences and forging a new sense of belonging. Immigrant Jews arriving in Mexico in the late 19th and early 20th centuries therefore had two major goals: adapting to a new society and creating a new social entity from the different types of Jews who arrived in the new land. In the process, they built a community structure as complex as the old communal structures of Jewish Europe that had characterized and maintained Jewish living arrangements for centuries. Their amazing experiment as a Diaspora people was to be played over again in Mexico, coalescing their distinctive cultural differences and varied ideological perspectives into a common goal: identifying common needs through the organizations that help them sustain and express their distinct cultural, religious minority status.

The first immigrants to Mexico of the contemporary Jewish community were Oriental Jews: bold men who were followed by their brides and families. Oriental Jews from Syria and Sephardic Jews from Turkey arrived in Mexico in search of better economic conditions. Their main objective, after finding jobs and housing, was to satisfy their religious needs. Although there are three scattered groups in Mexico today (Venta Prieta, Hidalgo; Cholula, Guerrero; and to the north of Mexico City) that claim to have Marrano ancestry, these groups live independently of the community. They use a liturgy and traditions made up from residual oral Judaism that has been selectively mixed with Christian practices. Yet none of these groups has been acknowledged by the Jewish Orthodox establishment.

The Mexico of the 19th century was 99 percent Catholic. The Jews it received in the 1860s—mostly individuals and a few French, British, and Alsatian families—represented a mere 1 percent of the country’s population. Lured by the possibilities of economic development, they invested in retail enterprises. Yet these few were not successful in creating a coherent community. It was left to the poor Oriental

immigrants from Syria, the Greek and Turkish Ladino-speaking Jews, and a few Ashkenazim who arrived without resources, languages, or professions to establish themselves in the new land. By 1912, they had inaugurated Monte Sinai, their first representative institution; a year later, this was followed by a Talmud Torah school and a cemetery.

With a few exceptions, the larger Ashkenazi immigration that followed began arriving in Mexico in the second decade of the last century, and they benefited from the welcome given to them by the few already established families. Like their predecessors, they sought a better livelihood as well as a haven from the strictures imposed by the old societies. At that time, all Jews cooperated with each other. The Jews who settled in Mexico arrived with diverse traditions, languages, life experiences, and expectations, but they shared a number of commonalities: their religion and their historical consciousness. But the most important forces that connected them soon became divisive: their interpretation of their existential experiences, expressed best in their communal languages—Yiddish, Hebrew, and Arabic—was emblematic of the differences that separated them. Although the commonalities helped them coalesce into a social entity, their internal differences were sufficiently marked to lead to organizational expansiveness. As a result, they established often parallel communal organizations to sustain the meanings of their Jewish life.

Some of the Ashkenazi immigrants hoped for a new political beginning in Mexico, adding an ideological component and a sense of mission to their endeavor. They therefore carried with them their rich ideological histories, which they transplanted to the new environment as soon as they disembarked from the ships that had left them on the shores of Veracruz. They published newsletters, created groups, and held meetings to enlighten others on their views concerning political developments in the rest of the world. After all, they knew Mexico had had its own revolution in 1910 and was therefore a fertile ground in which their ideals and dreams could be realized. If they had sympathized with socialist thought in their home countries—from folkism, to Bundism, to communism, for instance—they found a way to further their ideologies in the new territory, highlighting those messages that were particularly resonant. Those committed to the Zionist alternative as the better and more realistic choice for Jews, whether from the right or the left, similarly continued their political struggles, advocating for their goals. What could have been cultural and political dissonances were transplanted as new world views through which current experiences were interpreted. Thus, the entire gamut of ideological voices took root in the new community and set the stage for many debates that were played out within organizations, in the press, and among institutions.

But if Ashkenazim had ideologies to contend with, they had to thank the Oriental and Sephardic groups who had preceded them and created the elements necessary for Jewish cultural survival: synagogues and some emphasis on religious tradition. The pioneers had Orthodox concerns and used their religious affiliation and structures to attract others. Indeed, all other Jews had joined them at first, but soon differences in outlook asserted themselves and became a source of contention. As a result, each subgroup developed its own centers and independent organizations, each with its own hierarchy of power. Thus, from the first synagogue

(1922), new splinter groups and new organizations were created. This provided immigrants with an opportunity to recreate themselves anew, with multiple new status roles for themselves.

The Ashkenazi group that broke off from the original stem in 1922 began its activities with the Nidjei Israel congregation and benevolent association. Soon, the Sephardic Jews also established their own organizations (1923). Each subgroup added to the network of self-help groups, financial funds, and education institutions, among others. The Ashkenazim built an important modern new Jewish school, the Yiddishe Shule (1922–1923), a day school instead of a Talmud Torah. Its modern curriculum revolved around Yiddish and Hebrew while incorporating all the educational requirements of the Mexican school system. The school ideology rejected the American idea of the afternoon schools as its goal was to assimilate the children to the host society as soon as possible. Other new schools reflected different ideologies (from the Zionist Tarbut school to the religious Yavne to the Folkist/Bundist Naye Yiddishe Shule) of the Ashkenazim. Each school reflected the prevailing value systems. Schools such as the Sephardic Tarbut catered to a particular subgroup separate from the Ashkenazi Tarbut. At present, the number of schools continues to grow, and there are nurseries, primary schools, religious yeshivas, and high schools—approximately a dozen schools in Mexico City alone. Nevertheless, all the parochial schools suffer from a chronic financial deficit: because they are not government subsidized, they rely exclusively on communal resources.

But education has not been the only area of growth and attention. Splintering continued in other areas. Tzedaka Umarpe from the Aleppo Jews, later Maguen David, was organized in 1938 as a community center. Before and during World War II, different segments of the Jewish community felt a need to have a general representative body that could act vis-à-vis the host society. As a result, a body overseeing all the communal groups was formed. The Central Committee therefore began as an antidefamation group and a public spokesperson for all Jews in Mexico.

By 1950s, there were some 53 Ashkenazi organizations reflecting the divergent interests of all political factions: self-help groups, newspapers, writers' associations, cultural groups, synagogues, loan associations, health associations, teachers associations, youth groups, and so on. Many of the politicians and intellectuals of the community felt a need for an umbrella organization for the Ashkenazi, because its many organizations threatened to weaken of the group as a whole. This led to the formation of the Kehillah (1957–1958). This centralized institution favored the creation of a new political elite within this sector, while it replicated in part the much older kehillah organizations that were the central structure of many communal arrangements in Eastern Europe. In this way all segments of the Jewish community in Mexico had developed their leadership; women acted most often as social benefactors and men oversaw finances, education, and the religious organizations. Even new religious types of affiliation, that is, Conservative Judaism, set a foot in this community. Eventually, all subcommunities developed their own power elites.

If most of the schools today have overcome their initial differences and serve as educational institutions for all the subgroups (i.e., some of the Ashkenazi schools

have dropped Yiddish as a subject of their curriculum), minimizing cultural distinctions, the real coalescing force in the community is the CDI (Centro Deportivo Israelita), the Sports Center. Managed as a self-sufficient and self-supporting institution, it has never emphasized communal cultural peculiarities; instead, it has catered to all communal members, highlighting its identity through a strong connection with Israel and sports rather than with tradition, sectarian politics, or any other issue that could be faction driven. The institution has prided itself in serving as a center for all groups, minimizing tensions, and basing its rotating leadership on managerial principles rather than on power politics.

Although the community currently appears to have a rich and stable structural network, nevertheless it has undergone a number of power struggles with debilitating results. The interrelations of the members can therefore be characterized as a mixture of clashes and cooperation, often resulting in new institutions that either replace old ones or become altogether new entities. The pulse of communal life is constantly being reactivated.

### Selected Bibliography

- Backal de Gojman, Alice, ed. 1993. *Generaciones Judias en Mexico: La Kehila Ashkenazi (1922–1992)* [Jewish Generations in Mexico: The Ashkenazi Kehillah 1922–1992]. Mexico: Comunidad Ashkenazi.
- Cimet, Adina. 1997. *Ashkenazi Jews in Mexico: Ideologies in the Structuring of a Community*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Cimet, Adina. 1997. "Incomplete Allowance: Jews as a Minority in Mexico." *E.I.A.L., Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el Caribe* 8 (2): 105–124.
- Cimet, Adina. 1994. "Last Battles of Old World: Ideologies in the Race for Identity and Communal Power: Communists vs. Bundists vs. Zionists in Mexico, 1938–1951." *E.I.A.L., Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el Caribe* 5 (2). Available at: [http://www.tau.ac.il/eial/V\\_2/singer.htm](http://www.tau.ac.il/eial/V_2/singer.htm) (accessed 15 May, 2008).
- Hamui de Halabe, Liz, ed. 1989. *Los Judios de Alepo en Mexico* [The Jews from Aleppo in Mexico]. Mexico City: Maguen David, A.C.

## Contemporary Jewish Identity in Mexico

*Adina Cimet*

---

Given their awareness of cultural differences in a globalizing world, minorities have come to embody the evolution of identity complexities. With their abundant historic group experiences and multiple migrations, Jews constitute a useful example of a group that juggles multiple loyalties and identities within its cultural consciousness. Indeed, issues of multiple identities are an intrinsic part of Jewish history. In Mexico, where Jews arrived as a new minority, they sought to sustain their culture and self definition, while Mexican society was challenged to accept social difference. This challenge attains a novel perspective when analyzed through the angle of language use: one can see Yiddish used first as a particular minority Jewish

language, then reproduced into the new terrain of the Jewish community in Mexico, and finally its demise with the coming generations.

The contemporary communal life of Jews in Mexico dates to the latter part of the 19th century, although it was not until well into the 20th century that the Jewish presence in Mexico was acknowledged. Although there were Jews in New Spain (as colonial Mexico was called) who arrived there as Marranos or New Christians, their survival was jeopardized by the Inquisition. Today's Mexican Jews settled primarily during the 20th century. Initially, they arrived from Syria and Turkey; later, they migrated from Eastern Europe and Russia (and even from the United States), searching for better economic conditions and a calmer life. Proximity to the United States allowed them to hope for a future new locale if and when the closed doors of the immigration policy (1920s) would be reversed. In Mexico, Jews settled and grouped by place of origin, common roots joining faith, values, and language use as foundations on which to create a community. Eventually, different conglomerates merged as they formed the first organizations designed to meet their immigrant needs: synagogues, cemeteries, and schools.

The Jews who settled in Mexico also shared minority languages as distinctive markers that united them. Most maintained for religious use some knowledge of biblical Hebrew, and among Eastern Europeans (the majority of Jews in the world until World War II), Yiddish was the dominant language of use. Although they were primarily based in Mexico City, where their largest concentration remains to this day, they also settled in Monterrey and Guadalajara. By the 1950s, the numbers of Mexican Jews reached between 35,000 and 45,000. Today, the population is estimated to number 50,000. This total includes two main subgroups: the various Ashkenazim of Eastern Europe and the Sephardim and Oriental Jews of that ancestry.

In Mexico, Jews made enormous efforts to adapt and integrate themselves, taking advantage of all that Mexican society offered them: education, work, and a growing middle class that could support much entrepreneurial activity. They offered all they carried with them, from ideologies, to world views, to entrepreneurship. They adapted to the country linguistically as quickly as possible, and the host society undisputedly allowed them to belong, albeit with the requisites they imposed, either openly or covertly. The second generation of Jews born in Mexico participates in almost all spheres of the economy and culture. Although their parents arrived and became peddlers, bakers, and tailors, they became teachers, workers, architects, engineers, doctors, psychologists, writers, entrepreneurs, scholars, and more. They are therefore represented in many professions and disciplines and have left their mark in many areas of social and intellectual activity.

However, with the opening of greater opportunities, Jews faced the unexpected difficulty of maintaining their own culture in a political environment that tolerated, but did not nurture, difference. Language use and language choice have been used as a measure to qualify the level of adaptation of a minority group. In the case of Jews, they score highly with their acquired skills. Yet this language change distances the minority from its own cultural tools. As a group, the Jewish community had a focused commitment to use its human and economic resources to sustain and develop its transplanted cultural inheritance. Yet the culture that Jews brought

and tried to maintain did not reproduce itself in all its components. Their languages, their main tool for communication between themselves and with world Jewries, did not remain intact. After that change, some aspects of the minority culture suffered substantial erosion.

During the first 100 years of settlement in Mexico, the network of organizations Jews created—more than a dozen schools, an array of self-help groups, synagogues of all varieties and traditions, social organizations, and political groups—impressive as it is for a relatively small community, nevertheless masks the significant alterations that minority culture has experienced internally. Although change is to be expected as groups evolve over time, a distinction must be made between superficial adaptations and alterations that redefine the very essence of the community itself. Language is an essential cultural element that defines the identity of the group; its loss therefore has an indelible effect on the minority's cultural reproduction and self-definition. Jews in Mexico incorporated variety to their cultural background as they adapted to Mexican society and polity, but they shed or exchanged essential cultural elements in the process. In the case of their distancing from the Yiddish language, for most, the changes were both voluntarily accepted and socially encouraged, facilitated by the prevailing political and economic environment.

While the qualitative change that has occurred is hard to assess, it is visible everywhere. Today, communal languages are seldom heard socially or officially, and cultural production (e.g., newspapers, journals, books) in the minority languages has been largely abandoned in favor of Spanish in all Jewish cultural activities. This phenomenon, so emblematic of adaptation, is interpreted as evidence of the minority's success in merging with the majority society. It also indicates the degree to which the majority is willing to accept the minority. Seen through a different lens, this adaptation also reflects limits on the amount and quality of difference the host society accepts.

The loss of minority languages (in this case Yiddish) is a major loss. It reflects not only the weakened interest of the minority in ensuring its distinctive cultural survival but also the indifferences on the part of both the host and the minority in protecting linguistic diversity as part of national patrimony. The demise of minority languages mirrors the sociological tensions and asymmetries in the interrelations among groups, where the minorities, Jews as well as indigenous minorities, live subordinated cultural lives.

Perhaps the best way to gauge these changes and their social cost is to examine Jewish writers in Mexico, because they serve as barometers of communal and social integration and adaptation. Unlike their immigrant Ashkenazi predecessors, who wrote almost exclusively in Yiddish, for instance, the current generation of Ashkenazi writers writes exclusively in Spanish, catering to the mass cultural market of the broader society. In the past, the Ashkenazi group, greater in number and more ideologically committed to the beliefs and values of their original societies, felt a need to speak to and about world Jewry in their own language, linking themselves to other Jewish populations. Today, because Yiddish has been abandoned as a wide tool for communication and as the medium for cultural production, writers

behave and write differently and address a different audience. These writers are unable to read or write in this minority language, but they have a larger readership. Status and rewards accrue to those using Spanish, recognitions to which they could not otherwise aspire.

This exchange in language use signals an impoverishment of the cultural output of the group itself. Because losing a *lingua franca* is a way of fragmenting the minority itself, Jews in Mexico, detached from this cultural language, remain Jews in the 21st century but have to make special efforts to communicate with their brethren throughout the world. They share in the historical experiences of identity formation with other Jews, but have no shared language in which to communicate their current existential paradigms. The connection to Israel—a most essential bonding force for Jews since the existence of the State of Israel—may nurture identity elements, but is not a substitute for the communicating process itself. The loss of a unifying minority language has created a major barrier to communicating with other Jewish populations all over the world. The consequences of this loss can now be only dimly projected. Regarding minority languages, the case of the Mexican Jewish community is but an illustration of a Jewish world wide condition.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cimet, Adina. 1994. "The Case of Ashkenazi Jews in Mexico, 1940–1950: Nationalism and the Question of Languages." *The Journal of Culture and Society* 94 (2, July/August).
- Cimet, Adina. 1997. *Ashkenazi Jews in Mexico; Ideologies in the Structuring of a Community*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Cimet, Adina. 2000. "Ambivalence Acknowledged: Jewish Identities and Language Strategies in Contemporary Mexico." In *The Collective and the Public in Latina America; Cultural Identities and Political Order*, edited by Luis Roniger and Tamar Herzog, 273–284. Portland, OR: Sussex Academy Press.

## Jews in Latin America

*Gilbert W. Merkkx*

---

General Population: 150,000,000

Jewish Population: 400,000

Jewish Population per Country (number and percent of the total population for that country): Argentina, 395,379, 1 percent; Brazil, 200,000, 1 percent; Mexico, 53,101, 0.05 percent; Uruguay, 30,743, 0.9 percent; Venezuela, 25,375, 0.09 percent; Chile, 20,900, 0.1 percent; Colombia, 3,436, 0.008 percent; Peru, 2,792, 0.01 percent; Costa Rica, 2,409, 0.06 percent

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Spanish and Portuguese immigrants, conversos, émigrés of the Spanish Moroccan wars, and émigrés from the Balkans and failing Ottoman Empire contributed to the Jewish population.

---

## Historical Overview

Given the long and ultimately tragic history of Jews in the Iberian Peninsula (or Sepharad, as it was known in Hebrew) it was inevitable that they would be a presence in the Iberian colonies of what is now Latin America. As the Christian reconquest of Moorish Spain reached its final stages, waves of religious fervor led to the increased persecution of Jews. Repeated pogroms in the late 13th century forced many Jews to convert. In 1412–1415, the imposition of laws that forced many Jews to abandon their property and occupations led to another wave of conversions and the designation of a new social category, the “converso” or New Christian. Suspicions of the New Christians endured, and in 1480 the Spanish Inquisition began to investigate the sincerity of the converted.

The fateful year of 1492 was marked by three events of historic significance. First, the voyage of Christopher Columbus, financed by Queen Isabella with borrowed Jewish money, led to the European discovery of the Western Hemisphere. Second, the last Moorish bastion in Granada fell, ensuring the unification of Christian Spain. The third event occurred shortly thereafter when the Crown issued the Edict of Expulsion, requiring the remaining Jews in Spain to convert or be exiled. Some chose conversion, swelling the ranks of the New Christians. Many chose exile, leading to the establishment of substantial Sephardic communities in North Africa and the Turkish Empire. Others went to Portugal, which proved a short reprieve. In 1497, all Jews in Portugal were forcibly baptized, becoming another set of the converted, known as *cristãos novos*.

The conversos of Spain and Portugal remained under suspicion, however, and continued to be pursued by the Inquisition even if they were devout practicing Catholics. Conversos were also derogatively known as “Marranos” (literally, swine). New measures restricted activities by persons who could not prove “*limpieza de sangre*” (literally, clean blood, meaning not of Jewish descent). In 1501, Queen Isabella issued instructions prohibiting the migration of Moors, Jews, and New Christians to the New World. Given the worsening conditions in Iberia, the incentives for New Christians to reach the New World were high. Many conversos were able to purchase exemptions or find other ways to migrate.

How many of these conversos were actually crypto-Jews who continued to secretly practice their religion is not known and continues to be the subject of debate. The records of the Spanish Inquisition in the New World suggest that crypto-Jews were numerous in the minds of the inquisitors and included entire settlements. But without the ability to openly practice their religion, crypto-Jews were unable to pass their Judaism to later generations. Remnants of Jewish culture and family identity are still found in remote corners of New Spain, such as New Mexico, but the crypto-Jewish communities were absorbed by their host societies (as were individual Jews scattered throughout the rest of colonial Latin America). Small Sephardic communities established synagogues in Dutch Curaçao and Brazil during the Dutch occupation, but these also faded away over time.

The Jewish presence in Latin America was reintroduced in a more significant manner in the last half of the 19th century. Thousands of Sephardic Jews fleeing the

Spanish-Moroccan wars of the late 1850s and early 1860s, as well as subsequent persecution after the Spanish withdrawal from Morocco, came to Brazil and Argentina and established congregations. The brief reign of Emperor Maximilian in Mexico (1864–1867) began a small migration of Alsatian Jews, which increased after the German annexation of Alsace after the 1870 Franco-Prussian War and was further encouraged by the stability of the Mexican regime of Porfirio Diaz (1876–1911). Toward the end of the 19th century, the military and financial collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to a sizable migration of Jews to Brazil and the Southern Cone. The Balkan wars, the Revolt of the Young Turks in 1908 (which led to compulsory military service for Jews), and the dismemberment of Turkey after World War I, all contributed to increased Sephardic migration. The Argentine national census of 1895 recorded slightly more than 6,000 Jews (some estimates suggest that the real numbers were closer to 10,000), who were probably mostly Sephardim.

Significant Ashkenazic migration to Latin America also begins in the late 19th century. The assassination of Czar Alexander II of Russia led to a series of state-sponsored programs and edicts that led Russian Jews to flee westward. These numbers increased with military conscription during the buildup to World War I. After World War I, the collapse of the German economy and the rise of anti-Semitism under the Third Reich led Jews to seek refuge in Latin America in unprecedented numbers. The number of Jews in Argentina, according to current estimates, jumped from about 15,000 in 1900 to more than 250,000 in 1940. Most of these new migrants were Ashkenazim.

After World War II, Jewish migration to Latin America tapered off quickly. Once the displaced survivors of the Holocaust had left, there no longer were numerically significant Jewish populations in Eastern and Western Europe to serve as the source of migration. The sizable Jewish communities inside the Soviet Union were not free to leave. Moreover, Israel and the United States, not Latin America, had become the destination of choice for Jews of the Diaspora.

The high point of Jewish population in Latin America and the Caribbean was probably reached about 1960, when approximately half a million Jews lived in the entire region. Conventional estimates at that time were much larger, and some suggested that half a million Jews were living in Argentina alone. However, more recent demographic research by Sergio Della Pergola and his associates suggest that the real numbers were much lower and the Jewish population in Argentina in 1960 was 310,000. After 1960, with low birthrates and growing out-migration to Israel, those numbers began to decline.

The Argentine Jewish community was the largest in Latin America, with about three-fifths of Latin American Jewry. Comprehensive estimates of the overall population at the end of 1982 suggested that there were 465,000 Jews in the region: 233,000 in Argentina, 100,000 in Brazil, 35,000 in Mexico, 30,000 in Uruguay, 20,000 in Chile, 20,000 in Venezuela, 7,000 in Colombia, and 5,000 in Peru. Numbers in the remaining countries of Latin America and the Caribbean were far smaller and totaled only another 15,000 combined.

The most recent estimates of the Jewish population in Latin America and the Caribbean, also by Della Pergola, put the total in 2002 at 412,200 persons. The largest

decline in population was in the Argentine Jewish community, which had fallen to 195,000, less than two-thirds of its size in 1960. In contrast, the Mexican Jewish community had grown to 40,400. In countries that had growing economies and political stability, the Jewish communities were stable or grew slightly, and in countries marked by economic and political instability, there was a continuing exodus to Israel or the United States.

### Contemporary Overview

The demographic evidence makes it clear that the Jewish communities in Latin America have not been a significant proportion of the local populations. Only in Argentina and Uruguay did the Jewish populations even come close to constituting 1 percent of the national population. However, in spite of their small numbers, Latin American Jews have been a significant presence in modern Latin America.

The visibility of Latin American Jews in national life has not been a function of cultural manifestations such as Jewish theater and literature, which seem to have had little impact on national culture in Latin America. This is in noteworthy contrast to the experience of the United States, where Jewish contributions to literature, theater, and film have been highly influential.

Also in contrast to the United States, Jews have not been a significant political force in Latin America, either collectively or as individuals. Jewish politicians have been more notable by their absence than by their presence. In Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil some Jews had political careers, not because of, but in spite of being Jewish. Jews have at various times and in various countries also held important ministerial positions, but they were appointed for their abilities rather than their political influence.

Latin American Jews nonetheless have been a significant presence in two respects. First, the Jews in Latin America had extraordinary levels of upward social mobility compared with native populations and even other immigrant populations. This individual and collective social mobility led to a high percentage of successful entrepreneurs and professionals in the Jewish community. As a result, Jews have played an important role in the economic development and modernization of Latin America. Although Jews have not been dominant in important sectors of economic activity, they have been prominent and successful in many fields.

The second respect in which the Jewish presence in Latin America has been notable is as the symbolic target of national animosities. Anti-Semitism continues to permeate popular culture in Latin America, and it has been a staple in the nationalist diatribes of the extreme right. Ironically, some left-wing revolutionary movements of past decades in Latin America were also anti-Semitic, reflecting sympathies between the erstwhile guerrillas in Latin America and terrorist groups in Europe and the Middle East.

The Jewish role in Latin America is therefore marked by two paradoxes. One is the discrepancy between the relative success of Jews in climbing the social ladder and their minor role in politics and culture. A second paradox is the contrast between the relatively minor historical and demographic presence of Jews in modern

Latin America and their exaggerated importance in the myths of extremist political rhetoric and popular culture.

### Latin America and the Jewish Experience

The Jewish experience in Latin America is particularly interesting compared with Jewish experiences in the United States and Israel, cases with differing relationships between Jewish identity and national identity. In the United States, Jewish identity and national identity are discrete and unrelated. A Jew is no less an American and no more an American for being Jewish, and no more or less Jewish for being an American. In Israel, Jewish identity and national identity are in many respects identical. In contrast, in the Latin American republics national identity and Jewish identity have long been antithetical, contradictory, or problematically related, at least from the perspective of the majority populations. The fact that being Jewish is problematic in Latin America, but not in the United States or Israel, is a comment on the character of Latin American societies.

The persistence of anti-Semitism in popular Latin American culture contrasts remarkably with the decline of such prejudice in Europe and the United States. The roots of anti-Semitism in the medieval Christian tradition are clear, but far less apparent are the reasons for the survival of such stereotypes in countries and among groups in which Catholicism is actively practiced by only a small proportion of the populace and where the Jewish presence is small. Analogous to anti-Semitism, but without similar religious origins, is the persistence of other ethnic stereotypes hostile to supposedly "foreign" elements, as expressed in the extensive lexicon of racist and ethnic labels that are commonly used in Latin America. The pervasive hostility and suspicion with which minorities are characterized in Latin American popular culture, and the reluctance to extend national identity to minority group members, reflect more than Catholic tradition.

Anthropologists have attributed the Latin American suspicion of outsiders to the weakness of national institutions that provide citizens with equal protection under the law and a social safety net. In such a context, people rely more on extended family ties, clientelistic networks, religious congregations, or ethnic communities, and they rely less on public institutions. Also common in Latin America, as elsewhere in the less developed world, is a sense of inferiority with respect to the developed nations of Europe and North America. In Latin American popular culture, Jews are not only seen as outsiders but also as agents of international capital and the developed world. Thus, to the extent that Jews become the target of such national resentments, they are implicitly stripped of their standing as fellow citizens.

The link between anti-Semitism and the resentments born of underdevelopment suggests that the persistence of discrimination should be inversely correlated with the extent of economic development in different parts of Latin America. This appears in fact to describe the Jewish experience in Latin America. Jews fare better in the great metropolitan cities than in the provinces, and they fare better in countries with successful growth records than in those with stagnant or underdeveloped economies. Particularly interesting in this regard is the contrast between the

deteriorating situation of the large Jewish community in Argentina and the contemporaneous improvement in the situation of Jews in Brazil. Each cycle of economic crisis in Argentina seems to generate new expressions of anti-Semitism, whereas the steadier trajectory of development in Brazil has been accompanied by a continued reduction of anti-Semitism.

Economic crises in Latin America, as elsewhere, are linked to political crises. This is a feature of Latin American politics that may have helped preclude the emergence of Jews as politicians. If ethnic communities are to be a factor in national politics, either collectively or through the advancement of their representatives, incentives for political participation must exist. The risks of political involvement by minority communities are high in societies in which democratic regimes are fragile and subject to replacement by authoritarian or populist regimes. Achievements obtained according to rules of competitive democracy are only as lasting as the democratic regime itself. Almost as fragile are the protections afforded by legal systems and their rights and procedures, which are liable to suspension by authoritarian regimes. The instability of democratic regimes in Latin America has been a disincentive to Jewish political participation and a factor contributing to the climate of uncertainty that hangs over Jewish communities.

The relatively hostile cultural environment of Latin America did not produce the cooperation among Jewish groups of different origins that might have been expected. Instead, the environment increased the saliency of ties of origin and culture. In 1891, for example, Sephardic Jews left the *Congregación Israelita* in Buenos Aires to establish their own *Congregación Israelita Latina*. Prior national origin and culture (Sephardic, German, Eastern European, Moroccan, or Turkish) divided Latin American Jewish communities far longer than their counterparts in the United States and Israel.

Also lingering in Latin America was a far more Orthodox religious tradition than found among most Jews in the United States and Israel. Assimilation to the host culture was more likely to result in the severing of ties to the Jewish community. Intermarriage with non-Jews also led to isolation from the Jewish community after it was banned in Argentina in the 1920s by both Sephardic and Ashkenazic rabbis. The ban was intended to prevent intermarriage with non-Jews, but it had the effect of contributing to a net loss of population. As a result, upward social mobility in Latin America for much of the 20th century had two negative consequences for Latin American Jews. Some upwardly mobile Jews lost their religious identity, whereas others maintained that identity but did so at the cost of being less socially integrated in the host society. By the mid-20th century, it seemed that the Jewish communities of Latin America were destined to become ever smaller, more Orthodox, and aged in membership.

In 1954, the few Conservative congregations in South America affiliated with the Conservative movement in the United States. This led to the establishment in the 1960s of the *Seminario Rabínico* in Buenos Aires, under the direction of Rabbi Marshall Meyer, a U.S. citizen. Since then, the *Seminario Rabínico* has produced a steady stream of rabbis who have assumed leadership roles in modernizing the Jewish communities of Latin America. Conservative congregations introduced

mixed-sex seating and the use of Spanish or Portuguese for some parts of the service. A process for the conversion of non-Jews was established, stemming the loss of Jews. This led the Orthodox communities to initiate their own conversion process. Conservative and Reform congregations now attract adolescents and young married couples, which has stemmed the gradual aging that had marked Jewish congregations in the past.

## Conclusion

The future of Latin America's Jewish communities appears to be somewhat problematic in countries marked by instability and ensured in countries with sustained economic growth and political stability. The return of populist political movements in several countries of the region, including Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, is a cause for concern for Jews in those nations. The highly stratified and particularistic nature of Latin American societies has sustained some national cultures that tend to be hostile toward all minority groups but have a particular animosity to those with foreign linkages. Maintaining both Jewish and national identity in such countries has been a major problem for Latin American Jewry, creating high incentives for aliyah, or migration to Israel. This context contributed to the Orthodoxy and insularity of Jewish communities through much of the 20th century, characteristics that have been undergoing significant changes. The establishment of professional training for rabbis and the modernization of religious practices have brightened the prospects for survival of the Jewish communities of Latin America.

Necessary preconditions for improving civic life in Latin America and concomitantly lessening prejudice against Jews include economic growth and the consolidation of pluralistic democracy. In recent decades, such conditions have characterized Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico, which have had stable Jewish populations. The consolidation of democracy in Uruguay, even in the absence of significant economic growth, has contributed to the stability of its Jewish community. The large Argentine Jewish community has lost numbers, but it remains large and viable. The Jewish communities of Latin America now constitute about 3.3 percent of world Jewry, and they will continue to survive as a small but significant element of the Jewish Diaspora.

## Selected Bibliography

- Avni, Haim. 1986. *Antisemitism under Democratic and Dictatorial Regimes: The Experience of Latin American Jewry*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 59.
- Avni, Haim. 1991. *Argentina and the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 267.
- Elkin, Judith Laikin. 1998. *The Jews of Latin America*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 339.
- Elkin, Judith Laikin, and Gilbert Merckx. 1987. *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*. Boston: Allen and Unwin, 338.

# Jewish Identity in Latin American Fiction

*Lois Barr*

---

Several themes recur in Latin American fiction written by or about Jews: exile, alienation, dispersion, the quest for social justice, and the quest for a center—be it in Israel or a new Zion. Jewish writers struggle with their identity and the unique challenges that their circumstances present. Their work reveals identities that are fractured, assimilated, or defiantly Jewish. Their imagery, use of language, and world vision reflect their immigrant experience and their unique history in the various Latin American republics. At the same time, other writers present Jews by recycling age-old prejudices or presenting Jewish characters as martyrs and heroes who challenge the domination of the Catholic Church. Contemporary writer Jorge Luis Borges's stories present complex portraits of Jews in the Holocaust and take motifs from the Kabbalah. Carlos Fuentes and Homero Aridjis have written about the role of Jews in the Conquest period. So, although stories about Jews have left an indelible mark on Latin American literature, the Catholic society in which they are inserted has also left an indelible mark on their work.

## The Period of Discovery and Colonization: 1492–1816

Because the exportation of the Spanish and Portuguese languages to the American colonies coincides with the cataclysmic expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, it is impossible to speak of literature in those languages without speaking of its Jewish flavor and origins. Many of the explorers, conquerors, and settlers of those lands hoped they would be able to return to Judaism, but several decrees forbade non-Catholics from settling there. So Jews who wished to revert to their faith had to worship secretly. Some of the newly arrived passed on rituals from generation to generation, but most who had converted remained faithful to Catholicism and lost their identity as Jews. Yet all of them shared the language of the golden age writers, many of whom were of Jewish ancestry.

With the implantation of Catholicism in the territories of the conquest and the strictures imposed by the Inquisition, the identity of the Jew became part of the culture as the Judas figure, the killer of Christ, and the money lender. This stereotypical identification of Jews with usury continues in contemporary fiction. For example, an anti-Semitic work, *La Bolsa/The Stock Market* (1891) by José María Miró (Julián Martel), blames the moral and economic downfall of the Argentine nation on Jewish immigrants.

The institution that did the most to disseminate hatred of Jews was the Holy Office of the Inquisition. Three cases of secret Jews, imprisoned and executed at autos-de-fé, two in Mexico and one in Peru, left important vestiges in oral history and inspired operas, plays, poetry, and fiction. In Mexico the illustrious and politically important Carvajal family was burned at the stake.

A similar execution took place in Lima, Peru, in 1639. Francisco Maldonado Da Silva, a physician, was arrested for secretly practicing Judaism in Chile, then a remote outpost of the Spanish Empire. After 12 years of imprisonment, torture, and fierce interrogation, Maldonado not only refused to renounce Judaism, but he also circumcised himself in his cell and penned "Letters to the Jews of Rome." After a hunger strike rendered him thin enough to slip through the bars of his cell, he visited other prisoners to encourage them to remain steadfast in their faith. An eyewitness account says that when Maldonado was tied to the stake with many of his writings hanging around his neck, a great wind blew up and tore away the awning. The priest who saw this wrote that Maldonado's last words were, "God wanted to see me face to face" (Böhm 1984, 145).

Among the first writers in Portuguese-ruled Brazil were the poet Bento Teixeira (1560–1618), a New Christian, and playwright Antonio José da Silva (1705–1739), known as "The Jew," who died at the stake in Lisbon. According to Brazil's great novelist Moacyr Scliar (1937): "For two centuries the Jews were arrested, tortured and executed, until the end of the 18th century, when thanks to the new liberal spirit arising in Europe, Portugal ended the discrimination against Jews. Then the Marranos simply vanished, assimilated by Brazilian Society."

### The Period of Independence: 1816–1872

With the war of independence and the development of modern nation states, the Inquisition was banned. The Holy Office was burned in Lima. As this once omnipotent institution became the object of hatred, the former victims became the symbol of new and liberal nations. In Mexico, Justo Sierra O'Reilly's *La Hija del Judío* (The Daughter of a Jew; 1848–1852) tells the story of a Christian girl whose forebears were Jewish. Here the voice of the Jew "serves as a symbolic voice to promote anticlericalism" (Lockhart 1997, xiii).

The most famous depiction of Jews in Latin America in the 19th century is in *María*, a canonical novel by Colombian Jorge Isaacs (1837–1895). Although critic Doris Summer has closely studied the Jewish elements in Isaacs's work, *María* is a Christian novel. Despite the heroine's Jewish parentage, she devotes her short life to worshipping her cousin Efraín and the Virgin Mary. Many works written in the 20th century would share Isaacs's interesting fusion of Jewish and Catholic elements.

Later in the century in Cuba, according to Judith Laikin Elkin, José Martí's identification of the Cuban struggle for independence with the struggle of the Jews for freedom, "eased the acculturation of Jewish immigrants" (90).

### Immigration: 19th Century to World War II

Because of pogroms and famine in Eastern Europe and liberal immigration policies in many Latin American countries, by 1917 there were some 150,000 Jews living there (Elkin 1998, 68). Baron Maurice Hirsch, the railroad magnate who developed the Orient Express, established the Jewish Colonization Association in 1891 to bring Jews out of deprivation and back to the honorable work of tilling the soil. But

radical cutbacks in immigration quotas and other setbacks meant he would not realize his hope of getting more than 3 million Jews out of Eastern Europe to farming communities in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay (Elkin 1998, 109). In 1910, on the centenary of the Argentine nation, a budding journalist and fiction writer was urged to write about his own experiences in the Jewish Colonies. So Alberto Gerchunoff (1884–1950) wrote *Los Gauchos Judíos* (Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas), the best-known novel about Jews in Argentina. He describes the hard life of agricultural colonists in the fertile Pampas in idyllic terms. In the first chapter, the ideology of the project is explained by an elder of the community. He promises Jews will regain God's grace by working the soil in Argentina because Zion is "wherever peace and happiness reign" (Aizenberg 2000, 43).

In Cervantine prose, Gerchunoff's novel extolls the Jews' legacy: the Castilian language, their gaucho neighbors, and hard work. Those three elements would give the newly arrived immigrants roots in Argentina. *Los Gauchos Judíos* has been translated into several languages, has been reread many times, and has inspired plays, musical reviews, and a feature film by Juan José Jusid. Moreover, contemporary writers recount and deconstruct the experience of the agricultural colonies in such important novels as *O Centauro No Jardim* (The Centaur in the Garden; 1980), by Brazilian Moacyr Scliar (1937) and *La Logia del Umbral* (The Doorway Conspiracy; 2001) by Argentine Ricardo Feierstein (1942), *Criador de Palomas* (The Dove Keeper, 1989) by Mario Goloboff (1939), and *Complot* (2004) by Perla Suez. To this day many Argentines proudly call themselves Jewish gauchos.

Despite the preponderance of literature on the topic, the agricultural colonies were a short-lived experiment, and most Jewish immigrants ended up in urban centers. There are many newspaper and fictional accounts about the travails of peddlers (Elkin 1998, 132), such as *Cláper* (1987), by Venezuelan Alicia Freilich Segal (b. 1939), and the novels of Peruvian Isaac Goldemberg (1945). For women with no capital and little education, prostitution became a means of supporting themselves. Zwi Migdal, a criminal ring, recruited heavily in Eastern Europe and brought young women, who often thought they were coming to be married, to work in brothels in Uruguay and Argentina. The Argentine Jewish community banned prostitutes and pimps from the Yiddish theater and the communal cemeteries. Finally, in 1930 the Jewish organizations pressured the government to bar prostitution and to deport the white slavers (Elkin 1998, 98), but the topic remained in works by Argentines César Tiempo (Israel Zeitlin; 1906–1980), Nora Glickman (b. 1944), Mario Szichman (b. 1945), and Pedro Orgambide (b. 1929).

The immigrants created a thriving Jewish press in Spanish, Portuguese, Yiddish, and Ladino, which gave many writers their entrée into the literary world. Cuba had an important Yiddish press; however, the Castro regime decimated the ranks of the middle class and all but destroyed the Jewish community there.

### Contemporary Literature

Jewish writers have fought against social injustice in their writing and through political action. Bernardo Verbitsky's (1907–1979) *Villa Miseria También es América*

(*The Slum Too Is America*; 1957) is set in one of the shantytowns that ring Argentina's capital. The voices of squatters narrate their desperate lives as victims of the military, labor unions, and the police. Internationally known for essays, plays, and novels that critique General Augusto Pinochet and the parasitic effect of imperialism, Ariel Dorfman (b. 1942) has had to live outside Chile because of threats to his life. Testimony and fiction of the 1970s and 1980s attest to the great number of Jews who were disappeared in Argentina and Uruguay. The imprisonment of renowned newspaper editor of *La Opinión*, Jacobo Timerman, made worldwide news when Israeli operatives rescued him. Like Timerman, Mauricio Rosencof, a leader of the militant Uruguayan Tupamaros, wrote fiction and testimony about his imprisonment. With the return of democracy in the Southern Cone, investigative journalists such as Horacio Verbitsky document corruption in the Catholic Church and crimes against humanity by the military. Leftist poet Juan Gelman has crusaded for many years to recover the bodies of his son and daughter-in-law, who were disappeared and summarily executed, and to find his missing granddaughter.

The return of democracy in Argentina and throughout Latin America has not ended hardships for Jews. The 1994 bombings of the Israeli Embassy by militant Muslims and the 1994 bombing of the Asociación Mutual Argentina Israelita in Buenos Aires sent shock waves through Jewish institutions around Latin America. The perpetrators of those crimes escaped; moreover, the bungled investigations have traumatized and galvanized the Jewish community. At the same time, economic crises pushed Jews out of the middle class and into poverty in the 1980s and 1990s.

Through it all Jews still defend themselves with humor. Argentine short story writer Isidoro Blaisten (b. 1933) and novelists Silvia Plager (b. 1942), Ana María Shúa (b. 1951), and Alicia Steimberg (b. 1933) explore the neuroses and quirks of their Jewish protagonists. Eliahu Toker (b. 1934) has anthologized Jewish humor, and television comedian Tato Bores (Mauricio Borensztein; 1927–1996) kept hope alive for those who opposed the dictatorship while adding Yiddish words to the Argentine lexicon.

Zionist organizations in Latin America encourage young Jews to visit, make aliyah, or fight for Israel as in the tragic story of the protagonist in Peruvian writer Isaac Goldemberg's *Tiempo al Tiempo* (Play by Play; 1984). Novelists Silvia Plager (b. 1942), Mario Satz (b. 1944), and Ricardo Feierstein have written about Israel, and a literary journal, *Noaj* (1987), attests to the interest in Latin American Jewish writers in that country.

For economic, political, and social reasons several important writers have chosen to live abroad. Gelman lives in Mexico City, for example, and Spain has become home to many Argentine-born writers. In the United States, several Jewish writers devote themselves to university teaching. Mexican writer Ilan Stavans edits a series at the University of New Mexico Press devoted to translating Latin American Jewish works.

The writers who remain in Latin America struggle with many issues. Serious studies of identity crises, loneliness, and alienation are to be found in the works of Mexican Angelina Muñoz-Huberman (b. 1936), Brazilian Clarice Lispector

(b. 1925–1977), and Argentines such as Ana María Shúa (b. 1951), Bernardo Kordon (b. 1915), and Andrés Rivera (Marcos Ribak, b. 1928). In Alicia Steimberg's *Cuando Digo Magdalena* (Call Me Magdalena; 1992) an amnesiac narrator travels in and out of her Jewish identity. Amnesia and the Jews' strange mixture of cultural baggage is the theme of Ricardo Feierstein's *Mestizo* (1988). In many works Jewish and Catholic imagery and motifs create a strange fusion. Fortunately, such work finds a general readership and the success of young writers Diego Paszkowski (b. 1966) and Marcelo Birmajer (b. 1966) promises a future for Latin American Jewish fiction.

## Conclusions

From their arrival as secret Jews to their current status as emancipated citizens, Jews have played an important role in forming the cultural identity of the countries in which they live. As global wanderers, Jewish writers reveal their fascination with linguistic issues. Some writers, such as Rosa Nissán (b. 1939), incorporate Ladino, and others incorporate Yiddish. Critic Saúl Sosnowski defined this life between languages and cultures as "life on the hyphen." Jewish writers in Latin America have to find their identity in that hyphen between their religion and their nationality or between their ethnic origins and the place they live.

In the most viable Jewish communities, those of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Uruguay, Jews contribute far beyond their numbers in music, television and film and all genres of literature (Lockhart 1997; Goldemberg 1998). Santiago Kovadloff (b. 1942) and Margo Glantz (b. 1930) are members of the academies of letters of Argentina and Mexico, respectively. Mexican writer Angelina Muñoz-Huberman and Argentines Mario Goloboff and David Viñas occupy prominent positions as academics, while Steimberg and Manuela Fingueret (b. 1945) have held important bureaucratic positions in the diffusion of culture in Argentina. So Jews are insiders and outsiders. They occupy a precarious space for diversity that continues to exist there and bring readers remarkable stories about Jewish life in Latin America.

## Selected Bibliography

- Aizenberg, Edna. 2000. *Parricide on the Pampa? A New Study and Translation of Alberto Gerschunoff's Los Gauchos Judíos*. Madrid: Iberoamericana.
- Barr, Lois Baer. 1995. *Isaac Unbound: Patrirachal Traditions in the Latin American Jewish Novel*. Tempe: Arizona State University Press.
- Böhm, Günter. 1984. *La Historia de los Judíos de Chile*. Santiago, Chile: Editorial Andrés Bello.
- Cohen, Martin A. 1973. *The Martyr: The Story of a Secret Jew and the Mexican Inquisition in the Sixteenth Century*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Elkin, Judith Laikin. 1998. *The Jews of Latin America*. New York: Holmes & Meier.
- Goldemberg, Isaac. 1998. *El Gran Libro de América Judía*. San Juan: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico.
- Lockhart, Darrell B. 1997. *Jewish Writers of Latin America: A Dictionary*. New York: Garland Press.
- Scliar, Moacyr. "Reclaiming the text—or reclaiming voices?" The National Foundation for Jewish Culture, [http://www2.jewishculture.org/publications/wtjf/publications\\_wtjf\\_scliar.html](http://www2.jewishculture.org/publications/wtjf/publications_wtjf_scliar.html) (accessed June 17, 2006).

Senkman, Leonardo. 1983. *La Identidad Judia en la Literatura Argentina*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Pardes.

Sosnowski, Saúl. 1987. *La Orilla Inminente*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Legasa.

## Jewish Identity in Latin American Jewish Cinema

*Darrell B. Lockhart*

---

The historical and geographical vastness of the Jewish Diaspora in Latin America is well represented in cinema. Early manifestations of specifically Jewish themes in the cinema of Latin America emerged in the mid-1970s and continued through the 1980s with the production of a limited number of films. From the mid-1990s to the present there has been a small boom in Latin American Jewish cinema. Argentina, which is home to the largest Jewish population in Latin America, has produced a significant number of films that directly address issues of identity and sociohistorical reality for Jews. Likewise, there is a considerable quantity of films that deal with Jewish topics from other Latin American countries. As a whole, Latin American Jewish cinema takes up subject matter as diverse as the persecution of Jews by the Spanish Inquisition in the colonial era, immigration, Jewish prostitution, the Holocaust, and contemporary life for Jews in Latin American nations. Moreover, it tells the stories of Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities through a variety of cinematic genres, from documentary films to those based on historical events, literary works, or fictional scripts.

One of the first films in Latin America to focus on a specifically Jewish topic is the 1974 film *El Santo Oficio* (The Holy Office of the Inquisition) by Mexican director Arturo Ripstein, one of Mexico's most renowned directors. The film, based on historical fact, retells the persecution of the Carvajal family in 16th-century Mexico by the Spanish Inquisition. Betrayed by a family member and arrested for being Judaizers (those who secretly practice Judaism), the family is tortured and most of the members are burned at the stake in a public auto-da-fé in 1596. The most famous member of the family, Luis de Carvajal, el mozo (1567–1596), provided one of the first literary testimonies of Jewish life in Latin America in his memoirs, the letters addressed to family members he wrote during their imprisonment, and other documents. A second historical film that recalls the colonial era and the Inquisition is *O Judeu* (The Jew). The 1996 film by Brazilian director Jom Tob Azulay tells the story of Antônio José da Silva (1705–1739), who was born in Brazil and as a young boy was sent to Portugal along with his family under suspicion of being Judaizers. He was repeatedly harassed by the Inquisition, but in spite of that he became one of the most famous playwrights in 18th-century Portugal. Ultimately, his lifelong persecution by the authorities led to his death in an auto-da-fé in 1739.

Although the earliest stories of the Jewish presence in Latin America date back to the period of the European encounter with the Americas and colonial times, the

contemporary history of Jewish communities begins in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Jewish immigration to Argentina took place on a massive scale beginning in the late 19th century, due largely to the formation of the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), which was founded in 1891 and funded by the railroad magnate and philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch (Elkin 1998, 105–120). Under the auspices of the JCA Jews arrived by the thousands in Argentina and settled in agricultural colonies. This experience was made famous by the Argentine writer Alberto Gerchunoff (1884–1950) in his 1910 book *Los Gauchos Judíos* (The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas), which narrates the author's memoirs of life in Moisésville, the most famous of the Jewish colonies. In 1975, the prominent film director Juan José Jusid adapted Gerchunoff's foundational text for the big screen, and although it does not adhere strictly to the original stories, it does portray the same idealized version of Jewish immigration to Argentina set forth by Gerchunoff.

More recently, a number of excellent documentary films have taken up the task of reconstructing the saga of Jewish immigration in Argentina and have done much to preserve this important component of national history. Among the most outstanding of these films is the 2004 documentary *Legado* (Legacy), directed by Vivián Imar and Marcelo Trotto. The film is composed almost entirely of archival film footage and is narrated mostly in Yiddish. It recovers the history of the first group of Jewish settlers who arrived in 1889 aboard the steamship *Wesser* and ultimately became some of the first Jewish gauchos. The film is remarkable in the way it captures the spirit of the moment through both visual and audio techniques and gives an accurate portrayal of the hardships and triumphs of the Jewish pioneers of the Pampas.

Similar to *Legado*, the 1996 documentary *Un Beso a Esta Tierra* (A Kiss to this Land), by filmmaker Daniel Goldberg, provides a glimpse into the story of Jewish immigration to Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s. Told in retrospect by aging immigrants—most of whom now reside in convalescent homes—the film retraces the immigrant experience through the voices of several individuals who share their stories with the camera. The director takes full advantage of archival footage, photographs, and personal testimonies to piece together the story of Jewish immigration to Mexico in an eloquent and affecting manner. The story of the diminishing Jewish community of Cuba is told in the brief documentary *Havana Nagila: The Jews of Cuba* (1995), directed by Laura Paull, which also comprises a series of interviews with members of the Cuban Jewish community in Havana. A more intimate look at Jewish Cuba is found in the 2002 documentary film *Adio Kerida* (Goodbye My Love), directed by Ruth Behar, a Sephardic Jew living in the United States who returns to the Cuba she left as a child in search of her family history on the island and as an exploration of Jewish identity in general.

The 1994 Mexican film *Novia que te Vea* (Like a Bride), directed by Guita Schyfter and based on the novel of the same title by Rosa Nissán, was both a critical and a commercial success. It was the recipient of five Ariel awards (the highest honor bestowed by the Mexican Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences) and is one of few films in Latin American Jewish cinema to represent contemporary Sephardic identity. It tells the story of two young Jewish girls, Oshi and Rifke, who are best friends growing up in Mexico City. The film does an excellent job of contrasting the

differences between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities of the Mexican capital as well as portraying the isolation and marginalization of Jews within the dominant Hispano-Catholic society of Mexico. Issues as wide-ranging as Jewish tradition(s), Zionism, political activism, and feminism come to the fore in the film.

Several superb Latin American films treat different subjects that are simultaneously universal and unique to the Jewish Diaspora of Latin America. The often maligned topic of the *trata de blancas* or the Jewish white slave trade in Argentina is the central theme in the 1988 film *El Camino del Sur* (The Road South), directed by Juan Bautista Stagnaro. It is based on the history of countless young Jewish women who were deceived by the Zwi Migdal (a Jewish organized crime ring) into emigrating to Argentina under the false pretenses of legitimate marriages, but who were ultimately forced into prostitution upon arrival in the country. The subject of the Holocaust is powerfully articulated in the 1987 film *Debajo del Mundo* (Under the World), directed by Beda Docampo Feijóo, which chronicles the real-life story of a Polish family fleeing Nazi persecution and living on the brink of starvation and succumbing to the elements as they survived underground until they are able to escape to Argentina. Postwar Nazi infiltration in Argentina is dealt with in the 1986 film *Pobre Mariposa* (Poor Butterfly), directed by Raúl de la Torre.

Argentina is without a doubt the forerunner in the production of Jewish cinema in Latin America, especially within the period of 1994–2006. Director Daniel Burman is largely responsible for this small boom in Argentine Jewish cinema. His series of three films that deal directly with issues pertaining to the Jewish community of Buenos Aires have been groundbreaking both in stylistic and thematic terms. *Esperando al Mesías* (Waiting for the Messiah, 2000), *El Abrazo Partido* (Lost Embrace, 2004), and *Derecho de Familia* (Family Law, 2006), have all made a significant impact on Argentine cinema. His 2001 *Siete Días en Once* (Seven Days in Once) serves as documentary companion piece to his fictional films. The film traces the lives of several inhabitants of Buenos Aires's Jewish neighborhood (Once) over the course of seven days. It particularly addresses Jewish life in the Once—as do his other films—after the 1994 terrorist attack on the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, one of the major Jewish institutions of the city), which devastated the Argentine Jewish community. To commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the attack, in 2004 a group of 10 directors (including Burman) produced the film *18-J*, which consists of 10 short films that deal with the terrorist attack, each of which takes on the topic from different perspectives. The title refers to July 18, 1994, the date the attack took place. The 1996 *Sol de Otoño* (Autumn Sun), directed by Eduardo Mignogna, was the first film to include a vision of post-AMIA Argentina, although it does not deal directly with the topic. Gabriel Lichtmann has joined the ranks of Burman as one of the most promising new directors. His *Los Judíos en el Espacio, o ¿Por qué es diferente esta noche a las demás noches* (Jews in Space, or Why Is This Night Different from All the Rest? 2006) is a family drama that scrutinizes issues of identity and religious belief.

### Selected Bibliography

Elkin, Judith Laiken. 1998. *The Jews of Latin America*. New York: Holmes & Meier.

## Jewish Studies as a Subject of Latin American Studies

*Gilbert W. Merkkx*

---

For much of the 20th century, scholars of Judaism tended to see Latin American Jews as a topic for Latin American studies, whereas scholars of Latin America tended to see Latin American Jews as a subject in Judaic studies. Although some scholarship on the Jewish experience in the region was produced by members of Jewish communities in Latin America and other parts of the Diaspora, the subject was largely absent from the mainstream discourse in Latin American studies. As a result the comprehensive guide to primary and secondary sources published by Martin Sable in 1978 drew more on sources in Hebrew, Yiddish, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Hungarian, Polish, and Russian than on sources from the Latin American studies literature.

The rise of systematic research on Latin America's Jewish communities as a subject of intellectual significance began with the 1972 Experts Conference on Latin America and the Future of Its Jewish Communities, held in New York under the auspices of the Institute of Jewish Affairs. The conference was held at the end of a decade of rapid Latin American growth when the Vietnam War was drawing to a close, but the Cold War was very much alive.

Although the experts at the conference decried the lack of basic research, assertions about the issues confronting Latin American Jewry were not lacking. Among the opinions expressed were that Jewish communities of Latin America were growing and numbered nearly one million people; U.S. power in the region was shrinking in relative and absolute terms; and Latin American nationalism was a growing and impressive force. Some participants argued that the Jews were a powerful and influential force in Latin America. Others were concerned that the emergence of left-wing revolutionary violence posed a threat to Jewish communities, which were largely conservative, and these persons suggested that those communities would have to identify with the forces of revolutionary change or be left behind by history. The only participant who took strong issue with the views described was Natan Lerner, who argued that the marginality of Latin American Jewry had increased considerably over the previous decade.

In March 1982, a decade after the Experts Conference, a group of scholars attending the 1982 meetings of the Latin American Studies Association in Washington, DC, founded the Latin American Jewish Studies Association, which is dedicated to redressing the lack of attention given to the role of Jews in Latin America. At the same time, an entirely different group of scholars in Israel had begun pursuing research on Latin America from the perspective of comparative studies of world Jewry. In 1984, the University of New Mexico hosted a research conference on the Jewish experience in Latin America in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which brought together researchers from Israel, the United States, and Latin America. This event

brought a new level of empirical knowledge to bear on the condition of the Jewish communities of Latin America and inspired still further research.

The research that emerged in the 1980s made it evident that many of the views expressed at the Experts Conference in 1972 were inaccurate and that the minority viewpoint Lerner expressed was essentially correct. The newer research revealed that Latin American Jews were far less numerous than was previously believed and that the survival of most Jewish communities in the region could not be taken for granted. In the decade after 1972, Latin America was dominated not by the forces of revolution but by the institutionalization of repression under military regimes. The influence of the United States did not wane; on the contrary, it seemed ever more in evidence. Nationalism as a determinant of public policy was decreasing and being replaced by economic neoliberalism. The major challenge to the survival of Jewish communities during the decade came not from revolutionary upheaval and nationalism but rather from military rule and the larger conditions of life in Latin American societies. The single exception was the case of Nicaragua, which in the 1980s had experienced a revolutionary regime.

The findings from research on the Jewish experience in Latin America offered a significant new perspective to Latin American studies, which before 1980 had tended to focus on issues of nationhood and nationalism, rather than on the experiences of minority groups. Examining the condition of Jews brought new understandings of a region marked by volatile social, economic, and political conditions. Because attitudes toward Jews served as a litmus test of civility, tolerance, and liberty of conscience, research on the experience of Jews in Latin America provided an insight into the real, as opposed to the idealized, character of societies in the Western Hemisphere.

Interest in the experiences of Jewish populations in Latin America grew rapidly in the 1980s, resulting in an exponentially growing body of research and analysis. The Latin American Jewish Studies Association grew in size and activity, hosting a continuing sequence of research conferences in subsequent years and sponsoring panels at meetings of the Latin American Studies Association.

Interest in the study of Latin American Jewry also grew in Israel, led by Professor Haim Avni and his associates at the Institute for Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University. This growth of interest was reinforced during the 1970s and early 1980s by a sharp rise in the rate of migration to Israel from Latin America, a migration fed by military repression, anti-Semitism, and persecution of intellectuals. After democracy was restored in most of Latin America during the 1980s, a revitalization of scholarship and debate on the Jewish experience began in Latin America itself, particularly in the important Jewish communities of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay.

By 1990, so much research had accumulated that Judith Laikin Elkin and Ana Lya Sater were able to compile a new annotated guide to the post-1970 literature covering hundreds of monographs, dissertations, and articles on Latin American Jewry. This material was grouped into 31 difference categories ranging from agricultural colonies to Zionism. The guide also provided an annotated list of some 220 Jewish publications from Latin America in seven U.S. archives and libraries.

Scholarship continued to proliferate. In 1995, Elkin published an essay in the *Latin American Research Review* covering 11 major research monographs or series of monographs published in the early 1990s. These included a seven-volume collection on the history of the Ashkenazic community of Mexico City from 1922 to 1992, as well as works on the Jewish communities of Buenos Aires, Cuba, Brazil, Suriname, colonial Mexico, and the Dutch colonies of the New World.

The semiannual publication of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association, *Latin American Jewish Studies*, includes reviews of recent scholarship and current bibliography. The association's Web site also provides access to several bibliographies covering the periods 1991–1996, 1997–1998, 1999–2000, and 2001–2004. These four bibliographies provide impressive evidence of the research productivity of Latin American Jewish studies. Over the entire period 1991–2004, 813 scholarly works are listed, which amounts to an average of 70 new books, monographs, and articles per year.

The Latin American Jewish Studies Association (LAJSA) remains the central organization for scholars in the Western Hemisphere who carry out research on the Jewish experience in Latin American and the Caribbean. After a quarter-century of existence, LAJSA's viability is unquestioned. The activities of the scholars whose work is chronicled in LAJSA's publications and bibliographies has established Latin American Jewish Studies as an important subfield of Latin American studies and, increasingly, of Jewish studies. Perhaps more important, LAJSA has created an intellectual community that spans the Western Hemisphere and Israel. The vacuum of research on Latin American Jewry that was decried at the Experts Conference of 1972 no longer exists.

### Selected Bibliography

- Elkin, Judith Laikin, and Ana Lya Sater. 1990. *Latin American Jewish Studies: An Annotated Guide to the Literature*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Proceedings of the Experts Conference on Latin America and the Future of Its Jewish Communities*. 1973. London: Institute of Jewish Affairs.
- Sable, Martin H. 1978. *Latin American Jewry: A Research Guide*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College.

## Latin American Jewish Literature

*Stephen A. Sadow*

---

The Jews of Latin America live in a vast territory. They have a presence—sometimes substantial, sometimes minimal—in every Latin American country, a territory stretching from the Rio Grande and the Caribbean islands to Chilean Patagonia. Approximately 500,000 Jews live in Latin America, but this number is misleading. In reality, the Jewish population is fractured: there are about 200,000 Argentines,

110,000 Brazilians, 42,000 Mexicans, 22,000 Uruguayans, 22,000 Chileans, 16,000 Venezuelans, 3,000 Peruvian, and 3,000 Costa Ricans. Only 120 Jews live in El Salvador. For historical and geographical reasons, these Jewish communities are isolated from each other and differ in profound ways. Whereas Mexican Jews have tried to isolate themselves from the surrounding population, Argentine Jews have aggressively tried to join it. International organizations like the World Jewish Congress and the Joint Distribution Committee are in contact with Jewish communities in all Latin American countries.

Fleeing the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, the first people of Jewish descent to arrive in the Americas in the 16th century were conversos (converts to Catholicism) or Marranos (Jews who carefully hid their Judaism). They were not in a position to produce literary works with Jewish content. In the 19th century, German-Jewish fortune seekers in Peru failed to produce any significant literature. In 1910, Jewish Latin American literature began in earnest with the publication in Argentina of Alberto Gerchunoff's *Los Gauchos Judíos* (The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas), a collection of interrelated stories that rhapsodized the Jewish agricultural experiments on the dry Argentinean plains. In this work, Gerchunoff made it clear that Argentina, in spite of a harsh climate and occasional difficulties with non-Jews, was a fitting place for Jewish settlement.

Thereafter, Jewish writers in Latin America tended to meld Jewish culture with that of the country in which they live. With some exceptions, the preoccupations of Mexican Jewish writers differ from, say, those of the Argentineans or the Brazilians. Moreover, writers of Ashkenazi background emphasize different aspects of Judaism that do those whose heritage is Sephardic. Rather than inhibiting literary creation, these cross-cutting tensions are part of an extensive literature (or literatures) that include hundreds of authors and thousands of novels, short story collections, dramas and screenplays, and books of poetry. Although the first literature was written in Yiddish, Jewish writers in Latin America quickly shifted to Spanish and Portuguese.

Some personal experiences, though, are shared by virtually all Jewish Latin American writers, and these experiences are reflected in the literature. All have encountered anti-Semitism, sometimes in its most virulent forms. Most have lived for years under totalitarian regimes with anti-Jewish biases. The unsolved bombings of the Israeli embassy and the AMIA center in Buenos Aires left Jews with a perpetual sense of injustice and ongoing unease. On the other hand, the great majority of Jewish Latin American writers have had some formal Jewish education, ranging from that offered by religious day schools to cultural programs found at secular community centers. Because of the large aliyah (immigration) from Latin American countries, there are strong ties between Latin American writers and Israelis. Many writers are (or were) affiliated with Zionist groups; many have studied in Israel, lived there for a time, or visited frequently.

Thematically, identity and memory, spirituality, anti-Semitism, Israel, and, conversely, the pride of being Jewish, are dominant. Most pervasive are the issues of self- and community identity. In other words, how is it possible to be a Jewish citizen of a predominately Catholic Latin American country? The intensity of the issue



Moacyr Scliar, the Jewish Brazilian author, in 1989. (Beto Scliar)

varies from one country to another, but it is present in writings from all over Latin America. Many Jewish Argentinean writers have pondered whether it is even possible to be Argentinean and Jewish. In their literature, memories, real or fabricated, are the tools that help them find their individual and communal identity. Ricardo Feierstein has devoted a five novel saga to Argentinean Jewish identity. As David Schneiderman, the protagonist of Feierstein's *Mestizo*, tries to recover from stress-caused amnesia, he remembers not only his own past but also that of his forebearers in Europe. Ana María Shua reifies an extended Jewish family in *Libro de las Memorias* (The Book of Memories). The early Jewish colonization of the pampas is such a popular topic that many novels and short stories have been and continue to be written about it, as if their writers were boasting about Jewish roots in the Argentinean soil. Isaías Kremer has written dozens of stories about what it was like to live on the land. In a trilogy of novels, Susana Gertopan recreates immigrant family life in Asunción, Paraguay. In an autobiographical essay, Ilan Stavans describes the difficulties of growing up Jewish in Mexico City. In Caracas, Venezuela, Jacqueline Goldberg writes poetry about her identity as Jewish woman. Writing from Porto Alegre in southern Brazil, Moacyr Scliar has written what may be the ultimate Jewish identity novel. His *O Centauro no Jardim* (The Centaur in the Garden) is about a being who is half horse and half Jewish, a true hybrid. He must first come to terms with his divided self. Through surgeries, leg braces, and a centaur girlfriend who is not Jewish, he gradually sheds the horse part of his body and mind.

In Mexico, Uruguay, and Argentina, literature dealing with the Sephardic experience in Latin America has begun to emerge. Argentinean Marcos Aguinis's

masterwork, *La Gesta del Marrano* (The Marrano's Defiance), is a novel about a Jew who dies, refusing to renounce his beliefs before the Inquisition. Mexican Alberto Buzali writes disturbing short stories about the Inquisition in Mexico. Modern Sephardic is described in the fiction of Teresa Porzecanski, who focuses on Jews who came to Uruguay from Aleppo, Syria. Regina Kalach Atri of Mexico and Luis León of Argentina write in a style reminiscent of old Sephardic tales. The contemporary Sephardic community in Mexico is described lovingly by Rosa Nissán and with a combination of sarcasm and affection by Ivonne Saed.

More than elsewhere in Latin America, Jewish literature in Mexico has been concerned with spirituality, mysticism, and exile. Angelina Muñoz-Huberman, after discovering her own Marrano heritage, converted to Judaism and became a scholar of Jewish mysticism. Her output as a poet and novelist has been massive; she explores Kabbalah, feelings of exile, and Sephardic history from the Middle Ages to the present. Mysticism also imbues the writing of Ethel Kreuse and Esther Seligson, a Mexican novelist now living in Israel. The poet Gloria Gervitz wrestles with ancient Jewish questions. In Argentina, César Tiempo wrote many poems about the simple, direct faith of the working-class Jews of Buenos Aires. A native of Peru, Isaac Goldemberg's poetry expresses syncretism in which Jewish, Catholic, and indigenous ways of thinking seem to melt together.

The Holocaust is a pervasive theme in all of Latin American Jewish literature. Before World War II, many Jews arrived in Costa Rica, Bolivia, or anywhere else that would take them. After the war, survivors entered Argentina illegally; others went to Brazil, Uruguay, and Mexico and numerous other countries. Virtually all of these refugees had lost relatives in the Holocaust.

Born in Chile and now living in the United States, Marjorie Agosín wrote a book of letters in the form of poems to Anne Frank. The Argentinean poet Susana Grimberg has composed a cycle of poems based on Anne Frank's life. The Cuban poet José Kozer wrote poignant meditations on the Holocaust. Adina Darvasi, a Chilean who made aliyah to Israel, wrote a novel about the Chilean consul in Europe who saved her mother and many others. The Brazilian Roney Cytrynowicz produced a masterful short story about a man who survives the death camps by working as a *sonderkommando*, carrying the dead to the crematoriums, and who, in Brazil, became a doll maker, so that he could bring pleasure to little girls.

Similarly, the chronic anti-Semitism that has been omnipresent in Latin America since the Inquisition is a repeated theme in Jewish Latin American literature. From an expressionist perspective, Isaac Goldemberg has written novels and plays about the everyday antagonisms of the fictional town of San Sebastián. Marjorie Agosín (Chile/United States), Silvia Plager (Argentina), and Ariel Dorfman (Chile/United States) write of Nazis and fellow travelers in Chile.

Israel, both as a symbol and as a country, in and of itself, is an important theme in Latin American Jewish writing. Miryam Gover de Nasatsky fictionalized three crucial years of Theodor Herzl's life. Ricardo Feierstein's novel *El Caramelo Descompuesto* takes place in a kibbutz in Galilee. Enrique Amster's novel *Marcela y Judith* describes the dilemma of a woman torn between her commitment to Israel and her deep roots in Argentina. At the novel's end, she has left her Israeli lover

and returned to her estranged husband in Buenos Aires. From the small Uruguayan city of Artigas, Raúl Hecht writes poignant poems for his daughter and grandson, now living in Israel. A group of Argentinean-born Israelis, José Pivín, José Luis Najenson, and Elías Scherbacovsky continue to write poems, short stories, and novels in Spanish. In his poetry, Pivín eloquently compares Israel with his native Santa Fe province.

Nevertheless, Jewish Latin American literature is not always so serious. A vibrant celebration of being Jewish and practicing Jewish holidays and rituals acts as a strong counterpoint. Much poetry is dedicated to the major Jewish holidays and ceremonies such as bar mitzvahs and weddings. The stories of Ilan Stavans and Sandro Cohen show the humorous and fanciful side of Jewish Mexican writing. The Peruvian José Adolph writes stories filled with exaggeration and often surprising distortion. From Brazil, Moacyr Scliar's short stories are often structured as jokes or games. In his early novels, Scliar displays the foibles and wisdom of the residents of Bom Fim, a neighborhood filled with droll characters and odd relationships—a bit of the “old county” in a corner of Brazil. In the tradition of Isaac Bashevis Singer, Marcelo Birmajer, in numerous novels and short stories, describes and dissects life in the predominantly Jewish Once neighborhood of Buenos Aires. Argentine novelist Paula Margules also pokes fun at Jewish foibles. First in Argentina, and later in France, poet and short story writer Saúl Yukiévich engaged in intricate word play in which form and sound are often more important than content. What is not present in this literature is the denigration of Jews or Jewish ways. Even self-deprecation is rare. The biting criticism of Philip Roth and the whining of Woody Allen are for the most part absent in these writings. Perhaps because so many writers identify heavily with Jewish culture and perhaps because they do not want to show readers from the majority culture a negative picture of Jewish life, until very recently, Jews have rarely been described in unflattering ways in this literature. Samuel Rovinski's stories show the Jews of Costa Rica as hard-working and loyal citizens. The Venezuelan Isaac Chacrón's characters tend to be aggressive and streetwise, but likable. In fact, in Feierstein's novels, the Jewish characters always win the brawls and street fights and defeat those who attack their European shtetls or, later, their Latin American neighborhoods

There are, of course, many committed Jewish Latin American writers who do not write about Jewish themes, but who prefer to write through a “Jewish perspective” or who believe their Judaism affects their way of thinking and hence their way of writing. Alicia Borinsky, born in Argentina, writes poems that are disjointed, puzzling, and profound. In Uruguay, Julia Galemire and Evelyn Kliman touch on Jewish themes but generally write poetry that is highly personal and carefully constructed.

Jewish Latin American literature is a mature literature both in the questions it asks and the answers it provides its readers. It has world-class writers who win important prizes and praise from the critics in their countries, neophytes whose work is tentative and surprising—and everything in between. Jewish Latin American literature constitutes a major contribution not only to Jewish literature but also to the literatures of the many countries in which it is written and, most important, to world literature.

### Selected Bibliography

- Barr, Lois Baer. 1996. "The Jonah Experience: The Jews of Brazil According to Scliar." In *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America*, edited by David Sheinin and Lois Baer Barr, 33–52. New York: Garland.
- Berman, Sabina. 1998. *Bubbeh*. Translated by Andrea G. Labinger. Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press.
- Borinsky, Alicia. 2002. *All Night Movie*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press.
- Cohen, Sara. 2000. *Puertas de Paris*. Buenos Aires: Emece, 70.
- Friedman, Edward H. 1996. "Theory in the Margin: Latin American Literature and the Jewish Subject." In *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America*, edited by David Sheinin and Lois Baer Barr, 21–32. New York: Garland.
- Futoransky, Luisa. 1997. *The Duration of the Voyage/La Duracion del Viaje. Selected Poems*. Bilingual edition. Edited and translated by Jason Weiss. San Diego: Junction Press.
- Gardiol, Rita, ed. and trans. 1997. *The Silver Candelabra & Other Stories: A Century of Jewish Argentine Writers*. Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press.
- Glickman, Nora. 1996. "Discovering Self in History: Aída Bortnik and Gerardo Mario Goloboff." In *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America*, edited by David Sheinin and Lois Baer Barr, 61–74. New York: Garland Publishing
- Lindstrom, Naomi. 1997. "The Role of Jewish Editors in Argentine Publishing, 1920–1940." *AMILAT. Judaica Latinoamericana* 3: 371–83.
- Vieira, Nelson H. 1996. "Outsiders and Insiders: Brazilian Jews and the Discourse of Alterity." In *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America*, edited by David Sheinin and Lois Baer Barr, 101–116. New York: Garland.

## Jews in Argentina

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

**General Population:** 39,537,943

**Jewish Population:** Estimates range from 210,000 (American Jewish Committee) to 395,379 (World Jewish Congress).

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Buenos Aires, 165,000; Cordobam, 10,000; Rosario, 9,000; Santa Fe, 5,000; small towns and rural areas, 21,000

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Spanish conversos, French immigrants in mid-1800s, Russian immigrants in late 1900s, the Syrian community, and Eastern European immigrants contributed to the Jewish population. Most were Ashkenazi, but about 15 percent were Sephardic.

**Languages Spoken:** Nearly all speak Spanish. Ladino and Yiddish are rarely spoken.

---

### Historical Overview

1492 Conversos settle in Argentina after the expulsion from Spain. Most assimilate into the general population and by the mid-1800s, few Jews are left in Argentina.

- 1810 Argentina gains independence from Spain. Its first president, Bernardino Rivadavia, promotes freedom of immigration and respect for human rights and officially abolishes the Inquisition.
- Mid-1800s Jewish immigration begins in the mid-19th century with Jewish immigrants arriving from Western Europe, especially from France.
- 1860s A minyan meets for the High Holiday services and forms Congregacion Israelita de la Republica.
- 1889 Russian Jews numbering 824 arrive in Argentina on the S.S. *Weser* and buy land and establish a colony, which they name Moiseville; they become Argentine *gauchos* (cowboys).
- 1890s Immigrants fleeing poverty and pogroms in Russia and other Eastern Europe countries move to Argentina. These Jews become known as "Rusos" and become active in Argentinian society.
- 1900s Baron Maurice de Hirsch Baron founds the Jewish Colonization Association, which owns more than 600,000 hectares of land, populated by more than 200,000 Jews.
- 1906–1912 Jewish immigration increases at a rate of 13,000 immigrants per year. Most immigrants are Ashkenazi Jews from Europe, but some are Sephardic Jews from Morocco and the Ottoman Empire.
- 1918–1930 Antirevolutionary feelings develop into anti-Semitic acts.
- 1919 A general strike in Buenos Aires leads to a pogrom, beatings, and looting; rioters burn property belonging to Jews.
- 1920 More than 150,000 Jews are living in Argentina.
- 1927 Rabbi David Setton issues an edict against marriage to converts because of the deteriorating observance in the community of Buenos Aires.
- 1946 Juan Peron, a Nazi sympathizer with fascist leanings, rises to power.
- 1947 Peron halts Jewish immigration to Argentina and allows Argentina to become a haven for fleeing Nazis. He introduces compulsory Catholic religious instruction in public schools.
- 1949 Peron establishes diplomatic relations with Israel.
- 1955 Peron is overthrown, and this is followed by a wave of anti-Semitism.
- 1960 Adolf Eichmann is abducted from Buenos Aires to serve trial in Israel for Holocaust crimes.
- 1961 The Eichmann trial in Jerusalem arouses anti-Jewish sentiment in Argentina.
- 1976–1983 Under military rule, Jews are targeted for kidnapping and torture by the ruling junta; about 1,000 of the 9,000 known victims of state terrorism are Jews. It is alleged that the Israeli government had an agreement with the Argentine government to allow Jews arrested for political crimes to emigrate to Israel.
- 1983 Raul Alfonsin is democratically elected president. The Jewish population supports him and many Jews are appointed to high positions.
- 1988 President Menem helps pass a law against racism and anti-Semitism and orders the release of files relating to Argentina's role as a haven for Nazi war criminals.
- 1989 Carlos Saul Menem is elected president; despite his Arab origins he appoints many Jews to his government, visits Israel a number of times, and offers to help mediate the Israeli–Arab peace process.

- 1992 Attacks on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires kill 32.
- 1992–present All communal institutions are protected by armed guards.
- 1994 The Buenos Aires Cemetery is vandalized. Bronze objects are stolen from more than 150 graves.
- 1994 Blasts at the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) blasts kill 87 and wound 100, including many communal leaders, and destroy the community archives.
- 2001 In December, economic riots cause the looting of many Jewish businesses in downtown Buenos Aires.
- January 6, 2002 Stones are thrown into the Berazategui Jewish cemetery in the Quilmes section of Buenos Aires, damaging gravestones.
- January 7, 2002 Stones are thrown at the Maccabi Sports Club in the San Miguel section of Buenos Aires, damaging cars.
- January 28, 2002 Swastikas are found painted on the building of the Holocaust Studies Foundation in Mendoza.
- 2005 An Argentine prosecutor says the AMIA bombing was carried out by a 21-year-old Lebanese suicide bomber who belonged to Hezbollah.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Former generations included gaucho cowboys in the Argentinean cattle country, then farmers, peddlers, artisans, family business owners; and shopkeepers, pharmacists, furriers, and middle-class businessmen. Argentinean Jews were one of the nation's most affluent Jewish communities. Jews have held a large stake in the country's fur, textile, chemical, electronics, auto, and banking industries. Both Banco Mercantile and Banco Comercial were founded by Jews.

The modern Jewish community focused on higher education and professions. Jews became involved in most sectors of Argentine society. Still they were unable to gain high ranks in the military, foreign ministry, and judiciary.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Cultural and religious organizations have flourished. Several cities have Jewish social clubs, Sociedad Hebraica for Ashkenazi Jews and Casa Sephardi for Sephardic Jews. The Maccabi Sport Federation is also active in Argentina. One of the world's four remaining Yiddish daily newspapers and theaters opened in Buenos Aires. Plays are performed in Yiddish, Spanish, and Hebrew in a number of Jewish theaters.

Jews are active in all sectors of Argentine society. Jews are prominent in the arts, film, music, and journalism, including writer Jacobo Timmerman, owner of a local newspaper who campaigned for human rights; Rene Epelbaum, who founded a protest group for mothers of political prisoners; pianist Daniel Barenboim; and Cesar Milstein, the 1984 Nobel Prize recipient in medicine.

### Present Economic Conditions

Argentina was once one of the most successful Jewish communities. Some cannot believe its economic condition is presently so dire and believe the response from world Jewry is a test of its ability to survive future turmoil.

Because of the relatively high socioeconomic standing of the Jewish community, Argentinean Jews were also the first victims of the country's declining economy and a test case of new governmental economic policies. Since 2001, 10 percent of the community was beneath the poverty line (\$12,000 a year for a family of four). Welfare cases were estimated at 25,000. The average old-age pension is \$150 per month, although an individual needs an estimated \$400 per month to survive. At least 1,700 Jewish families have lost their homes to creditors. Jews continue working into their 70s to earn a living existence. More than 4,500 Jewish pupils have dropped out of the country's Jewish school system. In 2005, approximately 20,000 people attended communal dinners on Rosh Hashanah at Jewish institutions throughout the country. Over 60,000 people have come to various community-based celebrations. Because of economic decline, Jewish institutional networks have been in disarray and institutions have lost membership and contributions. Pride, denial of the situation, and social embarrassment cause considerable outflow of communal association.

Well-educated young people cannot find jobs, but groups in Argentina are trying to eradicate this problem. In 1998, Banco Patricios collapsed, taking with it millions of Jewish dollars. The Banco Mayo also failed to help the situation as it, too, went bankrupt in 1999. Many once-wealthy Jewish organizations are now unable to give funding to charity groups. Some believe the Jewish leadership in Argentina is incompetent and corrupt. They also claim that the two Jewish-run banks that went bankrupt were linked closely to a corrupt government and mishandled the community's money, losing \$26 million in communal assets overnight.

### Religious Denominations

Buenos Aires has 50 Orthodox synagogues, 21 Conservative synagogues, and a few Reform synagogues. The level of religious observance lies between Conservative and Orthodox. Most of the synagogues were built before World War II and are still in use.

The Argentine branch of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Conservative movement's rabbinical school, opened in 1962 in Buenos Aires. It trains Conservative rabbis from all over Argentina and Latin America. In 1992, the first woman was ordained by the seminary. The seminary acts as a center for interfaith dialogue, hosts a high school and a graduate school, and offers adult education lessons and seminars for the community.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Much of Buenos Aires Jewish life centers around the Once district, where the Yesod Hadat synagogue was founded in 1932 by Jews from Aleppo, Syria. Others include Libertad, Argentina's oldest synagogue, and Congregacion Israelita de la Republica

Argentina and its Jewish cultural center, which hosts concerts, lectures, and a high school. Founded in 1932, it houses a small Jewish museum, which has a collection of photographs and Jewish ritual objects. Other Jewish clubs include Hacoaj and CASA Sefardita, which have a range of sports and cultural activities.

Argentina has more than 70 Jewish educational institutions, including kindergartens, day schools, elementary and secondary schools. More than 60 percent of Jewish Argentine youth attend one of these institutions. In Buenos Aires alone, 17,000 Jewish children study in the Jewish educational system. There are 18 Jewish cemeteries in Argentina, seven are still in use.

Major organizations include the following:

- The DAIA (Delegacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas), founded in 1939 as the political arm of the Jewish community, protects Jewish rights and represents the community in the government.
- AMIA, originally an Ashkenazic mutual-aid society that provided health and human services to Argentina's Ashkenazi population, now serves the country's entire Jewish community. It is trying to pay off a \$26 million debt.
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) has created several new programs to aid the community, including the HIAS Employment Visa Programs and New Online Job Bank to Assist Argentine Jews. HIAS also supports Jewish communities around the globe that wish to provide resettlement assistance to Argentine Jews during this unprecedented crisis.
- Chabad-Lubavitch, an international religious movement with local members offers religious and social services in seven main cities with approximately 15 centers in all, catering to the Jewish population according to its populations, with services such as synagogues, festival and Shabbat meals and activities, early childhood and preschool centers, heder schools, day schools, religious studies schools (*metivta*), yeshiva (religious boys' seminary), teachers' seminary, adult education classes, women's groups, libraries, day camps, summer and winter camps, teen clubs, mikvah, judaica shops, circumcision services, *chevra kadisha* funeral services, kosher meal planning, soup kitchens and food package distribution, drug rehabilitation and drug prevention centers, prison visitation, employment services, and medical services.
- World ORT (Russia-based Society for Trades and Agricultural Labour), ORT Argentina operates two burgeoning high schools, and 80 percent of Jewish high school students attend these schools.

Other institutions active in Argentina include the following:

- American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
- Latin American Jewish Congress
- United Jewish Communities Argentinean Jewish relief
- Jewish Federations of North America
- Tzedaka Foundation
- The Federation of Jewish Community Centers of Argentina
- Israelite Congregation of Argentina

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The Jewish community is not growing, and many are immigrating to other countries. Since 1949 more than 45,000 Jews have immigrated to Israel from Argentina. The economic situation has caused about 10,000 Jews to leave Argentina in the past few years. About 6,000 immigrated to Israel. Other ports of immigration include Spanish-speaking countries or cities such as Miami, Florida. Some wish to come to the United States, Canada, or Australia. Long lines are reported at visa sections of several European consulates. Although poor, these immigrants are highly educated and skilled. A mass exodus of half of population in a decade is anticipated. After 9/11, immigration to the United States became more difficult, and Israel, with incentive packages including a grant of \$2,500 per family and a heavily subsidized mortgage offered by Zionist organizations, became the easiest, more-attractive option for immigration.

### Selected Bibliography

- "The Americas/Argentina." 2007. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Web site. [http://www.jdc.org/p\\_amer\\_arg\\_current.html](http://www.jdc.org/p_amer_arg_current.html) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Beker, Avi, ed. 1998. *Jewish Communities of the World*. Minneapolis: Lerner.
- "Chabad-Lubivitch Centers in 'Argentina.'" Chabad.org Web site. <http://www.chabad.org/centers/default.asp?country=Argentina> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Gerchunoff, Alberto. 1998. *The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Jewish Federation Greater Vancouver Web site. [http://www.jfgv.com/content\\_display.html?ArticleID=126985](http://www.jfgv.com/content_display.html?ArticleID=126985) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Jordan, Michael J. "Argentine Jews Tell of Misery, Ask Americans to Come to Aid." Jewish Federation of Greater Washington Web site. [http://www.shalomdc.org/content\\_display.html?ArticleID=71703](http://www.shalomdc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=71703) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Lipman, Steve. 2001. "Argentine Jews Have Bags Packed." *The Jewish Week*. The Jewish Agency for Israel Web site. <http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/Home/About/Press+Room/Jewish+Agency+In+The+News/2001/jwdec28.htm+3.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Tigay, Alan M., ed. 1994. *The Jewish Traveler*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Weiner, Rebecca. "The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Argentina." Jewish Virtual Library Argentina. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/Argentina.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Weisbrot, Robert. 1979. *The Jews of Argentina from the Inquisition to Peron*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Zaidner, Michael, ed. 2000. "World Jewish Communities: Latin America: Argentina." In *Jewish Travel Guide 2000*. Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell.

# Jews in Brazil

*Jeffrey Lesser*

General Population: 186,112,794

Jewish Population: 110,000

Percent of Population: 0.081 percent

Jewish Population by City: São Paulo, 60,000; Rio de Janeiro, 25,000–30,000; Porto Alegre, 10,000–12,000; Belo Horizonte, 5,000; Curitiba, 3,000; Santos, 1,500; Salvador, 1,000; Recife, 1,000

## Historical Overview

16th century Although there is an important 16th-century Jewish presence in Brazil as a result of Portuguese colonial expansion, it would be inappropriate to characterize a “community” in the contemporary academic sense of the word. The Inquisition forces much Jewish practice underground and many of those characterized as “Jews” by Portuguese government officials and church leaders are actually the descendants of converted New Christians who had migrated to Brazil. Variouslly called *Judaizantes*, *Marranos*, *conversos*, and *Cristãos Novos* (New Christians), they move to Brazil in small numbers to escape the economic, social, and religious persecution of the Catholic Church and Portuguese Crown. Their presence, however, never encourages large-scale Jewish immigration to colonial Brazil, even though people defined as New Christians may make up as much as 20 percent of the white population of the colonial capital of Salvador, Bahia.

1630 The Dutch invade the Pernambuco region of northern Brazil. For some 30 years, most notably in the city of Recife, Jewish practice is permitted openly.

1654 After the Portuguese expel the Dutch, some practicing Jews become crypto-Jews, others move to Holland, and still others migrate to cities in the Portuguese Americas, notably Curaçao and New Amsterdam.

1824 Brazil’s gains independence and the official persecution of Jews begins. In the new empire, the Catholic Church remains established and non-Catholics are not permitted public exercise of their faith.

1872 Although the Brazilian census of this year records no Jewish inhabitants in Brazil, perhaps 2,000 Jews did settle in the empire as part of a general European migration to Brazil. These Jews make significant social and economic progress in the capital of Rio de Janeiro and form some communal institutions.

1881 The first formal proposal for planned Jewish colonization to Brazil is laid out but never acted on. At the end of the 19th century, Brazil’s Jewish population is small; it officially consists of only 300 people but the number is somewhat closer to 3,000.

Most Jews in late 19th-century Brazil are descendants of Ladino-speaking Sephardic North Africans (*Maghribi*). The Spanish-Moroccan War (1859–1860) may have been the catalyst for emigration, but many migrate to the Amazon

region to participate in the emerging rubber economy of the early to mid-19th century. Most Moroccan Jews settle in Belém do Pará, although a smaller group goes to Rio de Janeiro. Many are multilingual—Arabic and Spanish are used for business, French and Hebrew are studied at the Alliance Israélite Universelle schools, and Haqitit (a Ladino dialect spoken in Morocco) is spoken at home—and this gave them a transnational perspective.

- 1890 More than 1,000 Maghribi Jews migrate to the state of Pará, at the mouth of the Amazon. They settle in small towns where they trade clothes, medicine, tobacco, and cachaca (a sugar cane-based liquor) for fish, Brazil nuts, rubber, and copaiba oil. Prosperity, however, is only one of the Amazon's attractions for Morocco's Jews: they soon discover they can easily obtain Brazilian naturalization certificates. Becoming Brazilian means the ability to return to Morocco with the sense of security a Brazilian passport would provide. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, few European Jews go to Brazil as more desirable locations, such as the United States and Canada, have no barriers to Jewish entry.
- 1891 The Baron Maurice de Hirsch founds the Jewish Colonization Association (Idische kolonizatsye gezelschaft, IKA or ICA) with the specific purpose of aiding poverty-stricken East European and Balkan Jewry by establishing Jewish farming colonies in the Americas.
- 1901 The ICA begins to investigate expansion into the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul because of its proximity to Argentina (where the ICA already has colonies) and that state government's desire for new colonists from Europe.
- 1904–1924 The ICA forms two Jewish agricultural colonies in Rio Grande do Sul. The East European Jewish colonists never amount to more than a few thousand people yet they are critical to orienting Jewish migration toward Brazil. This occurs for a number of reasons. First, the association enjoys the diplomatic support of a British government committed to ensuring emigrating East European Jewry will resettle outside the United Kingdom. Thus, in times of crisis, the Rio Grande do Sul government often finds the Jewish colonies represented by influential English diplomats. Furthermore, some of the ICA's directors are heavy investors in the Brazilian economy. Thus, the ICA provides legitimate refugee relief even while representing foreign interests in Brazil. As a result, a particularly strong relationship develops between the ICA and the Rio Grande do Sul government, which is interested in subsidizing and sponsoring agricultural colonization and encouraging foreign investment.
- 1913–1914 The pattern of immigration to Brazil, both general and Jewish, changes with the violence and dislocation of World War I. The number of migrants entering Brazil's ports falls by more than 50 percent and by another 60 percent the year after.
- 1918 Fewer than 20,000 immigrants enter Brazil, a low that is not be approached again until 1936. With the end of World War I, large numbers of people resume their migration in part because Brazil does not respond to its local nationalist movements with immigration quotas (as was the case in the United States and Argentina, among others). Between 1918 and 1919, the number of arrivals to Brazil's ports almost doubles, and in 1920 almost doubles again, reaching

69,000. These postwar immigrants differ from the prewar group in national origin and in their view of success and opportunity. Although Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, and German immigrants continue to predominate, two new groups enter in growing numbers: Japanese and Eastern Europeans.

1920 Jews make up about 45–50 percent of those immigrants arriving in Brazil from Eastern Europe. The upheavals created by the establishment of the new state of Poland encourage this emigration as do restrictive quotas in the United States, Argentina, and Canada.

1924–1934 East European immigration to Brazil increases almost 10 times. Like all Eastern Europeans, Jews reevaluate Brazil's potential as a country of resettlement as the economy seems increasingly prosperous in the face of a shift toward industrial development after World War I. By the mid-1920s, more than 10 percent of the Jews emigrating from Europe choose Brazil as their destination, and by the early 1930s the Jewish population of Brazil approaches 60,000. The Eastern European Jews who arrive in Brazil after World War I and the Russian Revolution settle primarily in the states of São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, and Rio de Janeiro and achieve a level of economic success matched by only a few other immigrant groups in Brazil, such as those from the Middle East and Japan. Jews, unlike most other immigrant groups to Brazil, rely on international relief organizations and new arrivals settle where aid is most available, generally in cities. This urban placement provides economic opportunities that are not available in rural Brazil. The ability to quickly earn an income, combined with the communal and ethnic-based nature of the immigration process leads Jewish immigrants into establishing burial societies, youth groups, schools, and synagogues. With the establishment of institutions, Jewish families are more likely to invest their time and capital in a Brazilian future.

In the 1920s and 1930s, an ever-increasing match between Eastern European economic skills and the demands of the Brazilian economy for commercial and industrial activity help Jews rise to positions of economic security, especially via peddling, textiles production, and sales. Between 1920 and 1930, about 30,000 Jews immigrate to Brazil, making it the third most important receiving country in the Americas after the United States and Argentina. In one five-year period almost 13 percent of all Jews leaving their countries of origin go to Brazil. These immigrants, for the most part, actively maintain many aspects of their premigration culture and are an extremely visible "other" in the *mélange* of immigrants who inhabit Brazil. The combination of economic success and cultural difference makes Jews particular targets of nativists after the Great Depression.

1934 Immigration quotas are established via a new constitution, and criticism of Jewish immigration becomes a regular component of political discourse. As popular and political nationalism grow, Jews find themselves singled out for negative treatment by the Brazilian government.

1935 Brazil begins to deny visas to Jews. The existence of Nazi ideology at the time makes anti-Semitism respectable throughout the Americas, and this surely plays a role in how Brazilian policy makers react when confronted with growing

pressure to accept Jewish immigrants and refugees. Anti-Semitism is rampant among Brazilian intellectuals and federal policy makers in the 1930s. Yet only 11 percent more Jews, representing about 3,000 people, enter Brazil between 1920 and 1930 than did between 1930 and 1940. The growing public discourse opposing Jewish entry and the resulting prohibition on Jewish entrances neither stops Jewish entry nor particularly changes its pattern for a number of reasons. Complaints to U.S. senators and congresspersons and British and Canadian members of Parliament by Jewish tourists and businesspeople lead those governments to pressure Brazil to modify its restrictions. Furthermore, the appointment of former ambassador to the United States Oswaldo Aranha as Brazilian foreign minister helps a philo-Semitic vision of “the Jew” to gain credence within the government. From this perspective Central European Jewish refugees are seen as bringing skills and capital to Brazil. International pressure to accept refugees is matched by a change in perception among some of Brazil’s most important immigration policy makers.

- 1938 New rules regarding Jewish immigration reopen Brazil’s gates to such an extent that more Jews enter than in any of the 10 years previously.
- 1950s Post–World War II Jewish settlement expands when significant numbers of Middle Eastern Jews, notably from Egypt and Syria, settle in the country after the Suez Crisis. In Recife, the Dutch-era synagogue has been designated an official national landmark.

## Contemporary Overview

Over the past century Brazil has had religious and cultural freedom within a hegemonic Catholic tradition. As a result the country is marked both by its multiculturalism and its widespread stereotypes (often positive) of the many different ethnic groups in the country. Brazilians of Middle Eastern, Japanese, and Jewish descent have particular visibility because members are often in the upper echelons of Brazilian economic, social, and cultural life. For example, the telenovela (nighttime soap opera) with the largest audience in 2006 included clichéd characters from each of these groups. One episode showed Jewish immigrants at a 1930 Shabbat service singing modern Israeli songs. Jews (and other ethnic minorities) are divided on how to respond to these types of portrayals.

Information from the Brazilian government’s 2000 census showed a Jewish population of 86,825, almost all of whom lived in urban areas. Some Jewish organizations in Brazil dispute this figure and place the number between 120,000 and 140,000. Probably the most reliable estimate comes from Israeli demographer Sergio Della Pergola, who placed the 2002 number at 97,300, a slight decline from the 1980 figure of 100,000. This makes Brazilian Jewry the 11th largest Jewish community in the world. The contemporary Jewish community was formed primarily after 1920. It is ethnically diverse, encompassing Ashkenazim (primarily of Polish and German descent) and Sephardim (the largest plurality is of Egyptian descent). The Lubavitch movement has had a particularly strong influence among Sephardic Jews. Most

community leaders and scholars suggest that the population self-identifying as Jewish is diminishing in large part because of intermarriage.

The largest Jewish community is in São Paulo, Brazil's largest city with a Jewish population of about 60,000 out of a population of more than 10 million. The second largest Jewish community is in Rio de Janeiro (25,000–30,000 Jews out of a population of 5.85 million), the third largest is in Porto Alegre in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (10,000–12,000 Jews in a population of about 1.36 million). Other significant communities are in Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Santos, Salvador and Recife.

As in many countries with relatively large Jewish populations, there are numerous nationwide and local community organizations seeking to represent Jews. The central body representing all the Jewish federations and communities in Brazil is the Confederação Israelita do Brazil (CONIB), founded in 1951. This umbrella body includes 200 organizations engaged in promoting Jewish and Zionist activities, as well as groups involved in Jewish education, culture, and charity. Most state-based Jewish federations have commissions dedicated to fighting racism, and the São Paulo-based Latin American Jewish Committee Section for Interreligious Affairs actively combats racial hatred with support from the Brazilian National Commission for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue, an affiliate of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops. A police unit specializes in the investigation of racial crimes in São Paulo, and the Jewish Federation in that city has a permanent member on the advisory board. All major international Zionist organizations and Zionist youth movements are represented in Brazil. Brazilian Jews publish a number of newspapers and magazines in Portuguese and much Jewish activity takes place in Jewish community centers.

In the 1990s, as Brazil entered into a prolonged economic crisis, the economic situation of Jews in the middle class worsened noticeably. Jewish assistance organizations thus took on an important new role in helping to retrain Jews for new jobs and helping children and the elderly. Many of these organizations opened their doors to all Brazilians and thus became models of public assistance from nongovernment entities.

There is a strong sense of cultural Judaism in Brazil. Books about Jews and Jewish issues are published regularly, although they tend to be hagiographic or memorializing. Academic works tend to engage in debates about the varying interpretations of Brazilian immigration policy during World War II, especially over the seeming contradiction between secret decrees prohibiting the entry of Jews and the fact of an increase in Jewish immigration during the years those "bans" were in effect. Jewish studies is a growing field of research at major Brazilian universities and there has been a proliferation in master's and doctoral theses on Jewish topics. Jewish film festivals have become increasingly common in Brazil, and the winners of these festivals tend to go into regular release. Films like *Promises* (2001, directed by C. Bolado, B. Z. Goldberg, and J. Shapiro), *The Syrian Bride* (2004, directed by E. Riklis) and *Free Zone* (2005, directed by A. Gitai) played for months on the commercial circuit in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, and Porto Alegre.

Brazilian Jewry, like many other Jewish communities in the Americas, has experienced a wave of Sephardism that has attracted interest from Jews (both Ashkenazi and Sephardi) and non-Jews. In Brazil, much of the cultural fascination

has to do with the myth that most of the Portuguese explorers of Brazil were crypto-Jews or New Christians. This notion has made its way into elite and middle-class culture, including among Jews, and there has been a wave of conversion to Judaism among Brazilians claiming New Christian or crypto-Jewish ancestors. The interest in Judaism has also been spurred by the rapid growth of evangelical Protestantism and its pseudo-Zionist discourse.

Rabbi Henry Sobel of the Congregação Israelita Paulista (a synagogue affiliated with both the World Union for Progressive Judaism–Reform movement *and* the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism) is perhaps the best-known Jewish leader in Brazil. Since the 1960s he has taken an active stance against discrimination and poverty and has engaged in interreligious dialogue. In 2006, Sobel participated in the Halachic reburial of political militant Iara Iavelberg in São Paulo's Jewish cemetery. Iavelberg was murdered by Brazil's repressive forces in 1971 (when Brazil was under a brutal military dictatorship) but at the time Jewish community leaders accepted the government's claims that the death was a suicide and thus did not allow her a formal Jewish burial.

Rabbi Nilton Bonder of Rio de Janeiro's Congregação Judaica do Brasil, known as the "green rabbi," is a prize-winning and best-selling author who uses Jewish tradition and mysticism to discuss a wide variety of spiritual matters and social issues such as the environment. The Congregação Judaica do Brasil is affiliated with both the Conservative movement and the Jewish renewal movement influenced by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi and Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach.

In the nonreligious realm, Dr. Celso Lafer, one of Brazil's most important diplomats, served as minister of foreign affairs beginning in 2001 and continues to be an important consultant on political and economic affairs. José Mindlin, after his retirement from business, was secretary of culture in São Paulo and has become one of the leaders in the preservation of rare Brazilian books. Mindlin is one of three Jews who have been elected to Brazil's most prestigious intellectual group, the Brazilian Academy of Letters. The others are Arnaldo Niskier and the novelist Moacyr Scliar, whose books on Jewish life in Brazil are widely read, are translated internationally, and have been made into television shows and films. The Safra family, former owners of Banco Safra, is one of the most prominent Sephardic families in Brazil. Silvio Santos (born Senor Abravanel), one of Brazil's most popular television personalities, has increasingly asserted his Jewish identity publicly, even though his wife and daughter are evangelical Christians.

Although Brazil has a reputation as a haven for Nazis, anti-Semitic discourse is very low, and there is little open anti-Semitism. One factor explaining this is the limited contact between the relatively small community of Jews, on the one hand, and the mass of Brazil's impoverished urban and rural people, on the other. In addition, Jewish communal organizations are careful to keep internal Jewish issues (as opposed to those related to Israel) out of the spotlight. Furthermore, Brazil's strong rhetorical commitment to ethnic, cultural, and racial tolerance is backed up by law, making public anti-Semitism a potential crime.

Outright anti-Semitic movements in Brazil have attracted only a tiny number of participants. Some literature denying the Holocaust has been published in Brazil,

almost all of it privately funded by the elderly Siegfried Ellwanger Castan, a wealthy industrialist. Castan's publishing company, Editôra Revisão, distributed an unknown quantity of free books to politicians all over Brazil, but there was no sign that they affected policy. Castan also reprinted a number of anti-Semitic books originally published in the 1920s, such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Henry Ford's *The International Jew*. Castan's books are not available in any of the major bookstore chains, and this literature has been widely attacked, consequently receiving disproportionate publicity. Anti-Semitic and racist publications are banned by Brazil's antiracism laws (Brazilian Constitution of 1988, Article 5, paragraph XLII). A lawsuit against Castan that began in 2001 led to a series of convictions in 2005 at both the state and Brazilian Supreme Court levels.

The current president of Brazil, Lula da Silva, has a number of Jews in his inner circle, including his spokesperson, Andre Singer, and his most important assistant, Clara Ant. The Lula government, like the Cardoso government before it, takes a middle-road position on the Middle East. In 2002, the Brazilian government strongly supported the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council on the end of the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel. The Brazilian government also supports the peaceful creation of a democratic state of Palestine, based on the Beirut Declaration by the League of Arab States and the proposals formulated by the so-called Quartet (United States, European Union, Russia, and the secretary general of the United Nations). Brazil is a member of the Rio Group, which has consistently called for an immediate cessation of all acts of terrorism, provocation, incitement, and destruction in the Middle East. In 2005, Lula was one of the signators of a World Jewish Congress document against anti-Semitism that was presented at the United Nations. Lula also participated in United Nation's Holocaust Memorial Day services at the Congregação Israelita Paulista, Latin America's largest synagogue.

### Selected Bibliography

- Elkin, Judith Laikin. 1998. *The Jews of Latin America*. New York: Holmes & Meier.
- Lesser, Jeffrey. 1994. *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Liebman, Seymour B. 1982. *New World Jewry, 1493–1825: Requiem for the Forgotten*. New York: KTAV.
- Norman, Theodore. 1985. *An Outstretched Arm: A History of the Jewish Colonization Association*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Novinsky, Anita. 1972. *Cristãos Novos na Bahia*. São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva.
- Vieira, Nelson, H. 1996. "Outsiders and Insiders: Brazilian Jews and the Discourse of Alterity." In *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies on History and Literature*, edited by David Sheinin and Lous Baer, 101–116. New York: Garland.
- Wischnitzer, Mark. 1948. *To Dwell in Safety: The Story of Jewish Migration since 1800*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America.

## Brazil, Jews, and Transatlantic Trade

*Joseph Abraham Levi*

---

During the first 300 years of European expansion/migration to the Western Hemisphere, the early Jewish presence in Brazil (1500–1822) was mainly Sephardic, consisting of conversos or New Christians. As early as 1822, with the proclamation of the independent kingdom of Brazil, and since the establishment of the Brazilian republic in 1899, the descendants of these conversos or crypto-Jews were finally able to declare Jewish identity without fear of being persecuted for their religion or ethnic background.

The Sephardim—mainly of Portuguese origin, either as openly declared Jews or, as often was the case, as New Christians—had a decisive role in transatlantic trade before and after their expulsion from Dutch Brazil (1624–1654). For more than three centuries—that is, from 1492 to the middle of the 19th century—these Portuguese conversos, or crypto-Jews, of the Diaspora were instrumental in linking the Americas to the Old World and beyond.

With commercial ties spanning Canada, the North American colonies, and the Caribbean area to South America to the European ports of Lisbon, Porto, Amsterdam, Antwerp, London, and Hamburg, these businessmen of Jewish descent succeeded in maintaining a dominant economic position despite the many difficulties and restrictions they faced, at one time or the other, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Because of their historical background, which forced them to constantly migrate from one area to another, Portuguese Jews/conversos were in a sense the linking point among different peoples, languages, and cultures—the Dutch, English, Germans, French, and Spanish. Thus, their knowledge of more than one of these European languages and, of course, Portuguese, made them practically indispensable and welcomed everywhere they ventured. They would in fact remain the only middlemen who were capable of trading with any and all of the European powers at the same time, and at a very competitive price, thus turning a profit for all parties involved.

The departure, or rather, the forced exile of Sephardic Jews and conversos from former Dutch Brazil inaugurates a new era not only for the Sephardim but also for the entire world. Initiated when they were still in Brazil, trade and business, which followed Portuguese Jews and conversos everywhere they roamed, were now being propelled to many new and not-so-new directions, establishing, revitalizing, and/or reinforcing commercial links that will remain in force off and on until the middle of the 19th century.

As a consequence of the Iberian expulsions and forced conversion (1492; 1497), many Sephardim began a new Diaspora: some refugees reached the city-states of the Italian Peninsula (Mainly Livorno, Ferrara, Genoa, and Venice), Northern Europe—particularly Holland and, to a lesser degree, England—as well as the many lands under the Ottoman Empire (1342–1924), namely the Maghreb, the Balkans, today's Turkey, and Israel. In all of these places, then, Jews were, if not totally welcomed, at

least tolerated and, of course, given permission to reside in their midst. Though not completely pro-Jewish, Holland was the most religiously tolerant European nation of the time. Amsterdam was a center of international trade and business and, given that Holland had few natural resources, anyone who could further business and trade was welcomed. The Jews, who traditionally also engaged in international trade, mainly because of the many restrictions that most European countries imposed on them, were thus allowed to live freely in the Netherlands, for fear that their expertise and business acumen would then go to other areas, namely England.

Many of the conversos who settled in Holland soon returned to Judaism. On the other hand, the Sephardim who decided to stay in the Iberian Peninsula, obviously disguised as New Christians, soon found themselves facing another kind of persecution: the establishment of the Inquisition (Portugal, 1536–1544 and 1547–1821; Spain, 1478–1808 and 1814–1834), which questioned the sincerity of their conversion to Christianity and, was often the case, accused them of Judaizing.

The New World, especially Portuguese-speaking America, gave the Sephardim and the New Christians alike a new hope: thus, they believed that if they put enough distance between themselves and the Holy Offices of the Inquisition they could finally start a new life, free from persecution and, most importantly, could continue practicing and/or openly return to their ancestral faith. In other words, the expulsion of the Sephardim from the Iberian Peninsula and the beginning of the Sephardic Diaspora east and west, were a necessary preamble for the imminent colonization of Portuguese America. In Brazil, the New Christians, either directly or indirectly, contributed to the socioeconomic formation of the future Portuguese colony. Ironically, their inferior social condition was counterbalanced by their economic supremacy.

Gradually, then, when the Dutch, English, and French began to establish their respective empires in the New World, Sephardim and New Christians living on their territories also began, in some way or the other, to live their lives as openly declared Jews, thus trying to obtain, if not full equality, at least some sort of recognition for their contributions to the welfare of the country in which they were living.

Many Marranos tried their lot in Mexico and Peru. Soon after, as early as 1570, Spanish America had its own Inquisition Office. Once again, the Sephardim returned to practicing Judaism in secret. In contrast, in Brazil, even if conditions were not ideal, openly declared Jews and crypto-Jews, mainly because of their economic weight, were, if not welcomed, at least tacitly tolerated. Furthermore, and more importantly, the Portuguese Inquisition was never established in Brazilian soil, though those suspected of heresy were immediately sent to Lisbon to await trial by the Holy Office of the Inquisition.

Already at the beginning of the 16th century, still disguised as New Christians, the Sephardim were instrumental in founding the newly formed Portuguese colony in the Americas, even if they could not disclose their true identity for at least a century. Almost all of them were involved in the cultivation of sugar cane in Brazil as well as the rest of the Americas, mainly the Caribbean area.

From Madeira and, in 1542, from São Tomé and Príncipe, Jews and New Christians introduced sugar cane and *engenhos*—that is, sugar plantations and mills—to

Brazil and thence to the rest of the New World. Little by little, mainly owing to the transfer of funds from Europe (e.g., Holland, England, and France—where the exiled Sephardic communities had previously established themselves) to the Americas, Sephardim and New Christians living north of today's Brazil—the Caribbean area, Suriname, today's Guyana (formerly British Guiana), and French Guiana—began to publicly profess their religion and culture. In a few years, they managed to accumulate riches and settle among the population, though not completely assimilating to it. Most were landowners and plantation owners, and they also owned African slaves. As for Brazil, given that the New Christians were indispensable for the economic prosperity of the young Portuguese colony, the colonial authorities, though very reluctantly, turned a blind eye to the New Christian presence among them, even allowing Marranos to hold some administrative roles. The Portuguese knew the Jews would indeed defend the economic interests of their colony. This would explain why many New Christians began returning to Judaism in a very visible way. Therefore, the Portuguese Crown had to impose more moderation in the external manifestations of their religious fervor.

The same began to happen in the French islands of Martinique and Guadalupe, notwithstanding the strict laws prohibiting public worship other than Catholic mass. Needless to say, they feared that if the Jews were expelled or they voluntarily left the islands, the colony would experience a severe economic crisis.

Beginning in the middle of the 16th century, Brazil became the receptacle for the Sephardim, both openly declared Jews and crypto-Jews, the latter escaping the Iberian Inquisitions. Both Jews and Marranos played an important role in the economic formation and development of Brazil: they were instrumental in maintaining the economic-commercial progress of the Portuguese colony and its inhabitants. For instance, in 1611, during his return trip from Salvador da Bahia to Portugal, François Pyrard de Laval (ca. 1570–1621) mentions the presence of New Christians on board, stressing their richness, the result of only a few years of trade in the young Portuguese colony.

By 1624, most of the New Christians in Brazil were either owners of *engenhos* or businessmen, the latter involved in the import and export trade. The first city that fell into Dutch hands was Salvador da Bahia. In a year, the Jews of the Diaspora had turned this city into their safe haven. With the seizure of Recife in 1631, the Dutch took control of the northern part of Brazil. Jewish and New Christian migration followed immediately, mainly from Bahia, which was now under Portuguese control. In a few years, local trade was in Jewish hands, and in a relatively short time, the number of Jews was double that of the Christians. Recife was therefore named Ha-Kahal Kadosh (the Sacred Congregation).

The history of Dutch Brazil is tied to the historic-political events of the times, mainly the history of the Sephardic Diaspora in Holland and the rest of Europe, including the Spanish-Dutch War (1621–1648). During the first decades of the 17th century, Amsterdam was the Sephardic world capital. Its commercial ties linked it to other trade centers of the then-known world. However, because Portugal still belonged to Spain (1580–1640), Holland could not have commercial contacts with Portugal and its colonies, even if the latter managed to retain their Portuguese

autonomy during the nefarious 60 years of annexation. In order to have trade relations with Brazil then, as it already was a great producer of sugar, Holland decided to seize this source of revenue. In 1624, the troops of the Dutch West India Company succeeded in defeating the Portuguese colonial forces. In a short time Salvador da Bahia was captured by the Dutch. The year after the Portuguese regained control over the town. Five years later, in 1630, the Dutch counterattacked and took over the captaincies of Pernambuco, Itamaracá, Paraíba, and Rio Grande do Norte.

With the Dutch occupation of Brazil (1624–1654) also came the law that guaranteed full liberty of religious expression. Thus, a great migration of Sephardim from Amsterdam arrived to other Brazilian cities under Dutch occupation. In a short time the Sephardim began arriving in large numbers, settling as far as the Rio de la Plata.

Bear in mind that among the members of the Dutch West India Company were a few Jewish shareholders whose health contributed to the very existence of the company. For instance, between 1623 and 1626 there were 18 shareholders of Judeo-Portuguese origin in the Dutch West India Company. In 1642, more than 600 Sephardim left Amsterdam for Dutch Brazil, mainly Recife, including Rabbi Isaac Aboab da Fonseca and Moses Rafael de Aguilar. A few Ashkenazim and other Jews of the Diaspora joined them in their new promised land, first in Salvador da Bahia and, after the Portuguese took over the area, Recife and surrounding areas. In a short time the Jewish community of Brazil, the first Jewish congregation of the New World, would eventually have a considerable number of members, and the numbers were surpassed only a century and a half later.

With Maurice of Nassau (1604–1679), governor of Dutch Brazil (1637–1644), a new era for the Jews of the Diaspora under Dutch rule began, one in which tolerance and freedom of religious expression were the norm. During his administration, which favored a free circulation of ideas, not only in the political and religious arena but also in the scientific field, many crypto-Jews openly returned to Judaism without fear of retaliations.

In a few years, Recife became an important center of Jewish life with two synagogues and centers of study. The first house of worship, Zur Israel, was inaugurated in 1636, whereas the second, Magen Abraham, opened the following year on Antônio Vaz Island. Other centers of Judaism appeared in Penedo, a fluvial city in the future state of Alagoas, and Paraíba.

Many of these Jews were traders doing business in both the Caribbean area and Amsterdam. Among them there were also teachers, lawyers, landowners, and plantation owners with their own *engenhos*. To the eyes of the tourists, as in the case of the famous Johannes Nieuhof (1618–1672), it was clear that the Jews were enjoying prosperity in Dutch Brazil.

In January 1638, the classis, the agent of the Dutch Reformed Church in Brazil, complained against the Jews of Recife for practicing their faith publicly not in one but in two different locales. The same year two Dutch ships brought 200 Jews. In 1642, another group arrived in the colony, this time headed by two hakam, or rather, rabbis, namely, the aforementioned Isaac Aboab de Fonseca and Moses Raphael de Aguilar.

Most of the Jewish immigrants were bilingual or at least had a basic knowledge of the Portuguese language so they could trade and maintain business ties with the region. Since their arrival, then, the Jewish population—almost all Sephardim of Portuguese origin—became indispensable to the Dutch authorities: the fact that they knew the Portuguese language and culture made them key elements for the economic prosperity of the young Dutch colony in Brazil, mainly in the production and export of sugar products. The slave trade, strictly tied to the cultivation and production of sugarcane, was in fact one of the reasons the Jews were welcomed or tolerated by the Dutch colonial authorities. For example, given their wealth, the Jews were able to sell African slaves on credit to other colonists.

Between 1645 and 1654, the number of Jews residing in Brazil was perhaps 1,000 or 1,500. Amsterdam's chief rabbi, Saul Levi Morteira (ca. 1597–1660), who belonged to the Sephardic community of Venice, in his unedited *Providencia de Dios con Ysrael, y Verdad, y Eternidad de la Ley de Moseh y Nulidad de los demas Leyes*, ascertains that with the expulsion of 1654 the number of Jews was reduced to a little more than 600.

At the onset of the 17th century, Brazil was the major producer of sugar in the world. Unfortunately, with the first Anglo-Dutch War (1652–1654) the Dutch were not able to protect Recife, which was captured on January 23, 1654. The surrounding cities of Mauritestad (Maurícia in Portuguese), Paraíba, Itamaricá, and Seara also fell into Portuguese hands. The departure of the Dutch marked, at least temporarily, the end of the Brazilian Jewish community. From then on Judaism went underground, as a clandestine religion, only to resurface 200 years later. Many Jews, Sephardic as well as Ashkenazi, returned to Amsterdam, the intellectual capital of the Jewish Diaspora. From the financial point of view, the Jews left Brazil completely ruined.

### Selected Bibliography

- Finn, James. 1841. *Sephardim; or, the History of the Jews in Spain and Portugal*. London: J.G.F., and J. Rivington.
- Katz, Israel J., and M. Mitchell Serels, eds. 2000. *Studies on the History of Portuguese Jews from Their Expulsion in 1497 through Their Dispersion*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press.
- Levi, Joseph Abraham, ed. 2002. *Survival and Adaptation: The Portuguese Jewish Diaspora in Europe, Africa, and the New World*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press.
- Marcus, Jacob Rader. 1975. *Early American Jewry*. 2 vols. New York: Ktav.
- Markens, Joseph. 1888. *The Hebrews in America*. New York: Arno Press.
- Meijer, Jaap. 1954. *Pioneers of Pauroma: Contributions to the Earliest History of the Jewish Colonization of America*. Paramaribo, Brazil: Eldorado.

# Jews in Peru

*Carolyn Wolfenzon*

---

General Population: 25 million

Jewish Population: 2,000

Percent of Population: 0.008 percent

Jewish Population by City: A few families live in Iquitos.

Ethnic Backgrounds: Russia, Romania, Germany, Poland, and Turkey

Languages Spoken: Spanish

---

## Historical Overview

1821 Peru gains independence.

1840–1867 Prompted by a peak in guano production, which requires more workers, the Peruvian government promulgates laws offering incentives to new immigrants. Despite the country's preference for white Europeans, most arrivals are Asian, but an estimated 50,000 Europeans also enter Peru.

1848 Germany and Prussia adopt an official anti-Jewish policy as a result of the Vienna Congress's 1815 decision, which causes Jews to migrate to Peru. The Revolution of 1848 and the subsequent crisis it unleashes also motivate Jewish migration.

Mid-1800s Jewish immigration takes place in a series of waves.

1850 The presence of some 300 Jews is documented in Peru. Most of the recent immigrants are German, Russian, French, and English Jews who work as bankers, jewelers, businessmen, industry moguls, and representatives of European firms.

1850 The brothers Segismundo and Fernando Jacobi, brokers for the Rothschild family, arrive and build on the Jewish economic presence in the country. The brothers are the first to establish a foreign exchange office in Lima. Paul Acher founds the Peruvian Commercial Stock Market and is the first accredited stockbroker in Peru.

1850s Many Jewish-owned stores advertise in the newspaper *El Comercio*: Jacobo Stein y Cia (1852); José Cohen y Hermanos (1855), a store specializing in Cuban cigars and European cigarettes; G. G. Cohen y Cia, another importer of cigarettes; H. Brenner y Cia (1858), a haberdashery specializing in imported European fashion; Phailles y Blanc (1853), a candy store.

1858 Augusto Dreyfus, a French Jew and representative of the Banco Dreyfus Hermanos y Compañía (Dreyfus Brothers Bank and Company), arrives in Peru.

1868 Peruvian president José Balta and Nicolás de Piérola, the interior minister, sign an agreement with Dreyfus, giving the rights to the Peruvian guano to the banker in exchange for a large loan and relief of external debt. Peruvian cosigners join in violent opposition to Dreyfus, constituting the first occasion in post-colonial Peru that a person's Jewish origin is used as a point of attack in a public argument.

- 1861 The number of deaths of Jews in Peru totals 25. They are buried in an isolated area of the Cementerio Británico (British Cemetery), but there is a strong preoccupation with the lack of a Jewish cemetery.
- 1870 The Peruvian Jews officially constitute themselves as a community and name their organization the Sociedad de Beneficencia Israelita (The Society of Israelite Benevolence). Jacobo Herzberg is the group's first president. Their primary concern is preserving the Jewish customs for burying the dead.
- 1875 Enrique Meiggs provides a plot of land to form the Baquijano Cemetery, the first Jewish cemetery in Latin America.
- 1876 Wladyslaw Kluger constructs the railroad connecting Bolivia and Peru, one of the highest in the world.
- 1879 Peru goes to war with Chile and receives support from Jews. German Jew Gustavo Badt forms a battalion of soldiers (la Unidad Militar Huáscar) made up of family members, friends, and workers from his hacienda, Chacra Colorado. Captain Enrique Oppenheimer is wounded in the battle of San Juan y Miraflores. The Jacobi brothers, along with other businessmen, lend large sums of money to the Peruvian government.
- 1880 Some 200 Moroccan Jews arrive in Peru and live in the jungle until 1910.
- 1883 Peru loses the war with Chile. Jews who had lent money and resources to the government lose everything.
- 1887 The Jews start celebrating religious festivals in rented spaces and Masonic lodges. Before this, the community had been small enough to gather in the home of Moisés Moses and in the home dental office of David Señor de Castro, one of the few Sephardim who came to Peru in those years.
- End of 1800s The Jews of Lima have practically disappeared.
- 1900–1920 The second migratory wave of Jews to Peru leads to the resurgence of the Jewish community. The German Jews arriving in this wave join with the Society of 1870. Three independently functioning groups (Germans, Sephardim, and Ashkenazi) coexist, and each maintains its respective customs.
- 1922 The Sephardim organize themselves as the Sociedad de Beneficencia Israelita Sefardita (The Sephardim Society of Israelite Benevolence).
- 1923 Peru closes its borders to Asian immigrants, and President Sánchez Cerro (1930–1933) unveils a nationalist policy that limits all European immigration to professionals or those with sufficient economic resources. According to León Trahtemberg (*Ser judío en el Perú*, 40), at this time there are already 2,000 Jews (from Russia, Romania, Poland and Turkey) in Peru.
- 1926 The Ashkenazi form the Unión Israelita del Perú (Israelite Confederation of Peru) and elect Samuel Eidelman as their first president.
- 1929 The Great Depression causes many Jews to leave Lima for the provinces. Some become peddling cloth salesmen, until the government of Oscar Benavides (1933–1939) restricts traveling salesmen. This decree forces Jews to open their own bazaars. In the provinces, they are the first to adopt payment by credit. Because many of the vendors' purveyors are located in the capital, they travel frequently and thus form a network between Lima and the rest of the country. The most important communities are in the towns of Arequipa, Huancayo, Chiclayo,

and Iquitos. Most of the inhabitants are speculators interested in the rubber market. They travel around the Amazon selling commodities in their nomadic markets. A number of these Jews served as mayor of Iquitos: Benjamín Medina (1877–1879), Víctor Israel (1917–1920), Salomón Joseph Deyfus (1952–1956), and Willy Benzaquén (1962–1963).

- 1930 German Jews continue to arrive; most of the new immigrants are musicians, engineers, and physicians. Two notable musicians are the director Theo Buchwald and Bronislaw Mitman, violinist and, later, director of the Music Corps of the Republican Guard. Intellectuals and scientists of this generation include Hans Horkheimer, archaeologist and professor of the University of Trujillo; pharmaceutical chemist Jacques Alcabas, director of the National University of Huamanga; and Kurt Mayer, a physician and director of the University of Trujillo.
- 1938 Theo Buchwald founds the National Symphonic Orchestra.
- 1939 German, Sephardic, and Ashkenazi cooperate for the first time to form campaigns to help the victims of the Shoah. They created the Comité de Protección de Ayuda al Inmigrante (Protection Committee to Help Immigrants) to receive Jewish refugees, help with job placement, and teach Spanish; the Asociación de Médicos Judíos (Association of Jewish Doctors), a group dedicated to providing free care to persons in precarious situations; and the Hogar del Inmigrante (Immigrant House), a modest apartment in the center of Lima where up to 30 Jews a month reside. The administrator, Sassone Sarfaty, budgets one sol a day to maintain each person.
- 1939–1945 The Protection Committee attempts to save Jews, to bring over 100 young Jewish orphans, and to bring potential colonists to build cooperative agrarian farms in the jungle. All attempts failed. The committee does succeed in obtaining 230 residency visas, as well as transportation to Peru, for European Jews during a period when the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has prohibited its consulates worldwide from granting visas to Jews.
- 1940 Jews living in provinces begin migrating back to the capital. At this time, there are 1,200 Jews in the provinces and 4,000 in Lima. In the 1940s, the Comité Peruano Pro Palestina Hebrea (Pro Hebrew Palestine Peruvian Committee) is created to shift Peruvian public opinion in favor of the partition of Palestine.
- 1946 León Pinelo opens. It is the only Jewish high school in Peru.
- November 29, 1947 Peru votes in favor of partitioning Palestine.
- End of 1950s Almost no Jews are left in the provinces. They have either returned to Lima or left Peru. The exception is Iquitos, where a small community of Moroccan Jews (who had arrived from the jungles of Brazil) persists.
- 1960s The number of Jews in Lima reached its peak: 5,500.
- 1965 Hans Horkheimer is awarded the Orden del Sol (Order of the Sun) for his discovery of the Chancay Fortress and the Huaura Walls.
- 1980s Peruvian Jews of the second generation start to participate in politics as individual people (not in representation of the Peruvian Jewish Association). During Alan García's first presidential term, Jacobo Mishkin and Jayzuño Abramovich participate in governmental reforms.

- 1990–2000 Independent Peruvian Jews are involved during Alberto Fujimori's government. José Chlimper, Moisés Wolfenson, and Efraím Goldemberg hold important public roles. Some Jews oppose the regime, including Leon Trahtemberg, Gustavo Gorriti, and Roberto Lerner.
- 2000–2005 During Alejandro Toledo's regime, the activity of Jewish people continues: David Waisman is the vice president, and Jacques Rodrich and David Lemor also have important roles.
- 2006–2007 Two Jews participate in two different political campaigns. Isaac Meckler is closely involved in the Ollanta Humala campaign, and José Kleinberg participates in the Lourdes Flores campaign.

## Contemporary Overview

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The development of the Peruvian Jewish community can be divided into three periods. The first encompasses the period from the end of the 1940s to the beginning of the 1970s; the second, during the 1980s, coincides with the first administration of Alan García Pérez (1985–1990); and the most recent period spans the 1990s until the present.

The 1950s were marked by the expansion of the community. The Jews purchased large communal locations (one in San Isidro, which today operates the León Pinelo School and hosts the three synagogues) and created volunteer organizations to help needy immigrants and Israel (the ORT and the Women's International Zionist Organization). During this period many large communitarian Jewish institutions were purchased, constructed, or moved: the León Pinelo School, the Union Israelita Synagogue, the Cultural Center Sharon, the Hanoar Hatzioni, the sports center Hebraica, Bikur Jolim-Jevra Kadisha and Aflantis (homes for the elderly), and the Israeli Embassy in Peru. This prosperity continued during the 1960s. At this time, most Jewish leaders were born and raised in Peru, and ties to Israel were quite strong. The Jewish communities in the provinces start to dwindle, and most of them moved to Lima, which had a population of 5,500 Jewish people at the end of the 1960s.

A massive reduction of the community characterized the 1980s, as described by León Trahtemberg in *Demografía Judía del Perú* (Peruvian Jewish Demographics). From the more than 5,000 Peruvian Jews at the end of 1960, the community shrank to 3,500 people. This 30 percent reduction, Trahtemberg maintains, is high, "because it occurred within a community living in a free country, where its members did not suffer persecution and generally enjoyed the strong economic situation" (Trahtemberg 1988, 23).

The decline is due in large part to the insecurity that arose from threats of the terrorist organizations *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) and the *Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru* (MRTA). The *Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* (Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) maintains that by the end of the 1980s, the Shining Path had killed close to 65,000 people, mainly farmers from the mountainous region of the country.

By the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Lima residents began to sense the presence of terrorism. The daily insecurity extended to the students at the León Pinelo



Interior of the Chabad Center in Lima, Peru. (Photo by Jono David)

School, which received numerous bomb threats. Armed groups constantly kidnapped businesspeople and held them for ransom, which they used to buy weapons and continue the civil war. Even though President Alan García (1985–1990) implemented a strict curfew, the kidnappings continued. In 1992, the Jewish-owned TV station Canal 2, *Frecuencia Latina* (owned by brothers Samuel and Mendel Winter and the then-majority partner Baruch Ivcher) was blasted with dynamite. In the face of this dangerous environment, many Jews decided to leave the country; the most common destinations were the United States, Israel, and Canada. From 1990 to 2001, during the 11 years of the Alberto Fujimori administration, the population of the Jewish community persistently declined. (Today, only 2,000 Jews live in Peru.)

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Almost all students graduating from the León Pinelo School typically enter the best universities in Lima and became professionals in their fields. The most popular fields are science, engineering, economics, and business administration, followed by the medical fields, especially medical science and psychology. Jewish businesspeople own some prosperous textile industries, fishing industries, and food industries.

### Culture, Science, and the the Humanities

Samuel Geller arrived in Peru in 1929. He studied in Padua, Italy, and founded the Regional Hospital in Quillabamba, a rural community in Cuzco. In 1938, he moved to Ica, where he built a private clinic and worked for the public beneficence. Hans

Ruhr arrived in Peru from Germany in 1934 and worked in one of the more poverty-stricken cities in Peru, Huancavelica. He conducted research on warts. Ruhr also founded the first private clinic in Huancayo City (1953). Among the most important doctors that have excelled in Lima are Marcos Roitman, who performed the first cardiac catheterization in Peru; Simon Kirschbaum, who is the current president of the Peruvian Society of Plastic Surgeons; Benjamin Alhalel, who cofounded the prestigious Cayetano Heredia University; Zuño Burstein, an important dermatologist and professor in his field at San Marcos University; Mayer Zaharia, the director of the Radioterapist Department at the Instituto de Enfermedades Neoplásicas. In psychiatry, two Jewish Peruvians are particularly well known: Saúl Peña and Moisés Lemlij. Well-known scientists include chemist Jacques Alcabes, dean of the Chemistry Department at the Huamanga University; biologist Abraham Vaisberg, dean of the Science Department at the Cayetano University; and physicist Barton Zwiebach, who currently works at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is one of the most important scientists in the world.

The Jewish community in Lima has an important theater group, Teatro Hebraica, which has been active since 1961 and has promoted culture inside and outside the community. Two authors have excelled: Herman Zwillich and Isaac Goldemberg. In music, Theo Buchwald was the director of the National Symphonic Orchestra in 1938, and most of the musicians that played with him were Jews: Bronislav Mitman (Rodolfo Holzman, Adolfo Berger, Max Bremer, and Edgard Heyman, among others. During the 1950s, Boris Ackerman and Boris Roseznic, both from Romania, composed two popular Creole waltzes. In art, Moico Yaker is the most famous Jewish painter.

### Current Economic Problems

In 2000, at the end of Fujimori's presidency, an event unprecedented in the Jewish community occurred: the Banco del Nuevo Mundo and the NBK Bank failed. Most of the stockholders were Jewish (Vitaly Franco and Isaac and Jaco Levy were the principal stockholders). Because of these failures, thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish investors lost their entire life savings. Despite knowing that the banks were at the point of collapse, the partners convinced Jewish investors and the treasuries of Jewish organizations to deposit their funds in the doomed banks. The theft perpetrated by Jews upon fellow Jews was noted in the national press. For the first time in the history of the Peruvian Jewish community, the principal investors from the implicated banks were categorically expelled from the community; the ban went as far as to deny them entrance to the synagogues and participation in religious ceremonies.

### Jewish Education, Communal and Political Institutions

During the Jewish expansion of the 1950s, the Jews promoted Zionism through several youth movements dedicated to supporting a Jewish state in Israel: the Unión Macabi Universal, Hashomer, Betar, and the Hanoar Hatzioni. These last two groups were the most popular and set the example for the following generations of Zionists. The Hanoar Hatzioni, whose first presidents were José Lemor and Alberto

Niego, still exists today and plays an important role in the life of Jewish youth; the organization operates as an independent entity within the León Pinelo School. This school, which opened in 1946, is still the only Jewish high school in Lima.

### Religious Denominations

Peru has three synagogues: The Sociedad de Beneficencia Israelita 1870, whose interim president is George Gruenberg; the Union Israelita del Peru, whose president is Herman Blanc; and the Sephardic Synagogue, whose president is Jack Falkon.

### Political Scandals and Anti-Semitism

Despite the reduction of the Jewish population in Peru during the past two and a half decades, Jews currently play a larger role in Peruvian politics and the national press than in any previous moment. However, most of those who have participated in the political arena have been connected to scandal and corruption. This has resulted in a negative effect on the overall image of the Jewish community in Peru. During the administration of Alberto Fujimori, Efraín Goldemberg was the economic minister and first minister, José Chlimper was the agriculture minister, and Moisés Wolfenson—owner of *La razón* and *El Chino*, one of the most important tabloids of the Fujimori regime—was a congressman. Goldemberg was placed under house arrest after the discovery of certain irregularities in his role as minister. For their part, the brothers Moisés and Alex Wolfenson were first detained and later incarcerated after it was discovered that they accepted large sums of money in return for publishing news reports dictated by Fujimori and his right-hand man Vladimiro Montesinos. Similarly, the Winter brothers were also accused of corruption and running their channel as a propaganda organ for the Fujimori administration. As with the Wolfensons, the Winters were jailed for several years.

The Jewish presence in Peruvian politics continued to expand during the administration of Alejandro Toledo (2001–2006), who appointed David Waisman as vice president and David Lemor as production minister. However, Toledo's wife, Eliane Karp, a Belgian Jew, continued to damage the image of Jews in Peru. She was accused of inappropriately spending government funds for personal vacations. Karp did not wait for the end of her husband's administration; she fled to Tel Aviv to evade any legal repercussions of the possible irregularities in her role as a public functionary.

### Recent Political Issues

In July 2005, Issac Mekler (then president of the Peruvian Jewish Association) faced severe criticism in the Peruvian press. Three candidates were running for the 2006 presidential elections: ex-president Alan García Pérez (who ultimately won the race and was sworn in July 28, 2006), the Unidad Nacional candidate, Lourdes Flores; and Ollanta Humala, an ex-soldier and member of the recently created Peruvian Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista del Perú). Even though Humala presented an openly anti-Semitic, anti-Chilean, and anti-white position—lobbying, for example, for the eradication of all residents who were not of the “copper race” (*raza cobriza*)—Mekler not only personally decided to support Humala's candidacy for the 2006

elections and run for Congress as a member of his political party, but he also pledged the support of the Jewish organization he represented.

Mekler's support of Humala earned him the expulsion from his post as president of the Peruvian Jewish Association and condemnation from the Peruvian press. The expression "the Jewish Ollanta lobby," which promoted the idea that the Jewish community would support any candidate as long as he or she was not a menace against their properties, became a common headline. For the media, it was difficult to see how a Jew could support Humala, a blatant enemy of anyone who was not a mestizo. Humala had publicly affirmed that Jews were not Peruvian, that they should not own newspapers or other media, and that they must be expelled from the country. Humala's claims notwithstanding, Mekler is currently the representative in Congress for Humala's party.

### Selected Bibliography

- Böhm, Günter. 1985. *Judíos en el Perú durante el siglo XIX*. Santiago: Universite de Chile.
- "Índice de Contenido General." Verdad y Reconciliación Web site [in Spanish]. <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index.php> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- "Lobby judío con Ollanta." 2005. Unidad de Investigación del diario *Expreso*. December 22. <http://www.libreopinion.com/members/mnsdp/expreso.html> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Mitrani, Henry, ed. 2006. *Ser judío en el Perú. Múltiples presencias de la cultura judío-peruana*. Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú.
- Polémica en el Perú por un empleo de la primera dama." 2002. *Clarín*. August 14. <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2002/08/14/i-02101.htm> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Trahtemberg, León. 1987. *La inmigración judía al Perú: 1848–1948*. Lima, Peru: Asociación Judía de Beneficencia y Culto de 1870.
- Trahtemberg, León. 1988. *Demografía judía del Perú: un estudio demográfico vocacional y de actitudes hacia lo judaico de la comunidad judía de Lima*. Lima, Peru: Unión Mundial ORT.
- Trahtemberg, León. 1989. *Los judíos de Lima y las provincias del Perú*. Lima, Peru: Unión Israelita del Perú.
- Weinfeld, Eduardo, ed. 1951. *Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana*. Vol. 3. Mexico City: Editorial Enciclopedia Judaica Castellana, 430–431.

## Concept of the Jew in Peruvian Literature

*Carolyn Wolfenzon*

---

The Franco-Peruvian author Flora Tristán recorded the Jewish presence at the birth of the Peruvian Republic in her book *Peregrinaciones de una paria (1833–1834)* (Peregrinations of a Pariah). The narrator describes the city of Arequipa, complete with the names of several French Jews who were living there at the time, and recounts the performance of a Catholic religious drama in the Plaza de las Mercedes. Tristán retells the simple plot of the drama: a Catholic attempts to convert Jews

and Muslims. The Jews stay faithful to their religion; for this, they are beaten, ridiculed, robbed, and finally publicly stripped in the plaza. Jesus appears at the Last Supper, accompanied by a Jew who tries to pass as an Apostle. This is Judas. "There are thirteen place settings. A Jew, hoping to take advantage of the meal, stealthily slips into the unoccupied thirteenth seat. Jesus has broken the bread and passed the wine to the guests when he becomes aware of the fraud. The guests immediately throw the Jew from his seat and the soldiers hang him" (251). As this occurs, Tristán tells us, the Arequipeño audience enjoys the spectacle. Tristán uses this common street performance to criticize the form in which the Catholic Church educated Peruvians.

The Argentinean author Juana Manuela Gorriti, who lived in Peru, published the story "La quena" (1845) in the *Revista de Lima*. This story tells the tale of the doomed love between the mestizo son of an Inca princess and a wealthy white woman from Lima. "La quena", which is set in Cuzco, is a variation on the indigenous drama *Ollantay*, but in Gorriti's version, it is not the Incan laws that impede the protagonists' relationship, but rather a Jew, who is represented as a detestable subterranean-dwelling creature: "he was an old man with a repugnant aspect, and his vulture eyes, curved nose and thin lips betrayed the lineage of Jacob's degenerate race" (45). In his underground world, the Jew prepares devilish potions at the request of his clients: "At the bottom of that black cave, in the gloomy glow of the flames, he had created two demons arranging for the damnation of a soul" (45).

In the 20th century, the most memorable Jewish character is perhaps Saúl Zuratas, the protagonist of Mario Vargas Llosa's *El hablador* (*The Storyteller*, 1987). Zuratas is the son of a Jew, Don Salomón Zuratas, and a criolla from Talara. Saúl complains that the Jews of Lima never accepted his mother even though she converted to Judaism, "the community did not accept her, not so much because she was a *goie* but because she was a criolla from Talara, a simple woman, without education who hardly knew how to read. Because the Jews of Lima had turned into a group of bourgeoisie" (14). Vargas Llosa's narrates the anthropology student Zuratas's process of immersion in the life of a Machiguenga tribe in the Peruvian jungle; he ultimately becomes that tribe's storyteller. Vargas Llosa presents the Jew as a physically deformed and horrible being: a half-moon shaped birthmark covers his face from his eyes to his mouth—the reason for his nickname *Mascarita* (little masked one)—but at the same time, he is an intelligent being worried about that Peruvian other: the indigenous people. In a critique of the Peruvian government's lack of attention to the development of the jungle tribes, Zuratas, the Jew, ends up justly representing the most radically other of Peruvian society.

Within the community, the first Jew to write about Jewish themes was the Polish immigrant Herman Zwilich, with his humorous chronicles *En serio y en broma*, a selection of articles published between 1942 and 1966 in the monthly communal magazine *Nosotros*. In *El vendedor de chismes* (*The Gossip Seller*), his second book, he recreates the feeling of immigrants, the conformation of Jewish institutions in Peru, and the narrow line each Jew walked in daily life.

José B. Adolph is the only Jewish writer from the next generation, and the most prolific one in any period. Born in Stuttgart, Germany, Adolph moved to Peru in

1938 and still lives and writes in Lima. He is the most outstanding author in the Peruvian science fiction tradition. Among his narrative works of that genre are *Mañana, las ratas* (1977), *La verdad sobre Dios y JBA* (2001), and one collection of short stories—*Hasta que la muerte* (1971). Even though he has not focused on the representation of Jews in his futuristic literature, he is the author of a novel—*Ningún Dios*, part of the trilogy *De mujeres y heridas* (2000)—in which the main characters are Jews. The core idea of that fiction is a comparison between the systematic killings of the Peruvian terrorist group Shining Path and the genocide perpetrated by German Nazism. The parallel, in Adolph's words, shows the lowest point in the history of left-wing politics in Peru.

The most widely known Peruvian Jewish novelist is Isaac Goldemberg (b. 1945), and his best-known novel is *La vida a plazos de Jacobo Lerner* (1978), which takes place in Peru between 1923 and 1935. The novel not only represents the Peruvian Jewish community but also the Peru of that epoch. The story is constructed as a series of unconnected fragments, a collage of voices of distinct protagonists in which passages from communitarian magazines are also included. The author recreates the racist and classist environment of the Sánchez Cerro period. Jacobo Lerner, the Jew, embodies a great number of the stereotypes usually adopted by the hegemonic group to represent the other. Jacobo is a Russian immigrant who is only interested in making money. He travels from Lima to Chepén and leaves behind Virginia, a pregnant criolla. He feigns ignorance of the existence of his son Efraín and returns to Lima, where he opens a brothel. Alone and sick, Jacobo slowly dies, and his son, who falls victim to a serious illness, ends up crazy and misunderstood by his *norteño* relatives. Jacobo dies without leaving behind any Jewish decedents, and he is rejected by a chorus of voices on his deathbed. Jacobo is associated with sickness—his cursed inheritance is blamed for disrupting the life of his son—because of his Jewish origin and his apparently perverse sexuality. The author rewrote and republished the novel in 2001, with the title *El nombre del padre*. The main change in the second version is the crucial role of the Holocaust in the actions of Jacobo and his Jewish friends, as well as the fact that Efraín has a significant new name—Jesus. Unlike the original Efraín, the new one does not die at the end of the narrative, but lives on to celebrate his bar mitzvah.

Goldemberg's fiction shows how complicated and difficult it is to be Jewish and Peruvian—in Lima or the provinces. His novels recreate the problem of this double identity through children of interracial or interreligious marriages, as occurs in *Tiempo al tiempo*. In this, his second novel, Marquitos Karushansky Ávila, during a game of soccer, narrates the discrimination he feels as much from the Catholics as from the Jews. The protagonist spends half of the game sitting on the bench, feeling the pain of marginalization. Like Jacobo Lerner, Karushansky is a border character. His decision to make the aliyah to Israel does not solve his identity problems: Karushansky Ávila shoots himself in the mouth; he cannot integrate himself, either here or there.

### Selected Bibliography

Adolph, José B. 2000. *Ningún Dios*. In *De mujeres y heridas*. Lima, Peru: Mosca Azul Editores, 2000.

- Goldemberg, Isaac. 1980. *La vida a plazos de Jacobo Lerner*. Hanover, NH: Ediciones del Norte.
- Goldemberg, Isaac. 1984. *Tiempo al tiempo*. Hanover, NH: Ediciones del Norte.
- Goldemberg, Isaac. 2001. *El nombre del padre*. Lima, Peru: Alfaguara, 2001.
- Gorriti, Juana Manuela. 1992. *La quena. Obras completas. Tomo IV*. Salta, Argentina: Banco del Noreste.
- Tristán, Flora. 2003. *Peregrinaciones de una paria* [Peregrinations of a Pariah]. Lima, Peru: Fondo Editorial UNMS.
- Vargas Llosa, Mario. 1991. *El hablador* [The storyteller]. Barcelona, Spain: Seix Barral.
- Zwilich, Herman. 1966. *En serio y en broma*. Lima, Peru: Cuadernos Peruano-Israelíes.

## Jews in Suriname

*Wieke Vink*

---

### Historical Overview

The Surinamese Jews account for a unique chapter in the history of the Jewish Diaspora. The Jewish colonists who first settled in Suriname in mid-17th century were an important, albeit small, community set in a slave society and colonial order. The establishment of a Jewish planter's community with a high degree of autonomy and full freedom of worship was unique in its time. In the slave society of Suriname, the Jews belonged to the upper strata of colonial whites. As planters and, later, colonial officials, Jews played an important role in the colonization and further development of Suriname as a Dutch colony.

Although there is no consensus on the exact date of first settlement, it is certain that Jews voluntarily migrated to Suriname on a regular basis from the 1650s onward. Early Jewish migration to Suriname mainly consisted of Sephardi Jews, generally referred to as Portuguese Jews in Suriname. Some came from Amsterdam, whereas others first settled in other colonies of the New World (Brazil, Cayenne, Essequibo) before migrating to Suriname. According to census records, approximately 230 men, women, and children constituted the Surinamese Jewish community in 1684. In subsequent years, the number of Sephardi and Ashkenazi, the latter generally referred to as High German Jews, increased rapidly. Initially, Ashkenazi Jews were incorporated into the Sephardi community. It was not until 1735 that a separate Ashkenazi community was established. Halfway into the 19th century, large-scale migration to Suriname came to an end, and the size of the Surinamese Jewish community stabilized at around 1,400 individuals, divided into two equally sized communities.

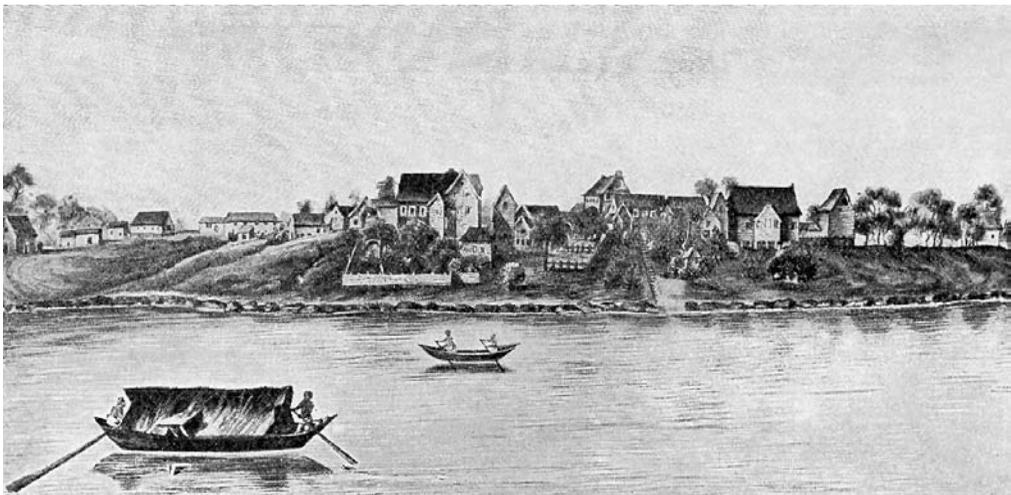
At its peak in the early 18th century, the Surinamese Jews accounted for approximately half of the total white population of Suriname. Over time, this ratio would decline to about a third by the 19th century. Suriname's extremely uneven ratio of slaves to free whites (between 33:1 in the plantation district and 16:1 in Suriname as a whole in 1791) and the fact that the Sephardi Jews owned a large portion of the plantations (about 28 percent in 1737, 18 percent in 1770, and 12 percent

in 1793) made the Jews an important socioeconomic group in Suriname. A small group of around 100 Surinamese Jews were the so-called colored or mulatto Jews, that is, the offspring of white Jewish men and Afro-Surinamese women, either slave or free. Children of these relationships were incorporated into the community, albeit as second-rate members called congregants, until the mid-19th century. Full membership was granted to “colored” Jews in 1841.

The planter’s community in Jodensavanne (Jewish Savannah) and Paramaribo, the capital city and colonial administrative center, were the two main sites of Jewish settlement in Suriname. Jodensavanne was the heart of Sephardi life in Suriname during the 17th and 18th century. In contrast to the Sephardi Jews, Ashkenazi Jews were never involved in the plantation industry at a large scale. They settled in Paramaribo and earned a living in small trade and crafts, such as, goldsmiths, bakers, butchers, and carpenters.

Until 1825, the constitutional position of Jewish communities in Suriname was based on a set of privileges granted to the Sephardi Jews in 1665. These privileges included freedom of worship, the right to administer their own form of civil law, and permission to draw up wills and perform marriages according to Jewish customs. In general, the Surinamese Jews were faced with little anti-Semitism, although some conflicts occurred, most notably on some of the Jewish privileges such as the right to open their shops and trade on Sundays, which was withdrawn in 1718. In 1825, all privileges and exceptionalities applied to Jewish residents in the Dutch West Indian colonies were withdrawn, and Jews were given equal rights as non-Jewish colonists.

The late 18th century marks a turning point in Surinamese Jewish history. Years of war against the maroons (escaped slaves) had further destabilized an already declining plantation sector in Suriname. After the financial crisis at the Amsterdam stock exchange between 1772 and 1773, many planters could not settle their debts



Engraving of the Jewish colony in Suriname known as Jodensavanne, from a 17th-century print. (Isadore Singer, ed. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

and had to sell their estates. At the turn of the 18th to 19th century, an estimated two-thirds of the Jewish population lived in poverty. By the end of the 18th century, Jodensavanne—the symbol of Sephardi planter's community—had been deserted by most of its inhabitants, and Sephardi community life was reallocated to the multicultural environment of Paramaribo.

The socioeconomic distinction between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi disappeared over the course of the 19th century. Starting in the 1780s, Sephardi Jews became increasingly impoverished because of the collapse of the plantation economy, while Ashkenazi Jews showed improvement of their average wealth. With the demise of the plantations, the Sephardi moved to Paramaribo, where they came to share the same environment as the Ashkenazi, who had always lived and worked in Paramaribo. From then on both Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews tried to make a living in Paramaribo's urban colonial environment. In 1845, the Jews found employment in small trade (36 percent), crafts (23 percent), and administrative jobs (26 percent) held at the offices of plantation directors, commercial establishments, and the colonial administration.

Although the Surinamese Jews would decline in numbers, from approximately 1,370 in 1845 to 670 in 1921, they gained political power. Given the full civil rights granted to them in 1825, the Jews were now eligible for high positions in the Suriname's colonial civil service. More than half of the elected members of the Colonial Assembly in the 1890s were Jews.

Since the 1950s, many Surinamese Jews have migrated to Holland, the United States, and Israel. The many mixed relationships caused a further decrease of the Jewish communities in Suriname. To join forces, and in an attempt to preserve the Surinamese Jewish community, the Ashkenazi and Sephardi congregations merged in 1998. Today only an extremely small community remains, thriving on the efforts of a few families.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Robert, ed. 1982. *The Jewish Nation in Suriname: Historical Essays*. Amsterdam: Emmering.
- Cohen, Robert. 1991. *Jews in Another Environment: Suriname in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Marcus, Jacob R., and Stanly F. Chyet, eds. 1974. *Historical Essay on the Colony of Surinam 1788*. New York: KTAV.
- Van Lier, Rudolf A. J. 1971. *Frontier Society: A Social Analysis of the History of Suriname*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Vink, Wieke. In press. *Creole Jews: Negotiating Community in Colonial Suriname*. Leiden, Netherlands: KITLV Press.

# Jews in Uruguay

*Avram Hein*

---

General Population: 3,431,932 (2006)

Jewish Population: 19,500 (2001)

Percent of Population: 0.57 percent

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Eighty-nine percent of the community is of European descent (Ashkenazim) and the remaining 11 percent are Sephardim (of Spanish descent) or Mizrahim (from the Middle East). In the early 20th century, 75 percent of the population was Sephardi or Mizrahi.

---

## Historical Overview

16th century There are traces of some Conversos but no complete records are available; it appears that any Jews from this time assimilated into non-Jewish society.

1726 The governor of Montevideo calls upon the first settlers to “be not inferior nor of Moorish or Jewish race.”

1770 This is the first record of Jewish settlement, although it takes several more decades for Uruguay to achieve a greater level of openness conducive to Jewish immigration.

1911 The Zionist movement begins activities in Uruguay with protests in support of the Balfour Declaration, against the pogroms of the 1920s, and against Arab riots in Palestine in 1928–1929.

1912 More Jews arrive in Uruguay, and the first recorded minyan is held. These new immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe, are economically better off and form the foundations of the present-day Jewish community in Montevideo.

1917 About 1,700 Jews reside in Montevideo, three-quarters of whom are Sephardi/Mizrahi.

Jews organize under ideological lines. Some members of the Ashkenazi Jewish community form the Kultur Verein Morris Vintschevsky to spread Yiddish culture. The organization founds schools, a public library, and a theater troupe. The organization also operates a soup kitchen and founds a free loan society. It is affiliated with the Yiddish-speaking section of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. A branch of Poalei Zion (the socialist branch of the Zionist movement) is also organized in Montevideo. Before World War II, the major organizations are Ezra, Hevra Kadisha Ashkenazit, and the Sephardic Hesed Shel Emet. They maintain the community’s cemetery and provide social services.

1918–1939 Between World War I and World War II, the Jewish population increases by 21,500 due to immigration. Uruguay serves as a transit point to Argentina between 1925 and 1928, leading to an increase in the Ashkenazi population.

1919 Separation of church and state is introduced in Uruguay. Nevertheless, Uruguay had been very welcoming to its Jewish newcomers since the late 19th century.

- 1929 The Jewish Socialist Party (Bund) is established in Uruguay. It founds schools and focuses on maintaining Yiddish as the language of the workers. It provides workers with the opportunity to live a “Jewish” lifestyle outside the religious framework.
- 1930 Incidents of Jews being refused at the port of Montevideo are reported.
- 1930s–1950 There are several failed attempts to create Jewish agricultural settlements in Uruguay.
- 1939–1940 Immigration restrictions are imposed. Hence, although 2,200 Jews immigrate in 1939, only 373 arrive in 1940.
- 1942 Religious and secular functions of the Jewish community are separated. Most expression of Jewish identity in Uruguay is cultural and Zionist and not religious. This is partly because of Uruguay’s melting pot ideology and the secular orientation of many of its immigrants. There is a strong subgroup of secular leftists who maintain their own cemetery because they refuse to be buried according to the requirements of Jewish law.
- 1945 The umbrella organization Concejo Central Sionist is formed.  
After World War II, displaced people and Holocaust survivors come to Uruguay.
- 1960 The Federación Sionista Territorial Unificado, an arm of the Jewish Agency for Israel in charge of aliyah (Jewish immigration to Israel), is founded.
- 1960s Left-wing Jews and non-Jews in Montevideo are attacked and marked with swastikas.
- 1981 Three men are arrested on charges of firebombing a synagogue and throwing rocks at other Jewish targets in Montevideo.
- 1990 A lone gunman attacks members of the Jewish community. The public is shocked and the perpetrator is imprisoned under strict security measures.

## Contemporary Overview

### Present Economic Conditions

Uruguay’s economic crisis has led to a diminished quality of social services, although international aide organizations, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee and other humanitarian nongovernmental organizations have been assisting the Uruguayan Jewish community. In May 2003, the four main religious communities joined together to form a new umbrella group, called Fundacion Tzedakah Uruguay, using the Argentinian model to provide relief and welfare to members of the Jewish community in economic distress. According to a 2003 report, 22 percent of the adult Jewish population is classified as “poor” and another 40.5 percent are “vulnerable” (Luxner 2003). The economic crisis affects all members of Uruguayan society and does not appear to disproportionately affect the Jewish population. In some way, they may be better off than the non-Jewish population because of the possibility of emigration to Israel and global Jewish philanthropic organizations. In 2002, the World Zionist Congress declared Uruguay’s Jewish community to be in a state of emergency (Hein 2003).

Most members of the Jewish community before the economic crisis were comfortably middle class. Despite the strong institutional structure and high enrollment in Jewish schools, Uruguay is “a nation that espoused and largely practiced an American-style commitment to the melting pot” (Freedman 2003).

#### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The umbrella organization of the Jewish community is the Comité Central Israelita del Uruguay. More than 60 religious and cultural groups, Zionist organizations, youth movements, women’s organizations, and other groups are part of the umbrella organization (Tal 2005, 286). The Comité Central Israelita was formed in 1940, after significant tension in the Jewish community and the collapse of the European Jewish organizations. It expelled the pro-Soviet *linke* and united the different ethnic groups that made up the Jewish community. Now controlled by centrist leaders, the Zionist groups gained hegemony over the old progressive groups, and the community today is unequivocally Zionist. In the 1950s, the Jewish establishment kehillah organization took upon themselves to “clean up the Jewish street” by expelling the *linke*. In the long term, however, while ridding the organization of ties with the revolutionary and radical parties of the 1960s and 1970s, it disconnected the radicals and their children from the mainstream Jewish community. Their children joined non-Jewish leftist groups—many of which have become Zionist and anti-Semitic.

Uruguayan religious life includes Polish-Russian, German, Hungarian, and Sephardic groups. There are 14 Orthodox synagogues and a Conservative synagogue (the German community) in Uruguay. Chabad is not formally a member of the umbrella organization, although there is a Chabad House in Montevideo. The Conservative community is strengthened by the nearby Seminario Rabinico Latinamericano in Argentina (Hein 2003). Two Orthodox and two Conservative rabbis deal with communal needs, in addition to the unaffiliated Chabad. Kosher food is readily available, both locally produced and important (World Jewish Congress). About half of Israel’s annual beef imports comes from Uruguay (Kraft 1998). Yet, while Uruguay has 20 synagogues, only 6 hold weekly Shabbat services and only one functions on a daily basis (Luxner 2003).

There are three kindergartens, three elementary schools, and two Jewish high schools in Montevideo that serve 1,700 students. In addition, there is an Orthodox high school which includes a synagogue and *kollel*. Between one third (World Jewish Congress no date) and 70 percent of Jewish youth are enrolled in a Jewish school (Tal 2005, 286). Four schools teach courses in both Spanish and Hebrew (World Jewish Congress no date). Zionist youth groups are very strong in Uruguay (Zimmer 2003, 11). They include B’nai Akiva, Hashomer Hatzair, HaNoar HaTzioni, and Betar (Hein 2003).

Jewish life in Uruguay is centered in Montevideo, which has a Jewish museum, a Jewish cemetery, monuments to victims of the terror attack on the AMIA Building in Argentina, Israeli soldiers, and a Holocaust memorial. Next to the opera house (Téatro Solis) is a square named after Golda Meir. Jewish university students

are served by Montevideo's Hillel, founded in 2001 (Hein 2003), the first Hillel founded in Latin America (Luxner 2003). Montevideo is also the home of ORT Uruguay, the largest private university in the country. Eighty percent of the graduates from Jewish high schools study at ORT, which also provides certification and courses for adult Jewish education, teachers, communal leaders, and Jewish communal professionals. ORT Uruguay also provides computer and information technology services to Uruguayan Jewish schools.

Some sites of interest include the Albert Einstein Monument in Montevideo; the Hebrew Integral School; and several synagogues, such as the Rabbi Meir Ba'al Hanes Sepharadic Synagogue, The New Israel Congregation, Vaad Hair Institute, the Polish Synagogue, and Yavne Synagogue. In 1994, a Holocaust memorial was inaugurated by the Uruguayan government in Montevideo.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Uruguay opened its first diplomatic mission in Israel in Tel Aviv in 1951 and moved it to Jerusalem in 1956, upgrading it to an embassy. In 1980, however, along with several other countries, Uruguay moved its embassy out of Jerusalem to Tel Aviv (Clairborne 1980).

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

In 2004, 20,000 Jews resided in Uruguay, making up approximately 0.67 percent of the total population (Tal 2005, 155, 265). Despite a presence in Uruguay since at least the 18th century Latin America's economic crisis at the beginning of the 21st century has led to a decline in the population, and much of the community has immigrated to Israel, Spain, and North America. Before Uruguay's economic crisis, more than 40,000 Jews called Uruguay their home. More than 95 percent of the Jewish population lives in Montevideo (Hein 2003). A few hundred families live in Paysande, Salto, and Punta del Este, and in small towns in the interior of the country (World Jewish Congress, no date).

In 1970, the Jewish population stood at 55,000, but by 1972, the population had already declined to 48,000 (Elkin 1980, 210). Although it is possible that the abatement of the crisis may lead to some reverse migration, it is highly unlikely that this Jewish emigration will abate, as it has been a feature of Uruguayan life since the 1970s.

Almost 1,000 Jews immigrated to Israel from Uruguay in 2002–2003, following a general trend of Jewish exodus from Latin America (Tal 2005, 180). The Jewish Agency set up an office in Montevideo to facilitate aliyah (Zimmer 2003). Others have moved to Spain and the United States.

### Selected Bibliography

- Elkin, Judith Laikin. 1980. *Jews of the Latin American Republics*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Freedman, Samuel G. 2003. "A Treasure Hunt for Lost Memories." *The New York Times on the web*. <http://www.wehaitians.com/a%20treasure%20hunt%20for%20lost%20memories.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).

- Hein, Avi. 2003. "Uruguay." Jewish Virtual Library. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Uruguay.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Institute for Jewish Policy Research and American Jewish Committee. 1996. "Uruguay." <http://www.axt.org.uk/antidem/archive/archive1/uruguay/uruguay.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Kraft, Dina. 1998. "Uruguay president pushes for trade with Israel." March 30. *Associated Press*.
- Tal, Rami, ed. 2005. *The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Annual Assessment 2004–2005: The Jewish People between Thriving and Decline*. Jerusalem: Gefen.
- "Uruguay." 1972. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 16. Jerusalem: Keter.
- "World Jewish Communities—Latin America: Uruguay." [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/latinamerica/comm\\_uruguay.html](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/latinamerica/comm_uruguay.html) (accessed April 22, 2007).

## Jews in Venezuela

*Carlos Colina*

---

**General Population:** 27,030,656

**Jewish Population:** Estimates range from 25,000 (Confederation of Jewish Associations of Venezuela) to 15,000 (World Jewish Congress)

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 0.08 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Caracas, 10,000; Maracaibo, 2,500; Porlamar, 2,000; Valencia, 1,000

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Spanish conversos, Moroccans, and Middle Easterns in the beginning of the 20th century; Eastern Europeans since the 1930s and after World War II; and Israeli, Canadian, and American business entrepreneurs after the oil boom. The community is almost evenly divided between Ashkenazim and Sepharadim.

**Languages Spoken:** Nearly all speak Spanish. Ladino/Hakitia and Yiddish are rarely spoken.

---

### Historical Overview

**1620** Anousim sett in Venezuela after the Spanish conquest of New Andalusia and in the port city of Tucacas. Most assimilate into the general population, and by the middle of the 1600s, few Jews are left in Venezuela, but Jews from Curaçao continue traveling to Venezuela to trade. Some may have settled in the mainland, although there are no records left.

**1802** Simón Bolívar, Venezuela's liberator, finds refuge and material support for his army in the homes of Jews from Curaçao, like Mordechai Ricardo and brothers Ricardo and Abraham Meza, who offer help to Bolívar in his fight against the Spanish Army

**1819–1821** The ties between Jews in Curaçao and Venezuela increase more dramatically when the new Venezuela constitution calls for religious freedom.

**1820** The first Jewish family settles in the town of Coro, the oldest city in the Americas and an United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Heritage Site. The town has a Jewish cemetery that still exists.

**1844** Groups of Jews from Morocco come to the port city of Barcelona.

- 1870 The government of Antonio Guzmán Blanco becomes very interested in attracting immigrants to Venezuela, in the form of permanent labor contracts. Abraham Lasry, Enrique Levy, and Alejandro Mondolfi act as the consular agents in southwestern Europe.
- 1875 The Jews of Barcelona are granted permission to establish a Jewish cemetery, which has disappeared now.
- 1884 A large group of Jews starts to arrive in the country from Morocco, especially from Tétouan, Casablanca, Fés, and Melilla.
- 1894 The first Sepher Torah arrives in Caracas, where the religious services are held at the house of the Pariente brothers.
- 1907 Enrique Levy is among the founders of the Israeli Beneficial Society, an association of Moroccan Jews.
- 1916 The Jewish community obtains its first graveyard in Caracas in an area that has expanded into the General Cemetery of Southern Caracas.
- 1919 Alejandro Mondolfi becomes the president of the assembly that founds the Asociación Israelita de Venezuela, the institution that groups the Sephardic community of Venezuela.
- 1921 Jewish immigrants from Russia and Poland form the Sociedad Israelita Ashkenazit de Caracas.
- 1931 The Hacóaj Sports Club is founded
- 1933 Saúl Angel founds the magazine *Israel*.
- 1934 Venezuela imposes specific restrictions on Jewish immigration, which remain in effect until after the 1950s.
- 1935 The Maccabi Community Club is founded
- 1939 The government of General Eleazar López Contreras permits the arrival of a group of Jews escaping from Germany in the vessels *Caribia* and *Königstein*, which had been banned from docking in several ports of the Americas.
- 1941 The Talmud Torá school is founded in Caracas.
- 1942 The Asociación Unión Hebreo-Polaca is founded.
- 1943 The newspaper *Mundo Israelita* is founded by Moisés Sananes and Eduardo Katz. It is refounded in 1973 as *Nuevo Mundo Israelita* by the merger of the magazines *Maguen*, *Unión*, and *Mundo Israelita*.
- 1945–1946 A large group of Holocaust survivors arrive from Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece, Austria, and Germany. Many of these newly arrived immigrants change their family names and use their fluency in German to enter the country and avoid the restrictions.
- 1946 The Moral y Luces Herzl-Bialik school is founded, which has evolved into the base of the community educational system.
- 1947 Venezuela votes in the United Nations in favor of the partition of Palestine and is among the first countries that recognizes the State of Israel
- 1950 The Jewish community has grown to around 6,000 people, even in the face of immigration restrictions. The Unión Israelita de Caracas is founded. Menachem Begin visits Venezuela.
- 1956 After Morocco declares its independence, a large numbers of Jews come from Casablanca, Tétouan, Tangier, Melilla, Ceuta, and other cities in Northern Africa, where Spanish is the prevailing language.

- 1958 After the fall of dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez, more than 1,000 Jews immigrate to Venezuela from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Greece, Turkey, Persia, and some even from Israel. Golda Meir visits Venezuela.
- 1962 Confederation of Jewish Associations of Venezuela (CAIV), the umbrella organization that groups all the Jewish associations in Venezuela, is founded.
- 1968 Yitzhak Rabin visits Venezuela.
- 1975 The Hogar Javad Lubavitch is founded. The Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas (IVIC) signs a cooperation agreement with the Chaim Weizmann Research Institute. The Moral y Luces Herzl-Bialik school receives the Zalman Shazar Award for the best Jewish school in Latin America.
- 1980 Baruj Benacerraf, a Venezuelan-born U.S. scientist, is awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine.
- 1982 The Center for Sephardic Studies is founded.
- 1983 The Colegio Sinai, a school for Haredi Sephardim, is founded.
- 1986 Yitzhkan Navon visits Venezuela. The community organizes the sixth Pan American Maccabi Games in Caracas.
- 1989 Yitzhak Rabin visits Venezuela.
- 1990 The synagogue Or Meir is founded in Margarita Island.
- 1992 The Israeli chief rabbi, Meir Lau, visits Venezuela.
- 1995 Shimon Peres visits Venezuela. A new cemetery, Gan Menujá, is founded in an annex of Cementerio del Este. The Venezuelan Post Authority issues stamps commemorating the independence of Israel.
- 1996 Ivonne Attas, a Jew born in Damascus and a former soap opera star, is elected mayor of the municipality of Baruta, in Caracas. She is succeeded in 2000 by Henrique Capriles Radonski, a descendant of Holocaust survivors.
- 1998 The largest mall in South America, Centro Sambil, opens in Caracas. It was developed by Constructora Sambil, owned by Salomón Cohen
- 1998 The Sepharadi Museum Morris E. Curiel is founded in Caracas. CAIV organizes the first Latin American Cultural Jewish Congress.
- 2005 Jonathan Jakubowicz breaks all records by having his opera prima, *Secuestro Express*, become the best-selling Venezuelan movie of all times. Movie critics expected it to be the Venezuelan candidate to the Oscars, but the Venezuelan government rejected it because it portrays a kidnapping in Caracas and shows the underbelly of the city.
- 2006 The conflict between Israel and Hizbollah brings unrest to Venezuela, where members of the Arab community, supported by members of the Venezuelan government, march toward the Israeli embassy and burn Israeli flags in the streets.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Former generations included door-to-door retailers, jewelers, small family businesses, shops, and pharmacies. Venezuelan Jews are considered one of the nation's most affluent communities. Jews have developed the country's textile, chemical,

construction, and banking sectors. Banco del Caribe, Banco de Venezuela and BancoFondoComún were founded by Jews. The modern Jewish community has focused more on higher education and has involved in most sectors of Venezuelan society. Still, they have been unable to gain high ranks in the military, foreign ministry, and judiciary.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Cultural organizations concentrate in Caracas, where there is a social club, Club Social y Deportivo Hebraica, for Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews. The community has a weekly newspaper, *Nuevo Mundo Israelita*. Prominent Venezuelan Jews in the arts include Isaac Chocrón, playwright, and writer; Irene Pressner, plastic artist, recipient of the Great Prize of the Museum of Latin American Art in 2006; Sofía Imber, founder of the Caracas Museum of Contemporary Art; Moisés Kaufman, author of *The Laramie Project* and *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*; Offer Zaks, world-renowned dancer; Margot Benacerraf, founder of the Cinemateca Nacional; Elia Schneider, a movie director famous for films that depict gang and mafia issues in Venezuela; Salomón Jabukowicz, director of *Secuestro Express*, the most viewed Venezuelan movie of all times; Ilan Chester, singer and songwriter; and Rosalinda Serfaty, television actress.

### Present Economic Conditions

Venezuela is home to one of the most successful Jewish communities. Most of the community belongs to the middle or upper class, and some very wealthy families control large companies like Locatel, the largest drugstore chain; Unifot, the largest chain of photo labs; Rolda, manufacturer of cosmetics; Grupo Sambil, which is responsible for building most of the malls in Venezuela, including the largest in Latin America; Punto de Fábrica, a chain of home decor retailer stores; Quinta Leonor and Mundo Graffiti, chains of department stores, and Almacenes Toledo, a chain of textile megastores. Many families own small businesses, such as furniture retailers or jewelry stores. The youngest generations have also followed professional careers in fields such as medicine, economics, and law.

### Religious Denominations

Venezuela has 19 synagogues, 16 in Caracas and one each in Maracaibo, Valencia, and Porlamar. All are Orthodox. Chabad Lubavitch is expanding its activities in Venezuela.

### Communal and Political Institutions

The oldest Jewish organization in Venezuela is Asociación Israelita de Venezuela, which was founded in the 1920s by Sephardic Jews. Caracas also has a significant Ashkenazi population, represented by Unión Israelita de Caracas founded in 1950; the ultra-Orthodox Rabinato de Venezuela; and a Hasidic congregation, Jabad Lubavitch de Venezuela. The community also has several Zionist organizations based in Caracas. The Confederación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela, associated

with the World Jewish Congress, is the umbrella organization for all the communities in addition to Zionist organizations like the Jewish National Fund. Venezuela also hosts the Women's International Zionist Organization; Maccabi events; Zionist youth groups, such as Federación Zionista, Keren Kayemet Leisrael, and Keren Hayesod; and charitable action groups, such as Fraternidad Hebrea B'nai B'rith de Venezuela, ORT Venezuela, and others.

In 1946, the Colegio Moral y Luces Herzl-Bialik school was established. Student enrollment numbers are around 2,000. The school spans kindergarten to 12th grade, and the whole community takes an active role in the institution's affairs. The school's reputation for outstanding academic standards has attracted non-Jewish students as well, who make up around 10 percent of the school's student population. There are also Colegio Sinai, Yeshiva Ketaná, Beth Yaacov and Colegio Or Jabad, schools serving the most religious families, and one in Maracaibo, Colegio Hispano Hebreo Bilú.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

There have been rare outbursts of anti-Semitism in Venezuela. In the 1930s, the government placed restrictions on Jewish immigration to the country, which remained in place until the end of the 1950s. Even today, few Jews engage in politics and are mostly absent from public administration and service. Recently, Venezuela's president, Hugo Chávez, made remarks that were considered anti-Semitic by some in the international community. Venezuelan Jewry, apparently not wanting to draw negative publicity, said they were taken out of context. Chávez also recalled the business attaché to Israel. Venezuelan Jews continue to maintain strong ties with Israel, and many volunteered in Israel during the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars. In 1947, at the United Nations, Venezuela voted in favor of establishing a Jewish state, and the diplomatic ties between the countries have been close since then.

Relations between Venezuelan Arabs and Venezuelan Jews have ebbed and flowed in different periods. In the beginning of the 20th century, Arabs and Jews were frequently business partners, perhaps because both groups shared a common language, Arabic. Yet President Chavez has shown strong support for the Palestinian cause and supports Hezbollah and Iran in their stance against Israel. During the recent conflict with Hezbollah, a group of Arab-Venezuelans and supporters of the Venezuelan government marched toward the Israeli Embassy, painted graffiti on the walls, and burned Israeli flags near the embassy and on the walls near Tiferet Israel Synagogue. Still, the younger generation of Venezuelans does not seem to care much about the Arab-Israeli conflict, and even today is possible to see Arab patisseries in the neighborhood of Catia in Caracas where some Jewish men buy sweets and drink coffee at the same table with Arabs, Greeks, and Armenians.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Most of the community lives in Caracas. Countries of origin are mostly Morocco, Poland, Turkey, Hungary, Syria, Austria, Greece, Romania, and Iran. There has been a small but continuous decline in the community, as many younger couples make aliyah or emigrate to Florida or Spain, like many descendants of other immigrants

have done recently because of the economic and political instability of Venezuela. Still, a small number returns and some Israelis, Americans, or South Americans come for business and after a certain time decide to stay, thus balancing the decline a bit.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Corcos, Joseph. 1897. *A Synopsis of the History of the Jews of Curaçao*. Curaçao: Imprenta de la Libreria.

Jabad Lubavitch de Venezuela Web site [in Spanish]. <http://www.jabadve.com> (accessed May 3, 2007).

*Nuevo Mundo Israelita*, digital version [in Spanish]. <http://www.nmidigital.com> (accessed May 3, 2007).

# Middle East

## Jews in the Middle East

*M. Avrum Ehrlich and David Straub*

---

Countries (excluding Israel): Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen

General Population: 193,000,000 (2007)

Jewish Population of the Middle East: 40,000–50,000

Percent of Population: Less than 1 percent

Population of Jews by Country: Turkey, 17,000; Iran, 12,000–20,000; Yemen, 200; Iraq, 100; Syria, 100; Bahrain, 36

Languages Spoken: Judeo Arabic, Hebrew, and Arabic

---

### Overview of the Middle East

Diaspora consciousness plays a significant role in the maturation of the Jewish people from their infancy. The earliest Diasporas in the second millennium BCE were divided between Egypt and the Middle East. The biblical patriarchs were immigrants and emigrants to and from these regions. The concept of exile and wandering, home, homelessness, and belonging are integrally sown from the histories and cultures of these regions into the biblical characters of Abraham; Jacob; Joseph and his brothers; and, of course, Moses, an Egyptian leader. The Hebrew people's relations with the kings and peoples of Assyria and Babylon forge a steady theme through the five books of Moses, the prophets and writings that compose the Old Testament. The New Testament reaffirms this Diaspora consciousness in its tales of the wandering apostles. David spent time in exile, as did Jeremiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Jonah is exiled in Nineveh, and the book of Esther takes place in the exile of Persia. Many of the psalms refer to exile; the famous "by the rivers of Babylon, where we sat down and cried as we remember Zion," puts into perspective the antiquity of the Diaspora experience in the Jewish consciousness. Jeremiah's warning, "[B]ecause you all walk after the imaginations of your own heart . . . I will cast you out of this land into a land that you don't know . . . which doesn't show you favour," gives the reason of sinfulness and the reason for the Diaspora and return to God as the solution for it. It is most likely that the Bible not only refers to the idea of exile in passing but also was very likely composed as a response to the early exilic experiences of its writers and editors and as a theological address to it.

The durability of the Jewish Diaspora, community life, national and religious identity, and homeland yearnings seems to have been forged because of the trickling rate of Hebrew migration from the Land of Israel to Babylon, allowing the first wave to put down the framework for the next. No doubt there was a high level of migrant assimilation into the surrounding culture, but as new waves of Jewish refugees arrived from the war-torn Jewish homeland, they reinforced a sense of identity

and reinvigorated the older communities. Most important for the development of the psychological and theological instruments to deal with exile and homelessness was the return of Jews from the first dispersion in Babylon back to Jerusalem. A theology of exile was constructed and implanted into the biblical texts that were put together after this phase. Future waves of migration took this message with them as they joined older communities. The effect was the emergence of a unique fusion of ideas and cultures and an early sense of trans-territorial and religious connectedness among the already widespread Jewish people.

The first formal dispersion took place from 722 to 586 BCE as a result of Assyria's defeat of the northern tribes of Israel: some dispersed to Persia, Nineveh, Resen, Calah, and Ashur, and some moved further east. Some moved to Antioch and Rezep in Syria, and others to Alexandria and Elephantine in Egypt. The initial wave of Judean deportees to Babylonia occurred in 597 BCE by officers of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon. The Judean king Jehoiakin was imprisoned and 10,000 metal workers exiled. The second wave occurred 11 years later, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. From the fifth to the second centuries BCE, Jews returned from Babylon to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem; during this time the Bible is edited, compiled, and canonized, and the emerging religious leadership taught it as the word of God. The next period of mass migration occurred from 359–338 BCE, when Persia dispersed rebellious Israelites to Babylon, Mahoza, Cutha, Sura, Nippur, Pumbedita, and Susiana. Communities and traders move further eastward, and legends of the lost tribes of Israel emerged from the speculated fate of these exiles. The collapse of the Persian Empire and Alexander the Great's (356–323 BCE) imperial conquests permitted Jews to expand throughout the Hellenistic world, so that, by the second century BCE, Jews had spread from North Africa to India.

In the second century BCE, an independent Jewish kingdom had been established, but fratricidal infighting brought civil war, and in the first century BCE Judea fell under Roman subservience. In the first century CE, the people of Judea took up arms against the Romans, resulting in the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the dispersion of Jews across the Roman world. Jews were recorded in large numbers in cities throughout the Roman, and subsequently Byzantine, cities of the Middle East. In response to the creation of a Diaspora, Jews were forced to alter their religious traditions, and from the second to sixth centuries the Jewish communities and scholarship of Babylon produce the Babylonian Talmud. The Christian takeover of Byzantium in the fourth century marked the beginning of centuries of horrific persecution of Jews throughout the empire.

To the south, on the Arabian Peninsula, Jewish communities were widespread, and there were even instances of the mass conversion of non-Jews. The most notable example of this was in the early sixth century in the Himyarite kingdom in modern Yemen, where the last Tubba Himyarite king is reported to have converted to Judaism and waged war against the Christian Ethiopians, who eventually routed the Himyarites. In the seventh century, Jewish tribes resisted Muhammad and his followers as the Prophet consolidated the territory surrounding Mecca and Medina during the creation of the first Islamic Empire. In the 620s in Medina, three Jewish tribes—the Banu Nadir, Banu Qurayza, and Banu Qaynuqa—were divided

and conquered during Muhammad's takeover of the city, and in 629, Muhammad routed the Jews of the Khaybar Oasis, located nearly 100 miles northwest of Medina. Muhammad's successors would later expunge Arabia of its Jewry through conversions and expulsions, and with the exception of a Jewish presence in Yemen that has survived up to the present day, few Jewish communities are known to have inhabited the Arabian Peninsula after the first millennium of the common era. Throughout the northern regions of the Middle East, in particular the former Byzantine territories, the establishment of the Arab caliphs in the seventh century marked a period of relative tolerance and legal protections, although Jews were officially discriminated against and instances of anti-Semitic violence occurred. Jews suffered greatly in 1096 during the First Crusade, when Christians inflicted horrific bloodletting of Jews and Muslims along the Mediterranean coast. During the successive Crusades, Jewish populations were massacred and synagogues were leveled.

The Ottoman Turks' rise to power in the Middle East in the 14th century and their benevolence toward Jews turned the region into the primary destination for European Jewish refugees. From the 1370s to the 1490s, waves of Jews expelled from Hungary, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Portugal settled in Ottoman lands at the invitation of the sultans. Jewish communities flourished in Jerusalem, Damascus, Egypt, and across Anatolia; Constantinople had a population of tens of thousands of Jews and dozens of synagogues. Under the Ottomans Jews were permitted to live in organized communities that had a large degree of autonomy and were represented by a chief rabbi. Many court physicians, diplomats, and wealthy entrepreneurs were Jews, and Jewish culture and literature flourished across the empire. As the Ottoman Empire entered a period of decline, the goodwill bestowed on Jews was occasionally violated by malicious rulers; such was the case with the massacre of Jews during the reign of Ibrahim I (1640–649). In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire began to splinter, until the empire was completely dissolved after World War I. From this point on, the fortunes of Jewish communities in the Middle East depended on the political and cultural nuances of each individual state.

In the late 19th century, the Zionist movement was founded to resettle Jews in the lands of the ancient Israelites. In 1896, Theodor Herzl published *The Jewish State*, and by the end of the century communities from across the Diaspora had made aliyah and founded settlements across Palestine. The British acquisition of Palestine after World War I led to hopes that a Jewish homeland would soon be created, but conflict with the Arab occupants of the region and infighting among the Jewish militias brought violence rather than independence. Rabid anti-Semitism on behalf of European fascists in the 1930s brought an influx of Jewish refugees to the Eretz Israel and further violence with the Arabs. The strong ambivalence many European Jews had for immigrating to the Holy Land was transformed into fervent support for Zionism among the survivors of the Holocaust after World War II. The creation of an independent Israel in 1948 marked the highest point in Judaic history in the Middle East in 2,000 years. Jews from across the region, and the world, left their homelands to make aliyah. At the same time, the Arab-Israeli wars heightened anti-Semitism in the region, which was only exacerbated after Israel's occupation of

Arab lands in 1967. The creation of a Jewish state brought religious and linguistic revival, an indefatigable pride in the Jewish race, and an unparalleled degree of security, yet outside of Israel the remaining Jewish communities in the Middle East were decimated by migration and frequently found themselves victims of anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic violence. The future for the remaining Jewish communities in the Middle East outside of Israel remains bleak, as emigration and an aging population takes its toll on Diaspora communities.

## Israelites and Judeans in Assyria in Ancient Times

*Ran Zadok*

---

The documentation for Israelites and Judeans in Upper Mesopotamia, notably Assyria proper and the Habur and Harran regions, is meager, but the ever-increasing corpus of cuneiform documents enables scholars to evaluate and to some extent quantify the evidence for their presence. Israelites are recorded there from ca. 710 BCE, that is, about a decade after the fall of Samaria, and Judeans after the deportation by Sennacherib in 701 BCE. The identification of Israelites-Judeans in Assyrian sources is difficult. Direct evidence for them in Assyrian sources is scanty. Very few individuals are explicitly designated as “Samaritans.” From the context (one Samaritan is mentioned in a letter from Gozan where two bearers of Yahwistic names are recorded) it seems that the Samaritans were deported Israelites rather than inhabitants of the province of Samaria.

All the common individuals who can be regarded as Israelites-Judeans in Assyrian sources are identified as such only according to their names. The most reliable criterion for their identification is the occurrence of the theophoric element Yhw in an individual’s name. This theophoric element is written Ia-(a-)u (with variants) in Assyrian cuneiform. People bearing names with the theophoric element Yhw are definitely Israelites-Judeans, seeing that no other ethnic group in the pre-Hellenistic Near East worshiped Yhw. Another typical Israelite-Judean name is, for instance, Hoshea. This name is not exclusively Israelite-Judean, but can alternatively originate from south Transjordan, notably Ammon. However, for all we know, no exiles were deported from southern Transjordan (Ammon, Moab, and Edom) to Upper Mesopotamia. Situated on the fringe of the Arabian-Syrian desert under constant threat from the Arabian nomads, these kingdoms were faithful vassals of Assyria: they owed their security and prosperity to the pax Assyriaca. At best there might have been a negligible number of corvée workers and auxiliary troops from there in Assyria proper, but they hardly settled there.

The pertinent statistical sample consists of about 80 Israelites-Judeans in the general Neo-Assyrian prosopographical pool of about 11,000 individuals. In Ostraca,

seals and bullae from the kingdom of Israel dated ca. 850–720 BCE indicate that only 36 percent of the individuals bear Yahwistic names. Therefore, it stands to reason that the list of about 80 Israelite-Judean individuals is far from complete.

The earliest Israelites in Assyria proper are the 13–15 members of a Samarian troop of charioteers stationed at Calah, probably in 710–708 BCE. Like other specialized warriors from conquered lands, this Samarian troop was incorporated into the Assyrian army. Several other individuals in the last decade of the eighth BCE, who can be identified as Israelites according to their names and connections, also belonged to the military establishment according to documents from Calah and Nineveh. Paqaha (Pekah) refers to two individuals: an estate manager and a master builder. It is likely they were Israelites, too, but as the name is also explicable in Aramaic terms, it cannot be excluded that they may have been Arameans. Mannu-kî-Arbail was sold as a slave to an Assyrian in 700 BCE. Judging from his Assyrian name, he was probably born in Assyria, but his father, Ahiyau, must have been an Israelite.

More than 50 individuals recorded in Assyrian sources between 701 and 602 BCE are either Israelites or Judeans. Most are recorded in the documentation from the new capital of Nineveh and less in Calah and Assur, as well as in small settlements whose location is unknown. On the whole about 75 percent are recorded in Assyria proper and about 25 percent on the Habur (in Gozan and Dur-Katlimmu), where they were deported according to the Old Testament, as well as in the region between Gozan and Harran. There is no doubt that this ratio is due to the nature of the Neo-Assyrian documentation that originates mostly from the urban centers of Assyria proper. At least one letter may refer to Israelites in the Habur region: Arihi, an official based in Laqe, asks another official whether to tax the grain of the Samaritans. The name Sakuua, which is recorded in Dur-Katlimmu, may be the same as Skwy



An officer conducts two Judeans to the king during the Assyrian conquest of the Jewish fortified town of Lachish. From the Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, eighth century BCE. (Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)

(with an initial lateral Sin). The latter (father of Hnn) is recorded in Tel Michal (in the southwestern Sharon near Herzliya) in the fourth century BCE (or rather in the fifth century) and may refer to a Samarian as the site probably belonged to the province of Samaria then.

Judah is associated with one individual: a certain A-du-ni-ih-a (the seah of Judah is mentioned in Nineveh in 660–659 BCE). Was he a Judean merchant who came to Nineveh on business? All of the Israelites-Judeans are mentioned in Neo-Assyrian cuneiform tablets, except for one, who is recorded on a tablet written in Aramaic. A few individuals belonged to the military establishment (a cohort commander, an archer, and a bodyguard), but the occupations of most individuals are not reported as many of them played the passive role of witnesses. But this indicates that they were basically free citizens. Moreover, some sold slaves, one acted as a guarantor of an estate manager, and others were involved in transactions.

Several Israelites-Judeans from Dur-Katlimmu engaged in agriculture at the very end of the seventh century BCE under Babylonian rule a few years before the first Babylonian deportation from Judah. A father and his son from Maalanate in the Gozan-Harran region were also employed in agriculture seeing that they sold straw in 665 BCE. No Israelites-Judeans climbed up the higher socioeconomic echelon, and none acted as a senior official. Some were minor functionaries (in charge of livestock and perhaps poultry in Gozan and a foreman from Assur). Hoshea, who was sold to an estate manager, was presumably a debt-slave if to judge from the fact that he had two wives. An Aramean from Gozan (or its region) was obliged to hand over the female slave Dayyana to Hoshea. Perhaps they were related. A somewhat clearer case for cohesion among Israelites-Judeans may be the fact that their fields in or near Dur-Katlimmu were located not far from each other.

The occurrence of several Israelite-Judean witnesses in the same deeds may also indicate a certain degree of social cohesion. However, it is very likely that most of the descendants of the exiles from Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah in the period preceding the Josianic reform did not resist the Assyrian declared policy of absorbing the numerous deportees. In the almost total absence of filiation in the neo-Assyrian record, it is impossible to trace a continuity of the Israelites and Judeans during the three or four generations, at least on the level of the individual. In other words: it cannot be demonstrated whether the Israelites-Judeans residing on the Habur in the last decade of the seventh century BCE were descendants of the Israelite-Judean exiles 120–180 years earlier or whether they originated from recent waves of unrecorded deportations.

There is ample evidence for immigration from Upper Mesopotamia to Babylonia: so far more than 150 individuals with Assyrian names or explicitly defined as Assyrians are recorded in Chaldean and Achaemenid Babylonia. A cohesive group of Assyrians is recorded in the archive of Ishar-taribi from Sippar, the Babylonian temple city that was close to Upper Mesopotamia, with connections to Hindanu on the Middle Euphrates and Rusapu near the Habur. It stands to reason that at least one Judean family, that of Iashe-iama (Isaiah), who is recorded at Sippar (531–530 BCE), might have arrived from Assyria or another part of Upper Mesopotamia in view of the Assyrian name of his daughter.

### Selected Bibliography

- Becking, B. 1992. *The Fall of Samaria*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Dalley, S. 1985. "Foreign Chariotry and Cavalry in the Armies of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II." *Iraq* 47: 31–48.
- Younger, K. Lawson, Jr. 1998. "The Deportations of the Israelites." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117: 201–227.
- Zadok, R. 2002. *The Earliest Diaspora: Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia*. Tel Aviv: Diaspora Research Institute, 7–26, 48–50.

## Judeans in Babylonia in Ancient Times

*Ran Zadok*

---

Judeans were deported from Judah to Babylonia in two major waves by the officers of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon. The first wave took place in 597 BCE. It was headed by King Jehoiakin and included 10,000 metal workers. The second wave occurred 11 years later, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. This deportation included mostly the urban elite, notably the population of Jerusalem. This information is based on the account of the Old Testament (2 Kings, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), which is supplemented with some details by Flavius Josephus. What follows is based mainly on Babylonian sources.

There is considerable extra-biblical evidence for the continuous presence of the exiles in Babylonia. Unlike the Old Testament, these external sources by their very nature do not allow scholars to present a continuous historical narrative, but they are sufficient for reconstructing a profile of the Judeans in the Babylonian Diaspora during 270 years (ca. 620–350 BCE). Regarding the settlement of the exiles in Babylonia, Jehoiakin was held hostage in Babylon. He is mentioned there, together with his sons and other Judeans of his retinue. His title is "the son of the King of Judah." He was considered the legitimate Judean ruler by the Babylonian authorities.

There is some evidence for the presence of Israelites or Judeans in and around Babylonia before the deportations. At least two such individuals are recorded there, one (Girrema) is mentioned in the Babylonian city of Nippur in 623 BCE, that is, 26 years before the first deportation. He is mentioned in a transaction of the Ebabbarra temple of Sippar (northern Babylonia). This temple bought sheep and goats in central or south Babylonia. The possibility that Girrema arrived from Upper Mesopotamia, where Israelites and Judeans had been found since ca. 732 BCE, cannot be excluded, the more so since several Judeans or Israelites resided just northwest of Babylonia on the Lower Habur river, which came under Babylonian control after the demise of the Assyrian Empire. They are recorded in deeds from there in 602 BCE, just five years before the first deportation. There is good reason for thinking that among the people who migrated from Assyria to Babylonia in that period there were also Israelites and Judeans. Hundreds of Assyrian immigrants and their

descendants are recorded in Babylonia between the seventh and fifth century BCE. According to the Babylonian documents, the Judean deportees were settled in northern and central Babylonia. Several hundred Judeans are recorded in these documents.

Regarding the identification of the Judeans in Babylonian documents, most of the evidence is indirect and implicit. The gentilic "Judean" (Yahu:da:yu) is recorded just once: only King Jehoiakin is explicitly defined as a Judean in the Babylonian sources. All the common individuals who can be regarded as Judeans in Babylonian sources are identified as such only according to their names. The most reliable criterion for their identification is the occurrence of the theophoric element Yhw in an individual's name. This theophoric element is written in two different ways in Babylonian cuneiform: Ia-a-hu-u (mostly as the first component in theophorous names) and Ia-a-ma (exclusively as the final element of such names). Both spellings have variants. People bearing names with the theophoric element Yhw are definitely Judeans, seeing that no other ethnic group in the pre-Hellenistic Near East worshiped Yhw. Other typical, but not exclusive Judean names are Hoshea, Shab-betai, and Simon.

The identification of Judeans in the abundant general documentation from first millennium Babylonia is with various degrees of plausibility. It is very difficult to distinguish between Hebrew names and Phoenician ones. Yet most of the 200 or so individuals identified as Judeans bore Yahwistic names or were blood relatives of persons having such names (the percentage of homonymous individuals, who may be physically identical with each other, is negligible in Babylonia). This statistical sample has about 50 percent Yahwistic names, a proportion comparable to that of the lists in Ezra-Nehemiah, but lower than in Elephantine. This may encourage the assumption that the numbers of most of the Judeans in the huge Neo/Late-Babylonian corpus were rounded up. Unlike other ethnic groups, the identification of Judean names is relatively easy, the occurrence of the element Yhw being a particular boon. On the other hand, most of the other ethnic groups lack reliable criteria for identification, the more so since gentilics occur quite rarely. For example, it is difficult to distinguish between Arameans and Arabians, and therefore scholars have to be content with the general definition of "West Semites."

As was already stated, almost all the information comes from Babylonian sources and is dictated by their types. This documentation consists of two main types of archives, namely temple archives and private archives. Royal archives are very rare in Babylonia. Only one small royal archive has been discovered there. Fortunately, King Jehoiakin and his dependents are recorded in this royal archive. The temple archives belong to the temple complexes of several Babylonian cities. The private archives were kept by long-established Babylonian families. All these archives include only clay tablets. They were written by Babylonians for Babylonians. Foreigners, namely non-Babylonians, did not write in cuneiform in Babylonia. The profession of the cuneiform scribe, which required a long training and considerable skill, was open only to autochthonous Babylonians. Therefore, one cannot speak of Judean or any foreign archives from Babylonia. What has been discovered are just by-products of a Babylonian scribal activity. It is very likely that the Judeans,

like most of the other foreigners and a growing number of Babylonians, wrote in Aramaic on perishable materials, namely parchments and possibly papyri. Since the clay tablets were written by and for Babylonians, the Babylonians are overrepresented in the documentation. Almost all the recorded transactions are between Babylonian parties, or at least one party is Babylonian. Therefore foreigners, including Judeans, are severely underrepresented in the Babylonian documentation. Hardly any foreign population group in Babylonia passes the 2 percent barrier in the general statistics. Therefore, the impressive Judean sample at our disposal is necessarily fragmentary. The actual percentage of the foreigners was probably much higher than what has been obtained from the rich documentation, the more so because the countryside was predominantly Aramean and the population of Babylon serving as the winter residence of the Achaemenid king included many Persian courtiers and officials. In addition, the geographical distribution of the recorded Judeans is dictated by the provenance of the documentation.

Both the temple and the private archives are basically urban. Therefore the countryside is poorly represented. Only one archive is an exception to this general rule. The owners of the Murashu archive from Nippur conducted most of their transactions in the region of Nippur in central Babylonia. This archive exceptionally does not record almost exclusively members of the Babylonian elite, but it offers a fair representation of foreigners, including Judeans. In fact, until a decade ago it was thought that most of the Judeans in Babylonia resided in the Nippur region. This distorted view is now corrected, thanks to the discovery of a new archive from the colony of Yahudu (Judah) near Babylon and Borsippa.

Judeans resided or were active in most of the temple cities of central and northern Babylonia. They dwelt in the capital Babylon, Borsippa, Kish, Nippur, Isin, Marad, Sippar, and Opis, as well as in many small settlements in central Babylonia. Very few Judeans resided in southern Babylonia despite the rich Babylonian documentation from there (for instance, no more than four are recorded in Erech and its region, and none are mentioned at Ur). This geographical distribution accords well with the situation in later periods, namely the Parthian and Sassanian ones. Shushan, where two Judeans are mentioned, refers to the Achaemenid capital of Susa in Elam rather to a homonymous settlement in Babylonia. The exiles were brought to existing settlements, but some founded new colonies as implied by the name Tel-Aviv, where Ezekiel was active. Tel-Aviv renders Akkadian *Til-abubi*, namely "the mound of the deluge," a general term for an uninhabited place, which was colonized by deportees. This process of colonization and development was initiated by the crown and served its interests. Judeans resided in old and new villages together with other foreigners, notably Phoenicians and Philistines. These groups originated from neighboring regions and spoke mutually intelligible dialects. Problems of oral communication became less acute in the second generation of the exiles. All the long-established foreigners and their offspring acquired the Aramaic language that was the vernacular of Babylonia then. At least the village of Yahudu in central Babylonia (presumably not far from Babylon and Borsippa) must have originally been a Judean colony. Yahudu does not refer to Jerusalem: the background and details of the transactions conducted there leave no doubt that it was

situated in Babylonia. Almost all the recorded Judeans are freemen. The notion that the deportees automatically became slaves is merely based on later analogies. Even the few Judean slaves who are recorded might have been debt-slaves. The number of Judean slaves and other dependents employed in the temple and royal sectors is very low, whereas many Judeans acted as witnesses and possessed seals, an indication that they were likely freemen. The exiles were employed by both the temple and the private sectors, which were in urgent need of workers. Exchange of workers and other resources between the crown and other sectors was a phenomenon of Babylonian management and economics.

Most Judeans engaged in agriculture as holders of small plots ("bow-lands"), lessees of fields (along canals), tenants, gardeners, and shepherds, but one has to bear in mind that this is dictated by the documentation, which is mostly about grain fields and palm groves. The almost total lack of information about Judean artisans is also to be ascribed to the nature of the documentation. Several tenants leased considerable tracts of land along canals. A group of Judeans promised Murashu in lieu of payment of their debt, 40 workmen to work on his estate for a month (Murashu had to pay the workmen wages). Their activity resembles that of the later and modern sarkal or "the head of the work," that is, a representative of the cultivators in southern Iraq, superintending their land and supplying workforce.

In later generations some Judeans became fishermen, an occupation that was unknown in Judah, which had neither watercourses nor seas with fish. It should be remembered that not only was fishing a new occupation for Judeans in Babylonia, but the character of the agricultural activity in the Babylonian alluvium, which was based on irrigated palm groves, was also entirely different from that in Judah. The adaptation of the deportees to their new environment was dictated by economic necessity and advocated by the Judean leadership in exile, who followed Jeremiah's recommendation (29:5) to build houses and plant gardens (gnwt is related to ganatu, which designates palm groves in Babylonian documents). These pragmatic leaders encouraged their people to be incorporated into the economic activity in Babylonia and stood up against some anti-Babylonian elements among the first generation of the deportees, whose activity could have endangered the community, as is made clear by the account in Ezekiel.

Most Judeans did not reach the higher socioeconomic echelon. Few Judeans acted as minor functionaries, for example, a rent collector of certain canals, a tax collector of a private firm and an overseer of the king's poultry. The high official Nehemiah from the capital Susa was an exception. Several royal merchants or commercial agents are mentioned, but this occupation was mainly in the hands of other foreigners. A Judean traveled from Sippar to Humadeshu in Persis, presumably on business.

It is noteworthy that relatively many Judeans were employed as alphabet scribes, who wrote in Aramaic script, in contradistinction to the exclusively Babylonian scribes writing on clay. The relatively new profession of alphabet scribes was open to foreigners. Since the seventh century BCE at the latest, these scribes wrote in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the three successive empires, namely the Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Achaemenid. But why are Judeans and not Arameans or other

West Semites overrepresented in this profession? Is it because literacy was widespread in Judah in the late pre-exilic period (that is to say, shortly before the destruction of the First Temple in view of the rich epigraphic find from Judah, especially ostraca and bullae)? One Judean, who belonged to the organization of the alphabet scribes of the army in or near Nippur, served with his fully equipped and armored horse in the army (in Erech).

The Judeans were organized in clans. Descendants of the deportees belonged to several big clans in the Nippur region. Scholars can follow their social ties and economic activity during three or four generations. A certain degree of social cohesion can be observed among the Judeans even many generations after the deportations. For instance, a Judean contractor hired agricultural workers who belonged to his own ethnic group. Most of these workers probably belonged to his own clan.

As is well known, the exilic period was crucial for the crystallization of Jewish religious law. Regrettably, the extra-biblical information about the religious character of the exiles in Babylonia is minimal as the documentation is exclusively economic. It is noteworthy that none of the documents where Judeans are recorded were issued on Saturday or during Jewish holidays, nor do such documents contain an oath to pagan deities. None of the few seals used by Judean signatories or witnesses of the deeds has a pagan scene on it. Moreover, the Judean onomasticon, that is to say the names borne by Judeans in the fifth century BCE, reveals to some extent a religious revival: there are more Yahwistic names in this period than in the preceding generation. This is gained by analyzing the genealogies. This revival is compatible with the restorative tendencies of Ezra and Nehemiah, who lived in the same age and hailed from the Diaspora.

The meager evidence for mixed marriages in Babylonia is presumably the exception rather than the rule. This phenomenon existed but was exceptional in Egypt, notably in Elephantine, in this period as well. After all, the Babylonian deeds, which were written for Babylonians, would have recorded only marriages where at least one party was Babylonian. The Judean marriage agreements were written on perishable materials and are not preserved. The only recorded mixed marriage is between a Babylonian and the daughter of a deceased affluent Judean (she was given in marriage by her mother and her older brother). This accords well with the fact that mixed marriages in Judah in the same period were practiced primarily by members of prominent circles, who had intensive social contacts with their pagan equals.

The exiles and their descendants preserved their separate and distinct identity even in Babylonia, which had a very ancient and prestigious cultural tradition, not only because of their strong religious heritage, but also because of the segregation of the Babylonian society. Unlike the Assyrians, who had a declared policy of absorbing the numerous deportees, the citizens of the Babylonian temple cities, namely the urban elite, did not mix with foreigners. They never gave their own daughters in marriage to non-Babylonians, but they themselves did marry foreign girls. This asymmetry is understandable if one takes into account that members of the Babylonian elite formed the most prestigious group in Babylonia, whereas the foreign deportees were at the bottom of the social scale. This situation was not significantly changed with the passage of time. The Judean social coherence, cohesion,

and nonassimilation were enhanced by the fact that the Babylonian elite discouraged assimilation. A historical problem seems to be created by the comparison between the very low percentage of the Judean exiles in the general population of Achaemenid Babylonia (less than 1 percent) and their demographic strength in later Babylonia (one million Jews in Parthian Babylonia according to Josephus and a Jewish majority in parts of northern Babylonia according to the Babylonian Talmud). Yet two considerations lessen this problem: the first is the extreme underrepresentation of the Judeans in the Babylonian sources, and the second is the fact that the Jewish mission took place in Babylonia like in other parts of the Diaspora in the post-Achaemenid periods, especially under the tolerant Parthian rule. Proselytes are indeed recorded in the Babylonian Talmud.

### Selected Bibliography

- Alon, Gedaliah, and Levi, Gershon, eds. 1989. *The Jews in Their Land in the Talmudic Age (70–640 C.E.)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gafni, I. 1990. *The Jews of Babylonia in the Talmudic Era: A Social and Cultural History* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center.
- Neusner, Jacob. 1965–1970. *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*. 5 vols. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers.
- Neusner, Jacob. 2002. *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: The Parthian Period*. Binghamton, NY: Global.
- Zadok, R. 2002. *The Earliest Diaspora: Israelites and Judeans in Pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia*. Tel Aviv, Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University.

## Jewish Leadership in the Babylonian Diaspora: Second–Sixth Centuries

*Geoffrey Herman*

---

The foremost leader in Babylonian Jewry in the Sasanian era (224–651 CE) was the exilarchate. Based in the empire's capital, the exilarchate was the official representative of the Babylonian Jews before the crown. Rabbinic literature is the main source so the image of the exilarch reflects the exilarch's mixed relationship with the rabbis. The rabbis criticized the exilarchate as a symbol of Persian cultural assimilation and for the lack of identity with rabbinic ideals, but the role was also the focus of Babylonian Jewish patriotism vis-à-vis Palestine.

### The Title

The title “exilarch” is English for what is known in the Aramaic sources: *Resh Galuta*. The term often appears in the collective: *de-Bei-Resh Galuta*, or *(de-)Bei Nesiah*, in the sense of a clan. The title alludes to its special affinity to Babylonia—the Exile, par excellence, from biblical times, thereby evoking the biblical past of this

community. The alternative designation, *de-Bei Nesiah*, uses the Aramaic form of the Hebrew term *Nasi*—the supreme political leader. This title may refer to the exilarch's claim to be scions of the biblical house of David.

### Source

The Palestinian Talmud (PT) and Babylonian Talmud (BT) are the contemporary sources on the Sasanian exilarchate for the third to fifth centuries CE. They do not, however, provide a great deal of reliable information, as they are only peripherally concerned with the exilarchate. Although geonic sources (7th–11th centuries CE), especially the *Epistle of Rav Sherira Gaon* and *Seder 'Olam Zuta* (SOZ), have also served many scholars in the past, they possess almost no independent historical value on the Sasanian exilarchate. Useful indirect contemporary sources include Persian epigraphic sources on the Sasanian empire and Syriac sources on Persian Christianity. The latter, particularly when relating to the catholicos, the Christian leader of equivalent status to the exilarch, offers a valuable comparative aspect for the fourth to fifth centuries CE and helps fill the void in knowledge on the exilarchate for the fifth to seventh centuries CE when the Talmudic sources run out. The historical portrayal of the exilarchate is largely determined by the methodological approach toward the sources. The popular portrayal of the exilarchate generally found in earlier scholarly literature is largely the result of a historicizing tendency prevalent among many scholars of ancient rabbinic literature, coupled with a certain romanticism and a lack of attention to the complex makeup of the BT, which incorporates diverse chronological and geographical strata and refashions earlier traditions. A critical reading of both the Talmudic and geonic sources, sensitive to their nature, genre, and inherent biases, yields notable differences, and is the basis for the following survey.

### Origins

There can be no certainty about the beginnings of the exilarchate. The critical reading of the rabbinic sources points toward the last third of the third century CE as the period when scholars can say with reasonable certainty that an exilarchate existed, and it was probably within this timeframe that it first emerged. It probably began with the advancement of an influential Jewish clan to a position of representation during the reign of King Šāpūr I (241–271 CE), who was tolerant of non-Zoroastrian minorities. Rabbinic literature, accepting the exilarchal claim to descent through the Davidic line of Zerubabel in uninterrupted succession, saw no difficulty in anachronistically depicting the exilarchs alongside much earlier rabbinic figures.

### Location

Location played a key role in the emergence and the authority of the exilarchate. The same was true for the catholicos, and the comparison is illustrative. In the late third or early fourth century, the bishop of the winter capital city—a city usually

called Seleucia by the Christians, Weh-Ardašīr by the Persians, and Meḥoza by the Jews—first achieved hegemony over the Christian population of the entire Sasanian Empire. Seleucia essentially maintained this primacy for Persian Christianity throughout the Sasanian era. With regard to the exilarchate the situation is only a little more complex. Two Babylonian cities, Nehardea and Meḥoza, are consistently associated with the exilarchate. Both of these cities were close to the powers that be, Meḥoza, founded in the early third century, was both the provincial capital and the royal winter capital city. Its centrality is self-evident. Nehardea, a more ancient city, was in the vicinity of Pērōz Šāpūr, the next most important administrative and military city in the region. Nehardea and Meḥoza were linked by the Royal Canal (*Nehar Malka*) and probably belonged within the same Sasanian administrative district (*šahrestān*), also called Weh-Ardašīr, which extended along the Royal Canal. There are some indications that the direct influence of the exilarch over the Jewish communities was confined to the *šahrestān* of Weh-Ardašīr, neatly reflecting Weh-Ardašīr's position as a provincial capital. At the same time, the notion of the exilarch as a central monarchical authority over the entire Jewish community of Babylonia (or the Sasanian Empire) reflected the position of Weh-Ardašīr as the royal capital.

The exilarchs are depicted in the BT as wealthy and Persianized. Their duties would have assumed a reasonable acquaintance with Persian language and culture and a capacity to function in Persian high society. Their location—in the wealthy, urbanized, and more Persianized setting of the capital city also supports this characterization. Rabbinic sources reflect and comment on this reality, both subtly through the incorporation of Persian loanwords in exilarchate-related traditions, and directly through stories and anecdotes. Stories (e.g., BT Giṭin 14a-b; BT Qiddu-shin 70a-b; BT Berakhot 46b) describe the exilarchal circle as possessing Persian names, using Persian language, wearing Persian dress, and preferring Persian table etiquette. The luxurious lifestyle of the exilarch included horses, golden carriages, silk garments, gardens, and servants. Food is central to this image. Wild prey was served on his table. He is depicted as hosting banquets with multiple courses for large numbers of guests. Rabbis were among his guests.

Only a few rabbis are regularly associated with the exilarch. Some of these, however, are of considerable importance. Some might have been under the employ of the exilarchate, possibly as judges. The exilarchate would claim judicial hegemony and exclusivity. In addition echoes of the exilarchal prerogatives are heard in the realms of corporal and even capital punishment. The royal patronage apparently enjoyed by the exilarchate may have favored the judicial claim and acquiesced to the punitive powers the exilarchate exercised. However, an examination of the Talmudic evidence on the judiciary indicates that the exilarchate's claim to judicial power was part of an ongoing polemic over hegemony within Babylonian Jewry and was contested. The punitive powers described in the Talmud, which often seem extrajudicial, may have been limited, possibly to the regional jurisdiction of Weh-Ardašīr.

The rabbis' attitude toward the exilarchate was not uniform. In some sources there is neutral discussion relating to the exilarch; elsewhere there are expressions of pride and enthusiasm. More common, however, are critical and hostile

comments. Many stories portray the exilarch as antagonistic toward the rabbis and their knowledge and treating them in a high-handed manner. The criticism fits into four principle categories: regional-Halachic, sociocultural, religious, and ideological, although there is some overlap between the categories.

First, there was criticism based on regional and Halachic differences with the exilarch symbolizing the local rabbinic law, or where representative rabbis from that region, such as Rav Naḥman, were treated as representing the exilarch. Disparaging anecdotes originating in places such as Kafri, Pumbedita, and Nehardea were aimed against Meḥoza. The focus was Halachic and the association between the local rabbinic school and the exilarchate was intended to delegitimize the rabbinical traditions of the locale.

Second, sociocultural condemnation stemmed from the perceived Persian lifestyle of the exilarchs and their ostentatiousness. This criticism reflected a broader conscious cultural conflict between rabbinic and nonrabbinic value systems and between varying approaches toward the assimilation of Persian cultural traits. The social differences between urban Meḥoza and the more peripheral Jewish centers accentuated the Halachic differences between the distinct geographical regions as already mentioned.

Third, religious criticism was based on the claim that the exilarchs did not conform to the rabbinic lifestyle, rules, and values. They were judged as lax in the observance of Sabbath and dietary laws. Religious and social censure merged in the allegations that their lifestyle was not commensurate with the sober condition of postdestruction exile and expectancy for redemption.

Fourth, the ideological criticism was based on a challenge to the leadership claims of the exilarchate. It appears to have been rooted in the anti-rulership tradition prevalent in rabbinic literature, which has biblical roots and expressed particular reserve concerning Gentile court affairs. It focused on the exilarchs' use and abuse of power, especially toward rabbis, often drawing allusions from the Bible. It also questioned, from a theological perspective, the existence of a Jewish "king" before the redemption. An exilarchate was not legitimate before the redemption or actually impeded this redemption (BT Sanhedrin 38a).

This criticism was articulated creatively through anecdotes describing encounters between rabbis and exilarchs or through the exegesis of suggestive scriptural verses. The banquet was a common setting for the interaction between rabbis and exilarch. Rav Sheshet was called on to respond when an exilarch declared before him: "You sages might be wise, but the Persians are more expert than you in table etiquette" (BT Berakhot 46b). Elsewhere Rav Sheshet demonstrated that a limb torn from a living animal was served on the exilarch's table (BT Giṭin 67b). Rav Hisda (PT Sota 9: 15 [24c]; BT Giṭin 7a) evoked a verse from Ezeiel 21, 31 "Thus sayeth the Lord, remove the turban and lift off the crown" in what seemed to be a challenge to the monarchical aspirations of the exilarchate. Rav Ḥisda, a rabbi of priestly descent, interpreted "turban" as symbolizing the high priesthood, and "crown" for the monarchy. He asserted that the exilarchate was advancing his "monarchic" pretensions despite the absence of an accompanying high priesthood. Monarchy and high priesthood must rise or fall together.

The symbolism of the exilarchate for Babylonian Jewry found its more positive manifestation in the realm of Babylonia's competition and polemic with Palestine. This dynamic of regional authority and rivalry mirrored the broader reality of two world-reaching empires in constant conflict. In the course of the Sasanian period, the prestige of the Babylonian Jewish Diaspora community grew until it began to view itself as equal or superior to the Jewish homeland. The exilarch would now come to embody Babylonia's alleged ascendancy over Palestine. The representative leaders of the two Jewish communities were believed to descend from the ancient Judahite royal line. The following literary and historical progression probably occurred. Patriarchal assertions of Davidic ancestry are first attested in the third century CE. An equal claim echoed forth from the exilarchate at some point in time. A series of separate but probably interdependent rabbinic anecdotes feature Judah I, the typological patriarch of rabbinic literature, and his contemporary, R. Hiyya, a key Babylonian rabbi who had migrated to Palestine (PT Kilayim 9. 4 [with parallels]; BT Horayot 11b; BT Sanhedrin 38a). R. Hiyya's two sons also feature in some of these traditions. The earliest trace would appear to have been in Palestinian sources originating in the rivalry between the disciple circles of R. Hiyya and Judah I. Within these stories, R. Hiyya and his sons functioned as a foil for the patriarch. The role of the exilarch was to symbolically affirm the superiority of Babylonian lineage. The earliest echoes of these traditions, then, would appear to reflect local Palestinian struggles over religious influence. This superiority of lineage then serves in the BT as a basis to assert the judicial superiority of Babylonia over Palestine (BT Sanhedrin 5a-b). In BT Sanhedrin 38a, however, the exilarch is, in fact, condemned alongside the patriarch. A story of a plot to depose the patriarch from the leadership of the rabbinic academy (BT Horayot 1b3–14a) also appears to address the rivalry between Babylonia and Palestine through its leadership but focusing on the tensions within the academy. One can read here how R. Meir and R. Natan conspired to overthrow the second-century Palestinian patriarch, Simeon b. Gamaliel. The story refers to R. Natan, a Babylonian rabbi, acquiring a position of eminence within the academy by virtue of his father's status. Geonic commentators believed his father was the exilarch. This story may be addressing the issue of exilarchal involvement in the world of the academies.

The history of the exilarchate during the latter part of the Sasanian era is no less enigmatic than the beginning. As the Talmuds reached completion the principle source is lost. Geonic sources provide sporadic cases of persecution in the late fifth century, including the execution of an exilarch in 470–471 CE, and SOZ describes in some detail an unsuccessful Jewish revolt led by an exilarch named Mar Zuṭra, that resulted in his execution. Some have viewed this period as a whole as falling under the shadow of religious persecution. The historical credibility of SOZ, however, has been questioned and the persecution appears to have been limited in duration. One should not, then, be too hasty in interpreting this lacuna in the source material as signaling the end of the exilarchate. The condition of Persian Christianity in this period, and in particular, the experience of the catholicate, is suggestive and serves to neutralize the lacrimoneous narrative based on the geonic sources. With respect to the relations between religion and state in the late

Sasanian era, a more balanced picture is evident, suggesting the continued existence of representative leadership of religious minorities for most of this period.

### Selected Bibliography

- Beer, Moshe. 1976. *The Babylonian Exilarchate in the Arsacid and Sassanian Periods* [Hebrew]. Tel Aviv, Israel: Dvir.
- Goodblatt, David. 1994. *The Monarchic Principle*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 277–311.
- Herman, Geoffrey. 1996. “The Relations between Rav Huna and Rav Hisda” [Hebrew with English abstract]. *Zion* 61 (3): 263–279.
- Herman, Geoffrey. 2005. “The Babylonian Exilarchate in the Sasanian Era” [Hebrew with English abstract]. PhD thesis, Hebrew University.
- Lazarus, Felix. 1890. “Die Häupter der Vertriebenen.” *Jahrbücher für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* X: 1–183.
- Neusner, Jacob. 1986. *Israel's Politics in Sasanian Iran: Jewish Self-Government in Talmudic Times*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

## Jews in Iran

*Irena Vladimirska*

---

**General Population:** 68,688,433 (CIA figures)

**Jewish Population:** Estimates range from 30,000–40,000 (CIA figures)

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Main Cities Populated by Jews:** Tehran, Shiraz, Hamedan, Isfahan, Nadawand, Babul

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Background:** Sephardic Jews of Persian Empire, Bukharian Jews, Caucasus Jews, and a small Ashkenazi community arrived during World War II.

**Language Spoken:** Nearly all speak Persian; Judeo-Persian or Bukharian dialects are also often spoken.

---

### Historical Overview

**732–722 BCE** In the first Babylonian Captivity, Jewish citizens of Gil'ad and eastern Galilee are resettled to the territory of Assyria by Tiglath-Pileser the 3rd; Jews from the territory of the Israeli kingdom are resettled to the territory of Mesopotamia and Midia several years later.

**598–587 BCE** The Jewish population of Iran increases considerably because of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of the Judean kingdom. Jews settle in the inner provinces of Babylonia, such as Ecbatana and Shushan.

**539–423 BCE** Under the rule of Cyrus (539–530 BCE), Darius (521–486 BCE), and Xerxes (486–423 BCE), Jews are guaranteed their religious, social, and political rights as subjects of Achaemenid Empire.

**30–50 CE** Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE–50 CE), in his book *Embassy to Gaius*, and Flavius Josephus (37 CE–100 CE) in his *The Wars of the Jews*, repeatedly mention a

- great number of Jews in all provinces of Midia, Babylonia, Elam, and Parfia. Numerous Jews make pilgrimage to Jerusalem during festivals of Sukkoth, Passover, and Shavuot.
- 224–642 The Babylonian Talmud is completed. It describes not only the ritual life of the Jewish community of the empire but also provides information on ordinary life in the Jewish communities of Midia, Elam, Susiana, and Khuzestan.
- 642 Iran becomes part of the Omayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. The juridical status of Jews as other non-Muslim minorities is defined as *dhimmi*' (subjects of Muslim state with restricted juridical, civil, and property rights).
- 762 Baghdad becomes the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and the main center of international trade. The Jewish populations of Baghdad, Ahvaz, Isfahan, and Shiraz grow considerably. Numerous Jewish traders play an important role in commerce and become financial advisers and bankers of caliphs and viziers.
- 1258–1336 The Abbasid Caliphate is conquered by the grandson of Genghis Khan, Kulagu Khan who founds his protectorate over its territory. All the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims become irrelevant and Jews received a unique opportunity to become part of the administrative and cultural elite. The numerous Jewish administrators include Sa'd al Davla ibn Hibbat Allah ibn Munasib Ebheri (1240–1291), grand vizier of Il-Khan, and Rashid al Davla (Rashid ad Din) (1244–1318), who converted to Islam, became great vizier, and defined internal and external policy of the Ilkhane Caliphate.
- 1639 Shah Abbas, the first of the Sefavid dynasty (1571–1639), orders the Jews of the empire to wear special head covers. Practically all synagogues are closed and the study of Jewish religious literature is strictly forbidden.
- 1839 The Jewish community of Mashhad is forcefully converted to Islam; a year later, they leave for the territory of contemporary Turkmenistan and return to Judaism.
- 1898 The first Alliance school opens in Teheran.
- 1904 Five additional Alliance schools are opened in Hamadan, Isfahan, Senna, Shiraz, and Kermanshah.
- 1906 The first Iranian constitution is adopted. The constitution guarantees the Jews of Iran social, political, and economic equality.
- 1917–1918 The "Society on Studying of Hebrew" is organized in Iran, and the first Jewish publishing house opens in the capital city of Teheran. The first textbook on studying Hebrew is published and two periodicals on Judeo-Persian language, *Ha Geula* and *Ha Haim*, appear.
- 1919 An international Zionist branch organization opens in Teheran.
- 1944 A network of religious Jewish schools is established—Otzar ha Torah—as well as the youth Zionist organizations Ha Halutz, Ha Halutz ha Dati, and Bnei Akiva.
- 1958 The first Jewish hospital opens in Teheran.
- 1979 A religious revolution in Iran causes mass immigration of Jews to Israel and the United States. The head of the Jewish community of Iran is sentenced to death and executed. All the Jews are obliged to have a special indication mark in their passports; shops that belong to Jews are marked as well.

August 1980 Jews are deprived of the right to vote or elect Jewish deputies to the Iranian parliament.

1983 Ten leaders of the Iranian Jewish community are executed; Jewish property is confiscated, and every kind of connection with Israel or Zionist organizations is prohibited.

February 1994 Feizolla Mehubad, a member of the council of the Jewish community of Teheran, is executed for an attempt to establish a connection with his relatives in Israel.

1999 On the eve of the Passover holiday, 13 Jews from Shiraz and Isfahan are arrested and accused of spying for Israel. Among those arrested are a university professor, a teacher of Jewish schools, and a 16-year old boy. They are sentenced to prison (terms between 4 and 13 years). In 2002 all of the accused are released.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Traditionally, Jews of Iran were professionally involved in trade and handicrafts. During the rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941–1978), economic conditions of Jews improved, and many Jews found employment as government bureaucrats. The Jewish community of Teheran reached 40,000 members; most of them were businesspeople, doctors, pharmacists, and scientists. The Teheran Jewish College of Education trained teachers for Jewish schools. Literature on Jewish culture and tradition was published in Farsi and Hebrew.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

From 1948 until the Iranian revolution of 1978, Jewish cultural and educational organizations flourished and educational and publishing networks grew. In Teheran the Jewish periodicals *Sinai*, *Alami Yahud*, and *Rahnamayie Yahud* were published. In 1960, the Jewish society of Teheran was established; the society coordinated the activity of several Jewish organizations, such as Teheran Charity Center, Society of Jewish Women, ORT, and the Society of Jewish Intelligentsia of Iran. The Jewish Community of Teheran became a member of the World Confederation of Sephardi Jewish Communities.

### Present Economic Conditions

In 1978, before the Islamic revolution, the Jewish population of Iran reached 80,000. Jews of Iran were the second largest Jewish community in the Middle East, after Israel, and were concentrated mostly in large cities such as Teheran, Isfahan, and Shiraz. The economic position of more than 80 percent of Jews was satisfactory, and 10 percent of Jews associated themselves with large Iranian manufactures and traders. After the revolution most Jewish property was confiscated and nationalized; the approximate value of this property was more than US\$1 billion.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

According to available official information there are only 27 active synagogues left in Iran, 11 of them in Teheran. Synagogues play an important role as the Jewish community centers are where Jews feel considerably safe. There are three active Jewish primary schools, all of them located in Teheran. At the head of the schools stand Muslim religious authority, and among pupils can be found some Muslims. Pupils study the Torah in the Persian language; on Fridays, members of the volunteer Jewish organization Otzar ha-Torah give Hebrew lessons. There are two Jewish secondary schools and two colleges, all of them in Teheran.

The Jewish community of Teheran has a Jewish community hospital and a home for elderly Jewish citizens. Jewish cultural, student, youth, and women's organizations are officially registered, but their activity is controlled by Muslim religious authorities.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

For a period of 30 years (1948–1978), more than 61,000 Iranian Jews, mostly poor community members and members of different Zionist organizations, left for Israel. Between 1979 and 1984, an additional 55,000 Jews left Iran: more than 15,000 resettled in United States, about 11,000 immigrated to Israel, and the rest immigrated to Europe, Britain, and Canada. According to 2002 population estimates, the number of Jews in Iran is between 30,000 and 40,000 persons; most Jews live in Teheran, Isfahan, and Shiraz. The Jews of Iran are united by the Council of Jewish Communities.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bahrampour, Tara. 2000. *To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brauer, Erich, and Raphael Patai. 1993. *The Jews of Kurdistan*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Goldberg, Harvey Ellis. 1996. *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Goldin, Farideh. 2004. *Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Women*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- International Sephardic Leadership Council. 2006. "Situation on the Plight of the Jews in Iran." [www.sephardiccouncil.org/iran.html](http://www.sephardiccouncil.org/iran.html) (accessed April 20, 2008).
- "The Jews of Iran." Jewish Virtual Library. [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/iranjews.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/iranjews.html) (accessed April 20, 2008).
- Lewis, Bernard. 1987. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sanasarian, Eliz. 2000. *Religious Minorities in Iran*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Sykes, Ella Constance. 1910. *Persia and Its People*. Boston, MA: Adamant Media Corporation.

# Jews in Iraq and Zionism

*Esther Meir-Glitzenstein*

---

## Zionism: 1921–1941

Organized Zionist activity in Iraq began in the early 1920s, after the British conquest of Iraq during World War I. A Zionist organization was established in Baghdad. Members studied modern Hebrew, read Hebrew books and newspapers, held conversations and discussions, and engaged in sporting activities. The central figure in this activity was Aaron Sasson, who also ran a Hebrew school called Pardes Hayeladim. The active Zionists were drawn from the lower middle-class, traditional Jews who had been exposed to the early stages of the European Enlightenment and the Hebrew Haskalah. This organization was the product of local initiative, reflecting the growing Westernization of the Jewish community and the inroads of nationalist ideas. The ties between these local activists and the international Zionist movement were limited mainly to collecting funds and distributing aliyah certificates. In the early 1930s, a few dozen teenagers, influenced by teachers from Palestine on the faculties of schools in Iraq, established a Zionist organization (Ahiever). Some of these young people immigrated to Palestine, where they joined the rural settlement movement. This group disbanded after being discovered by the Iraqi authorities.

In the early 1920s, there were about 90,000 Jews in Iraq—the overwhelming majority of them in Baghdad, the rest in Basra, Mosul, and several dozen other cities, towns, and villages all over the country. They had been granted equal rights, including suffrage and eligibility for parliament. At that time the Jewish problem did not exist in Iraq, so the Jews had no need for the Zionist solution. By the 1930s, however, Jews were gradually being excluded from positions of political and economic influence, and their access to higher education was being restricted. During this period all Zionist activity was declared illegal.

While in Europe the authorities had sanctioned and sometimes even approved Zionist movements, primarily because their solution to the Jewish problem involved the Jews' removal from Europe, in Islamic countries Zionist activity encountered opposition, as it transplanted the Jewish problem into the very heart of the Islamic world. As the enormity of the problem became clearer, especially after the escalating bloodshed events between Jews and Arabs in Palestine during the 1920s and the 1930s, public and official opposition to Zionism intensified in Iraq. The charter the British granted to the Zionist Organization in Baghdad in 1921 was revoked after one year, and continued Zionist activity required discreet conduct and an absence of publicity. The bloodshed events of 1929 in Palestine triggered anti-Zionist demonstrations in Iraq; at the end of that year the Zionists were told to cease all activities, and teachers from Palestine were forced to leave. During the years of the Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936–1939), there were anti-Jewish demonstrations and grenade attacks against Jewish communal institutions and social clubs, and a number of Jews were murdered. The Farhud, a pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad on

June 1–2, 1941, erupted in the context of anticolonialism, but it was also the culmination of the steady growth of anti-Semitism. The attempts of the Jewish social and intellectual elite to integrate into the political and social structure of Iraq suffered a major setback. Some people began looking for other solutions, such as emigration, or joined revolutionary movements like communism and Zionism.

Throughout this period, the Jewish population at large had a sympathetic attitude toward Zionism, though it was seen primarily as a solution for the poverty-stricken and persecuted Jews of Eastern Europe, not for Iraqi Jewry. The Iraqi rabbinic establishment never attacked Zionism because in Iraq secularization had never led to a loss of Jewish identity or the relinquishing of the Jewish community, so the secular character of Zionism was not perceived as a threat to Jewish identity. The Jewish communal leadership, on the other hand, related to Zionism cautiously and with some reservations, although it took no direct action against it. During the 1930s, motivated by concerns for the community's safety, communal leaders condemned Zionism, emphasizing their loyalty to Iraq and to Arab nationalism. In the 1940s, they were increasingly afraid the authorities might uncover the activities of the Zionist underground and bring disaster upon the community as a whole, but they still did not act against it.

As the position of Iraqi Jewry deteriorated, Zionist policy underwent an equally dramatic transformation. Faced with the extermination of European Jewry, which was going on at that same time, the Jewish leadership in Palestine concluded that the future of Zionism depended on finding alternative sources for potential immigrants. This realization led the Zionist leadership to reevaluate their attitude toward the Jews of Islamic countries and to formulate the "One Million Plan," whose primary goals were the immigration of one million Jews—Holocaust survivors and Jews from Arab countries—and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

In an attempt to win over Jewish communities previously ideologically and culturally remote from Zionism, and thereby generate their mass immigration to Palestine, the Zionists established a network of organizations throughout the Middle East and North Africa. This included a new Zionist organization in Iraq, which existed from 1942 to 1951. The basis for its activity was a commonality of interests between Zionism, which was looking for an alternative source of potential immigrants, and Iraqi Jewry, which was trying to find a solution to the problem of survival in light of the imminent threat of additional pogroms.

### **The Zionist Mission to Iraq: 1942–1951**

Zionist activities in Iraq started up again in the spring of 1942, directed by emissaries from the Mossad le-Aliyah Bet. They set up a branch of the pioneer movement Hehalutz, ran the Haganah self-defense organization, and organized clandestine immigration to Palestine.

Because Zionism was illegal in Iraq, it operated as an underground movement. Most activities took place in the basements of Jewish homes in Baghdad, and it was difficult to arrange large gatherings, trips, and outings; to set up training camps; or to conduct drills in the use of firearms. The young people knew that if they were

caught by the authorities, they and their families would be subject to imprisonment and heavy fines. In these circumstances, only a single Zionist movement, Hehalutz, was established, and it prevented the establishment of any competing Zionist movements. Very soon Zionist branches were established in Basra and Mosul.

Zionist activity began with the teaching of Hebrew. The Hebrew library of the Ahiever organization, which had closed in 1937, was reopened; dozens of groups were established for the study of Hebrew, Jewish history, Zionist ideology, and other subjects. Membership, only a few hundred in 1942, reached around 2,000 by the middle of 1948. During its 10 years of activity, several thousand teenagers and young adults participated in the movement's programs.

Activities were directed by emissaries sent from Palestine, assisted by a council comprising emissaries and representatives of the local movement. They set up a number of standing committees responsible for activities related to education, culture, printing, fund-raising, and preparing candidates for illegal immigration to Palestine. They held regular conventions once a year on Passover, which were attended by representatives from various branches throughout the country.

After World War II, the pioneer movement found it increasingly difficult to maintain regular communication with Palestine and was also subjected to increasing pressure by the local authorities. Enthusiasm for Zionism among Jewish youth weakened, as the possibilities for stealing across the border into Palestine became fewer and fewer and the Communist Party—whose proposed solution to the Jewish problem did not involve uprooting oneself from Iraq—became more active. In addition, the leadership of the Yishuv in Palestine, preoccupied with attending to the Holocaust survivors in Europe, gave low priority to activities in Iraq, which caused disappointment and grumbling among movement members. These factors led many members of long standing to leave the movement.

As long-time members were leaving, Zionist activity expanded in other sectors. The Hehalutz Hatza'ir youth movement gained new members from among the teenagers in the poor sections of the Jewish quarter of Baghdad, while also increasing its influence among the youth of the wealthier neighborhoods (Battawin and Karrada). Branches of the Zionist movement were also established in dozens of towns and villages throughout Iraq, including the Kurdish area in the north. The culture of the Jewish community in this area was Kurdish in many respects—religious, traditional, and conservative and less well educated and less assimilated than those of central and southern Iraq. Among the Jews of Kurdistan, religious and mystical ties to the Land of Israel, as well as belief in the messianic redemption, were also stronger.

The establishment of these branches was extremely important. They strengthened ties among the different Jewish communities of Iraq and established two-way communication between the Jews of Baghdad and the Jews of the provincial cities, towns, and even remote villages.

After the State of Israel was established, Iraqi Jewry experienced a new wave of persecution, officially sanctioned and well organized. In the middle of July 1948, the Iraqi parliament made Zionism, like communism and anarchism, a criminal offense, carrying a sentence ranging from seven years' imprisonment to death. Jews

found their freedom of movement restricted and emigration almost totally outlawed. Heavy fines were imposed on wealthy members of the community, and hundreds of Jews were arrested, imprisoned, or fined for the “crime” of maintaining ties with relatives or friends in Israel. In September 1948, Shafiq Ades, a Jewish millionaire, was executed after being convicted of selling surplus military equipment to the Israeli army. This event severely undermined Iraqi Jewry’s sense of security.

### **Illegal Immigration (Aliyah)**

Throughout the 1940s Iraqi Jews immigrated illegally to Palestine. This aliyah had to contend not only with the British ban on entering the country, under the terms of the White Paper (May 1939), but also with the Iraqi ban on emigration, instituted in the mid-1930s. In the summer of 1941, after the pogrom in Baghdad, hundreds of Jewish youths arrived in Palestine by way of Syria and Transjordan. Beginning in 1942, Aliyah Bet agents took an active role in organizing this immigration, involving themselves in all its stages from the initial selection of the individuals in Iraq up to the moment when they finally crossed the border into Palestine.

During World War II, the route most frequently used for the illegal immigration passed through Syria and Lebanon. Hundreds of individuals traveled to these countries on various pretexts—medical treatment, studies, or sightseeing—and then continued on to Palestine. After Syria gained its independence in 1946, however, this was no longer possible. From then until the establishment of Israel, the main route from Iraq to Palestine passed through Transjordan. Transportation was arranged through Arab smugglers and could involve serious mishaps: some emigrants were abandoned along the way, others were robbed, and still others were caught and jailed. On one occasion two emigrants were killed in a traffic accident. This route was used primarily by members of the Zionist movement who had been waiting to leave for months; their departure was essential for maintaining the attraction of the Zionist movement. In 1947, several dozen young people, using forged passports, arrived in Palestine on planes that landed at the Lod airport; another hundred or so arrived on two clandestine flights.

According to the 1948–1949 census, there were approximately 9,000 Jews of Iraqi origin in Israel in November 1948, of whom approximately 3,000 had immigrated between 1941 and 1948.

### **The Defence Force (Haganah)**

The Haganah in Iraq, an underground organization that operated between 1942 and 1951, was devoted to defending the Jewish community in the event of further pogroms. Founded by emissaries from the Yishuv in Palestine, it had several hundred members, both Zionists and non-Zionists. Its headquarters were in Baghdad, and there were branches in Basra and Kirkuk. The organization’s weapons and ammunition—primarily handguns, grenades, and Molotov cocktails—were brought in from Palestine, but as time went on they were purchased from arms smugglers

within Iraq itself. In many cases these were weapons stolen from British army bases after British forces had evacuated the region.

The Haganah had a hierarchical structure. There was an emissary from Palestine at the top, the instructors in the middle, and the rank-and-file members at its base. In 1945, a defense strategy was developed for protecting the main Jewish population centers in Baghdad against any attempt by a frenzied mob to break into the Jewish quarter and massacre its inhabitants. The goal of the plan was to stop the rioters' advance and hold on until help could arrive. Wireless communications were to play a central role in transferring information to the Yishuv and calling for assistance. If the Iraqi authorities were to take part in an attack on the Jewish quarter, the Haganah would have no effective response other than a struggle to the death, following the examples of Masada and the Warsaw ghetto.

The Haganah's activities were dangerous, because their exposure and especially the discovery of their weapon caches might lead to their being labeled a terrorist organization, thereby endangering the entire Jewish community. Likewise, any irresponsible use of firearms might be seen as a provocation and cause riots. Both the Haganah high command in Palestine and the members of the local organization were fully aware of this dilemma. Nevertheless, they believed disbanding the Haganah, especially after the Holocaust, would be tantamount to abandoning Iraqi Jewry, leaving them defenseless in the event of a possible pogrom.

### **From Persecution to Emigration, and from Emigration to Expulsion**

In October 1949, the Iraqi secret police arrested and interrogated dozens of Zionist underground members. The investigators, however, failed to uncover the Zionist organization, because the underground succeeded in smuggling many of its members to Iran and from there to Israel. By the end of December 1949, this flight to Iran had reached massive proportions, and thousands of Jews left Iraq. After trying and failing to stanch the illegal exodus, the Iraqi authorities decided to legalize and regulate it, on the assumption that only a few thousand young people would want to emigrate. On March 9, 1950, the Iraqi parliament passed a law authorizing Jewish emigration for a period of one year, on condition that emigrants surrender their Iraqi citizenship and promise never to return. In fact, the number of Jews who left Iraq far exceeded the government's expectations: more than 90 percent of the community (124,000) moved to Israel.

In the final stages of this operation, Iraqi Jewry was struck by a heavy and unexpected blow. On March 10, 1951, exactly one year after the passage of the law permitting Iraqi Jews to relinquish their citizenship, the government froze Jewish assets, leaving the Jews destitute. A short time later, the Zionist underground in Iraq came to an end after two Israeli emissaries (Mordechai Ben-Porat and Yehuda Tajar) were captured by the Iraqi secret police. This resulted in the arrest of dozens of members of Hehalutz, the Haganah, and the intelligence network run by the Israeli emissaries. Two members of the Zionist underground, Yosef Basri, who headed an Israeli spying network, and Haganah member Shalom Saleh, were hanged after being convicted of committing terrorist acts against Jews to encourage them to immigrate to Israel.

## Selected Bibliography

- Moshe, Gat. 1997. *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq 1948–1951*. London: Frank Cass.
- Nissim, Kazzaz. 1991. *Ha-yehudim be-Iraq ba-me'á ha-esrim* [The Jews in Iraq in the Twentieth Century]. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute.
- Nissim, Rejwan. 1985. *The Jews of Iraq, 3000 Years of History and Culture*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

# Jews in the Ottoman Empire

*Marc D. Angel*

---

## Historical Overview

When Spain expelled its Jews in 1492, thousands found haven in the domains of the Ottoman Empire. Jews had been living in the empire centuries earlier, but the influx of Sephardim led to the emergence of a major new center of Sephardic civilization. Throughout Turkey and the Balkans, as well as in the land of Israel, Sephardic culture prevailed among the Jews; Judeo-Spanish was their mother tongue. Sephardim established significant communities, large and small, in such places as Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Salonika, Edirne, Rhodes, Monastir, Safed, and Jerusalem.

As the Ottoman Empire expanded to include lands in the Middle East and North Africa, Jews of Arabic-speaking background represented an important segment of Ottoman Jewry. Some Ashkenazic and Romaniote communities also existed. This essay, though, will focus on the Judeo-Spanish-speaking Sephardim, heirs to medieval Iberian Jewry.

During the 16th century, the Sephardim reestablished their communities along the patterns that had existed in Spain and Portugal. They built synagogues and schools, operated their own court system, and published texts in their own language. They functioned as autonomous communities, a tolerated minority within the larger Islamic Ottoman Empire. Jewish officials represented Jewish interests to the Ottoman government and were responsible for collecting and transmitting taxes from the Jews.

Sephardim maintained a vibrant intellectual tradition. Rabbinic sages published classic works in Jewish law (e.g., the *Shulhan Arukh* by Rabbi Yosef Karo), Kabbalah (e.g., the works of Rabbis Moses Cordovero and Hayyim Vital), midrash (e.g., the *Ein Yaacov* by Rabbi Yaacov Ibn Haviv), ethics (e.g., *Reishith Hokhma* by Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas), biblical commentary (e.g., the commentaries of Rabbi Moshe Alsheikh), and poetry (e.g., the hymns of Rabbis Shelomo Alkabets and Israel Najara). This period also witnessed a flowering of rabbinic responsa literature and the publication of some philosophical works.

Sephardim distinguished themselves as doctors, merchants, international traders, and civil servants. By the mid-17th century, though, the Ottoman Empire underwent military and economic setbacks and began a long period of decline. This obviously affected all residents of the empire, including Jews.

As external conditions worsened, Jews also suffered enormously from the episode of Sabbatai Zevi, a charismatic personality born in Izmir who claimed to be the Messiah. He and his devoted followers convinced much of Ottoman Jewry (and world Jewry as well) that he would be revealed as Messiah in 1666. When Sabbatai Zevi proved to be a false messiah (he converted to Islam under threat by the Sultan!), the Jewish community was spiritually devastated.

By the late 17th century, then, the Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire were in a precarious state. Their financial condition had dropped precipitously. Their spiritual life was in shambles. Observers of Jewish life during the 18th and 19th centuries almost invariably described the Jews as impoverished, politically powerless, and apathetic. Although the Jews always had an elite group of scholars and wealthy businessmen, the masses had sunk into poverty and relative ignorance.

Yet, in spite of their material and political hardships, the Jews maintained a rich inner life that reinforced their sense of self-worth and dignity. They drew strength from their religious faith and traditions. They saw themselves as members of the chosen—albeit persecuted—people of Israel, destined to teach the world about the one true God. They also took pride in their specific Sephardic heritage. A popular belief among Sephardim was that they descended from the aristocracy of ancient Judea, which had been exiled to Spain from the Holy Land.

Sephardic culture stressed the virtue of interiority—building a strong inner life. The rabbis and pietists taught the virtue of *hitbodedut*, meditation. Kabbalistic beliefs and practices were widespread, further underscoring the role of spirituality and inwardness. Sephardic sages fostered a religious worldview that pointed out the transience of earthly life and the centrality of the world to come. An otherworldly, somewhat fatalistic, philosophy emerged.

Folk culture stressed the virtues of self-reliance, resignation in the face of suffering, and trust in God. A midrashic/Kabbalistic worldview prevailed in which respectful piety was preferred to philosophic speculation.

Synagogue customs inculcated respect for others and honor for oneself. For example, when a man was called to the Torah during synagogue services, his younger relatives stood in his honor. As he walked toward the reader's desk, congregants would call out "*bekhavod*" (with honor). When his portion was completed, his children and grandchildren kissed his hand and received his blessing. These customs not only conveyed honor to the man but also to his family.

Family solidarity was evident in the custom of naming children. Traditionally, the firstborn son and daughter were named after the father's parents, the second-born son and daughter after the mother's parents, and subsequent children after relatives alternating from the father's to the mother's family. Sharing names is a source of gratification and identification with the family.

Sephardic culture was also characterized by a remarkable optimism and sense of happiness. Judeo-Spanish folk singing was ubiquitous, and many of the *romanceros* sang of love, the beauties of nature, and other powerful emotions. These songs not only served to bring pleasure but also to stimulate the imagination and poetic sensitivities. Women tended to be best versed in the melodies and words of the Ladino folk songs. At family gatherings and celebrations, men and women sang these songs together.

Sephardic prayer services were generally chanted to upbeat melodies, led by the *hazan* and accompanied enthusiastically by the congregation. Some of the hymns were sung in Ladino, so that everyone would be able to understand the words.

Even the poorest Jews stressed neatness and aesthetics, colorful presentation of foods, and proper etiquette. Everyday life, no matter how dismal it may have seemed, was filled with celebration, humor, laughter, and hopes for a better time.

Sephardic life stressed balance and eschewed extremism. It fostered a worldview in which religion was an integral part of life—not an enterprise separated from the real world of business, emotions, and interpersonal relations. Its ideal was a religious humanism in which Jews served the Lord with piety, and at the same time were engaged in the universal concerns of humankind. Sephardim tended to maintain traditional communities and did not fragment into different religious movements as did the Ashkenazim of Europe and America.

The Sephardim of the Ottoman Empire created an extensive literature in Ladino (Judeo-Spanish). Printed in Rashi script, Ladino publications included translations of the Bible, prayer books, and other Hebrew texts, for example, *Hovot ha-Levavot* and selections from the *Shulhan Arukh*. Many original works—mostly on religious themes—also appeared. In 1730, the first volume of the *Me'am Lo'ez* was published in Istanbul. Envisioned as a comprehensive biblical commentary, its first several volumes were prepared by Rabbi Yaacov Huli. After his death, other rabbis continued the project, completing volumes on the entire Torah, as well as some of the books of the prophets and writings. The *Me'am Lo'ez* was eminently popular, being written in a congenial style in the vernacular language of the masses of Sephardim.

During the 19th century, numerous Ladino newspapers appeared throughout the Ottoman Empire, featuring news, essays, poetry, fiction, and humor. Dramatic works were translated into or composed in Ladino and were performed to enthusiastic audiences. Novels in Ladino were also very popular. The religious and secular literature of the period reflected the confrontation with modernity and the renewed sense of Jewish nationalism, that is, Zionism. During the early 20th century, some Ladino publications began to be printed in Latin letters.

The Alliance Israelite Universelle opened many schools throughout the Ottoman Empire, beginning in the 1860s. The goal was to provide a modern education where the French language and culture would predominate. Alliance graduates tended to prefer French to Judeo-Spanish and saw themselves as more modern (i.e., Westernized) than those who attended traditional communal schools. Within the Sephardic communities, dissension arose between traditionalists and progressives in many areas, not just educational policy.

The Ottoman Empire came to an end in 1923. By that time thousands of Sephardim had immigrated to the United States, the Land of Israel, Europe, Africa, and South America. Judeo-Spanish civilization continued to flourish in the new lands for several generations; but by the end of the 20th century, Judeo-Spanish was the mother tongue of only a few elderly Sephardim. Although there has been a revival of interest in Sephardic culture in general, and Judeo-Spanish folklore and literature in particular, Judeo-Spanish has effectively reached the end of its course as a living language.

For nearly 500 years, Sephardim maintained a unique Judeo-Spanish civilization. Their values, ideals, and worldview continue to have relevance to those interested in Jewish history and culture.

### Selected Bibliography

- Angel, Marc D. 1991. *Voices in Exile: A Study in Sephardic Intellectual History*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav.
- Angel, Marc D. 2006. *Foundations of Sephardic Spirituality: The Inner Life of Jews of the Ottoman Empire*. Woodstock, IL: Jewish Lights Publishing.
- Benbassa, Esther, and Aron Rodrigue. 2000. *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community 14th–20th Centuries*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

## The Sabbatean Movement in the Ottoman Empire

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

The Ottoman Empire lasted from 1299 to 1920 and as it grew embraced different religions and cultures under its sovereignty. The Ottomans had a long history of tolerance and an open-door policy for Jews from Spain and, later, from Russia. To accommodate them and other groups it developed the Koranic concept of the *dhimmi* to ensure the development of a method of Islamic rule that was tolerant to different cultures. It translated into a system of minority administrations known as the “millet system,” whereby religious groups could rule their own people with minimal interference, while ensuring Ottoman hegemony and efficient tax collection. This system was partially successful but also left much dissatisfaction. Perhaps Sabbateanism was a form of Jewish protest against the corruption of mainstream millet leadership—which was invariably controlled by the rabbinate. Perhaps the millet system ordained by the sultan to facilitate the orderly control of minority religions bolstered an intolerant local leadership that ignored pluralism and the subtleties of religious subgroups, causing them to be stifled to such a degree that it made conversion to Islam one of the preferable remedies.

Sabbateanism developed to explain the teachings and actions of Sabbatai Zevi (Shabbetai Zvi), who declared his messianism in 1666 and soon afterward allegedly converted to Islam, leaving a large and far-flung flock in the Ottoman Empire and beyond very confused. He and his followers combined the study of Lurianic Kabbalah with overt messianism and a unique relationship with the Ottoman Empire. The aberration of Jewish law as taught by his disciples was justified with mystical rationale as an important step in the messianic redemption. Thus, disobedience to Jewish religious law became acceptable and even encouraged in the sect, while followers purported to have a desire for holiness, and a belief in God and the Messiah. Abandoning tradition seemed to legitimize and even encourage assimilatory

thinking as a religious tenet, something that had been strongly condemned by the rabbinic leadership until that time. Sabbateanism witnessed a group of Zevi's adherents converting to Islam (known as the Donme) but other followers converted to Catholicism (Frankism), and it is considered likely that other arguably assimilatory efforts (such as Haskalla, Reform, Secular Zionism) were either inspired by Sabbatean doctrine or underwent the same processes that led to its development. Assimilation seems to be a common thread among these groups. For many believers who rejected Zevi's messiahship after his apostasy, the issues he extolled nevertheless still remained relevant. They were ideas that had been repressed by the traditional leadership but had been given credibility by the Sabbatean movement, and even though it took on extreme expression by Zevi's conversion to Islam, the ideas remained intact. Had Zevi and his followers not taken such extreme measures the ideas expressed would never have reached a critical mass, but clearly there existed pent-up feelings and dissatisfaction in Jewish life that needed to be vented, and it fell on these events to bring them to the fore. Indeed, many Jews wished to remain loyal to their religious, traditional, family, and emotional heritage but also had reservations about their lives under existing conditions. The all-permeating legal demands of ritual Jewish law (Halacha) were stifling, and the introverted stance of the Jewish community and its fear of engaging the wider society did not suit the ambitious nature of many Jews. The lack of a living Hebrew culture, the absence of Jewish national symbols, and the sense that Jews were not able to entirely share the pride and empathy of other Turks in the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire were frustrating. Many sought a way to integrate into the larger society and sought a national identity while not giving up their essential Jewish belief systems and the culture dear to them. Sabbateanism emerged to provide doctrinal solutions for these people. The doctrines emerging did not remain the heritage of a closed group. Although the assimilation doctrine was not always conducive to group building, it was an important enough idea to proliferate, and it did so leaving few traceable links to its Sabbatean source.

The Donme are the descendents of a small group of people who, emulating Zevi, converted to Islam. Some will argue that they had been forced to convert to Islam like their leader had and the theological conviction in support of the conversion developed only afterward. The term "Donme" is Turkish for an insincere conversion to Islam—apostate. The Donme community combined many Jewish practices in private while demonstrating Islamic practices in public. Although enclined in religious doctrine, the essential direction of the theology was toward assimilation. Interestingly, this idea still possesses religious significance. Nevertheless, it is likely that conversion to Islam had practical motives also. Those seeking tax havens and better economic treatment sought to join the Donme community and be recognized as Muslims; in this way they could, on the one hand, remain Jewish at heart, and on the other hand, enjoy tax benefits reserved to Muslims. It is also likely that those who had converted to Islam for pragmatic reasons before Zevi's mystical apostasy later joined Donme communities feeling more comfortable there than in a purely Islamic environment.

In many respects this resembled (or inspired) a later declaration by Moses Mendelsohn to be a “Jew in the home and a German in the street,” or rather in this earlier context “to be a Muslim on the street and a Jew in private.” The influences of Sabbateanism can be detected in Mendelsohn’s sentiments and within the highly assimilatory program of the Enlightenment. But overt rejection of tradition would have been impossible in the strongly traditional structures of the 17th century, and therefore, the Donme intuitively garbed their ideas with religious/doctrinal overtones and elaborate rituals and symbolism at least until the onset of public secularism permitted its essential nature to become public.

The Donme are notoriously secretive, this becoming a major tenet of their doctrine. This was likely because of fear of the Ottoman authorities and because they wished to preserve the many benefits they enjoyed as Muslims while knowing they were not entirely Muslim in practice. Without a doubt they also feared the criticism and vengeance of Jewish Orthodoxy, which might try to spoil their situation if too much be known. Converting to Islam offered a way to break out of the millet community structure forced on minority communities by the Sultan.

Under such a system the Jewish religious leadership of the Empire—the “Haham Basi”—appointed rabbinic leaders, collected taxes, decided community policy and religious law, and meted out justice. However disagreeable his religious decisions were for minority Jewish groups, all were required to abide by its policy. By converting to Islam, however, one would no longer be required to heed the Jewish hierarchy and could more easily form independent community structures. Clearly, motives existed for conversion: to be relieved from religious tyranny and to become a part of a broad thinking and aspiring Empire.

The Donme answered to various names, such as “Maaminim” (Hebrew for “believers”), “Avdeti” (Arabic for “heretics”), “Selanikli” (from Salonika), and Sabetayci (Sabbetai). By the 19th century, three strains of Donme had emerged, each with its own distinct classes and its own kahal/synagogues, and they were particularly represented in the Donme stronghold of Salonica.

1. Izmirim (otherwise known as Kapanci) were the original followers of Sabbatai Zevi, named after his hometown of Izmir. The Izmiris were successful in trade and prominent in the intelligentsia—they formed the aristocracy of Donme society under the name “Cavellers.” They were highly assimilated into Ottoman society and spoke Turkish.
2. The Yakoviyim followed Zevi’s brother Jacob, believing him to be Zevi’s incarnation. They were represented in lower and middle classes of Ottoman society and were commonly bureaucrats in Ottoman government.
3. The Konyoses (otherwise known as Karakash) followed one of Zevi’s disciples, Baruchia Russo, believing him to be Zevi’s incarnation. They were the poorest of the Donme, spoke Judeo-Spanish, and were generally artisans and workers. Part of this group is believed to still practice religious rites in modern Turkey, and they are known as fanatical fundamentalists by the rest of the Donme.

If the Donme conversion to Islam is interpreted not so much as an embrace of Islamic religious doctrine but as the desire to assimilate into the dominant society, then one may assume that with the easing of Islamic norms in modern Turkey, the Donme would not fight to remain loyal to Islam but rather would adopt new practices. And although Islam does not permit the interrogation of converts and was required to accept them without question, the Donme were traditionally suspected of lacking conviction. This suspicion proved justified, as demonstrated by the ease with which Donme slipped into secularism after the Tanzimat reforms introduced by foreign pressures around the 1840s. Taxation of minorities was eased and conversion out of Islam was permitted, signaling a process of secularization and unprecedented levels of tolerance for other worldviews on a *de jure* basis. Evangelical Christian groups became more active in the empire, and some even exerted their strong influence on Sabbateanism, which combined Christian influences of the inquisition and influences of British millenarians making headway in the Ottoman Empire. The Donme community certainly felt less obliged to observe strict Islam and at liberty to pursue greater assimilation into an even broader system, while the reforms allowed many to return to Judaism. By that time Jews were also seeking broader cultural and ideological paradigms and a return to earlier forms so sectarianism was unnecessary. Religion was no longer the predominant superstructure for society, but rather a component of it; they and others identified the umbrella structure of nationalism and tolerant secular government to be the preferred paradigm permitting diverse practices and culture. It became obvious that conversion to Christianity was also not as progressive as the embrace of secularism and nationalism.

### **Sabbatean Evolution**

Sabbateanism developed in the atmosphere of defeat that the Ottomans suffered at the gates of Vienna in 1683. It is likely that the atmosphere in the empire affected the growth of the movement. The Sultans quickly understood that if the empire did not embrace Western techniques and adopt the best of the enlightened sciences, including engineering, medicine, and modern scientific method, they would continue to lose wars. But it was more than a century and a half later before sultans like Mahmut II in 1826 started movements to openly adopt Western culture. In 1839, Sultan Abdul Mecid extended equal citizenship to all the citizens of the empire, without religious or ethnic distinction, ensuring that all citizens could bear witness in court even against a Muslim, could hold government office, and could serve in the high ranks of the army. The Donme were important beneficiaries of this process, growing and enjoying swift assimilation into Ottoman life.

On the other front, the relationship of the Donme to the Jews was tense. Their need to defend themselves from religious Jewish polemic inspired the rapid spread of print and encouraged scholarship and the continued study of Jewish mysticism and theological literature. At the same time, the Jewish religious authorities banned the study of mysticism and repressed Sabbatean influence while turning inward. Some attribute the decline of Ottoman Jewry to the crisis born in the wake of

Sabbatai Zevi's messianic claims and apostasy. Sabbatean or messianic expectations are believed to have neutralized the entrepreneurial spirit of many believers who expected to be magically whisked away from exile to redemption. This view does not accurately depict the sociological structures of messianic groups and is unlikely to be the entire cause for the economic degeneration of Ottoman Jewry. On the contrary, communities of believers and minority sects are often able to develop strong networks and loyalties that allow them to strengthen their economic activity. Further, contrary to common thinking that messianics are dreamy-eyed and unworldly, messianic beliefs are often rooted in strong cultural and social networks and provide both an excellent infrastructure and motivation for commerce. This was the case with the Donme. Perhaps the mainstream Jewish communities, which were influenced by Sabbatean thinking but remained under rabbinic leadership, went through a greater crisis as they were required to go to great lengths to weed out the potentially heretical elements still active in their midst.

It is this process that was damaging for Ottoman Jewry. The efforts to censor certain religious and Kabbalistic texts is well documented, and the oppression of the imaginative faculties, freedom, and creativity of community members left its mark on Ottoman Jewry. Ties with undesirable elements were cut, suspicions and paranoia raged against those who were believed to be secret Sabbateans, and the community turned inward, leaving a sense of depression among the Ottoman Jewish communities. In the meantime, other minorities of the empire became more adept in their commercial dealings and were helped by their religious structures, particularly the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox churches. The Donme who converted to Islam were now free of the Jewish millet control over their activities and quickly emerged as an important and functional community in the wider society. The repressed Jewish communities were probably relieved to find alternatives to their oppressive leadership in secularism, and so, indirectly, the oppression brought on by rabbinic reactions to Sabbateanism also influenced Jewish support for the Young Turk Revolution.

In a fascinating instance of a Jewish class conflict, in 1840s Izmir, the poorer Jews reacted to the extortion of the wealthy meat merchants who charged them high meat taxes, first by embargoing them and finally by eating nonkosher meat. A more extreme act was the mass conversion of 80 families to Protestantism and the preparedness of another 2,000 to do the same, so as to avoid the millet authority of the Jewish leadership and its taxes and oppression. Although no overt mention of Sabbateanism is found, it seems more than coincidental that this occurred in Zevi's home town and that the consumption of nonkosher meat was a Sabbatean practice. The fact that so many people were willing to convert out of Judaism is almost Sabbatean/Frankist in style. One might view this as a testament to the effects and influences Sabbateanism was having on the Jewish communities and how it legitimized the break with ritual law and endorsed assimilation for motives of personal benefit. Even though the Jewish community broke with overt Sabbateanism, precedents were set and the infrastructure was in place for Jews to exit the observance of ritual law. This correlated with its freedom from the often oppressive practices of the religious leadership and was reinforced by the success of the Donme

communities in the general society and their gradual reacceptance by mainstream Jewish elements.

The greatest change for the Donme community occurred during the Balkan Wars in the years leading up to World War I when Salonica passed over to Greek hands. At this point many Donme resettled in Turkish Istanbul and set up schools and communities that have left a mark on Turkish society till today. However, the forced transfer of Turks from Salonica to Turkey in 1924 was the final blow to the Donme stronghold and changed the course of Donme history. Although many attempted a rapprochement with the Jewish community that would allow them to remain in Salonica as Jews not as Turks, their efforts were rejected. Rabbinic refusal to accept them back remarkably saved them from extinction along with the rest of Salonican Jewry during the Nazi occupation of Greece. Other Donme are alleged to have converted to Christianity so as to remain in Salonica, but the Greek public opinion viewed the Donme as more harmful than other Turks and sought their absolute expulsion. Therefore, it is unclear to what extent conversion to Christianity helped them and to what extent those that remained were saved from destruction under the Nazi occupation. From the 1940s, there began a strong assimilatory trend among the Donme who resettled in Turkey. Efforts to preserve their secrecy were intensified, probably resulting from having witnessed the destruction of Greek Jewry and fear that the same could happen to them in the wake of Turkish cooperation with the Nazi regime. Fear of growing Islamic antagonism to the perceived Donme role in the overthrow of the sultan and establishment of a secular state in Turkey further forced Donme affiliates to underplay their prominence and community network.

Though the Donme were never officially deemed to be a separate group, there were signs that this might change when the 1960 census registered them as a distinct group, primarily for taxation purposes. At the time it was believed there were approximately 20,000 Donme members in Turkey. Some estimate their numbers to be around 50,000–60,000 today; others estimate it at 100,000. They are believed to be very prosperous but highly assimilated, and only a small minority are Sabbatean in the religious sense. They generally refer to themselves as “Salonicians” not as Sabbateans. They are extremely nonreligious. The enmity of Islamic fundamentalism toward them is one of the strongest factors in the preservation of their distinct ethnic memory. Because of the high intermarriage rate, the phenomenon of half-Donme is becoming increasingly well known. There have been recent efforts by partisan Donme activists to reclaim their national pride and standing in Turkish society, but this has met with overall rejection, embarrassment, and denial from the mainstream Donme population.

At present, there are some well-known Donme families and other less-known families occupying important positions in modern Turkish life. The former foreign minister, Ismail Cem, was a Donme, though some of his family members have officially come out and declared that, although they are of Donme ethnicity, they disassociate from the cultural group, including Cepil Ipekci, a famous fashion designer in Turkey, and Nukhet Izet Ipekci, daughter of the famous journalist Abdi Ipekci, who declared on an Islamic channel that her parents were of Donme origins.

Other Donme include the industrialist Dilber and Bezmen families and Rahsan Ecevit, wife of former Prime Minister Bilent Ecevit. Tansu Ciller, who was the first female prime minister, is half Donme on her mother's side. Altan Oymen, past leader of the Republican People's Party was of Donme descent. Other prominent personalities of Donme origin include writers, journalists, filmmakers, professors, lawyers, judges, bureaucrats (legal and foreign service), bankers, and industrialists. They can almost be said to be the standard bearers of secularism and modern Turkish nationalism that is based on cultural unity rather than racial characteristics. They are more advanced in this process than secular Turkish Jews and in many ways resemble the prominence and thinking of the European Jewish Enlightenment, leading many to suspect that Sabbateanism played a role there, too. Donme sympathy toward Jews exists but association is not common because of the fears of being further tainted by Islamic fundamentalism. This fear is becoming increasingly real as the influence of Islamic parties grows.

### Selected Bibliography

- Baer, Marc David. 1999. "Revealing a Hidden Community: Ilgaz Zorlu and the Debate in Turkey over the Donme/Sabbateans." *The Turkish Studies Association Journal* 23 (1, Spring): 68–75.
- Barnai, Jacob. 1996. "From Sabbateanism to Modernization: Ottoman Jewry on the Eve of the Ottoman Reforms and the Haskala." In *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*, edited by Harvey E. Goldberg, 73–80. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Barnai, Jacob. 1996. "The Spread of the Sabbatean Movement in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." In *Communication in the Diaspora: The Pre-Modern World*, edited by Sophia Menachem, 313–337. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Carlebach, Elisheva. 1990. "Sabbatianism and the Jewish-Christian Polemic." *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 10: 1–7.
- Ehrlich, Avrum. 2000. "Sabbatean Mysticism as Proto Secularism." In *Jewish Turkey Encounters*, edited by Mehmet Tutuncu, 273–300. Haarlem, Netherlands: SOTA.
- Idel, Moshe. 1997. "Saturn and Sabbetai Tzevi: A New Approach to Sabbateanism." *Jewish Studies* 37: 147–160.
- Katz, Jacob. 1998. "The Suggested Relationship between Sabbatianism, Haskalah, and Reform." In *Divine Law in Human Hands*, 504–530. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.
- Katz, Yossef. 1987. "Paths of Zionist Political Action in Turkey, 1882–1914: The Plan for Jewish Settlement in Turkey in the Young Turks Era." *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4 (1): 115–135.
- Liebes, Yehuda. 1993. "Sabbatean Messianism." In *Studies in Jewish Myth and Jewish Messianism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 93–106, 177–182.
- Stavroulaki, Nikos. 1984. "Shabbetai Zevi and the 'Donme' of Thessaloniki." *Forum on the Jewish People, Zionism and Israel* 53: 103–114.

# History of Jews in Syria

*Sarina Roffé*

---

**General Population:** 18.6 million (U.S. State Department)

**Jewish Population:** 10

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Damascus, 5; Aleppo, 5

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Primarily Sephardic Jews; immigration from Spain and Italy began after 1492. Jews began leaving Syria in the late 1890s and continued emigrating until the State of Israel was created. The doors to emigration were closed by the government and not reopened until the 1990s, when the all but a few of the remaining Jews left the country for Israel or the United States.

**Languages Spoken:** Arabic and Hebrew

---

## Historical Overview

1,000 BCE Jews are found living in Aleppo and Damascus, which was considered part of greater Palestine.

950 BCE The Great Synagogue of Aleppo is built.

200 CE East-West trade routes link through Damascus to Central Asia where silk and spices are sold. These caravan routes become an important source of commerce for Syrian Jews. Dubbed the Silk Road by German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in the 1870s, the Silk Road peaked during China's Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE).

636 CE The Arab conquest of region: Islamic caliphates begin ruling the region.

896 The Aleppo Codex is written.

921 Sa'adia Gaon visits Aleppo.

10th century Jews from Iraq move to Syria.

1170–1180 Rabbi Petachya of Regensburg visits Aleppo.

1173 Benjamin of Tudela writes of a visit to Aleppo.

14th century The Aleppo Codex is taken into the custody of the Jewish community of Aleppo.

1400 The Great Synagogue of Aleppo is destroyed during the rule of Tamerlane.

1418 The Great Synagogue is rebuilt.

15th century Jews from Spain and Italy move to Syria.

18th century Jews in Syria have limited access to the outside world and the modernism that spreads through Western Europe.

1867 The opening of the Suez Canal destroys the regional economy that depended on the caravan trade routes.

1890s Jews begin leaving Syria for Manchester, England, and Eretz Israel.

1900 The Ottoman census reports about 10,000 Jews in Syria.

1907–1913 A large Jewish emigration to the United States, Mexico, and Argentina is prompted by conscription of Jews in the Turkish Army, severe economic

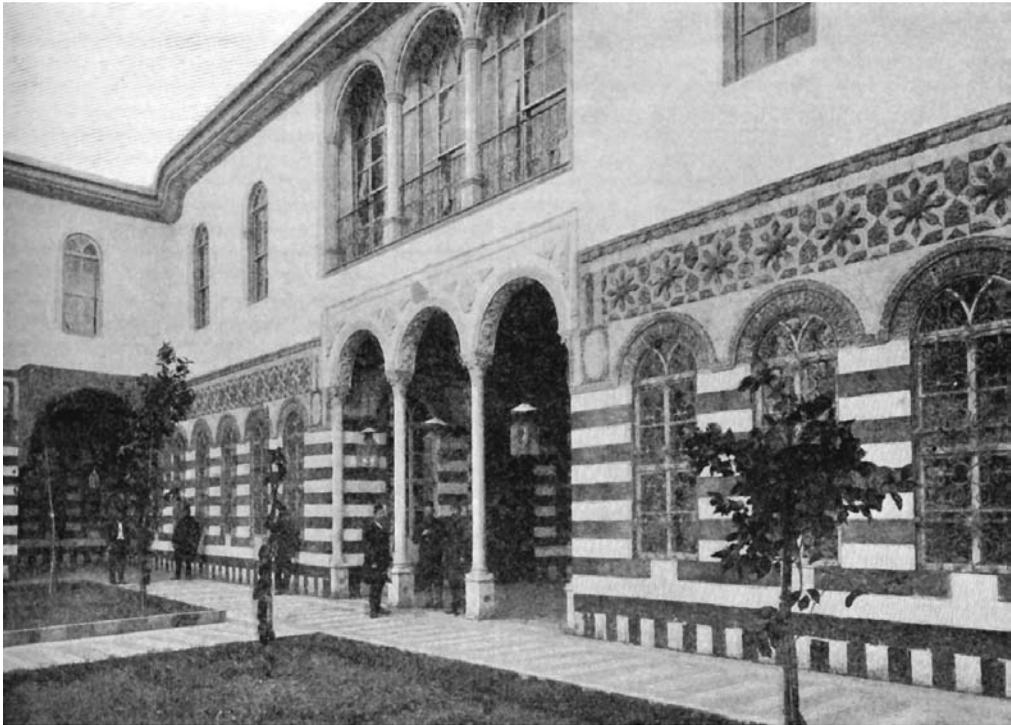
- decline in the region, and increased persecution of Jews due to Zionism. Emigration stops during World War I.
- 1908 Young Turks take over the Ottoman Empire. *Dhimmi* status ends and the government begins to conscript Jews into the Turkish Army.
- 1918–1920s After World War I ends, emigration to the United States, Mexico, and Argentina resumes.
- 1920 The Ottoman Empire is split and the French Mandate of Syria (as well as Lebanon) is established in the Treaty of Sèvres.
- 1923 The Republic of Turkey is established.
- 1924 The French combine the provinces of Aleppo and Damascus into the state of Syria.
- 1946 Syria is recognized as an independent state.
- 1947 Anti-Zionist groups burn the Great Synagogue of Aleppo.  
Aleppo Codex is damaged and hidden.  
Pogroms leave Jewish shops and synagogues destroyed.  
Thousands begin to emigrate.
- 1948 The last large emigration of Jews from Syria, before the doors of the country close to emigration.
- 1958 The Aleppo Codex is smuggled out of Aleppo.
- 1980s A small group of unmarried women is permitted to leave Syria. Holy objects are smuggled out of Syria.
- 1990s The doors to emigration open and the last group is permitted to leave for the United States. About 10 Jews remain behind.
- 1995 The state of Syria abandons the Great Synagogue of Aleppo.

## Background

Syria is one of the oldest Diaspora communities in the world, and Jews are reported to have lived there on land that belonged to Rabbi Judah Nasi. In the 10th century, the Jews of Syria were artisans and were engaged in commerce, banking, and government administration. Because of its conquest by King David, Syria has a higher status than other places outside Israel, and some of the commandments that apply only to Israel apply to Syria as well. The influx of Jews from Spain at the end of the 15th century and later strengthened the communities of Syria, where the influence of cabalists from Safed was intense. Jews primarily lived in Aleppo, Damascus, and outlying areas.

The city of Aleppo spans Jewish history from the days of King David over 3,000 years ago. Aristocratic and noble, Aleppo was the crown of the Sephardic world. The Jewish presence in Syria is intertwined with the history and the politics of Jerusalem. According to the book of Samuel and Psalm 60, Aram Soba, the Biblical name for Aleppo, was part of the extended area of northern Israel. Through the millennia, great Talmudic sages record Aleppo's unbroken record of communal peace and spiritual productivity. The Hebrew printing press was introduced in Aleppo in 1806 and this soon became the leading industry.

Damascus is closer to Safed and it was easier to travel from there to Tiberias than to Aleppo, where the Arabic dialect was slightly different. The Jews of Damascus



Residence of a prosperous Jewish family in Damascus, Syria, about 1900. (Isadore Singer, ed. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

were Zionists, were liberal, and had mixed schools; their Hebrew developed into the modern Hebrew language. Many were wealthy and from distinguished elite backgrounds. The middle class started to develop in Damascus only in the 18th century, although most Jews remained in the lower classes.

By contrast, Aleppo preserved its own identity, even when the Spanish Jews came after the 1492 Expulsion and the Francos (European) followed later. The Francos were not obligated by local rules, enjoying a kind of extraterritorial privilege. Their orientation was more modern, paving the way for the introduction of modernism in Aleppo. They included the Picciotto family, who were consular representatives in Aleppo, supported the building of synagogues, and attempted to establish their own educational system. The gap in classes between the old neighborhood and Jamilliyah, the new neighborhood, was noticeable.

Over the centuries, Syria was plagued by earthquakes, floods, epidemics, anti-Semitism, the Black Plague, and other natural disasters. The cities maintained several charity funds, including a Bikur Holim (society to visit the sick) and hospitality and bridal funds.

In the late 17th century, Syrian Jews adopted the European attitude of quarantines, which harmed commerce. Doctors were cautious about deciding if someone was contagious, because the family would then go into quarantine and were isolated for months, shutting down trade. In Aleppo, the wealthy lived outside the city

during these periods; while in Damascus many lived by the river, where it was believed the air was cleaner.

Occupations in Aleppo included international trade along the caravan route, local trade, small business, and money exchange. Silk was the primary export. A look at the records of the British Levant Company indicates that for many centuries Jews in Aleppo controlled the customs houses where the interpreters were Sephardic Jews who could converse in Spanish, Italian, and Arabic.

The 1867 opening of the Suez Canal was catastrophic for the residents of Aleppo, because they no longer had a source of trade. After the canal began operation, more than half of Aleppo's rabbis moved to Jerusalem, and its spiritual center moved with it. Spiritually, Aleppo was central to southern Turkey (Antioch, Kilez, Orpha, Entebbe, and others) and the areas east of Baghdad.

During a 10-year period in the 1980s, a collection of Jewish holy objects was smuggled out of Syria through the efforts of Avraham Hamra, who was the chief rabbi. The collection included nine ancient Bible manuscripts, known as the *Ketarim*, each between 700 and 900 years old. In addition, there were 40 Torah scrolls and 32 decorative boxes in which the Sephardic Torah scrolls were held. The collection was taken in stages via Turkey to the Jewish National and University Library of the Hebrew University in Israel. The smuggling was necessary because official requests for permission to take them out of Syria were denied.

Famous and influential Jews in Syria included the Farhi, Antebi, Elmaliah, and Safra families. Edmond Safra, although not the eldest son, took on his family's banking legacy, expanding it to an international empire.

## Emigration

From the seventh century until the end of Ottoman rule, the Jewish community paid *jizya*, a poll tax. The tax delineates their status as *dhimmi*, a protected people, and allows them to self-govern. Self-government entitled the Jews to freedom of religion, a separate court system ruled by local rabbis to handle internal disputes, and military protection. According to the Koran, *dhimmi* status did not entitle Jews to the same or equal rights as Muslim citizens. Jews, along with their Christian counterparts, were of a lower status than Muslims and disputes between a Christian or Jew and a Muslim were settled in the government court, which was ruled by Islamic law.

In 1908, the Young Turks took over the Ottoman Empire and *dhimmi* status ended. The new government began to conscript Jews into the Turkish Army, spurring emigration. Other factors in emigration included the tremendous economic decline in the years after the Suez Canal opened and the rise of anti-Semitism as Zionist ideas were spread around the world. Emigration stopped during World War I but picked up again after the war ended. The last large wave of immigration occurred after World War II and the creation of the State of Israel. Then the doors to emigration by the Jews of Syria were closed by the government of Syria.

In the 1970s, attempts to cross the border were met with hostility. Travel papers were only granted if members of the family stayed behind. Jews faced increasing

levels of persecution. In the 1980s, however, a small group of unmarried women was permitted to leave Syria to find husbands. After increased pressure from the Syrian community in Brooklyn, the doors to emigration opened in the early 1990s, when the remaining 5,000 or so Jews in Syria were airlifted out of the country. As of 1995, a Jewish community no longer exists in Syria.

### Rabbinical Leadership in Aleppo

A look at Aleppo rabbinic literature indicates that responsa were sent to nearby Jewish communities in southeastern Turkey who relied on Aleppo as a spiritual center and sought the services of its rabbis and its rabbinical court. In Syria, the methods used to decide Halacha were similar to those used in Eretz Yisrael. In Aleppo, the Shulhan Arukh was followed very strictly, and the community is extremely devout.

Under Muslim rule, each community was responsible for its own religious autonomy. For centuries, and until the Jews began to migrate out of Aleppo in the early 1900s, precipitated by the Young Turks Movement, Torah honors remained the province of the Dayan family, direct descendants of King David, as distinguished scholars. The family established Beit Nasi (House of the Prince), a revered house of study and prayer that functioned in Aleppo until Israel's independence in 1947–1948.

In 1803, a dispute between the Jewish community of Aleppo and the Francos (European Jews) was settled in a 220-page rabbinical decision (*Mahane Yehuda* treatise, Livorno, Italy) issued by Rabbi Yehuda Kassin (Aleppo, 1708–1784). *Mahane Yehuda* contains hundreds of responsa and illustrates mastery of all phases of Talmudic literature. The end of the book has printed agreements between Jerusalem and Damascus rabbis. A collection of Kassin's responsa was subsequently published in Jerusalem by his great grandson, Rabbi Shaul Kassin, under the title *Ro'ei Yisrael* (Jerusalem 1904) in three parts. A collection of his sermons, *VaZot LiYehuda*, exists in manuscript form. It is a book of questions and answers on Torah, Gemara, and Kabbalah.

From the mid-19th century on, the Ottoman government appointed a chief rabbi (*Hakham bashi*), who represented the Jewish community before government agencies and could be a powerful individual in the community in his own right. Rabbis often came from families with a long tradition of supplying the community with hakamim. The hakam was distinguished by his clothing, for example, the size and color of his turban and the long, wide sleeves of his outer garments.

### Aleppo Codex

The Aleppo community was particularly proud of its ownership for several centuries of the Aleppo Codex, written in the 10th century in Tiberias. The "Jewel of the Crown" is the Hebrew manuscript of the Bible written by the scribe Shlomo Ben Buya'a and then verified, vocalized, and pointed by Aaron Ben-Asher in Tiberias. The Codex went from Tiberias to Jerusalem to Cairo (11th century), where it was

used by Maimonides, and then it went to Aleppo in the 14th century. The Aleppo Codex was kept in the Joab Ben Zeruiah Synagogue (in the Cave of Elijah) for some 500 years until 1947.

Aleppo's rabbis allowed few to view the Codex as they believed it was a talisman that protected the community. After the State of Israel was established, the streets of Aleppo and Damascus exploded with fires and acts of anti-Semitism. The Codex disappeared for 10 years, until the remaining 295 of its 487 leaves was delivered to the Ben Zvi Institute in Israel for safekeeping. Now in the Shrine of the Book, alongside the Dead Sea Scrolls in Jerusalem, it is considered the most authoritative manuscript of the Masoretic text of the Bible.

The rabbis of Aleppo made significant contribution in terms of religious literature. Examples are as follows:

- Rabbi Haim Mordecai Labaton (1780–1869 Aleppo), the son of Luna and Rabbi Helfon Labaton, became chief rabbi of Aleppo and head of the beth din. He wrote two learned treatises, *Nochach Hashulchan* and *Ben Yayir*.
- Rabbi Helphon Labaton, one of the sons of Rabbi Haim Mordecai, was a kabbalist who died in 1824 at a young age, predeceasing his father. Some of his writings are included in *Nohah HaShulhan*.
- Rabbi Isaac Labaton wrote *Oseh Hayyil*, and his responsa are published in works by other authors. Rabbi Isaac Labaton's daughter, Sarah Labaton, married kabbalist Rabbi Shalom Hedaya (1862–1945 Aleppo), son of Rabbi Moshe Hedaya. Shalom wrote *Shalom LaAm*, *Dober Shalom*, *HaHayyim VeHaShalom*, *She LeBet Abot*, and *Shalom veTzedek*.
- Rabbi Yitzhak Attia (b. 1775 Aleppo) wrote six books over the course of his life. Rabbi Yitzhak's first book, titled *Zara Yitzhak Attia*, is an explanation of the first two sections of the *Chumash*. The second book, *Vatican Yitzhak*, is a continuation and covers the next three *Chumash*. *Shut Avot* is an explanation of the *Gemarra*. *Rov Tagan*, his fourth book, is an explanation of the six books of the *Mishna*. His fifth book, *Mesharet Moshe*, speaks of the strong hand of the Rambam; *Echet Chael* is a literal translation of the Woman of Valor poem. His last book was titled *Tana Veshiar*.
- Rabbi Rafael Kassin's writings include *Maarekhet HaShulhan*, *Lehem HaMarekhet*, *Yayyin HaRekaa* (a collection of sermons), *Derekh Hahayyim* (a defense against Gentile attacks on the Bible and Talmud), and *Tekafu Kohen*.
- Rabbi Shaul Matlub Abadi (1889 Aleppo–1970 Brooklyn) was a Torah scholar and head of the Magen David Talmud Torah program that served Brooklyn's Syrian community for more than 40 years. He left Aleppo when B'nai B'rith tried to establish a chapter in Aleppo and he opposed it. Abadi came to Brooklyn in the 1920s to serve the Brooklyn Syrian community. A descendant of many rabbis, he studied with Rabbi Yitzhak Dahan and Ezra Shayo. He taught thousands of students in the Sephardic method of study, where you read what the sages have said; determine a correlation between the sages and today; and look at the structure of the paragraph, the sentence, and the order of the words. Abadi was also an excellent writer, especially in using meter and rhyme.

## Education

Education was not provided for girls, who were protected and did not leave the home without a male escort, even after they were married. Boys attended religious school and learned basic math necessary for tracking business expenses. Once a boy reached his 13th birthday and made his bar mitzvah, he no longer attended school.

When the Alliance Israélite Universelle opened its schools in Damascus and Aleppo in the mid 19th century, it was a revered institution that included Torah studies, so it was supported by the rabbis. During its height, about 300 students attended the school annually. After the large emigration of 1907–1913 and 1918–1923, most Jewish children attended the Alliance schools. Many needed financial assistance because of the economic conditions in the region.

## Contemporary Overview

A Jewish community no longer exists in Syria, although there may be dozens of Jews who live in nonorganized communities.

## Selected Bibliography

- “The Central Synagogue in Aleppo, Syria.” The Database of Jewish Communities. <http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Synagogue/Aleppo.asp> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Deshen, Shlomo, and Walter Zenner. 1982. *Jewish Societies in the Middle East: Community, Culture, and Authority*. Washington, DC: University Press of America.
- Goshen-Gottstein, Moshe H. 1960. “The Authority of the Aleppo Codex.” *Textus: Annual of the Hebrew University Bible Project* 1: 17–58.
- Harel, Yaron. 1992. “A Spiritual Agitation in the East—The Founding of a Reform Community in Aleppo in 1862.” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 63: 19–35.
- Harel, Yaron. 1993. “The Edict to Destroy Em Lamikra—Aleppo 1865.” *Hebrew Union College Journal* 64: 27–36.
- Karpat, Kemal H. 1985. *Ottoman Population: 1830–1914*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Kassin, Jacob S. 1995. *Princely Wisdom*. New York: Shengold.
- Peretz, Don. 1958. “Israel.” AJC Archives. [http://ajcarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/1958\\_13\\_IsraelMidEast.pdf](http://ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1958_13_IsraelMidEast.pdf) (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Peretz, Yosef. 1998. “Zekher Amalek.” Lectures on the Torah Reading. <http://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/tetzaveh/peres.html> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Roffé, Sarina. 2002. “Kassin Rabbinic Dynasty: Part I.” Rav-SIG online journal. <http://www.jewishgen.org/Rabbinic/journal/kassin.htm> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Roffé, Sarina. 2002. “Kassin Rabbinic Dynasty: Part II.” Rav-SIG online journal. <http://www.jewishgen.org/Rabbinic/journal/kassin2.htm> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Roffé, Sarina. 2002. “Labaton Rabbinic Dynasty.” Rav-SIG online journal. <http://www.jewishgen.org/Rabbinic/journal/labaton.htm> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Roffé, Sarina. 2002. “Rabbi Murad Maslaton.” Rav-SIG online journal. <http://www.jewishgen.org/Rabbinic/journal/maslaton.htm> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Roffé, Sarina. 2002. “Sephardic Rabbis Impact Halachah.” Rav-SIG online journal. <http://www.jewishgen.org/rabbinic/journal/halachah.htm> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Roffé, Sarina. “The Jews of Aleppo.” Jewishgen.org Web site <http://www.jewishgen.org/Sephardic/AleppoJews.htm> (accessed May 3, 2007).

- Roffé, Sarina. "The Term *Sephardic Jew*." Jewishgen.org Web site. [http://www.jewishgen.org/Sephardic/sephardic\\_roffe.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/Sephardic/sephardic_roffe.htm) (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Setton, David. 1928. *Dibber Shaul*. Jerusalem: Yoreh Deah.
- The Spirit of Aleppo*. 1986. Sephardic Archives. Brooklyn, NY: Sephardic Community Center.
- Sutton, David. 2005. *Aleppo City of Scholars*. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications.
- Sutton, Joseph A. D. 1979. *Magic Carpet: Aleppo-in-Flatbush*. New York: Thayer-Jacoby.
- Sutton, Joseph S. 1988. *Aleppo Chronicles*. New York: Thayer-Jacoby.
- Thornton, Ted. 2007. "Persian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine Eras: 500 B.C.E.–500 C.E." History of the Middle East Database. <http://www.nmhschool.org/tthornton/mehistorydatabase/persian.php> (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Wischnitzer, Mark. 1956. *Visas to Freedom: The History of the HIAS*. Cleveland: World.
- Zemer, Moshe. 1988. "The Rabbinic Ban on Conversions in Argentina." *Judaism* 37: 84–96.
- Zenner, Walter P. 2000. *A Global Community, The Jews from Aleppo, Syria*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Zenner, Walter P. 2000. "Reinterpretation of a Tradition by a Transnational Elite: The Rabbis of the Aleppan Diaspora." Unpublished paper.

## Jews in Yemen

*Barak Barfi and Yael Katzir*

---

**General Population:** 20,727,063

**Jewish Population:** Various approximations from 200 to 300 to 500. Arab news report estimate, 1,500

**Percent of Population:** 0.001 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Rayda and in villages surrounding Sa'ada

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Yemeni Jews have continual ancestry in Yemen for 2,000 years or more.

**Languages Spoken:** Judeo-Arabic or Arabic.

---

### Historical Overview

1st millennium BCE Though Jews have a long history in Yemen, known in Hebrew as *Teman*, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when they arrived. As such their early origins are shrouded in legends. One tradition claims the Queen of Sheba brought back a number of Jews after her visit to King Solomon's court. Other legends place the foundation of the community around the time of the destruction of the First Temple (586 BCE) when 75,000 Jews traveled to Yemen. The Talmud however makes no mention of the country, and one can only conjecture they arrived during the early centuries of the common Era when trade opportunities attracted them.

ca. 380 CE The Himyarite king Abukarib Asad falls under the sway of Judaism, though scholars are unsure if he converted.

- 6th century Himyarite Dhu Nuwas, who reigns from 518–525, converts to Judaism. He persecutes Christians and massacres the community in Najran. This event leads to an Ethiopian invasion of Yemen and his death, as well as the death of Judaism as the state religion.
- 12th century Jewish chronicler Benjamin of Tudela mentions that Yemen has a large and powerful Jewish community, though scholars have cast doubt on these claims.
- 1160s The earliest accounts of Jewish persecution are dated around 1165 when Abd al-Nabi b. al-Mahdi orders Jews to convert to Islam. At the end of the century, the Ayyubid caliph Isma'il does the same.
- 1499–1500 A false messiah proclaims himself in Eastern Yemen and draws a following that is put down by the Sultan. The mission of the false messiah Sabbatai Zevi has a particularly devastating effect on Yemeni Jewry. A number of them sell their belongings and prepare to leave for Palestine. Hubris overcomes them and they rebel against the social restrictions imposed on them. This leads to outrage among the Muslim population and retribution. In Shibam and Kawkaban, they plunder Jewish possessions and rape their women. Though the perpetrators are punished, harsh taxes are imposed on the Jews, rabbis are imprisoned, and, later, the community is ordered to convert.
- 17th century Sources are best informed of Yemeni Jewish history beginning in the 17th century, and these accounts paint a dismal portrait of their plight. In 1676, Imam al-Mutawakkil orders Jews to convert to Islam. When they refuse, his successor, al-Mahdi, demolishes synagogues and prohibits prayer in public. They are later banished from Sana'a. The sage Mori Shalom Shabazi laments the expulsion in verse, writing, "They (the Jews) have forgotten happiness and are humiliated; they were uprooted in haste, in the desert they tread."
- 19th century The modern era of Yemeni Jewry begins with the British occupation of Aden in 1839. This period coincides with political volatility and as such offers the Jews little respite from their difficult predicament. The political instability of the 19th century and its accompanying economic and social difficulties lead to a resurgence of messianic feeling. Three false messiahs appear. These messianic movements, though in part the result of Muslim persecution, only exacerbate Jewish suffering because this social unrest destabilizes the economy and sometimes draws Muslims to their cause. The authorities respond by imposing more hardships on the Jews. Thus during this century, they are tasked with removing excrement and dead animals from Sana'a.
- 1870 Traveler Joseph Halévy records the restrictions on horseback riding that Jews have to contend with. Sore from walking, he wished to continue on a mount, a luxury prohibited to Jews. Astonished by his audacity, the Muslims he passed caused him so much grief that he was obliged to dismount.
- 1872 The Turks seize Northern Yemen. During the second Ottoman occupation of the country (1872–1914), Yemen is subjected to the Tanzimat reforms that were imposed in other parts of the empire. However, scholars are of mixed opinions as to how this benefits the Jews. They are given greater social autonomy, but at the same time their institutions, such as the *beth din*, are severely weakened.

- 1882 Zionist and modernist ideas, coupled with the political instability and sufferings of the 19th century lead to organized emigrations beginning in 1882. The authorities prohibit further departures a year later but the weak government cannot enforce the ban.
- 1884 Eduard Glaser visits Yemen and writes of Yemeni Jews that “they enjoyed no rights” and comments, “it was my general impression that they were the most pathetic creatures in all of South Arabia.”
- 1908 A second wave of Jewish emigration begins in 1908. More than 20,000 Yemeni Jews are in Palestine on the eve of Israeli independence.
- 1947–1950 The creation of the State of Israel provides the final impetus for mass migration. Both push and pull factors are involved in the decision to leave Yemen. After the vote to partition Palestine in 1947, Muslims riot in Aden and kill dozens of Jews. At the same time, the creation of Israel appears to fulfill biblical prophecy. Israeli authorities however, are not so keen to accept the newcomers. Cabinet transcripts reveal a heated debate over whether or not Israel really wants the Yemeni community to settle in the new country. Some ministers believe Yemeni Jews are so primitive they will not be able to integrate into Israeli society. Others worry they will bring unwanted diseases with them. Nevertheless, the government decides to facilitate their departure. Under the name Operation Magic Carpet, from 1949 to 1950 approximately 45,000 Yemeni Jews are brought to Israel.
- 1962 The trickle of Yemeni Jews that have continued to immigrate to Jewish state halts after the 1962 political revolution in Yemen.
- 1990s Emigration resumes with small numbers relocating to London, New York, and Israel. Much like Operation Magic Carpet, this exodus is also accompanied by controversy. The vehemently anti-Zionist Satmar Hasidic sect attempts to persuade the émigrés to avoid moving to Israel arguing the secular country will destroy their religious way of life.
- 2006 In January 2006, a dissident religio-political group called the Believing Youth chase 45 Jews of Ghurayr from their homes outside Saada. Though the group claims the community is serving Zionist interests and corrupting Muslims, it appears the real reasons for their actions are political. The Believing Youth are followers of a political rebel killed by government forces in 2004 and have never come to terms with their defeat. Indeed, days after the Jews leave Ghurayr, the organization ambushes and kills a number of soldiers. Thus, in all likelihood the Jews are pawns in a larger struggle between the Believing Youth and the government.

### Origins of Yemenite Jews

The origin of the Jewish community in Yemen is probably found in merchants from the Babylonian Diaspora and the Persian Empire who during the Second Temple period settled in the flourishing Yemenite ports and in Arabian tribes who converted to Judaism. The Yemenite Shiite Muslims started extensive persecutions of Jews in the 12th century. Correspondence with the Rambam, the leader of world



Group of Yemeni Jews, about 1900. (Isadore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

Jewry at the time who lived in Egypt, produced his famous encouraging “letter to Yemenite Jews.” Since then, for almost 1,000 years, Yemenite Jews were isolated from world Jewry. The Jews were the only non-Muslim religious group in Yemen. The Jews formed a castelike minority group within the highly stratified tribal Yemenite society, distinguished from Muslims by endogamy, religion, culture, and hereditary occupations. Jewish folk culture in Yemen was deeply embedded in local traditions, and there was a strong physical resemblance between Yemenite Arabs and Jews. The spoken language in Yemenite Jewish communities was the local variant of Yemenite Arabic. By Muslim law Jews were *dhimmi*, “a protected foreign people of the Book,” second-class citizens, landless, and doomed to poverty and discrimination. Most Yemenite Jews were rural and were scattered throughout Yemen in hundreds of villages. There were also urban communities such as in Sana’a, the capital, and Taiz.

### Preservation of Tradition

The Jewish community in Yemen kept its tradition and Orthodox Jewish way of life zealously and consciously for almost 2,000 years in the face of great difficulties. The Yemenite Hebrew dialect is a variant of the Hebrew used in the Babylonian Diaspora, evidence to the antiquity of the community and its excellence in preserving Jewish tradition. Because of its centuries of isolation, most Yemenite Jews knew only of the Old Testament and were not acquainted with the Oral Law of the Mishnah and the Talmud. Jewish communities were too poor to support a specialized

class of religious scholars and functionaries. In the absence of printing and with the scarcity of books, Yemenite Jewry entrusted custody of the sacred tradition to all males in the community. All Yemenite Jewish men could read in Hebrew and were “walking books” who knew the entire Old Testament by heart. Every man could recite the entire Old Testament in Yemenite Hebrew dialect. Men transmitted the Torah tradition directly to their sons by reciting by heart the Old Testament continuously while working at their craft with their sons present as apprentices and pupils, who followed in the recitation, until they mastered not only the craftsmanship but also memorized the whole Old Testament.

Yemenite Jewish males were artisans who came to occupy certain economic niches through the monopolization of such crafts as silver smithing, coin minting, leather work, weaving, and tailoring, vocations Muslims considered polluting. Jews were also small-scale traders, usually of their family products. In the absence of mechanized industry, banks, and so on surplus income was invested in silver jewelry and coins. Jews, thus, played a key role in Yemenite economy. The mastery of the craftsmanship was transmitted within the male kin group from father to son as a secret society.

Yemenite Jews started immigrating to Palestine in small numbers in 1882. In 1921, the Yemenite government passed a law forcing all Jewish orphans to convert to Islam because “Mohammed is the father of all orphans.” In 1948, upon the establishment of the State of Israel, Operation On Eagles’ Wings brought 100,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel.

## Overview of Contemporary Jews in Yemen

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The Yemeni Muslims frowned upon craftsmanship, which cleared the way for the Jews to dominate the vocation. They excelled as jewelers, blacksmiths, ceramists, and silversmiths. To this day Sana’ani jewelry shop owners speak of Jewish silverware in almost mythical tones, and their goods fetch much higher prices than recently crafted products. It is believed there were approximately 1,000 silversmiths in Yemen on the eve of their departure for Israel. Though they were not extensively involved in commerce, they dominated the coffee trade in Manakha. In Sana’a they controlled the royal mint for centuries. A very small percentage engaged in agriculture

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

The greatest Yemeni scholar was Yahya Salih (d. 1805). Despite their isolation from other Jewish communities, Yemeni Jewry remained loyal to the rabbinic tradition. They were in contact with the Gaonates in Babylonia and later followed the teachings of Maimonides and Joseph Caro. They were devoted to kabbalistic teachings in general and the Zohar in particular. According to Yom Tov Semach, the Aggadic *Ein Ya’akov* was the most popular book among Jews.

Though they were passionate students, they produced little in terms of scholarship, and none of their works had an impact outside the country. They focused on

midrashic and kabbalistic works. Among their chief scholars were Solomon Adani (16th century) who authored *Melekheth Shelomo*, a commentary on the Mishnah. Nathanel b. Yesha (14th century) penned a midrashic work, *The Light of the Darkness*.

In the literary realm, their leading writers were Zechariah al-Dahir (15th century) and the aforementioned Mori Shalom Shabazi (17th century). The former wrote *maqamat*, a traditional form of Arabic music in North Africa and the Middle East, in the fashion of Judah al-Harizi, while the latter was a poet steeped in mysticism.

Yemenis have traditions that vary from those of their coreligionists. During the Torah readings on the Sabbath, they read a verse in Hebrew followed by its Aramaic translation. They follow the Seleucid calendar, which begins in 312 BCE. As residents of the Arab country of Yemen, they speak Arabic. The few that remain in Yemen today use Hebrew not only for liturgical and scholarly purposes but also as a means of communication.

### Present Economic Conditions

Today Jews are full citizens of the state; the medieval strictures of the Pact of Umar, a ninth-century limitation on Jewish rights, and the *jizya* tax have been abolished and Jews have the same legal rights as Muslims. Nevertheless, they are still subjected to a great deal of social discrimination. They are compelled to choose from a limited number of professions, such as craftsmanship and agriculture, and are restricted to living together in a specific quarter of the town. Reports that they neither pray in synagogues nor have religious schools because they fear their Muslim neighbors will tear them down are unsubstantiated.

Living in the poorest country in the region, Yemeni Jews experience the same hardships as their Muslim compatriots and struggle to make ends meet. They are largely supported by Jewish communities abroad who provide religious books and yearly donations.

Because the central government is weak in large portions of the country, tribes rather than the regime control large swathes of the nation. Though Yemenis discriminate against them, they also offer them crucial protection, without which they could not survive. Rayda and Sa'ada are still ruled by disorderly tribes rather than by the central government in Sana'a. As such, every family and group must seek the protection of larger tribes or clans to survive. In Rayda, the Hashid and Bakil tribes safeguard the Jews by exacting retribution and meting out vengeance when Jews are wronged. Until 15 years ago, the Jews paid the tribe an annual tribute but recently they have done so only when they needed the Hashids to intervene on their behalf.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Yemeni Jewry was exposed to Zionist and modernist ideas for the first time in the 19th century. In 1910, after correspondence with the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a modern school was opened in Sana'a, but it closed five years later because the community feared the modernist ideas it preached would have a detrimental effect on traditional Jewish life. The debate over the school reflected a greater struggle between modernists such as Rabbi Yahya Kafih and traditionalists led by Rabbi

Yahya Isaac. The former wanted to wean the community away from dependence on kabbalistic teachings and embrace ideas emanating from Europe.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Though Yemeni Jews lived scattered throughout Yemen, they resided in five main centers—Adeb and Habal in the south, Yarim in the center, Sa'ada and Tarjih in north, and Sana'a, the capital. They were largely rural in nature, and only two Jewish communities (Sana'a and Rayda) had more than 1,000 inhabitants. They lived in the urban areas of Sana'a, Sa'ada, Aden, Dhamar, Kawkaban, and Ta'iz. In addition, they resided in many rural regions, such as the Harraz mountains and the Rahib and Amran districts. The travelers Carl Rathjens and H. von Wissmann detailed 500 places where Jews lived in northern Yemen based on information given to them by a rabbi. Using these figures, they estimated there were around 70,000 Jews in the country in the 1930s; S. D. Goitein listed communities in 60 tribal areas, most located in the plateau between Ibb and Sana'a; this means they were in the Zaydi areas, not the Shafi' ones

Today few Jews live in Yemen. According to the U.S. State Department, fewer than 500 Jews remain, though Arab news reports put their number as high as 1,500; possibly the remaining number of Jews is as low as 300. They reside in the city of Rayda and in villages surrounding Sa'ada, one of the cities of Sa'ada and Rayda, among the most restless and dangerous areas of Yemen.

### Selected Bibliography

- Goitein, S.D., ed. 1941. *Travels in Yemen: An Account of Joseph Halévy's Journey to Najran*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press.
- Goitein, S.D. 1947. *From the Land of Sheba*. New York: Schocken.
- Goitein, S.D. 1955. *Jews and Arabs*. New York: Schocken.
- Halévy, Joseph. 1873. "Voyage Au Nedjran: Itineraire D'Un Voyage Dans Le Yemen 1869–1870." *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* 6 (July): 6–31; 6 (September): 249–273; 6 (December): 581–606.
- Halkin, Abraham, and David Hartman. 1985. *Crisis and Leadership: Epistles of Maimonides*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Lavon, Yaakov. 1997. *My Footsteps Echo: The Yemen Journal of Rabbi Yaakov Sapir*. Southfield, MI: Mishnas Rishonim.
- Shivtiel, Avihai, Wilfred Lockwood, and R. B. Serjeant. 1983. "The Jews of Sana'a." In *Sana: An Arabian Islamic City*, edited by R. B. Serjeant and Ronald Lewcock, 391–431. London: World of Islam Festival Trust.
- Tobi, Yosef. 1999. *The Jews of Yemen: Studies in Their History and Culture*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Warburton, David. 1993. *My Journey through Arhab and Hashid*, translated by Eduard Glaser. Ardmore, PA: American Institute for Yemeni Studies.



# Western Europe

## Jews in Europe

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

**General Population:** Total European Union, 376,533,000

**Jewish Population:** Total European Union Jewish population is approximately 1,000,000.

**Percent of Population:** 2.5 percent

**Jewish Population by Country:** As of January 1, 2007, there are 27 member states in the European Union (EU27): Austria, 9,000, 1.1 percent; Belgium, 31,400, 3.1 percent; Bulgaria, 2,300, 0.3 percent; Czech Republic, 2,800, 0.3 percent; Denmark, 6,400, 1.2 percent; Estonia, 1,900, 1.4 percent; Finland, 1,100, 0.2 percent; France, 519,000, 8.8 percent; Germany, 103,000, 1.3 percent; Greece, 4,500, 0.4 percent; Hungary, 51,300, 5.1 percent; Ireland, 1,000, 0.3 percent; Italy, 29,400, 0.5 percent; Latvia, 9,600, 4.0 percent; Lithuania, 3,700, 1.0 percent; Luxembourg, 600, 1.4 percent; the Netherlands, 28,000, 1.8 percent; Poland, 3,500, 0.1 percent; Portugal, 500, 0.0 percent; Romania, 10,800, 0.5 percent; Spain, 12,000, 0.3 percent; Slovakia, 3,300, 0.6 percent; Slovenia, 100, 0.1 percent; Sweden, 15,000, 1.7 percent; United Kingdom, 273,500, 4.6 percent

**Languages Spoken:** The national languages of the respective countries are usually the language of the Jews, but Jews will often prefer certain languages. In Belgium, for example, Yiddish is still a living language in Antwerp and Brussels, and French is preferred over Flemish. Many German Jews speak Russian. Many French Jews from Arab countries speak Arabic. A large number have a grasp of Hebrew reading, and others are fluent speakers. A large majority use English as the international language.

---

## Historical Overview

European Jewish history is of central importance to the course of Diaspora life. The wealth of literature and books, studies, and volumes of historical documents relating to the Jewish experience in Europe is enormous and complex. Jews have followed and, in many cases, paved the contours of European life. At different times, Jews were active in the central nervous systems of European thinking, commerce, administration, and intellectual activity in the sciences and literature. In addition to the Christian nature of European culture, and the Bible's influence on its morality, governance, and perception of Jews, the role of the Jew in old and new Europe is very complex and figures in the European imagination as a subnarrative for the European experience, providing a fascinating mosaic for contemplation.

Jewish people moved into Greece, which is now Europe, in the fifth century BCE and gradually, over many cascades of time, dispersed, some keeping their identity as Jews and others assimilating at varying speeds and degrees. Small and earlier communities of Jews may have lived on the brink of extinction in certain regions until a wave of Jewish immigration from another place would come to reinforce it. At other times, regions have been evacuated or the Jews expelled, and the entire ethnic and cultural baggage of a Jewish community could be transplanted to

another country, fusing with existing Jewish communities. This pattern has occurred time after time in Europe and elsewhere, suggesting unique sociological structures for the Jewish populations. It is certainly an interesting phenomena and typical of the Diaspora experience.

The Ashkenazi/Sephardi distinction emerged in Europe as Jews made their way toward Germanic and Central European countries; developed their own customs, habits, dress, and language; and became known as Ashkenazim. Some moved to Christian Spain and over a period of hundreds of years fused with the Baghdadi Jews of Iraq who lived in Muslim Spain from the ninth century. Over a few more hundred years, their joint sense of identity formed around their Spanish experience; hence, the Sephardi culture emerged. This culture was transported out of Spain in 1492 when all Jews who had not converted to Christianity were expelled, and many made their way to new areas of Europe, joining older Jewish communities in Holland, Britain, Italy, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire, and forming new settlements in Asia, South America, and North America.

A curious irony is that at different times in Jewish history, different ethnic groups of Jews have experienced declines and successes, favor and disfavor in the eyes of changing rulers. For example, taken from relatively late Jewish history, the Portuguese Jews of the 1700s were considered the most intelligent, wealthy, able, and valuable assets to have in a new country and were protected as such. This was so in Scandinavia, Britain, and the Netherlands. European Jews, Ashkenazim, were frowned upon, and there were several examples of how Sephardi Jews tried to disassociate themselves from their Ashkenazi brothers, who were often forlorn, ignorant, and poor, seeking greener pastures in new countries and often depending too heavily on their wealthier coreligionists. Ironically, within two centuries, the reverse phenomena occurred: Ashkenazi Jews have developed a reputation for intelligence, wealth, and commerce, and the Sephardi Jews emerging from the declining Middle East are perceived as poor and less educated; the same discrimination has been prevalent.

The same feeling of superiority was expressed by German Jews who spoke negatively of the Russian and Eastern Jews who crossed over to Germany in the early 1900s. The same phenomena repeats itself in different degrees of severity, however, after the Holocaust, when there is a more intense effort to ensure that Jewish migration to more hospitable countries is made possible. An example of this is the influx of Russian Jews into Germany and the encouragement this step was given by the relevant authorities. Nevertheless, many Israelis immigrating to Diaspora countries are perceived in varying degrees of favor, while Russian and South African immigration is considered favorably.

The Nazi destruction of most of Europe's Jewish people and culture was also a great equalizer for Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Jews throughout the Diaspora probably realized the results of not doing enough to help them emigrate before the disaster struck. The Sephardi perception of the destruction of Ashkenazi Jewry was profound, and their sense of identification with the Ashkenazi Jews, deep. This is not only because Sephardi Jews witnessed the horrors of the annihilation of the Sephardi Jews of Greece, but also out of grief and a sense of brotherhood.

Today, the Ashkenazi/Sephardi divide among Jews is becoming less relevant as a new identity is developing and the socioeconomic difference narrows. The new horizons for the European Diaspora are not yet manifest. Depending on anti-Semitic trends, the Jews of different European countries could either thrive as they have in the past, negotiating their identity as Jews with modernity, or they could immigrate to other regions or to Israel. In all cases, the Diaspora story of European Jewry is not over.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The Jews of Europe, are well established in European society and can be found working in a wide range of professions. Jews are typically strong in commerce, or retail trade. In general, Jews in European Union countries are relatively well-off, and some hold positions of influence.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Historically, the Jewish influence on European society is undeniable. Now, as reconstruction of Jewish communities across Europe has been given time to flourish, cultural and religious organizations have generally done well. Arguably, Jews and Jewish culture continue to be important elements in European society, politically, socially, and economically influencing and broadly shaping it. Jewish, contemporary contributions to European culture, in the fields of the sciences and the humanities, are too numerous to list exhaustively, as are the important European Jewish figures who so often stand behind them. Nevertheless, efforts to preserve strong ties to Judaism for the community by offering a developed cultural infrastructure would not be possible without the support of major international Jewish organization's support.

### Present Economic Conditions

The European Jewish community is well established and well organized in European society and has been able to enjoy high status in that society, both socially and economically. Initiatives to restore Jewish property exist in most countries, but problems also exist for many countries where the issue is surrounded with legislation, legal procedures, and litigation, due in part to special government committees. There may also be conflicts among Jewish interest groups as to the distribution of assets and monetary compensation.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

Jewish communities are well organized, operating under central umbrella organizations, the leadership of a chief rabbi, and a relatively well-established Jewish communal infrastructure. Much of the work for maintaining Europe's Jewish schools, organizing community activities and facilities, and establishing and maintaining legal and political institutions is more frequently accomplished through

important international Jewish organizations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee or the Lauder Foundation. These mainly political organizations are active throughout Europe in the reconstruction of the Jewish community. Some highly successful Jewish studies programs, *Limmud*, for example, in Britain, provides a very wide and broad exposure to all strains of Jewish interests. Enrollment in Jewish schools varies; for instance, enrollment in Jewish schools is higher in Britain and lower in France.

#### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Although there are continued anti-Semitic incidents throughout much of Europe with reconstruction, anti-Semitism in most parts of Europe is not present at dangerous levels (although in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Britain many challenges remain, as anti-Semitism has been on the rise in these countries for several years). Since 2003, the European Union has been involved in activity directly pertaining to the Jews of Europe, particularly with regard to the issue of anti-Semitism.

#### Demographic Movement and Emigration

As a source of growing concern for the Jews of the European Union, it is not anticipated that there will be another wave of immigration rivaling that during the 1950s and 1960s, when 250,000 to 300,000 Jews from North Africa immigrated to France. The exception in this case is Germany, where, from 1990 to the end of 2003, immigration was accessible for up to 190,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union. Regardless, the Jewish population in Europe has been declining, anywhere from 25 percent in Britain to 50 percent in Holland, because of low birthrates, aging, aliyah, and intermarriage.

Some Jews are wary of the rise of the Muslim community and its consequences for the Jewish community within Europe's urban centers. For instance, France's Muslim community is said to be 8–10 percent of the overall population; at the present rate of growth for Europe's Muslim community, challenges may seem unavoidable.

Jews of Europe may experience conflict over the negative view of Israel often conveyed in the media by biased reporting, which has contributed to the delegitimization of Israel in some sectors of Europe. At the same time, Jews in the European Union maintain a strong connection with the State of Israel and are active in fund-raising and cultural activities.

# Jews in Austria

*Shoshannah Zirkin*

---

**General Population:** 8,106,000

**Jewish Population:** 10,000

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 0.125 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Most Austrian Jews live in Vienna. Smaller communities can be found in Baden, Bad Gastein, Graz, Innsbruck, Linz, and Salzburg.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Most Austrian Jews are Holocaust survivors and their descendents. In recent years, Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Iran have settled in Austria.

**Languages Spoken:** German is the official language of Austria. Many Jews also speak English and Yiddish.

---

## Historical Overview

903 The first Jews arrive in Austria with the Roman legions.

1195–1198 Many Jews from Bavaria and the Rhineland settle in Austria.

1200 Austria becomes a center of Jewish study. Many Jews work for the government administering taxes.

1250 The number of German Jews in Austria begins to increase.

1320 Government records show that Jews begin to pay special taxes. Discrimination against Jews increases steadily over the next century.

1420 All Jews are arrested under the orders of King Albert V, and the government confiscates all Jewish-owned property. More than 200 Jews are burned at the stake, and those who survive are expelled from the country.

1440 Life for the Jews improves under the reign of Frederick III. Jewish refugees are given protection by the state, and they are allowed to settle in two small towns, Styria and Catinthia.

1551 Jews in Austria are required to wear a yellow badge for identification.

1669 Jews are again expelled from Austria, with the exception of those employed by the state.

1727 Fewer than 500 Jews reside in Vienna; all are members of the wealthy elite. At this time, the government tries to control the Jewish population by permitting only the oldest male in a family to marry.

1785 Life for the Jews improves again during the reign of Joseph II. Jews are encouraged to assimilate into Austrian society. For the first time, they attend public schools and are permitted to serve in the army.

1790 Joseph II dies, and many of the restrictions he abolished are reinstated. Jewish children are forced to attend Christian schools.

1826 Seitenstettengasse, Vienna's first major synagogue, opens.

1848 Austria experiences a revolution that leaves the Jews optimistic about their future. Several Jews are elected to serve in the Austrian Parliament. Jews are no

- longer required to pay special taxes, and the laws restricting the number of marriages per family are revoked.
- 1867 The right to exercise freedom of religion is reinforced in the Austrian constitution, and conditions for Austrian Jews improve again.
- 1882 Kadimah, the first all-Jewish national students' society is founded in response to anti-Semitism.
- 1919 After World War I, the Treaty of Germain grants minority status to all Jews living in Austria. The Jews live well until the years leading up to World War II.
- 1938 Austria is annexed by Nazi Germany. Jews are heavily persecuted. Hitler gives an order to deport the first lot of Viennese Jews in October, and *Kristallnacht* takes place the following November. More than 30,000 Jews are sent to concentration camps and nearly all synagogues and Jewish-owned shops are destroyed.
- 1941 Jewish emigration out of Austria is prohibited. Many of the remaining Jews are sent to the Lodz Ghetto. Others are sent to ghettos outside the country in Riga, Minsk, and Kovono.
- 1943 Only 800 Jews remain in Austria. They live in hiding and are cared for by members of the community.
- 1945 About 70,000 Austrian Jews are killed in the Holocaust.
- 1968 A small Jewish community reemerges in Vienna.
- 1991 The Austrian government admits to participating in war crimes during the Holocaust.
- 1993 Tyrol reopens; the Innsbruck synagogue had been destroyed in the pogroms at the start of World War II.

## Contemporary Overview

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

Vienna has several Jewish kindergartens and one primary school. The ultra-Orthodox community maintains its own separate school system, which includes the Lauder-Chabad School and the Zvi Perez Chajes School. In addition, there is an Institute for Jewish Studies at the Vienna University and an Institute for the History of Jews in Saint Polten.

The Austrian Jewish community produces several publications. The two most popular are *Die Gemeinde* and *Illustrierte Neue Welt*, both distributed monthly.

Vienna has a Jewish Welcome Service to aid new residents and visitors. The community offices of Vienna and the Chief Rabbinate are located in the Stad Temple, built in 1826. The temple also has a number of prayer rooms that accommodate the many Hasidic sects that live within the city.

Vienna also has several Jewish-related museums. The Jewish Museum, which opened in 1993, displays a plethora of objects that reflect Jewish life in Austria before 1938. The museum is owned and operated by the city. Museum Judenplatz, which opened in 2000, serves as the national memorial for Austrian Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. There is also a Sigmund Freud Museum, located in Freud's former residence.



Holocaust Memorial at Judenplatz in Vienna, Austria. (Photo by Jono David)

Jewish organizations in Austria include B'nai B'rith, Hashomer Hatzair, the Austrian Jewish Students Union, S. C. Hakoah, the Women's International Zionist organization, the Zionist Federation, and Chabad.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Unlike Germany, Austria has done much to suppress memories of the Holocaust. Many Austrians argue that because Austria was invaded by Germany, the country actually did not exist from 1938 to 1945, thereby refusing to take any responsibility for what happened. What they fail to mention is that during the years of occupation, nearly 10 percent of Austria's non-Jewish population (630,000 people) willingly joined the Nazi party. This selective memory leaves little remorse for the terrible tragedies that took place in Austria during World War II.

After 1945, unlike Germany, Austria made no attempt to reeducate its population. Anti-Semitism did not cease to exist, and it still holds a strong presence in Austrian society today, which is reflected most heavily in politics and the media. The political left is strongly anti-Zionist, arguing that Israel promotes terrorism and racism and is an uncivilized society. In addition, *Neue Kronenzeitung*, the most widely read newspaper in Austria, contains anti-Semitic text and has been known to print articles that grossly diminish crimes committed during the Holocaust. However, the paper has improved significantly since 2000, when the publisher was

taken to court for publishing racist materials. Another paper notorious for publishing anti-Semitic material is *The Zur Zeit Weekly*.

In contrast to the media, the true history of the Holocaust is part of the official Austrian Ministry of Education's curriculum. It is taught in all public schools, and all Austrian schoolchildren go on field trips to see Mauthausen.

Anti-Semitic crimes in Austria are rarely violent; however, synagogues and cemeteries are often desecrated, and many religious Jews experience verbal abuse. Crimes usually go unreported, and those that are taken to the police are commonly overlooked. Regardless of the gross denial and the anti-Semitism still in place, there are historians who have exposed Austria's true history, including Pelinka, Richard Mitten, Hans Sadrian, Gerhard Botz, G. E. R. Gedye, and Erica Weinzierl.

Austria enjoys full diplomatic relations with Israel.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Many Jews emigrated from Austria at the start of World War II. From 1938 to 1941, approximately 130,000 of the total 300,000 Austrian Jews fled the country. Most of these refugees settled in England, other European countries, the United States, and Palestine. Since 1948, 5,400 Austrian Jews have immigrated to Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Dagmar, Lorenze C. G., ed. 1999. *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Austria: An Anthology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Halsall, Paul. 1998. "Jewish History Sourcebook: The Charter of the Jews of the Duchy of Austria July 1, 1244 CE." <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1244-jews-austria.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Jewish Communities: Europe: Austria." 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Lea, Charlene A. 1978. *Emancipation, Assimilation and Stereotype: The Image of the Jew in German and Austrian Drama (1800–1850)*. Bonn, Germany: Bouvier.
- Marcus, Jacob. 1938. *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook, 315–1791*. New York: JPS.
- "The Nazi Holocaust 1938–1945 6,000,000 Deaths." 2000. The History Place: Genocide in the Twentieth Century. <http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/holocaust.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Pauley, Bruce F. 1992. *From Prejudice to Persecution: A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Peri, Anat. 2001. *Jorg Haider's Antisemitism*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University.
- Shields, Jacqueline. "The Jewish Virtual History Tour: Austria." Jewish Virtual Library. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Austria.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Zohn, Harry. 1995. *Austriaca and Judaica: Essays and Translations*. New York: P. Lang.

## Overrepresentation of Jews in Vienna's Gymnasien

*Steven Beller*

---

Overrepresentation of Jews in secondary and higher education in modern Western societies has been a much remarked upon and generally recognized phenomenon, especially as regards late 19th- and early 20th-century Germany and Central Europe. There has been much debate about the reasons for this overrepresentation, and what its consequences were, both for the Jewish communities involved and for the larger societies and cultures in which they existed. One of the largest Jewish communities in Central Europe at the turn of the 20th century was in Vienna, and Jewish overrepresentation in the Habsburg capital's elite secondary schools, the *Gymnasien*, has been seen as providing a major clue as to the very large, indeed predominant, role of Jewish individuals in the modern culture of fin-de-siècle Vienna.

Jewish overrepresentation in secondary education in Vienna was very high, especially in the *Gymnasien*. Jews represented roughly 9 percent of Vienna's population around 1900. Yet roughly 25 percent of all secondary schoolboys in Vienna in the same period were Jewish, with slightly more than 20 percent of boys at *Realschulen* and about 30 percent of all *Gymnasium* students being Jewish in the two decades before 1914. Secondary education for girls was not as widespread as for boys, but Jewish overrepresentation in this sector was even greater, with Jewish girls constituting around half of all those attending the *Lyzeen* that were the main form of female secondary education (Rozenblit 1983, 102–122; Beller 1997, 138).

Various explanations for this overrepresentation have been suggested, and they tend to divide along the lines of social causation, on the one hand, against, more specifically, Jewish cultural explanations, on the other. A straightforward cultural explanation is that Jewish religious and cultural tradition put far more weight on the need for education than did other group traditions at the time, most notably the Catholic tradition. Against this is the consideration that the *Gymnasien* were bastions of Classical and German humanist, secular education and, as such, were seen at major variance from the religious traditions of Central European traditional Judaism. Social historians have instead emphasized social factors, such as the concentration of Jews in commercial and bourgeois occupations, whose non-Jewish members also tended to send their children to secondary schools at a much higher rate than, for instance, peasant farmers or manual workers would. The fact that Vienna's Jewish population had a quite different occupational structure than that of the non-Jewish majority, with roughly two-thirds of Jews being either self-employed or salaried, compared with the majority Catholic population, where more than three-quarters of those employed were wage laborers (Oxaal et al. 1987, 36–37), would appear to support this social argument. Yet the very peculiarity of the Jewish occupational distribution is itself partly explicable by cultural factors, and the tendency of some occupational groups in Vienna, such as commercial independents,

to send their children to elite humanist *Gymnasien* could just as well be due to the ethnic background and hence cultural background of the members of those groups as it could their socioeconomic class.

A quite cogent explanation for the overrepresentation is that the wish to integrate into and succeed in the larger society around them led many Jews, as members of a diasporic minority, to make an extra effort to obtain an education for themselves and their offspring as a means of gaining a professional advantage or social acceptance. Yet it is debatable whether this is to be viewed as a cultural or social explanation. The motivation to assimilate was undoubtedly a strong factor, but it had its own ideological background in the emancipation movement of Central European Jewry, going back to the late 18th century. It was also not clear that the most effective way to the desired integration was through elite secondary education. The Jewish ideology of emancipation proclaimed secular humanist education the best method, and this was echoed by German liberal ideology; but large sectors of Viennese society did not accept this ideology, and other groups in Vienna, such as the very numerous Czech immigrants, integrated in quite other ways. The attraction of education as a means to integration, as well as to social, material, and moral advancement, was as much culturally determined as socially, and in originating in the Haskalah of the 18th century linked up to the original explanation for Jewish overrepresentation, which was the high value placed on education by traditional Jewish religious society, even though now in secular form.

The emphasis within Vienna's Jewish community on the need to get one's offspring a good secondary education was much more widespread than one might have thought: more than half of Jewish primary schoolboys went on to either a *Realschule* or a *Gymnasium* at the turn of the century, compared with less than 20 percent of all primary schoolboys, and less than 15 percent of non-Jewish schoolboys. The result was a ratio of overrepresentation of Jews at *Gymnasien* of almost 5:1 and at *Realschulen* of 3:1 (Beller 1997, 119).

The consequences of this overrepresentation are also much more significant than often realized. The large Jewish presence in the *Gymnasien* varied greatly geographically (among schools) and socioeconomically (among parental occupations). Some schools had very few Jewish pupils, such as the Theresianum, which was traditionally the school of the nobility, and the Schottengymnasium, which, as a clerical institution, enjoyed a conservative and elite reputation. Most *Gymnasien* in the outlying districts of Vienna also had relatively few Jewish pupils. Not surprisingly, Jewish boys were concentrated instead in schools in those districts of Vienna with sizable Jewish populations, most notably the First (Inner City), Second (Leopoldstadt), and Ninth (Alsergrund) districts. These districts were also the three that remained politically liberal after the 1895 Christian Social takeover of Vienna's municipal government. Excluding the conservative Schottengymnasium, Jewish boys at these schools, in the so-called liberal districts of Vienna, made up 59 percent of all pupils between 1870 and 1910 (Beller 1990, 173).

Jewish boys were also concentrated in terms of their parents' occupation. Whereas non-Jewish fathers were concentrated in traditional Austrian middle-class

careers, especially in the officialdom, Jewish fathers, as one would expect from traditional Jewish occupational patterns, were heavily concentrated in the commercial, financial, and capitalist sectors and in the liberal professions. This skewed distribution on ethno-religious lines meant that although Jewish boys made up 30 percent of all *Gymnasien* pupils, they represented about two-thirds of all *Gymnasiasten* from a liberal bourgeois background (Beller 1989, 53). The combined effect of geographic and occupational variation meant that in the schools in the liberal districts of Vienna, 79 percent of the boys whose parents had a liberal bourgeois occupation were Jewish between 1870 and 1910. (Beller 1990, 172–173).

Such figures strongly suggest that the reason for the well-known prominence of Jews in Vienna's modern culture was due to the equally great presence of Jews in that culture's social reservoir as represented in the more liberal and progressive sector of Vienna's educated elite. If, as has been claimed, Viennese modern culture was the product of the educated scions of the city's liberal bourgeoisie, alienated from the political realm by the collapse of political liberalism in Vienna in the 1890s, then something like two-thirds of this group appears to have been Jewish. Furthermore, the more politically liberal the grouping, the higher the Jewish presence. Over the period 1870–1910, the Jewish presence in the liberal sector of Vienna's educated class was growing, as well. (It should be recalled that the Jewish presence was even higher among educated women.)

The Jewish presence in the more liberal bourgeois sector of Vienna's educated class was so large that the particular Jewish history and experience that had partially created this overrepresentation, the ideology of emancipation and its strong attachment to the German humanist culture of *Bildung*, had a very strong influence on the resulting modern culture, along with the problems of being Jewish in a strongly anti-Semitic environment. Anti-Semitism can itself be seen, ironically, as partially due to the envy of the less-educated, and hence less successful, when confronted with Jewish educational achievement. In that sense, the attempt to integrate through education created one more barrier, one more locus of resistance in the rest of society.

### Selected Bibliography

- Beller, Steven. 1989. *Vienna and the Jews, 1867–1938: A Cultural History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Beller, Steven. 1990. "The Social and Ethnic Foundations of a Cultural Elite: Jewish Overrepresentation in Vienna's Gymnasien." In *Education and Social Structure in Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Victor Karady and Wolfgang Mitter, 163–176. Vienna: Böhlau Verlag.
- Beller, Steven. 1997. "The City as Integrator: Immigration, Education, and Popular Culture in Vienna, 1880–1938." *German Politics and Society* 15 (1): 117–139.
- Oxaal, Ivar, Michael Pollak, and Gerhard Botz, eds. 1987. *Jews, Antisemitism and Culture in Vienna*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rozenblit, Marsha L. 1983. *The Jews of Vienna 1867–1914: Assimilation and Identity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

# Jews in Belgium

*Shoshannah Zirkin*

**General Population:** 10,249,000

**Jewish Population:** 31,400

**Percent of Population:** 3.1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Antwerp, 15,000; Brussels, 15,000. Much smaller communities are found in Arlon, Liege, Mons, Ostende, Charleroi, and Ghent.

**Languages Spoken:** Jews in Antwerp speak Yiddish and Flemish. Jews in Brussels speak French.

## Historical Overview

- 1262 The first official record of Jews in Belgium appears in Duke Henry III's will, where he orders all Jews to be expelled from Brabant province. Around the same time, theologian Thomas Aquinas suggests that Belgian Jews pay taxes and perform manual labor to prevent them from becoming wealthy.
- 1311 The Jewish community is rebuilt under the protection of Duke John II. Many Jewish refugees from France settle in Belgium at this time.
- 1348 Like elsewhere in Europe, Jews in Belgium are blamed for the Black Death and massacred as a result.
- 1490 Large numbers of Sephardic Jews are expelled from Spain and Portugal and settle in Antwerp. Most of these Jews are Marranos, that is, Jews who pretend to be New Christians while practicing Judaism in secret.
- 1650 The Marrano population maintains a synagogue with a center for diamond trading as a cover-up.
- 1713 Belgium is under Austrian rule. Jews are required to pay special taxes.
- 1831 Belgium regains independence, and Judaism is recognized as an official religion. Jews in Antwerp remain religious, but Jews in Brussels have a high rate of assimilation.
- 1878 The Great Synagogue, designed by Desire DeKeyser, is built on Rue de la Regence.
- 1880 Many Jews from various areas throughout Europe flee to Belgium to escape persecution.
- 1940 Belgium puts up a strong resistance against German invasion, but eventually the Nazi government triumphs and places the country under military rule. Restrictions of Jews are put into action immediately and become progressively worse over time; however, Belgian law did not permit the mention of religion on civil documents, making it difficult for the Nazis to identify most of the Jewish population. In addition, most local Belgians are unwilling to help the Nazis; instead, they often help Jewish friends and hide Jewish children.
- 1942 Jews in Belgium are required to wear yellow badges for identification, but local police are unwilling to help enforce this law. The first Belgian Jews are

sent to concentration camps (primarily Auschwitz). In response, the Committee for Jewish Defense, an underground resistance group, is organized to help Jews hide and escape.

1942–1944 Approximately 25,000 Belgian Jews perish in the Holocaust.

1947 Belgium votes for the creation of a Jewish state at the United Nations.

1970 Political activism increases among Jews in Belgium.

1979 The first of many Arab terrorist attacks on Jews takes place in Belgium.

1980 Belgian-Israel trade reaches an all-time high.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Jews dominate the diamond industry in Antwerp. The official language of the Diamond exchange is Yiddish, and business deals are always sealed with *Mazel-Bracha* (luck and blessing).

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

There are many Jewish historical sites in Belgium including the Great Synagogue, the National Monument to the Jewish Martyrs of Belgium, and a Memorial for Jews who fought in the Belgian Resistance during World War II. There are several smaller monuments in Brussels, including one for World War I hero Louis Bernheim.

### Present Economic Conditions

The majority of Jews in Belgium are middle class. They work in several industries including fur, textiles, leather, and diamonds.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The Belgian government constitutionally recognizes minority religions, and therefore holds power to support and fund religious schools. There are seven government-funded Jewish schools in Antwerp and four in Brussels. Most of the children in these cities go to religious schools where they receive Orthodox educations.

Belgium's Jewish community puts out several community publications. *Regards* is the main publication in Brussels, and *Belgisch Israelitisch Weekblad* is the most popular Jewish newspaper in Antwerp. In addition, several magazines address specific subjects, such as *Israel Aujour'd'hui* and *La Tribune Sioniste*, which are both dedicated to issues concerning Israel. *Los Muestrros* is a magazine focused on Sephardi culture.

Antwerp has one of the largest communities of ultra-Orthodox Jews in the world, including Hasidic Jews who follow in the traditions of Belz, Ger, Czortkow, Lubavitch, Satmar, and Vishnitz. The city has about 30 synagogues, all Orthodox. On the whole, the Jewish community of Brussels is less religious than those in Antwerp. There are more than 10 temples, including one Reform and one Sephardic synagogue.

Antwerp has kosher food stores and restaurants. It is more difficult to find kosher food in Brussels.

Because Brussels is the capital of the European Union, the Belgian community takes a special interest in politics. The World Jewish Congress and the European Union of Jewish Students both have offices in Brussels.

Major organizations include *The Comite de Coordination des Organisations Juives de Belgique*, which acts as a representative body for all of the separate Jewish communities throughout the country.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Belgium has a long history of anti-Semitism. In a sense, it is fashionable to be against the Jews. Belgian newspapers regularly publish anti-Semitic political cartoons, where Jews are portrayed as ugly and ultrareligious. Although deep-seated anti-Semitic beliefs are on an overall decline, violence against Jews still takes place and is often traced back to the large community of North Africans who now live in Belgium. The second Palestinian uprising in 2000 led to a drastic increase in anti-Semitic feelings and actions throughout the country. Media reports and public opinions continued to get worse for the Jews leading to anti-Semitic acts in 2002, including the bombing, shooting, and vandalizing of several synagogues and Jewish-owned shops. In addition, the Israeli flag was burned at a pro-Palestinian demonstration. About 80 percent of violent acts of anti-Semitism occur in Antwerp and are targeted at ultra-Orthodox Jews. The other 20 percent of crimes usually occur in Brussels.

Most Belgian politicians are staunchly against Israel politically, siding with Palestine on nearly all issues, in attempt to win the support of the new and large Muslim population. Belgian politicians use hatred for Israel as a tool in domestic and international issues. They appeal largely to the country's Christian majority, which reproaches Jews for failing to assimilate into mainstream society. Initially, this strong anti-Zionist sentiment was fashionably exclusive, discussed among the intellectual elite; however, it has emerged from the academic sphere into mainstream popular opinion. Today, the Belgian media continues to portray Israel in a negative light, and the people side with the press, showing little to no support under any circumstances.

Belgian Jews often feel limited to the Jewish community and misunderstood by the greater society. Some more extreme Belgians have argued that Zionists should be stripped of their Belgian citizenships because their allegiance is clearly to a country other than their own. To prove their patriotism, about 300 Jews have organized the Union of Progressive Jews of Belgium. Members are both anti-Zionist and anti-Israel. They speak regularly in public schools, and the media often showcases their various functions.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Since 1948, 4,000 Belgian Jews have emigrated to Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abusz, Werber. 1968. "Jewish Resistance in Belgium." *Yad Vashem Bulletin* 19 (22, May): 60–66.
- Beker, Avi, ed. 1998. *Jewish Communities of the World*. Minneapolis: Lerner.
- Coene, G., and C. Longman. 2006. "Gender Equality and Cultural Diversity: The Belgian Case." Working paper for the conference Gender Equality and Cultural Diversity: European Lessons and Comparisons II, Free University Amsterdam, June 8–9, 2006.
- Fabry, Joseph. 1991. *Next-to-Final Solution: A Belgian Detention Camp for Hitler Refugees*. New York: P. Lang.
- Gerstenfeld, Manfred. 2005. "Anti-Zionism in Belgium—The Country's Civil Religion that Reflects the New Anti-Semitism: An Interview with Joël Kotek." *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, No. 29, February 1. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Web site. <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-29.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Global Anti-Semitism: Selected Incidents around the World in 2002." 2002. Anti-Defamation League Web site. [http://www.adl.org/Anti\\_semitism/anti-semitism\\_global\\_incidents.asp#](http://www.adl.org/Anti_semitism/anti-semitism_global_incidents.asp#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Jewish Communities: Europe: Belgium." 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress. [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "The Jewish Community of Belgium. Am Yisrael Web site. <http://www.amyisrael.co.il/europe/belgium/> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Jewish Population Tables: Table 4. Estimated Jewish Population Distribution In Europe, 1/1/2002." 2002. <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/concepts/demography/demtables.html#4>. (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Mikhman, Dan, ed. 1998. *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Oreck, Alden. "The Jewish Virtual History Tour: Belgium." Jewish Virtual Library. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/Belgium.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Tigay, Alan M., ed. 1994. *The Jewish Traveler*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

## Holocaust Art in Belgium

*Daniel Potteau*

---

By the 1920s, the little kingdom of Belgium included a lively population of well-assimilated Jews, ranging from small shopkeepers and craftspeople to scientists, military officers, bankers, and artists. In the next decade, Belgium faced a massive immigration of mostly impoverished Jews from Eastern Europe, and after the rise of Nazism in 1933, thousands of the estimated 250,000 Jews who fled Germany settled in Belgium. At the outbreak of World War II, some 65,000 Jews lived in Belgium, the majority of them not Belgian.

In entertainment—music, ballet, opera, theater, journalism, literature—as well as in the visual arts—painting, sculpture, film, photography—Jews were participating in Belgian cultural life. Art schools and music and acting conservatories welcomed Jewish students, who were eager to learn.

When Germany invaded Belgium on May 10, 1940, Jews were seemingly left alone for almost a year. But in Poland, the first extermination camps were soon to be built.

In 1941, in a first step toward isolation, impoverishment, and degradation, all Jews in Belgium were forced to live in one of the four cities (Antwerp, Brussels, Liège, and Charleroi) where the great majority already lived. They also were subject to a nightly curfew at their domiciles. Among the many restrictions, Jewish professors and students were banned from conservatories, academies, and universities; artists were denied exhibitions; and Jewish children banned from public schools.

In Berlin, a meeting at Adolf Eichmann's office had ordered the SS officials in charge of Jewish affairs in France, the Netherlands, and Belgium to prepare for deportation of the Jews, later named the *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final Solution to the Jewish Question). SS-Sammelläger (transit camps) were instantly installed in France (in Drancy, a suburb of Paris), the Netherlands (Westerbork), and Belgium (Mechelen, Malines in French).

In Mechelen, the former Belgian Caserne Dossin barracks, ideally located half-way between Antwerp and Brussels, and with its own railroad ramp, was hurriedly converted with bunk beds for 1,000 people. (Today, part of the building houses the tiny Museum of Deportation and Resistance, which opened in 1995.)

An inexorable next step was when, after their "successful" experience in Poland, the Germans established a *Judenrat* (Association des Juifs en Belgique, or AJB), which all Jews were forced to join. The AJB was ordered to coordinate the so-called *Arbeitseinsatz* (labor mobilization) and create files for all Jews in Belgium. The files were eventually used to "invite" the Jews to work in the East. By then, Jews in Belgium were also ordered to wear the Star of David. Soon trucks drove into the Caserne Dossin courtyard, unloading new prisoners almost every day.

Resistance, even unarmed, against the German occupation was dangerous, so in the beginning much was done by individuals or small groups. Yet an illegal press flourished, and Jewish and non-Jewish artists alike drew caricatures in numerous Resistance tracts to counter Nazi propaganda.

### Artists at Work in SS Camps

Several Jewish artists were rounded up and sent to the Dossin transit camp; a few survived. In one barrack, a *Malerstube* (painters' workshop) was installed in a small room with one window, where Jewish painters were assigned to paint cardboard numbers for the inmates, signs, and so on. Artists, including Lon Landau, Jacques Ochs, Irene Spicker, and Azriel Awret, toiled in the *Malerstube*, and some managed to secretly draw Dossin camp scenes, caricatures, and portraits. Others, like Kopel Simelovitz, stayed just a few weeks in Mechelen before being transported to the East.

When the evidence grew that the first deported Jews had all disappeared in the East, and after witnessing the Germans deporting even little children and older people for "voluntary labor," most remaining Jews went into hiding in attics and cellars and avoided sleeping at their homes anymore, as raids were mostly done by night. To fill the deportation trains, Jews were arrested wherever they could be

found, and major raids were launched in Antwerp and Brussels in coordination with the deportations from the Netherlands and France. The artist Felix Nussbaum and his wife, the Polish-born Felka Platek, for example, were arrested and deported after their hiding place was discovered.

Soon, the SS headquarters was demanding more Jews be deported, no matter what nationality. In September 1943, the hunt for foreign Jews had become so difficult that, to better fill the trains, a carefully prepared raid was carried out to round up Jews who had Belgian citizenship. Thus far relatively safe, they, too, were now being arrested, sent to the Dossin camp, and deported.

In the meantime, Jewish and non-Jewish underground workers risked their lives to hide almost 4,000 Jewish children, including 2,500 Jewish children hidden by Catholic institutions. Even King Leopold's mother, Queen Elisabeth, born a Bavarian princess, used her German connections and influence to save several hundreds of Jewish children, scientists, artists, and old people.

Between 1942 and 1944, 28 convoys containing 25,257 Jews and 351 Gypsies left Mechelen for Auschwitz. Of all of these people, more than two-thirds were sent to the gas chambers upon arrival, and many others died from slave labor in the camps. A total of almost 40,000 Jews in Belgium were imprisoned or deported. Following were some of the best-known artists:

#### Jacques Ochs (1883–1971)

Jacques Ochs, a painter, was born in Nice, France, to Belgian parents. He studied at the Liège Royal Academy of Fine Arts where he was later a professor (1920) and the director. A champion fencer, Ochs won a gold medal for Belgium in the 1912 Summer Olympics (épée team). Since 1910, he had been a caricaturist for the well-known satirical monthly *Pourquoi Pas?*

In the late 1930s, his caricatures were often warnings against fascism. In 1938, Ochs drew Hitler with blood on his hands on the *Pourquoi Pas?* title page. The Germans would not forget: After the German invasion, Ochs was betrayed in February 1941, arrested for acts of resistance, and imprisoned in the infamous Breendonk Fort. Because he was a well-known portrait artist and caricaturist, he was allowed to portray the inmates and SS guards. (After the war he bequeathed his sketchbook to the Breendonk Fort museum.)

In February 1942, Ochs was set free, after the intervention of Queen Elisabeth, who favored artists. However, he continued his resistance work in the illegal press and was arrested again in 1944, imprisoned in Breendonk, and eventually was sent to the Dossin transit camp in Mechelen. A Belgian subject and a renowned artist, he was spared deportation and once more set free. He died in 1971 in Liège, Belgium.

#### Felix Nussbaum (1904–1944)

*When Ich untergehe, lasst meine Bilder nicht sterben!*  
(When I pass on, don't let my paintings die with me! 1942)

Felix Nussbaum, who was born in Osnabrück, Germany, studied art in Hamburg, Berlin, and Rome. His early paintings feature stern European Jewish themes. In

1932, he was awarded a scholarship to study at the German Academy in Rome. After the Nazi rise to power in 1933, he was dismissed from the Academy by Goebbels. He remained for a year in Italy before settling with his future wife, Felka Platek, in Ostend, Belgium, where he had spent summer vacations with his parents. Terrified by the Nazi regime, his painting became more and more ominous and disturbing.

When the Germans invaded Belgium in May 1940, Nussbaum, still a German citizen, was arrested by the Belgian police and sent to the camps of Saint Cyprien and Gurs in southern France. He managed to escape and went into hiding in Brussels. Felix and Felka lived in a small attic and painted desperate works. In 1944, they were betrayed and sent to the Dossin camp. A shy and hopeless man, Nussbaum painted small watercolor still lifes till he was deported with Felka to Auschwitz, where they perished.

Felix Nussbaum's art was completely forgotten until long after World War II, when his native city of Osnabrück organized his first postwar exhibition and later built the Nussbaum Museum. The Felix Nussbaum Haus is an extension to the Cultural History Museum and displays his saved graphics and paintings. Daniel Libeskind (b. 1946), an American architect of Polish-Jewish descent who won the competition to build the museum, stated "The Nussbaum Museum becomes a profound place for the encounter of the future and the past, and not only a testament to an impossible fate."

#### Carol (Karel) Deutsch (1894–1943)

Carol Deutsch, a Belgian-born businessman, painter, and illustrator, was the son of a Jewish Hungarian diamond dealer. Deutsch settled in Ostend where he ran a prosperous fur trade. A stylish socialite and dandy, and a passionate art collector, he befriended famous artists like James Ensor and Leon Spilliaert, who both painted his portrait, and eventually became a painter himself. He excelled in Ostend port views, figures, and portraits and in 1929 had his first exhibition at the Manteau Gallery in Brussels. His friend Ensor wrote the introduction to the exhibition catalog.

After the German invasion, Deutsch and his wife went into hiding in Brussels under assumed names. During 1941–1944, he painted a series of 99 expressionist yet naïve illustrations to the Bible, which he kept in a wooden box as a birthday present for his 2-year-old daughter, Ingrid.

In September 1943, Deutsch and his wife were arrested by the SS and imprisoned in the Dossin camp. The day they were deported to Auschwitz with transport XXB, he left 22-year-old Irene Spicker his paintbox, which she still uses. Both Deutsch and his wife died in Auschwitz. Ingrid Deutsch, and the box with the 99 illustrations, were saved by Belgian neighbors, and she later moved to the United States. Ingrid died in 1982 and bequeathed the box and the illustrations to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum.

#### Lon (Léon) Landau (1910–1945)

Léon Landau was a well-known stage designer for the KVS (Royal Flemish Theatre) and actor in the Groep 111, in Antwerp, Belgium. It is reported that he had lived in

Palestine for some time. In 1941, he moved to Brussels to hide from the Gestapo. When he was eventually arrested and sent to the Dossin camp, he was given a B number (indicating that he was a Belgian Jew), which for some time saved him from deportation. He was one of the artists in the Malerstube and voluntarily took care of the old and the very young in the dormitories.

Eventually, in 1944, because he was a suspected communist, he was put on transport XXIV to the Bergen Belsen concentration camp, a few months before the Germans were to blow up the Auschwitz-Birkenau gas chambers. When the Bergen Belsen camp was liberated, Landau volunteered to help typhoid patients, and died of the disease, aged only 35. He was buried in a mass grave in the Bergen Belsen camp.

### Irene Spicker Awret (b. 1921) and Azriel Awret (b. 1910)

Irene Spicker was still a student when she fled Germany in 1939. In Brussels, she managed to survive for three years as an art student, a farm maid, and so on, but eventually had to hide and was finally arrested, one more victim of the notorious Jewish traitor “Jacques” who spotted and helped arrest more than 200 Jews in the streets of Brussels. She was imprisoned in the Dossin camp in March 1943. Because of her talent as a painter, she was assigned to the Malerstube (painters’ workshop). There she met Azriel Awret, a Polish-born painter who was assigned to paint thousands of cardboard numbers and needed an assistant. Irene, Azriel, Jacques Ochs, and other artists managed to draw sketches of camp life, many of which Irene was able to hide and save. Azriel and Irene both survived the camp. After the liberation in September 1944, they married, and in 1949, they immigrated to Israel. There, Azriel and Irene helped found the artists’ colony in Safed. They have lived in the United States since 1968. Irene Awret’s 2004 book, *They’ll Have to Catch Me First*, describes her flight from Berlin and her 18 months in the Dossin barracks of Mechelen, where her talent as an artist saved her from deportation.

### Kopel Simelovitz (1900–1943)

Kopel Simelovitz was born in Seduva, Lithuania, in 1900. In 1915, when Jews were expelled from the western Soviet territory into the Russian interior, young Simelovitz ended up in Vitebsk, Marc Chagall’s birthplace. Simelovitz studied from 1916 to 1919 with famed local painter Yehuda Pen (Chagall’s teacher in 1906) and then returned to Seduva, where he was an art teacher for five years and joined the He Halutz (Pioneer Movement) that promoted settlement in Palestine.

In 1924, after his mother died, Simelovitz immigrated to Haifa, where he was a photographer, then went to work in the Ein Hai moshav (Kfar Melel today). However, he could not take the hot and humid climate and came down with malaria. He then contacted his uncle, Samuel Behr, who owned a frozen egg import company in London and Shanghai. After a short business training in London, Simelovitz was sent as financial manager to a subsidiary in Ghent, Belgium.

In 1931, however, the Ghent office closed and Simelovitz decided to become a professional painter. He studied at the Ghent Academy from 1932 to 1937 and had

his first solo exhibition in 1935. He also rented a studio in Sint-Martens-Latem, the well-known artists' colony. Because of his health problem, he was a frequent visitor to a doctor's office and fell in love with a Belgian nurse, Florine (she never married and died in 1976). Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, Simelovitz eventually succeeded in getting Belgian citizenship.

Sadly, Simelovitz did not go into hiding and continued to live at his home for three years. In 1943, he was arrested and sent to the Dossin camp. Six weeks later, he was deported to Auschwitz, where he perished. Irene Spicker Awret recalls: "An older artist also joined sometimes in the painters' workshop, shyly sitting on the edge of our bench. He talked little and painted delicate, small watercolors, dream-like memories of Palestine—blossoming meadows where almond-eyed children played with young horses and cypresses swayed over flooded fields. Kopel was gentle, a dreamer, and we liked him well." Irene Spicker's future husband Azriel Awret painted Simelovitz's portrait, which is now in Yad Vashem's art collection.

### Selected Bibliography

- Awret, Irene. 2004. *They'll Have to Catch Me First: An Artist's Coming of Age in the Third Reich*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press–Dryad Press.
- Jewish Museum of Belgium (Brussels). [www.mjb-jmb.org](http://www.mjb-jmb.org) (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance. [www.cicb.be](http://www.cicb.be) (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Potteau, Daniel. "The Hole in the Wall—Kopel Simelovitz 1900–1943." Unpublished manuscript.
- Steinberg, Maxime. 1983–1986. *L'Etoile et le Fusil*. Brussels: Vie ouvrière.
- Van Doorslaer, Rudi. 1995. *Kinderen van het Ghetto* [Children of the Ghetto]. Ghent, Belgium: Hadewijch, Antwerpen-Baarn—AMSAB.

## Jews in France

*Ronald Schechter and Shoshannah Zirkin*

---

General Population: 59,268,000

Jewish Population: 519,000

Percent Population: 0.8 percent

Jewish Population by City: Paris and suburbs of Paris, 350,000; Marseilles, 70,000; Toulouse, 23,000; Nice, 20,000; Strasbourg, 16,000; Grenoble, 8,000; Metz–Nancy, 4,000; Corsica, 200. There are also several small communities scattered throughout the country.

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: 300,000 Jews immigrated to France from North Africa (primarily Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt) in the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, nearly 60 percent of France's Jewish community is Sephardic.

Languages Spoken: Arabic, French, Hebrew, Yiddish

---

### Historical Overview

The Jewish presence begins in the fourth century in what today constitutes France. As Roman citizens, the Jews of Gaul have the same rights as their non-Jewish

compatriots. They engage in a wide variety of trades, including agriculture, public administration, and the military, and enjoy freedom of worship.

In the fifth century, the conquest of Gaul by the Franks does not change the legal situation of Jews, though the conversion of the Frankish King Clovis to Christianity at the end of the century marks the beginning of a series of attempts on behalf of the church to limit the rights of Jews and restrict their interaction with Christians.

From the 7th to the 10th centuries, the Jewish population sinks considerably. The rise of the Carolingian dynasty, founded by Pepin the Short in 751 and greatly expanded by his son Charlemagne (crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800), marks the beginning of a happier period in the history of the Jews of France. In Narbonne, a Mediterranean port city in southeastern France, the Jews had enjoyed the tolerant government of Muslim rulers before the city's capture by Pepin in 759. The Carolingians maintain good relations with the Jews, whose international contacts are useful in the lucrative Mediterranean trade, and the Jewish population of Narbonne increases accordingly. Charlemagne provides Jewish merchants with broad trading privileges, including exemptions to commercial duties, and appoints a Jewish ambassador, "Isaac the Jew," to the court of the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad. He grants the Jews legal autonomy and accepts their testimony in court, thus exempting them in most cases from the notorious trials by ordeal to which Christians are subject. His son, Louis the Pious, continues the Carolingian tradition of benevolent rule over the Jews. Such is the religious climate of the day that Bodo, a court priest, can convert to Judaism (839) and engage in public disputations with Christians without fear of reprisals, a situation unthinkable in the later middle ages. The year after Bodo's conversion, Louis the Pious dies, and his three sons contest the succession. The compromise division of the empire into three parts, its subsequent subdivision, and the increasing threat of Viking incursions lead to a disintegration of royal power and a corresponding increase in the power of territorial lords. Accordingly, the status of Jews varies from one territory to the other. Typically, lords grant the Jews residence, trading privileges, and corporate autonomy in exchange for cash and financial services. Should the Jews fail to be useful to their lords, they risk expulsion. In southern France, Jewish scholars translate the writings of Sa'adia Gaon (882–942) and Judah Halevi (ca.1075–1141) from Arabic into Hebrew, and similarly introduce their coreligionists to the great philosophers of the Arab world, Avicenna (980–1037) and Averroës (1126–1198).

Beginning in 1096, the primarily anti-Muslim enterprise quickly creates Jewish victims, as Crusaders on their way to Palestine massacre Jews in the Rhineland. Though Jews in France largely escape the violence of the First Crusade, and though Saint Bernard himself denounces attacks on Jews during the Second Crusade (1146), the Crusaders had already created a climate of hatred toward non-Christians. The notorious ritual murder accusations against Jews, in France as well as England, date from the 12th century. Thus, it is easy for Philip II (Philip Augustus, reigned 1179–1223) to expel the Jews from his domains in 1182 by citing their perfidy, though his primary interest is their property, which he duly confiscates. When he sees that the value of this property does not compensate for the loss in

tax money that the Jews had previously provided, he rescinds the expulsion order in 1198.

Despite the persecutions of the Middle Ages, the Jews of France can boast of notable cultural achievements. The great biblical and Talmudic commentator Rashi (1040–1105), emerges in the tolerant atmosphere of Troyes under the counts of Champagne. Building on Rashi's legacy, two centuries of disciples known as Tosafists, for the *tosafot* or “supplements” they write to the master's commentaries, contribute to the prominence of Champagne as a center of Talmudic scholarship. Among the most famous Tosafists are Rashbam (1085–1158) and Rabbenu Tam (1100–1171). Champagne also sees the birth, around 1100, of the *Machzor* of Vitry, the prayer book that canonizes the liturgy of northern European French Jewry.

In the 13th century, Louis IX (Saint Louis, reigned 1226–1270) adds religious zeal to the persecution of the Jews, though he uses their misfortune for political gain. Citing church prohibitions against the lending of money at interest, he cancels debts owed to Jews and has their property confiscated when they fail to pay their own debts. In 1242, Talmudic manuscripts are publicly burned in Paris, and in 1254 the king orders the burning of all such “blasphemies.” In 1269, Saint Louis eagerly executes the order of the Fourth Lateral Council of the Church and forces the Jews to wear badges distinguishing them from the Christian population. His successor, Philip IV (Philip the Fair, reigned 1285–1314), expels the Jews from the kingdom in 1290, though, as with the expulsion of 1182, the value of the confiscated property does not compensate for the ensuing shortage of tax revenue. Consequently, Louis X (Louis the Stubbard, reigned 1314–1316) calls them back again in 1315.

The 14th century is a catastrophic period for the Jews of France, encompassing the Hundred Years' War and the Black Death. As susceptible to disease as anyone else, the Jewish population is decimated by the plague of 1348–1349. To make matters worse, Jews are scapegoated as bearers of the dreaded illness and consequently subjected to judicial murders and lynch-mob massacres in those areas of France where they had managed to reside. Oppression and disease take such a toll that when Charles VI (Charles the Mad) banishes the Jews in 1394, there are few left to expel.

Although the expulsion of 1394 is never formally rescinded, Jews begin to trickle back into France in the 1650s. In the southwest, they become “New Christians.” In 1550, conversos fleeing the Inquisition in Portugal settle in Bordeaux with the permission of Henri II, who sees in the crypto-Jews a potential stimulus to commercial activity in the Atlantic port city, which had never recovered from the Hundred Years' War. Their privileges, reconfirmed (for a price) by subsequent kings until the end of the 18th century, include freedom to conduct trade not otherwise regulated by local guilds, to purchase real estate, and to bequeath their property. A smaller group of Sephardic Jews finds refuge in Saint-Esprit, just outside Bayonne, at the end of the 16th century, and Louis XIV accords them the same privileges their coreligionists enjoy in Bordeaux. By the reign of Louis XV, the pretense of conversion has been dropped and the Sephardic Jews are formally recognized as Jews. Roughly contemporary with the arrival of the Portuguese Jews in southwestern France, Ashkenazi Jews begin settling in the city of Metz—conquered from the Holy Roman

Empire in 1552—in the northeast. In 1565, the military governor grants residency to three Jews for the purpose of raising money to rebuild the citadel and provision the garrison. In 1574, the lieutenant governor expels the Jews, yet King Henry III later issues letters patent allowing eight Jewish families and their descendents to live in the city. Succeeding Bourbon kings confirm these residence privileges, each time admitting a larger number of families, although from 1715 the Jews have to pay a steep annual fee for “protection.” Entrepreneurs provide the army with cavalry horses, meat, grain, and cash, while their poorer relations eke out a living by peddling used goods (new products being the monopoly of Christian guild members), lending small sums of money to peasants, or begging.

The Jewish population of Alsace accrues to France in 1648 upon the province’s incorporation into France at the end of the Thirty Years’ War. As part of the postwar settlement, the French crown preserves the laws that entitle lords to settle Jews on their lands. Jews there trade in livestock and grain and therefore represent an important source of food for soldiers stationed in the embattled province and civilians who suffer periodic shortages resulting from war and harvest failures. They also engage in moneylending, which makes them unpopular with, but indispensable to, cash-poor peasants and military officials in need of specie. Making up the majority of the Jewish population in France, the Alsatian Jews are also the poorest. As in Alsace, the Jews living in the neighboring northeastern province of Lorraine come under French rule as a result of annexation. Initially an independent duchy, Lorraine is occupied by France between 1633 and 1661, and again between 1670 and 1697, before passing definitively to France in 1766. During the first period of occupation, military commanders admit small numbers of Jews, one family at a time, on the basis of their utility in providing grain, meat, and cash to the frontier region. Under the second French occupation Jews settle in 10 authorized villages throughout the province but are excluded from the capital city of Nancy.

The status of Jews rises briefly under Duke Léopold, who in 1701 prohibits Christians from mistreating or insulting Jews and who appoints a Jew, Samuel Lévy, as his receiver general in 1715. Yet when this financier is found guilty of debasing coinage and pocketing the profits, the entire Jewish community suffers. Jews who had immigrated to Lorraine after 1680 are expelled, and residents of longer standing are strictly monitored. Duke Stanislas admits more Jewish immigrants and regularizes their status by establishing a Rabbinate in 1737, but in return he charges the community with an onerous annual protection tax. On the death of Stanislas in 1766, Lorraine becomes French again and the kings assume the new role of “protector.” In addition to Ashkenazim in the northeast and Sephardim in the southwest, Provençal Jews live in and around the papal city of Avignon. After the expulsion of 1394, many Jews had fled to Provence, and when that kingdom fell to France and the Jews were expelled in 1500, most sought refuge in Avignon and the papal cities of Carpentras, Cavaillon, and Isle-sur-Sorgue in the Comtat Venaissin. Periodically falling under French control, these communities also add Jews to the French kingdom through immigration to Bordeaux, Bayonne/Saint-Esprit, and Paris. This last destination is conspicuous under the Ancien Régime for its absence of Jews, who are only unofficially tolerated before the Revolution of 1789.

It is difficult to generalize about the Jews in France between the middle of the 16th century and the end of the 18th. As during the Middle Ages, their conditions vary from place to place, according to contractual arrangements made with the relevant authorities. Significant cultural differences, as well as (usually) great distances, divide Sephardim and Ashkenazim, and the “Avignonese” Jews have a separate Judeo-Provençal culture altogether. Rich traders such as David Gradis in 18th-century Bordeaux have little in common with itinerant peddlers and beggars in Alsace. Yet with the exception of the Parisian Jews, who only constitute about 500 out of a French Jewish population of 40,000 at the time of the Revolution, nearly all are subject to legally autonomous communities. Authorized by royal letters (*patent*), though dependent on the king’s good graces, Jewish communities are governed by statutes (*takkanoth*) based on Jewish law and administered by councils composed of rabbis and laymen. They are not hermetically sealed, however; repeated ordinances throughout France prohibit fraternization between Jews and Gentiles are evidence that such friendly contact existed, as are contemporary rabbis’ sermons against the adoption of Gentile styles and habits.

The Revolution of 1789 dramatically transforms the legal status of the Jews in France. Just as it abolishes other corporate structures that had been characteristic of the Ancien Régime, the Revolution dissolves the Jewish communities as well. The emancipation of the Jews is implicit in Article 10 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which prohibits unequal treatment on the basis of religion, yet the widespread prejudice that Jews are morally unfit for citizenship, combined with varying degrees of confidence about the ability of the law to transform human nature, prompts a national debate over whether inclusion in the French nation could morally improve or “regenerate” the Jews.

On September 27, 1791, the National Assembly declares Jewish men who otherwise fit the criteria for “active citizenship,” that is, who meet high property qualifications, eligible to serve in public office. Although this only directly affects a handful of men, given the poverty of the Jews in general, the new law signals an end to arbitrary treatment of Jewish communities and inclusion of the Jews into the family of French citizens. At the same time, emancipation signals a modern understanding of Jewishness as an identity to which individuals are to attribute personal meaning. Under the Ancien Régime Jewishness comprises specific legal obligations—contractually defined privileges and disabilities, justice administered by relatively autonomous Jewish courts, dues and fines collected by community officials—that the Revolution abolishes. In postrevolutionary France, Jewish identity becomes more of a spiritual or philosophical question, though to a large degree social pressure to live and work among Jews, and Gentiles’ resistance to Jewish integration into the surrounding society, slows the effects of emancipation.

If the revolution abrogated the institutions that had defined Jewish life for centuries, Napoleon attempts to create new ones from the 1790s to 1815. In his zeal for centralized control, he establishes a new organizational structure for French Jewry: the consistory. Headed by rabbis and lay notables, consistories in the newly created national *départements*—the postrevolutionary provinces—oversee religious and secular education and promote the “regeneration” of the Jews, a process that

largely involves the reeducation of peddlers and moneylenders for “useful” occupations in artisanry, agriculture, and science. They in turn report to a Central Consistory in Paris, over which a chief rabbi (grand rabbin) presides. In a colorful ceremony designed as much to advertise Napoleon’s role as lawmaker as to celebrate the emancipation of the Jews, the emperor convokes a Grand Sanhedrin (1807)—based on the ancient rabbinical court—to confirm the compatibility of French and Jewish law and define the powers and responsibilities of the consistories. Ironically, Napoleon violates his own much-vaunted principle of legal equality by creating laws of exception against Alsatian Jews (in his view, the most lacking in civic virtue), prohibiting them from moneylending and cancelling debts non-Jews owe them. Despite these discriminatory acts (which lapse soon after the emperor’s fall), and largely because of his emancipation of Jews in conquered territories in Italy and Germany, Napoleon long maintains a heroic stature in the Jewish collective memory.

The 19th century sees an unprecedented improvement in the opportunities and conditions for French Jews. Despite the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy and a Catholic revival, especially under Charles X (reigned 1824–1830), the principle of equality of men before the law remains in place. Unlike their counterparts in Italy and parts of Germany, for example, the French emancipation is not rescinded after Waterloo.

The Jewish population more than doubles, to 96,000, by 1861, by which time nearly half of French Jewry has moved to cities, and more than a quarter (25,000) to Paris alone. Jews achieve prominence in a wide range of occupations, including musical composition (e.g., opera composer Fromental Halévy, 1799–1862) and performance (e.g., pianist Henri Herz, 1806–1888), theater (e.g., actresses Rachel Félix, 1821–1858 and Sarah Bernhardt, 1844–1923), banking (e.g., the Foulds, Pereires, and, especially, the Rothschilds), politics (e.g., government minister Adolphe Crémieux, 1796–1880), and academia (e.g., sociologist Émile Durkheim, 1858–1917). The Consistory authorizes moderate reform in the liturgy, introduces the organ to synagogue service, and integrates girls into Judaism through religious initiation ceremonies, but France—unlike Germany, where legal discrimination prompts a high rate of conversion—saw neither wholesale abandonment of Judaism nor radical reform in doctrine or practice. French patriotism, combined with a belief in the *mission civilisatrice*, or “civilizing mission” that justifies French imperialism, provides support for the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU, founded 1860), the international philanthropic organization dedicated to the emancipation and regeneration of Jewish populations around the world.

The establishment of the AIU is indicative of the security of the French Jewish community by the middle of the 19th century. Though not fully accepted in French society, the Jews are sufficiently confident to organize on behalf of their less fortunate coreligionists. By the end of the 19th century, however, Jews in France itself have reason to be worried. Anti-Semitism had existed throughout the century, but before the 1890s public expression of hostility to the Jews was rare. Utopian socialists such as Alphonse Toussenel, follower of Charles Fourier and author of *Les juifs, rois de l'époque* (The Jews, Kings of the Epoch, 1847), had denounced Jewish bankers, especially the Rothschilds, though other utopian socialist groups, especially

the followers of the Comte de Saint-Simon, include Jews among their most vocal members. The Comte de Gobineau distinguishes between Aryan and Semitic “races” in his *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1853–1855), thus providing the pseudoscientific framework for future racists. Yet the dominant political philosophy of the postrevolutionary period, especially after 1830, is a liberalism that sees religion as a private matter and directs its criticisms primarily at the Catholic Church, not Jews or Judaism.

The decade of the 1880s sees the ominous beginnings of a new, popular anti-Semitism; the ravings of Toussenel and Gobineau had only reached a small audience of pseudointellectuals, but in 1886, Edouard Drumont writes a best-selling screed, *La France Juive* (Jewish France), in which he accuses the Jews of plotting to destroy France. Yet attention from his fantasies might have waned had it not been for the Panama Crisis of 1892. Founded by Ferdinand de Lesseps (the father of the Suez Canal), a joint-stock company had begun work on what would later become the Panama Canal. The company went bankrupt in 1889, however, and it was subsequently discovered that its agents had bribed legislators to vote for public backing of the failing enterprise. Though neither the company’s directors nor the politicians implicated in the scandal are Jewish, the two intermediaries who had distributed the bribes are. One of them, Jacques Reinach, commits suicide in 1892. Before his death, however, he leaks the names of bribed politicians to Drumont, who uses the information to boost sales of his scandal sheet, *La Libre Parole* (Free Speech), from which he launches incessant attacks on the Jews to 300,000 subscribers, a huge audience for the time.

The Dreyfus Affair gives Drumont and his fellow anti-Semites another excuse to attack the Jews. In October 1894, Alfred Dreyfus, an assimilated Alsatian Jew and a captain in the French army, is accused of spying for Germany. On the basis of documents later proven to be forgeries, a closed-session court martial convicts him of high treason, and in January of the following year he is transported to Devil’s Island off the coast of French Guiana. During the summer of 1896, a fellow officer, Georges Picquart, discovers the identity of the real traitor (Ferdinand Esterhazy) by matching handwriting samples, but his superiors transfer him to a dangerous post in Tunisia to prevent him from attempting to reopen the case. Nevertheless, Picquart manages to convey his findings to Dreyfus’s wife and brother, who publicly demand a retrial. In January 1898, Emile Zola publishes his famous “J’accuse,” an open letter to the president of the Republic denouncing the army and declaring Dreyfus’s innocence. Drumont counters with attacks on Zola, other supporters of Dreyfus (known as Dreyfusards), and, of course, the Jews. In January and February riots against the Jews break out in France and Algeria, and politicians running for office in the National Assembly regularly capitalize on popular anti-Semitism to win voters. In another travesty of justice, a court-martial chooses to ignore the evidence against Esterhazy and acquits him. Theodor Herzl, at the time a young journalist writing from Paris, later credits the Dreyfus Affair for convincing him that the Jews are not safe in the Diaspora and they need their own state.

In June 1899, the Cour de Cassation, the highest court in France, sets aside the verdict against Dreyfus and orders a new court-martial. In a bizarre verdict, the

military tribunal reconvicts Dreyfus with “extenuating circumstances” and sentences him to 10 years in prison. The president of the Republic now steps in and issues a pardon. In 1906, the Cour de Cassation annuls the 1899 verdict, though it is not until 1995 that the army itself publicly acknowledges Dreyfus’s innocence. Nevertheless, anti-Semitic agitation dies down quickly in the wake of the presidential pardon.

As to the Jewish community more generally, the Dreyfus Affair, though alarming, does not disrupt its efflorescence. Despite social and political anti-Semitism, especially in the 1890s, the Third Republic (1871–1940) furnishes opportunities for the Jews that no other European country, with the exception of the United Kingdom, could provide. Jews occupy the highest rungs on the civil service ladder. They preside over, and are present at, the salons in which the social, political, and cultural elite meet. And though Dreyfus was tragically betrayed by his peers, he is evidence of the mobility of Jews in the French army. Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe bring their ideas, and their conflicts, to France, especially after the 1905 Revolution in Russia and the closing of the United Kingdom to immigration. Though viewed with suspicion, not least by “native” Jews who worry about the effect on their own status of a largely poor immigrant population with (literally) revolutionary ideas, these new arrivals find France a welcome asylum. Paradoxically, they number among the most famous Jews in France from the turn of the century to World War II, especially in the visual arts: Jacques Lipchitz (1891–1973), Chaim Soutine (1893 or 1894–1943), and Marc Chagall (1887–1985), for example.

The nationalistic sentiment pervading Europe at the time of World War I, in which the Jews largely participate, brings with it a suspicion of foreigners, but the Jewish community in France also benefits from the idea of the *union sacrée*, the “sacred union” in which the French are bound, despite their differences, for the duration of the war. In the war’s aftermath, though politically France is far from united in the 1920s, anti-Semitism is a marginal movement and appears increasingly to be a relic of the previous century. Less on the defensive than ever before, Jews experiment publicly, in writing and through associations, with many ways of being Jewish: from Zionism to non-Zionist cultural nationalism (i.e., Bundism) to Hasidic revivalism and other forms of heterodox religious experience. With Hitler on the rise in Germany in the 1930s, the specter of anti-Semitism reappears in France, with extreme right-wing newspapers, clubs, and gangs attacking Jews as the alleged agents of international socialism. Nevertheless, such is the willingness of the French electorate to set aside religious or ethnic prejudice that the Jewish socialist Léon Blum (1872–1950) becomes prime minister twice, first from June 1936 to June 1937, and again in March 1938.

After the German invasion of May and June 1940, however, the situation of the Jews deteriorates rapidly. By the terms of the armistice of June 25, a little more than half of France (including Paris) would be under German occupation, but unlike other defeated countries (with the exception of Denmark), France is to remain independent, at least in principle. On July 10, the National Assembly, meeting in the spa town of Vichy in the unoccupied zone, accords dictatorial powers to Marshal Philippe Pétain, an octogenarian hero of World War I. Under his auspices, and

without any coercion from Germany, the Vichy regime promulgates the *Statut des juifs* (Statute on the Jews) of October 3, 1940, which excludes Jews from leadership positions in the state and the armed forces and bans them from the professions of teaching, journalism, film, and theater. The following day Pétain issues a law authorizing prefects to intern “foreigners of the Jewish race” in “special camps.” By this point more than half of France’s Jewish population consists of immigrants.

From 1941 to 1945, Vichy imposes strict quotas on the number of Jews who are allowed to study at university or to practice as lawyers, architects, physicians, dentists, pharmacists, and midwives, among other occupations. “Jewish” property is “aryanized,” and Jews are required to submit to a detailed census. The Jewish census greatly facilitates the deportation of Jews, which begins with the first train to Auschwitz on March 27, 1942. The most notorious raid on the Jewish population occurs on July 16, 1942, when 4,500 French police arrest 12,884 Jewish men, women, and children of foreign origin and intern them in the Vélodrome d’Hiver, a cycling stadium in Paris. After five days of detention in appallingly unsanitary conditions, the Jews are deported to Auschwitz. In all, 75,000 of France’s 300,000 Jews perish in the camps. German pressure is undoubtedly an important factor in the French Holocaust, particularly in the Occupied Zone, but the anti-Semitism of government officials and their zeal in tracking down Jews for deportation makes the Nazis’ job easier than it otherwise would have been.

From 1945 to 1948, approximately 80,000 Jews from Central and Eastern Europe move to France. In 1949, France establishes diplomatic relations with Israel, and in 1950 France supplies Israel with arms and helps develop Israel’s nuclear program.

French Jewry experience a remarkable renewal in the wake of the Holocaust. More than doubling in size between 1944 and 1970, primarily because of the immigration of Sephardic Jews from former French colonies in North Africa, it is now the largest Jewish population in Western Europe, with a population of 650,000. French guilt in the Shoah is discussed little during the quarter century after the Liberation. Upon arriving in Paris in August 1944, General Charles de Gaulle, in an effort to prevent civil war and stop summary reprisals against suspected collaborators, promotes the myth that the French had (with few exceptions) collectively resisted Germany. The “myth of Resistance” went so far as to include Marshall Pétain himself, who is said to have played a “double game” of pretending to accede to German demands while secretly thwarting them. According to this logic, Pétain had shielded the French from what would have been a more destructive German occupation. With the publication of *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–44*, by Columbia University historian Robert Paxton, in 1973, these myths become increasingly difficult to sustain. Using German diplomatic archives captured by the Americans, Paxton shows that rather than simply (and badly) following German orders, Pétain had actively sought collaboration with Hitler. Though at first controversial, Paxton’s findings have a receptive audience in the generation that had demonstrated against “the establishment” and questioned their elders’ wartime actions and decisions during the uprising of May 1968. Few historians today support the “double game” hypothesis. Anti-Semitism, however, did not disappear after the Liberation.

The populist right-wing movement led by Pierre Poujade (1920–2003) reaches its height shortly after his anti-Semitic attacks on Mendès-France. The successor to *Poujadisme*, the extreme right-wing National Front is led by the anti-Semitic politician Jean-Marie Le Pen (1928– ), who has dismissed the gas chambers at Auschwitz as mere “details” of history. More mainstream politicians have betrayed anti-Semitic biases as well. During the Six-Day War in 1967, De Gaulle equates the State of Israel with the Jews more generally, infamously referring to them as an “elite people” and “domineering.” In 1980, after a bomb attack outside a synagogue, Prime Minister Raymond Barre distinguishes between the “Jews going to synagogue,” for whom the bomb was intended, and the “innocent Frenchmen” who are its actual victims.

In the 1990s, politicians begin to court France’s Jews in unprecedented ways. The Jacobin ideology inherited from the French Revolution had long devalued religious or ethnic “particularism” as harmful to the goal of republican indivisibility. Around the time of the bicentenary of the Revolution, however, Jews and representatives of other ethnic, religious, or regional groups proclaim the *droit à la différence*, or the “right to be different.” This new pluralism, together with growing pressure by all European governments to deal honestly with their nations’ record in World War II, leads to such gestures as Jacques Chirac’s 1995 speech acknowledging the French role in the Holocaust and the establishment of an annual commemoration of the round-up at the Vél d’Hiv.

Yet, anti-Semitism remains a problem in France with atrocities such as the desecration of a Jewish cemetery at Carpentras in 1990. In 2002, the National Front party is alarmingly successful in the first round of presidential elections when anti-Semitic candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen takes one-fifth of the votes. In 2006, the kidnapping, torture and murder of Ilan Halimi by an anti-Semitic street gang shocks France.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

At the turn of the century, many prominent Jewish artists worked together at the School of Paris. They came to be known as the “Jewish School of Paris” creating an exclusive group that left a lasting impression. Some of the most famous among them were Camille Pissarro, Chaim Soutine, Amedeo Modigliani, Jules Pascin, Mane Katz, and Marc Chagall.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Jewish historical sites exist in many locations throughout France. The Provence region is particularly rich with historic sites. Old synagogues in Carpertras and Cavaillon are now national monuments, and old cemeteries in Landes and Alsace are well maintained.

In Paris, the Museum of Jewish Art and the Cluny Museum contain the Strauss-Rothschild Collection. Paris also has several Jewish libraries, such as the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, and the Medem Library, which is the largest Yiddish library in Europe.

French Jews have held leading positions in government, including Pierre Mendès-France (1907–1982), who held the premiership (1954–1955) during a crucial phase of decolonization from Indo-China and, more recently, Simone Veil (1927– ), an Auschwitz survivor who has served as the head of the Conseil Constitutionnel (the highest administrative court in France) and president of the European Parliament. Leading Jewish intellectuals have included legal scholar and Nobel Peace Prize laureate René Cassin (1887–1976), sociologist Raymond Aron (1905–1983), anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908– ), and literary theorist Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). Among the best-known public intellectuals today are Bernard-Henri Lévy (1948– ) and Alain Finkielkraut (1949– ), each of whom addresses questions of Jewish identity, among other themes.

### Religious Denominations

Forty-eight percent of French Jews are moderate Orthodox. They are a well-represented community with many synagogues and rabbis throughout the country. Most Sephardi Jews in France consider themselves members of this community. Seven percent of French Jews are ultra-Orthodox, and about 5 percent are Reform. Both communities have a number of synagogues and rabbis. About 25 percent of the Jewish community observes kashruth. The number of kosher butchers, restaurants, and supermarkets is growing.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

About 4 percent of Jewish children are enrolled in Jewish day schools, of which there are more than 20 in Paris. Jewish schools are also located in Strasbourg, Nice, Toulouse, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Metz, and Aix-les-Mains. The AIU is an organization that supervises Jewish-French schools in other countries.

Courses in Jewish studies are offered at most universities. Classes for students and academics are offered at the Mercaz Rashi. In addition, the Rabbinical Seminary ordains French-speaking rabbis.

The Jewish community organizes a Book Week, a Music Week, and an intellectual colloquium annually. The Jewish community gathers during these events to matters of interest and concern. Regardless of the activity within the community, less than half of France's Jewish community members are registered with synagogues or Jewish organizations.

France also has an active Jewish press that produces both weekly and monthly publications. In addition, there are Jewish television shows and radio broadcasts. The recent trial of Paul Touvier, the Vichy police commander of Lyons, has brought Jewish issues to the forefront of media exposure, causing a small revival within the community. Aliyah and tourism to Israel have increased, and the small ultra-Orthodox community is growing.

During the Holocaust, valuable works of art and property were confiscated from the Jewish community. In 1996, a government commission was established to investigate these crimes.

Major organizations include the CRIF (The Representative Council of French Jewry), which was founded in 1944 as the political representative of the Jewish community. The Consistoire Central supervises religious affairs. In addition, the FSJU (The United Jewish Social Foundation) was founded in 1950 to organize and overlook social, cultural, and education issues within the Jewish community. Chabad-Lubavitch also has a large presence in France. Chabad centers offer a variety of community services, including adult education, Hebrew school, children's club, bar and bat mitzvah instruction, holiday awareness programs, kitchen koshering, hospital visitation, marriage preparation, women's group, and synagogue. Centers are located in more than 50 cities.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

In the years after World War II, approximately 80,000 Jews from Central and Eastern Europe moved to France. In 2002, anti-Semitic incidences reached an all-time high, which resulted in one of the worst years for Jews in French history. Many Jews were targets for violent attacks. In Paris, several school buses transporting children were stoned. There are recorded assaults and attacks on various individuals after leaving synagogue. Many members of the Jewish community were injured, and many Jewish sites were targeted for crimes. Many Jewish-owned properties, including schools, synagogues, and a social sports center, were targets of arson. Jewish-owned shops, kosher butcher stores, and Jewish cemeteries were defiled with graffiti. Such occurrences are regularly reported in newspapers and magazines.

The surge of anti-Semitism in recent years has caused many more religious French Jews to move elsewhere, namely Israel. Since 1948, 34,000 French Jews have emigrated from France to Israel. Among the less religious, instances of intermarriage continue to rise.

### Selected Bibliography

- Blumenkrantz, Zohar, and Amiram Barkat. 2006 "2,500 American, French Immigrants to Arrive This Summer." *Haaretz* 14 May.
- Gerstenfeld, Manfred, interview with Shmuel Trigano. 2003. "France: Memory versus Truth." In *Europe's Crumbling Myths: The Post-Holocaust Origins of Today's Anti-Semitism*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Yad Vashem, World Jewish Congress.
- Gerstenfeld, Manfred. 2006. "The Future of the Jews in France: An Interview with Shmuel Trigano." *Changing Jewish Communities*, no. 11, August 15. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Web site. <http://www.jcpa.org/cjc/cjc-trigano-06.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Global Anti-Semitism: Selected Incidents around the World in 2002." Anti-Defamation League Web site. [http://www.adl.org/Anti\\_semitism/anti-semitism\\_global\\_incidents.asp#](http://www.adl.org/Anti_semitism/anti-semitism_global_incidents.asp#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Jewish Communities: Europe: France." 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress Web site [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Jewish Population Tables: Table 4. Estimated Jewish Population Distribution in Europe, 1/1/2002." 2002. <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/concepts/demography/demtables.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).

- Klarsfeld, Serge, ed. *Memorial to the Jews Deported from France, 1942–1944*. New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1983.
- Lazarus, Joyce Block. 1999. *Strangers and Sojourners: Jewish Identity in Contemporary Francophone Fiction*. New York: P. Lang.
- Nolden, Thomas. 2006. *In Lieu of Memory: Contemporary Jewish Writing in France*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Schnapper, Dominique. 1983. *Jewish Identities in France: An Analysis of Contemporary French Jewry*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Jewish Day School Education in French-Speaking Europe

*Zehavit Gross*

---

Jewish education is considered the best antidote to assimilation and the only guarantee for Jewish commitment and continuity (Waxman 2001). Hence, the future of European Jewry depends on the quality of its Jewish day schools. The aim of this entry is to describe the challenges facing Jewish day schools in francophone countries. The information is based on a study carried out in six Jewish day schools in Paris, three in Brussels, and one in Geneva (Gross 2002).

The main threat to the existence of many Jewish communities in Europe, and especially the francophone communities, are incidents of anti-Semitism and violence toward Jews. In response, for security reasons, many Jews prefer to send their children to Jewish day schools rather than to public schools. If the increase in violence continues, there will be a growing need to establish new schools in those countries, as the existing schools will not be able to hold the vast number of Jews who want to send their children to Jewish schools. The question is whether these schools will be the same as the schools that exist today or whether something new and fresh will develop.

Today in francophone countries, Jewish schools are not attractive to many parents; as a result, a relatively small minority sends their children to Jewish schools (Tal 2005). These day schools cope with four main problems:

1. *Resources*: The financial state of most schools is very poor; their infrastructure is primitive, and they lack basic educational equipment needed in a modern school.
2. *Economic status of the teachers*: The salaries of most teachers in Jewish education are lower than the official salary tables accepted in all three countries, and teachers have no union to protect their interests. They have personal contracts (formal and informal), generally for part-time positions, and need to supplement their income by working in more than one school. As a result, many schools cannot establish a permanent staff for Jewish studies.

3. *Social status of the teachers*: Most of the teachers are of Sephardic origin and low socioeconomic status. There is a correlation between their low salaries and their image in the eyes of students and parents.
4. *Professionalism*: most of the teachers have no formal professional training (didactic or disciplinary) or a diploma from an academic institution.

In spite of these obstacles, the teachers are generally extremely committed to their profession. They view their work as a mission rather than as a job and are ready to sacrifice.

The organizational structure of most of the schools is of a bureaucratic-hierarchical nature. The hierarchy is headed by the state, which has de jure influence over school affairs. Each principal (except for Geneva) is bound by state law and is subordinate to the school board or committee, which is made up of key community personalities, such as rabbis, wealthy members of the Jewish community, intellectuals, selected parents of high socioeconomic status, and official community representatives. The membership hierarchy is headed by its president. The committee is the direct employer of the principal and functions as the school's executive body. According to most principals, the school committees are as important as the state.

The more centralized the state, the more pivotal its influence on components of professional administrative functions and school curricula. School principals in France have more extensive reporting obligations vis-à-vis the state and the bureaucratic procedures they have to follow are more complex than is the case for their peers in Belgium or Switzerland. This is probably related to the fact that, as representatives of the state, Parisian principals exercise a great deal of power on behalf of the state, and thus their accountability is greater than that of Belgian or Swiss principals.

The most prominent similarity among all schools is the dual structure of school organization; there are two subcurricular systems, general studies and Jewish studies. This duality on the organizational/administrative level corresponds to particularistic (Jewish) and universal (general) elements and reflects the ambivalence of the Jewish school toward the bicultural world in which Jews live as a minority.

The schools maintain no official, practical contact with parents as individuals except through ad hoc committees. Students are situated at the bottom of the school hierarchy and are expected to adhere to the school curriculum and obey its teachers. Students take this situation for granted and accept it as part of the francophone tradition of hierarchy and order.

The school's organizational structure and balance of power reflects its identity and its conceptual world. That is, its organizational structure reflects the forces operating within the school system, the power wielded by various actors, and the relationships between the system and the actors. A school's balance of power is thus a practical manifestation of its inherent political inclination and identity (Gross 2006).

All the principals surveyed claimed that the purpose of a Jewish school was to enhance Jewish education, expose children to Jewish culture, and create a Jewish

milieu where Jews could meet in order to avoid assimilation. However, the hours allocated to the Jewish curriculum are limited and the level and quality of Jewish studies is very low. In most schools, Judaism is perceived in the narrow sense of observance of precepts and not as a civilization in the broader sense. The process of socialization places greater emphasis on the behavioral aspects of Judaism (religious laws and practices) than on cultural ones. Judaism as taught at school is perceived to be anachronistic and does not seem to be an equivalent alternative to the meaningful existential experience bestowed by the values of the modern Western world.

The connection to Israel is the foundation of the school, but there are fundamental differences between the schools. The more religious the school, the more positive its attitude toward the Land of Israel from the theological aspect, and the more critical it is from the political point of view. In most schools (especially in Paris, where there is a rapidly growing ultra-Orthodox [*haredi*] community), there is criticism about the secular nature of Israel. On the other hand, in the more pluralistic and secular schools (for example, in Brussels, where there is a rapid process of secularization and assimilation), which view Judaism as culture, the State of Israel and the Hebrew language serve as the focus of Jewish education. These dichotomous attitudes are accompanied by negative feelings toward the State of Israel for universal-humanistic reasons (because of the Israeli policy in the West Bank and its relationship with the Palestinians). This attitude can be found among leftist radical intellectuals in Brussels and Paris.

If Jewish education is the basis for Jewish continuity, the local Jewish communities in these countries need to view it as the core of their financial, spiritual, and human investment. The financial priorities of the communities, as well as the professional empowerment of the schools, will make the schools agents of Jewish education, not merely schools for Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

- Gross, Zehavit. 2002. *From Philanthropy to Meritocracy: The World of Jewish Day Schools in Paris, Brussels and Geneva* [Hebrew]. Ramat Gan, Israel: Rappaport Center for Research of Assimilation and Jewish Vitality, Bar-Ilan University.
- Gross, Zehavit. 2006. "Power, Identity and Organizational Structure as Reflected in Schools for Minority Groups: A Case Study of Jewish Schools in Paris, Brussels and Geneva." *Comparative Education Review* 50 (4): 603–624.
- Tal, Rami. 2005. *The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Annual Assessment 2004–2005: The Jewish People, between Thriving and Decline*. Jerusalem: Jewish People Policy Planning Institute.
- Waxman, Chaim I. 2001. *Jewish Baby Boomers: A Communal Perspective*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

## Jewish Identity in French Literature and Society in the 20th Century

*Alan Astro*

---

The realist novel was perfected in France in the 19th century; correspondingly, the history and sociology of French Jewry in the 20th century are well documented in literature. The Dreyfus Affair, which raged as the century began, is a focus of Marcel Proust's multivolume *Remembrance of Things Past* (originally published from 1913 to 1927), perhaps the greatest masterpiece in French literature. Proust's aristocrats and bourgeois parvenus display anti-Dreyfus sentiments, as do some of his Jews and half-Jews, eager to distance themselves from their origins. Yet one of the main characters, Swann, a baptized Jew's son, begins manifesting Jewish traits as he feels his common identity with the mistreated army captain.

Proust depicts the sector of French Jewry from which Dreyfus as well as his own mother derived: those descending from the millennium-old Jewish settlement of Alsace. Alsatian Jews had moved to Paris and other important cities starting with the French Revolution and ending with the loss of their region to Germany in 1870. Many became quite prosperous; a portrayal of one in French literature, dating from the 19th century, is Balzac's Baron de Nucingen, based on the Rothschilds. Just how far some Alsatian Jews had journeyed from Judaism is clear from Proust's description of their loss of their "half-German, half-Jewish" language (1981, 1: 830), that is, the western dialect of Yiddish, quite different from what was spoken in Central and Eastern Europe: "[A] Jewish family . . . now thoroughly Gallicised" uses "a ritual term diverted from its true meaning. . . . [T]he children have no idea what the word meant, whether it was Spanish, Hebrew, German, dialect, if indeed it ever belonged to any language" (1981, 3: 331).

Despite this distance from Jewishness, apostasy was less common in France than in Germany. Whereas the German Jewish poet Heine saw conversion as his entry ticket to European culture, secularistic France demanded not change of religion but cultural assimilation (Marrus 60–63). Most ancestrally French Jews remained nominally Jewish, rather endogamous, practicing at most a purely formalistic religion. A typical experience is described by Edmond Fleg (né Flegheimer) in his *Why I am a Jew* (originally published in 1928): A young Jew, attracted to Christianity, rediscovers, because of the Dreyfus Affair, an ethnico-religious background he had thought largely irrelevant. A similarly unconsummated flirtation with Catholicism is recounted in an autobiographical work by the social critic Julien Benda (b. 1936). Benda's forebears included Jews who had fled the Inquisition to the Low Countries; however, most were ancestrally French Sephardim descended from Portuguese Jews who had settled around Bordeaux.

A humorous portrayal of the impasses of acculturation occurs in a poem entitled "Assimilation" from a volume of *Poèmes juifs* [Jewish poems] originally published in 1919 by André Spire, of Alsatian background: "You're happy! You're happy! / Your

nose is almost straight, my word! / And so many Christians have somewhat curved noses!" (1992, 61). In 1916, some of Spire's works were set to music by Darius Milhaud, one of the most prolific 20th-century composers, who, on his father's side, hailed from a Jewish settlement even more ancient than that of Alsace or Bordeaux: the Comtat-Venaissin, located in the area around Avignon, which belonged to the popes until the French revolution. Some date this Jewish enclave back to the founding of Marseille by the Greeks in the sixth century BCE. By the time of the Dreyfus Affair, the overwhelming majority of these "papal Jews" had, like their Alsatian and Sephardic coreligionists, long since dispersed to Paris and other livelier cities. Yet a small core group stayed in place until the 1930s, interspersing their French with remnants of a Judeo-Provençal dialect that had caught the interest of a nationalist Provençal movement, not otherwise well-disposed to Jews. Such facts are recounted by Armand Lunel, librettist to Milhaud, in his 1926 *Nicolo-Peccavi, or The Dreyfus Affair at Carpentras*, a novelized version of his childhood.

Spire's remarks on the obsession with the Jewish proboscis are reminiscent of a joke from the same era by the American Dorothy Parker, who said that singer and comedian Fanny Brice, undergoing a common plastic surgical operation, had chosen to "cut off her nose to spite her race." Indeed, as in America, the recent arrival in France of thousands of more intensely Jewish immigrants from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires unsettled the feeling of complete integration among well-established Jewry. For example, a novel portraying Eastern European immigrants to France, *Un "schadchen"* (A *shadkhn*, that is, matchmaker, in Yiddish), depicts a French Jewish veteran who rejects an immigrant as a mate for his child: "An army officer's daughter must marry a born Frenchman" (Jacob 1930, 28).

Far more sympathetic is a depiction by the avant-garde poet Guillaume Apollinaire, falsely "accused" of being a Jew at the time he was equally unjustly charged with stealing the *Mona Lisa*. In 1912, he painted foreign-born Jews as part of the landscape of Paris in *Zone*: "Weeping you watch the wretched emigrants / . . . They are mostly Jews the wives wear wigs" (1977, 117). Indeed, Apollinaire was friend to Marc Chagall, one of numerous Jewish immigrant artists (like Amedeo Modigliani, Chaim Soutine, Jacques Lipschitz, Chana Orloff, and Ossip Zadkine) whose presence in the Montparnasse district until World War II contributed to making Paris the world capital of 20th-century art.

Yet most Eastern European Jews in Paris lived not in left-bank Montparnasse but in right-bank working-class neighborhoods. Some streets there were nearly as replete with garment sweatshops and other insalubrious conditions as New York's Lower East Side. In this milieu, a significant Yiddish press and literature took hold in Paris. In 2004, works by one of the main writers there, Wolf Wiewiorka, who would die on the forced march from Auschwitz, were translated into French, an example of the newfound interest in Yiddish. There were also literary attempts in French, like Abraham Cahan's English novels, to portray the life of Yiddish-speaking immigrants; one example was André Billy and Moïse Twersky's three-volume *L'épopée de Ménaché Foïgel* (Menashe Foïgl's epic; 1927–1928).

France drew Jewish immigrants not only from Eastern Europe but also from the Mediterranean basin, especially Greece and Turkey. (The large-scale immigration

from North Africa, which represents some half of French Jewry today, would occur only after World War II.) Albert Cohen, born in Corfu and a naturalized Swiss, was the author of tragicomic novels on Greek Jews in Geneva and Marseille, published over half a century. Cohen worked as a diplomat for various organizations in Geneva; he held that the book he was proudest of was the passport for stateless refugees he helped implement after the war and that served many Holocaust survivors (Cohen 1986, xcvi).

Alas, among depictions of Jews in French literature before World War II, one would have to include many invidious or frankly anti-Semitic portrayals. Generally, they are similar to Proust's Jewish parvenus, but without much of the sympathy even the ambiguous Proust bestows on them. One example is Jacques Lacretelle's *Silbermann* and its more egregious sequel, *Le retour de Silbermann* (Silbermann's return). Silbermann is a Jewish lycée student, of the rootless cosmopolitan variety, bereft of a culture of his own, but who apes Gentile manners and tries futilely to make the French mindset his own. The case most often adduced of the anti-Semitic French novelist is Louis-Ferdinand Céline, whose pacifism (evident in his novel about World War I, *Journey to the End of Night*) led him to anti-Semitism (because Jews, it was argued, were trying to lead France into another disastrous war against Germany in the 1930s). However, Céline's anti-Semitic writings were actually more diatribe than novel; far more interesting in this respect was an attempted antidote to such lucubrations, Jean-Paul Sartre's 1939 novella *The Childhood of a Leader*, which shows the grafting of an anti-Semitic obsession onto the psyche of a young man who cannot find any authentic organizing principle for his life. This prewar text forms the basis for Sartre's 1946 *Anti-Semite and Jew*, where he develops the notion of the Jew as the dialectical invention of the anti-Semite. (That influential book is clearly flawed by Sartre's exclusive attention to French Jewish assimilates, so ignorant of Jewish religion and culture that they needed, as it were, anti-Semites to remind them of their identity.)

On the eve of World War II, it is generally reckoned that some 300,000 Jews resided in France. They included, besides Jews of Alsatian, Portuguese, Provençal, and far more recent Eastern European and Mediterranean origins, a few thousand refugees from Nazi Germany. (The latter group included such figures as Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt.) Of these 300,000 Jews in France, some 75,000 were murdered by the Nazis, with the collaboration of the Vichy regime. This crime is all the more ignominious as it occurred in the nation that along with Great Britain and the United States can pride itself on having invented modern democracy; however, the figures (three-quarters of Jews surviving) places France among occupied countries like Italy and Bulgaria whose populations are regarded as having been generally supportive of persecuted Jewry. Indeed, Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld has claimed that many Jews stayed alive thanks to the sympathy of a significant minority among the French.

Though not much Holocaust literature was produced during the catastrophe itself, two important works emerged from occupied France. One was *Guiding Star* by Jean Bruller, a half-Jewish resistance writer better known by his pseudonym Ver-cors. This story, published clandestinely in 1943, recounts the last days of a Czech

Jewish immigrant who has become a French patriot; his faith in his adopted country is shaken only at the very end, when he sees he is to be executed not by Germans, but by their French collaborators. In the Yiddish language, the elegiacal *Song of the Murdered Jewish People* was composed in an internment camp in France by Yitzhak Katzenelson, who was sent from there to his death at Auschwitz.

In the immediate postwar years, the shame of official collaboration with the Nazis made the French reluctant to dwell on the specific fate met by Jews during World War II. As the historian Annette Wieviorka (granddaughter of Wolf, mentioned earlier) has shown, numerous Jewish survivors of extermination camps who wrote accounts in French of their martyrdom tended to present themselves as resisters to Nazism—communist revolutionaries, or French patriots, or both—rather than as victims of a racist policy targeting them primarily as Jews.

Only in the 1950s did French society generally become willing to deal with the specificity of the Jewish tragedy in World War II. In 1958, Elie Wiesel's *Night* appeared in French, in his own adapted translation from a Yiddish original of two years earlier, *Un di velt hot geshvign* (And the World Stayed Silent). Though *Night* has had a well-known role in defining much discourse on the Holocaust to this day, another work was far more popular at the time: *The Last of the Just* by André Schwarz-Bart (originally published in 1959). This saga elaborates over several centuries the Jewish legend of the 36 righteous men needed in each generation to keep the world in existence; the book ends in the extinction of the lineage of one of them: the Lévy clan, who had emigrated from Eastern Europe to Germany to France, only to be caught by the Nazis there.

The interest in Jewish fate that the French showed during the 1950s is partially attributable to their government's policies then in favor of Israel, which was seen as an ally in the struggle against Arab nationalism in French North Africa. Indeed, the debacle there caused the overwhelming majority of native Jews in Algeria, who were French citizens, to settle in France. This was the destination also chosen by a great number of Moroccan and Tunisian Jews; Israel was largely considered the less desirable option. These North African Jews are generally called Sephardic, though most of them descended not from the Jewish elite in their homelands who could trace their origins to Spain, but from Berbers converted to Judaism before the Muslim conquest. The massive arrival of these so-called Sephardim literally doubled the number of Jews in France, making it the only Nazi-occupied country to host more Jews after the war than before. Additionally, the North African Jews were less self-conscious about their peculiar identity than other Jews in France, and less troubled by accusations of dual allegiance. They are generally considered to have profoundly changed the mentality of French Jewry, making it more willing to voice concerns unapologetically (Abitbol 1994).

The first major North African Jewish writer in French is the Tunisian Albert Memmi, whose novel *The Pillar of Salt*, originally published in 1953, portrayed the impasse of those of his milieu, forced out of their native lands by growing Arab nationalism, yet not so thoroughly Frenchified as to feel at one with the colonizing power. Memmi would go on to become a major theoretician of decolonization and Francophone literature, and then a spokesman for a secular but specifically Jewish

identity in the Diaspora, supportive of Israel but working for its harmonization with Arab concerns. Other North African writers who have portrayed the successful but nostalgia-tinged integration of their community in France include the Moroccan-born Marcel Bénabou, and the Algerian-born Gil Ben Aych.

A seismic shift in French policy toward Israel took place in June 1968, when de Gaulle sought to regain influence among former colonies and the Arab world generally as well as consummate a break from American tutelage. French public opinion tended to approve of less favor shown to Israel, but times had changed. In the 1960s came the first serious questioning of the monolithic “Jacobine” nature of the French republic. No longer were the sole political differences among the French considered to be those based on the rift between right and left, between upholders of the status quo and those who sought a more equitable or frankly utopian distribution of wealth. Suddenly, groups of all sorts—students, women, homosexuals, Bretons, Muslim immigrants from North Africa, Jews—felt entitled to formulate demands for recognition that did not necessarily dovetail with those of a social class or the French nation as a whole. In this cacophony of political discourse, a carnivalesque novel appeared in 1968 on the occupation and the Jewish question: Patrick Modiano’s *La place de l’étoile*. (The title is a play on words: the Place de l’Étoile is the plaza where the Arc de Triomphe stands, but it also means “the place of the star” on one’s chest, that is, the yellow stars the Jews had to wear under the Nazis.) In this book, Modiano rehearses, in an ironic display of self-hatred, the obsessions of various French anti-Semites, including even a Jewish collaborationist of sorts: Maurice Sachs. (Sachs was a French Jewish man of letters, active in the 1930s, openly homosexual, who converted successively to Catholicism and Protestantism. He ended up passing as an Aryan and spying for the Gestapo on Frenchmen deported to labor in Germany, where he was killed [Jacobson 1994]). Foregrounding such dubious characters, Modiano battered the myth that Jews had to behave as model Frenchpeople, or even as good Jews fearful of Gentile disapproval. This novel was one of many signs that a new space of expression had opened for French Jewish novelists and polemicists, similar to that introduced in the English-speaking world by Philip Roth and Mordecai Richler, with their ill-behaved Jewish antiheroes.

Since the late 1960s, so many self-consciously Jewish writers have emerged in France that it is only possible to name a few. They all bear witness to the vibrancy of a French Jewish community that has increased to some 600,000 (figures vary) and is rediscovering, in a typically postmodern renewal of religion and ethnicity, all manner of Jewish particularities. The legacy of Yiddish as a silenced tongue is embodied in the fiction of Henri Raczymow, Myriam Anissimow, Cyrille Fleischman, and Gilles Rozier. A similar role for Ladino is evident in the works of Clarisse Nicoïdski and Marcel Cohen, both of Turkish background. The greatest contribution of French Jewish writers of North African origin might well be creative syntheses of philosophy and Jewish religious thought, as in works by Edmond Jabès, Shmuel Trigano, Marc-Alain Ouaknin, and even Jacques Derrida. All such meldings of philosophy and Judaism in France owe a great deal to the Lithuanian-born Emmanuel Levinas, who was naturalized French in 1930. An example of Levinas’s philosophy is the Jewish response he gave to Heidegger on the latter’s terrain: the

true dwelling-place of *Dasein*, human reality, is not, as the German philosopher would have it, the more or less permanent house, but the temporary sukkah or hut. This is borne out in the global nomadism that has existed forever in the Jewish people, but that has become so clear in the 21st century.

French Jews find themselves at the confluence of more defining factors of contemporary Jewish experience than their American or Israeli counterparts. Like American Jewry, they are a sizable minority living among a Christian majority, in a historically democratic society that allows them to play leading roles in cultural and political arenas. Yet like Israeli Jews, they share their environment with a Muslim population larger than theirs, with whom they must achieve a degree of harmony. Moreover, French Jews live in a country that was occupied by the Nazis; memory is particularly acute there. These factors add up to a particular existential constellation reflected in a rich literature.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abitbol, Michel. 1994. "The Integration of North African Jews in France." *Yale French Studies* 85: 248–261.
- Benbassa, Esther. 1999. *The Jews of France: A History from Antiquity to the Present*. Translated from the French by M. B. DeBevoise. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fleg, Edmond. 1943. *Why I am a Jew*. Translated from the French by Victor Gollancz. London: V. Gollancz.
- Marrus, Michael R. 1971. *The Politics of Assimilation: The French Jewish Community at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Raczymow, Henri. 1994. "Tales of Exile and Forgetfulness (Excerpts) and 'Memory Shot Through with Holes.'" Translated from the French by Alan Astro. In *Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth Century France*, edited by Alan Astro, 91–105. *Yale French Studies*, No. 85. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Schwarz-Bart, André. 1960. *Last of the Just*. Translated from the French by Stephen Becker. New York: Atheneum.
- Spire, André. 1992. "Assimilation." In *Poètes juifs de langue française: anthologie* [Jewish French-language Poets: An Anthology], edited by Jacques Éladan, 61–62. Paris: Noël Blandin.
- Wieviorka, Annette. 1994. "Jewish Identity in the First Accounts by Extermination Camp Survivors from France." Translated from the French by Françoise Rosset. In *Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth Century France*, edited by Alan Astro, 135–151. *Yale French Studies*, No. 85. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Wolitz, Seth L. 1994. "Imagining the Jew in France: From 1945 to the Present." In *Discourses of Jewish Identity in Twentieth Century France*, edited by Alan Astro, 119–134. *Yale French Studies*, No. 85. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

## Jews in Germany

*Frederick Ehrlich*

---

General Population: 82,000,000

Jewish Population: 100,000 to 200,000

**Percentage of Population:** 1.5 percent

**Jewish Population Centers:** Berlin, Cologne, Dresden, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Giessen, Hamburg, Hannover, Karlsruhe, Munich, Nuremberg, Potsdam, and Ulm

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Russian emigration, Israelis and older generations of survivors

**Languages Spoken:** German, Russian, Yiddish, Hebrew, and English

---

## Historical Overview

**4th century** A Jewish cemetery from this era is found in Cologne in the 1930s.

**8th century** Flourishing Jewish communities are found along the Rhine, and Jews live harmoniously alongside their newly Christian neighbors. Jews hold public office, own land, and work in any field they choose.

**10th century** Rabbenu Gershom founds a yeshiva in Mainz, which attracts Jews from all over Europe.

**11th century** Pope Urban II initiates the Crusades. Jews are now clearly considered “outsiders,” and communities in Worms, Mainz, and Cologne are devastated; 1,100 Jews are killed in one day in 1096 in Mainz.

**13th century** Jews migrate to the East, following new communities in Munich, Vienna, and Berlin.

**13th century** Yiddish begins to evolve.

**12th–14th century** Numerous massacres of Jews take place in cities such as Speyer, Worms, Mainz, and Cologne. Some 12,000 Jews are killed in the Rhenish cities alone between May and July 1096; Jews are accused of blood libel, poisoning wells, and other crimes. Accusations of well poisoning also occur during the Black Death in 1348–1349.

**15th century** Jews of Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia are slaughtered for being unbelievers, or forced into baptism.

**16th century** Yiddish becomes a written language as well as a spoken one, using Hebrew characters.

**17th century** The elector of Brandenburg, Frederick William, decrees that all religious beliefs should be tolerated and Jews should be protected against oppression and slander, but this proves to be only a localized phenomenon.

**18th century** Joseph Oppenheimer, in his role as a prominent court Jew, persuades the Duke of Wurttemberg to rescind an expulsion order banning Jews from this Duchy.

**1914** Jews serve loyally in the German armies against its enemies.

**1930s** Hitler rises to power, implementing a series of anti-Semitic measures leading to the destruction of great parts of European Jewry and the near complete dissemination of German and Eastern European Jewry.

A number of pieces of evidence suggest a Jewish presence in the Rhineland as early as the third century and a document dated 321, refers to the fact that the Jews in Cologne had the same rights as elsewhere in the Roman Empire, which ruled the region at that time. The only restrictions on their civil liberties were in relation to

the dissemination of their religion and holding government office, but they were free to follow any occupation and it appears they indeed did, in commerce, industry, agriculture, and eventually banking-type services.

Indeed, a number of Jewish communities were established in Western Europe before the arrival of Christianity. They owned land and accepted local converts, but it was not long before the Church developed the doctrine that the Jews were a rejected people who should be kept apart.

In spite of this, the Jews developed their skills as merchants, many becoming influential to the point of being used by the rulers to fund various projects or to finance their armies and their wars. Jewish mercantile networks spread to many areas beyond the Rhineland, although the major centers remained there.

With the emergence of the Holy Roman Empire after Charlemagne's unifying efforts, persecution of Jews became widespread. Nevertheless, there were major intellectual and religious movements including the establishment of yeshivas. The most famous of these was that of Rabbenu Gershom, whose yeshiva in Mainz became very famous and was even visited by Rashi.

Persecution did not become large-scale until the Crusades, when Jewish communities were routinely massacred by passing crusaders, affecting even the major centers of Worms, Mainz, and Cologne. Numerous communal facilities and private homes were also destroyed, only to be rebuilt.

It became increasingly difficult for Jews to interact with their Christian neighbors and eventually, the communities became increasingly closed and isolated. The ghetto, however, had many positive aspects also. It permitted the community to run its own affairs with less interference and, very significantly, allowed Yiddish to develop into a formal language structure. This isolation probably proved to be a major factor in maintaining the coherence and continuity of these communities, a common language being a central feature of nationhood.

Conditions for Jews steadily deteriorated after the Crusades and led to the eventual development of the Inquisition with its forced conversions and savage persecution of heretics, taking an increasing toll. Jews were accused of blood libel, poisoning wells, and spreading plague, and this was a factor leading to the migration east, so that the major centers of Jewish population spread from places like Worms and Speyer toward Poland where the kings were less disposed to persecute Jews. However, there were always some Jews who remained in Germany, and in more modern times, communities were established in Munich, Frankfurt, and Berlin. Some of these communities produced government advisers or financiers, had positions at court, and eventually produced philosophers, composers, and artists.

During the 19th century, the Haskalah movement allowed much cultural assimilation to occur and the evolution of "the German gentleman of the Mosaic faith," but this was all brought to an end by the Holocaust.

## Contemporary Overview

### Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds

Almost all the “original” German Jews were killed in the Holocaust or have migrated to England, the United States, South America, Australia, or Israel. Most Jews presently living in Germany have come from the former Soviet Union since the 1990s. The vast majority are secular and have very little knowledge of Jewish tradition, but there are vigorous attempts at introducing Jewish education and affiliation around communal institutions. Apart from German, the commonly spoken languages are Russian and Hebrew, because of considerable presence of Israelis in financial centers such as Frankfurt. The major communities have their own rabbis, synagogues, and cemeteries, and kosher food is available in most centers.

There are several Jewish primary schools and a high school in Berlin. In addition, a number of universities have programs in Jewish studies, most of them conducted by non-Jews, for non-Jews. At Heidelberg University, there is an autonomous school of Jewish studies, which offers academic degrees, and most high schools in Germany teach various aspects of Holocaust studies.

Culturally, there is a weekly newspaper as well as a Yiddish weekly. In addition, numerous museums have sections dealing with Judaism and the Holocaust.

There appears to be little poverty among German Jews now. Many are young and actively involved in professions and commerce.

Apart from the synagogues, there are various outreach services promoted by the Chabad movement involving adult education, day camps and after-school programs, Hebrew schools, children’s clubs, and bar and bat mitzvah instruction. Additional services include checking of mezuzot and tefillin as well as loans, soup kitchens, prison visitation, hospital chaplaincy, and marriage preparation.

## Selected Bibliography

- Agus, I. A. 1970. *Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg: His Life and His Works as Sources for the Religious, Legal, and Social History of the Jews of Germany in the 13th Century*. New York: Ktav.
- Cohn, Michael. 1994. *The Jews in Germany, 1945–1993: The Building of a Minority*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, iii.
- Nywiek, Donald. 1980. *The Jews in Weimar Germany*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Poppel, Stephen. 1977. *Zionism in Germany: The Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1897–1933*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Pulzer, Peter. 1992. *Jews and the German State: The Political History of a Minority, 1848–1933*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Reinharz, Yehuda. 1975. *Fatherland or Promised Land: The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893–1914*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

# Jews in Germany: 1848–1933

*Peter Pulzer*

---

## The Struggle for Emancipation

The restoration of the prerevolutionary order after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 left the Jews of Germany as the subjects of 38 different states, each with its own legal code or in some cases codes. Though the treaty setting up the new German Confederation (1815–1866) pledged itself to the “civic betterment” of the Jewish population, when governments did propose measures of partial alleviation they frequently faced the opposition of legislatures, municipalities, churches, or the populace, as in the Hep-Hep pogroms that began in Würzburg and spread across Europe in 1819. The numerous petitions from Jewish communities during the 1830s and 1840s, and the untiring advocacy of complete legal equality by the Hamburg lawyer Gabriel Riesser, constituted an uphill struggle. The liberal revolutions of 1848 changed this situation. The National Parliament that met in Frankfurt contained seven deputies of the Jewish faith, including Riesser, who became one of its vice presidents. It adopted a constitution for Germany, incorporating a charter of basic rights that proclaimed that “the enjoyment of civic and citizens’ rights is neither conditioned nor restricted by religious belief.” Most of the constituent German states adopted legal provisions along similar lines. Though the Frankfurt Parliament was short-lived, dispersed as it was by Prussian bayonets, its enactments had a profound impact on Jewish consciousness. Having seen parliamentary institutions as the guarantor of civil rights, most German Jews from then on supported liberal or democratic politics—an ideological preference that did not necessarily endear them to their fellow citizens.

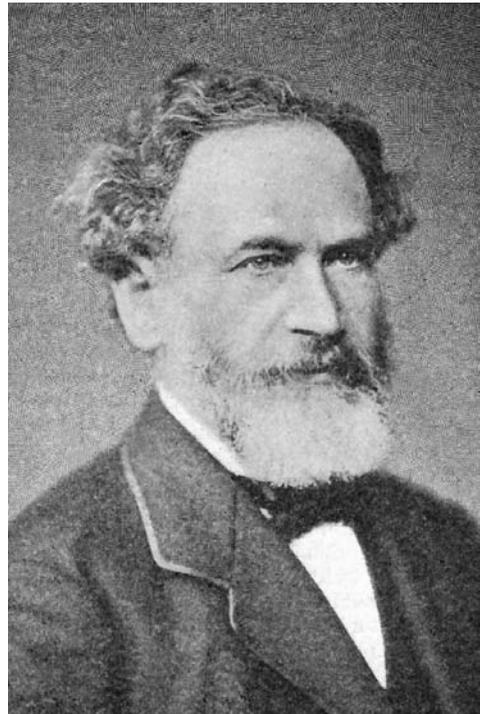
## Equal Rights in Theory and Practice

In the decade that followed the failure of the revolution, the emancipatory laws adopted by the various states were either rescinded or ignored. In Bavaria, the government’s modest proposals for greater Jewish rights in 1849 were met with more than 1,800 petitions of protest. However, as commerce and urbanization grew, liberal sentiment revived. In 1859, when the German National Association (Deutscher Nationalverein) was founded to further German unification on a parliamentary basis, Jews were prominently involved. Jews also began breaking the barriers to public appointments without first submitting to baptism. In 1860, Riesser became the first professing Jew to be appointed to a judgeship in his native city of Hamburg. A year earlier, Moritz Abraham Stern was appointed to a full professorship in mathematics at Göttingen University. One by one, German states enacted full equality for Jews, including the Grand Duchy of Baden, in 1862, and the Kingdom of Württemberg and the Free City of Frankfurt, in 1864. With the achievement of national unification, admittedly by military rather than parliamentary means, the Reichstag of

the new North German Federation (1867–1870) settled the issue of full legal equality in the law of July 3, 1869. This in turn became a law of the German Empire on its foundation in 1871.

In the decade of national unification from the late 1860s to the late 1870s, it seemed as though the moment of liberalism had come, as in many other parts of Europe, offering the prospect of further extensions of political liberties and a more open society. It also marked the high point of Jewish participation in shaping German politics. The program of the largest political party at that time, the National Liberals, was drafted by Eduard Lasker. Another National Liberal, Ludwig Bamberger, played a leading role in establishing the Imperial central bank, the Reichsbank, and a unified gold-based currency, the reichsmark. Levin Goldschmidt, who became a justice of the Imperial Commercial Court and a professor of commercial law at the University of Berlin, was one of the initiators of a unified code of civil law for the newly created empire. The first and, as it turned out, the only professing Jew to become a cabinet minister during the empire was Julius Elstätter, minister of finance in Baden from 1868 to 1893. A more mysterious figure was Gerson Bleichröder, the private banker and informal political adviser of the imperial chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. For opponents of the new order he symbolized the archetypal “money Jew” and became a scapegoat for the triumph of commerce and materialism.

This significant integration of Jews in the German public sphere had its causes in the convergence of their values and hopes and those of the majority of the German middle class. By the last third of the 19th century, most German Jews were



Franco-Jewish politician Eduard Lasker.  
(Isadore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

adherents of some form of Reform Judaism, which made assimilation to the dominant culture easier and even desirable. But even the Orthodox minority, though it did not welcome the dilution of Jewish traditions, did not lag behind in its German patriotism and loyalty to the new political order. The identification of German-Jewish aspirations with the political reality of the new state was, however, short-lived. At the end of the 1870s a less liberal and more nationalist tone set in, the Liberal parties lost electoral support, and Bismarck abandoned his alliance with them. This more right-wing climate brought with it greater envy and resentment of the successes Jews had achieved. Politicians, political parties, and journals arose that were committed to reversing or modifying the civil rights of Jews. The term “anti-Semitism” made its appearance in Germany in 1879. Though the formal legal position remained unchanged until the end of the empire in 1918, the limits to Jewish advancement now became clear.

### Achievements and Frustrations

The rightward turn in German politics largely marked the end of a Jewish role in national policy making, but not of Jews in politics. Their center of gravity now moved toward the parties of left liberalism (Progressives). In the Reichstag, this faction was a largely powerless opposition, but at the municipal level, especially in major cities like Berlin, Frankfurt-on-Main, and Breslau, Jews continued to exercise powerful influence. A younger generation of politically active Jews found its home in the growing Social Democratic Party (SPD), partly as a revival of the older tradition of Jewish radicalism, partly because the SPD was increasingly seen as an opponent to anti-Semitism. Paul Singer, a wealthy clothing manufacturer, became the party's vice chairman, and Jews were prominent in the party's ideological disputes, exemplified by Eduard Bernstein on the moderate (revisionist) side and Rosa Luxemburg on the radical wing.

Another area in which Jews continued to be numerous was the press. The leading liberal newspapers, the *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Frankfurter Zeitung*, had Jewish owners (Rudolf Mosse and Leopold Sonnemann) and editors, and the Mosse and Ullstein houses also printed a variety of tabloids and magazines. Within the Social Democratic press, too, Jewish party members, who were the most likely to have formal education, were prominent as editors of daily newspapers and theoretical journals. Although Jews enjoyed professional success and shared in the prosperity of the empire, they suffered not only from the anti-Semitism of the streets but also from continuing official discrimination. Throughout the period of the empire (1871–1918), it was extremely rare for a professing Jew to be appointed to a civil service or diplomatic position or, except in some Bavarian regiments, to be a military officer. Even in professions for which Jews were particularly well-qualified, such as the judiciary or academia, appointments were few and promotion came slowly. These frustrations obliged Jews to organize in defense of their interests. The most important defense body, significantly named the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, founded in 1893, had mobilized about a third of the Jewish population by 1914.

## War, Revolution, and Democracy

Many German Jews welcomed the outbreak of war in 1914, in the hope that the frustrations of the prewar years would thereby be overcome and their integration into a patriotic consensus be completed. They volunteered for the army, subscribed to government war loans, and were recruited into high administrative positions, but under the impact of the military stalemate and the hardships on the home front the consensus evaporated. Jews were accused of profiteering and shirking active service, to which the government responded by ordering a census of Jewish participation in the army. This humiliating measure and the revival of anti-Semitic agitation increasingly alienated Jewish opinion from the existing order; Jews became prominent in movements favoring a compromise peace and in the antiwar Left inside and outside the SPD. These developments culminated, as Germany faced defeat in 1918, in revolutionary outbreaks and the overthrow of the monarchy, which, though not instigated by Jews, saw Jewish participation on an unprecedented scale. An extreme example was that of Bavaria, where governments of escalating radicalism contained such figures as Kurt Eisner, Ernst Toller, Gustav Landauer, and Eugen Leviné. Such activism occasioned a backlash, and anti-Semitism, which before the war had been largely verbal, now took on violent and even terroristic forms. The Nazi Party, of which Adolf Hitler seized the leadership in 1920, was founded in Munich.

Though the revolutions failed, the democratic republic, whose constitution was adopted in Weimar in 1919, was equally contested. Its enemies denounced it as a foreign import and the child of defeat, a defeat attributed to a “stab in the back” by civilian politicians, including liberal and left-wing Jews. That the new constitution was drafted by a Jew, Hugo Preuß, exacerbated the political polarization. Although complete religious freedom was guaranteed by the constitution, this no more removed the ambiguities of the Jewish position than the law of 1869 had done. Nevertheless, more Jews now had access to state and municipal employment and public advisory bodies. Though few Jews were members of national governments, especially after the assassination of Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau in 1922, they were active in all left-of-center parties and their media. In other public institutions, especially the increasingly reactionary universities, they fared less well. One sign of the growing plurality of Jewish political opinion was increased support for Zionism, with which only a small minority had identified before 1914. The encounter with the more “authentic” Jews of Eastern Europe during World War I, the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, and a decline in the fortunes of liberalism all contributed to this development.

## The End of Civil Rights

The election of a government by the Nazi Party in 1933, in the wake of the Great Depression, marked the end of the democratic experiment. The mere fact that Jews had had a stake in this order made it suspect in the eyes of many, and the ease with which Jews were deprived of their hard-won rights showed that these had

probably never enjoyed a broad consensus in Germany. The imposition of the Nazi dictatorship in which all elements of the rule of law were cumulatively suspended showed how closely the rights of Jews were tied to the existence of human rights in general.

### Selected Bibliography

- Meyer, Michael A., ed. 1997–1998. *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*. Vols. 2–4, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mosse, Werner E. 1989. *The German-Jewish Economic Élite: A Socio-Cultural Profile*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Niewyk, Donald L. 1980. *The Jews in Weimar Germany*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Pulzer, Peter. 1988. *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pulzer, Peter. 2003. *Jews and the German State 1848–1933: The Political History of a Minority*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Reinharz, Jehuda. 1975. *Fatherland or Promised Land: The Dilemma of the German Jew 1893–1914*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Richarz, Monika. 1991. *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Stern, Fritz. 1977. *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire*. New York: Alfred Knopf.

## Jews in Gibraltar

*Tito Benady*

---

General Population: 28,750

Jewish Population: 600

Percent of Population: Approximately 2 percent

Migration Routes: Mainly Morocco, particularly from the Ladino-speaking city of Tetuan; a small number from England.

Languages Spoken: English and Spanish

---

### Historical Overview

1160 The city of Gibraltar is founded by the emperor of Morocco.

1462 Gibraltar is captured by Spain.

1474 Gibraltar is sold by its lord, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, to the conversos of Cordoba.

1476 Medina Sidonia expels the conversos.

1704 Gibraltar is captured by an Anglo-Dutch force in the name of the pretender to the crown of Spain.

- 1705 Gibraltar is cut off from Spain and the garrison depends largely on supplies from Morocco. A number of Jewish merchants from London, Lisbon, and Livorno who deal with Morocco settle in Gibraltar, as do a number of Jews from Tetuan in Morocco.
- 1713 Gibraltar is ceded to Britain under the Treaty of Utrecht. Spain insists on inserting a clause in the Treaty, which precludes Jews from living in Gibraltar.
- 1717 Jews are expelled from Gibraltar, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht.
- 1718 Britain is at war with Spain again after Spain invades Sicily and upsets the arrangements made at Utrecht. Gibraltar is once again cut off from supplies from Spain, and the Jews are readmitted to ensure supplies from Morocco.
- 1721 Commodore Stewart of the British Royal Navy negotiates a treaty with Morocco. On the Moroccan side, the negotiations are handled by Moses Ben Hatar, the treasurer of the emperor of Morocco, and Jews are henceforth allowed to settle in Gibraltar. The first land grants are given to Jews.
- 1723 The Great Synagogue of Shaar Hashamayim (Gate of Heaven) is founded by Isaac Netto on land granted by the governor. The synagogue and its services follow those of the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue at Bevis Marks in London.
- 1750 Governor Bland makes the elders of the synagogue responsible for maintaining order among the poorer members of the community.
- 1754 There are 573 Jews in Gibraltar and they form one-third of the civilian population.
- 1759 The yeshiva (Talmudic academy) of Es Hayim (Tree of Life) is turned into a synagogue.
- 1766 The Great Synagogue is destroyed by floods that follow torrential rains, but it is rebuilt two years later.
- 1777 The number of Jews has increased to 863, but they now form only a quarter of the larger civilian population.
- 1779 The Great Siege by Spain commences in June and lasts until February 1783.
- 1781 Heavy Spanish bombardment begins. The synagogue is burnt down and many of the Jewish inhabitants take refuge in England to escape the rigors of the siege. Most return in 1783.
- 1793 The French Republic declares war on Britain. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, which last (with an intermission of less than three years) until 1815, bring great prosperity to the merchants of Gibraltar and Jewish merchants. Two of them, Aaron Cardozo and the banker Judah Benoliel, achieve considerable fame abroad. Cardozo's mansion is now the City Hall.
- 1800 The Flemish synagogue, Nefusot Yehudah (Dwelling Places of Israel), is built.
- 1881 The Jewish population reaches 1,800, forming 10 percent of the total civilian population.
- 1940 The noncombatant population of Gibraltar is evacuated because of fears of a combined attack by Spain and Germany. Most evacuees go to England, but some go to Jamaica and the Portuguese island of Madeira. They return in 1944 and 1945.

## Contemporary Overview

### Trades and Professions

Jews participate in all the trade and professions, but a number are lawyers. Gibraltar's finance center, which incorporates a number of overseas companies, offers many opportunities to the legal profession.

### Communal Institutions

Four Orthodox synagogues practice the Sephardi rite. The managing board of the Jewish community controls all communal affairs. There is an elementary school, which recently celebrated its centenary, and, more recently, separate secondary schools have been started for girls and boys. There is an active burial society, Hevrat Gemilut Hasadim, which is entirely run by volunteers.

### Communal Relations

The Jewish community is well established, and relations with other religious groups are very good. On special occasions joint services are held. There is no anti-Semitism, a situation no doubt eased by considerable intermarriage in past years. Today a quarter of the general population has some Jewish ancestry.

### Present Economic Conditions

The finance center and tourism make Gibraltar an affluent place with a gross domestic product of more than £20,000 per person, above the average for southern Europe. Nevertheless, opportunities are limited, and this has led to much Jewish migration to Britain and Israel.

## Selected Bibliography

- Benady, Tito M. 1979. "The Settlement of Jews in Gibraltar, 1704–1783." *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 26: 87–110.
- Benady, Tito M. 1989. "The Jewish Community of Gibraltar." In *Western Sephardim*, edited by Richard D. Barnett and Walter Schwab, 144–179. Gibraltar: Gibraltar Books.
- Benady, Tito M. 1994. "The Role of the Jews in the British Colonies of the Western Mediterranean." *Transactions of the Historical Society of England* 33: 45–63.
- Benady, Tito M., ed. 2004. *Aaron Cardozo: Life and Letters*. Gibraltar: Gibraltar Books.
- Jackson, Sir William, and Francis Cantos. 1995. *From Fortress to Democracy: The Political Biography of Sir Joshua Hassan*. Gibraltar: Gibraltar Books.
- Lamelas, Diego. 1992. *The Sale of Gibraltar in 1474*. Gibraltar: Gibraltar Books.
- Lombard, Anthony. 1997. "The Roman Catholic Abudarham Family." *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* 4: 75–90.
- Lombard, Anthony. 2000. "Fives Court: The Benzimra and Levy Families." *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* 7: 49–73.
- Serfaty, Abraham B. M. 1933. *The Jews of Gibraltar under British Rule*. Gibraltar: Gibraltar Books.
- Seymour, Anthony A. D. 1996. "A Tale of Two Families." *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* 3: 49–60.

# The Jews of Gibraltar and the Development of Medical Practices

*Lawrence Sawchuk*

---

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the Jews of Gibraltar played a critical role as intermediaries facilitating commercial and political activities that enabled Britain to provide food and provisions essential for the survival of its garrison outpost. An important port of call for merchant ships and war vessels, Gibraltar's free port status and strategic location ensured that it served as a major node in a trade network that linked numerous urban centers throughout Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa, and the New World.

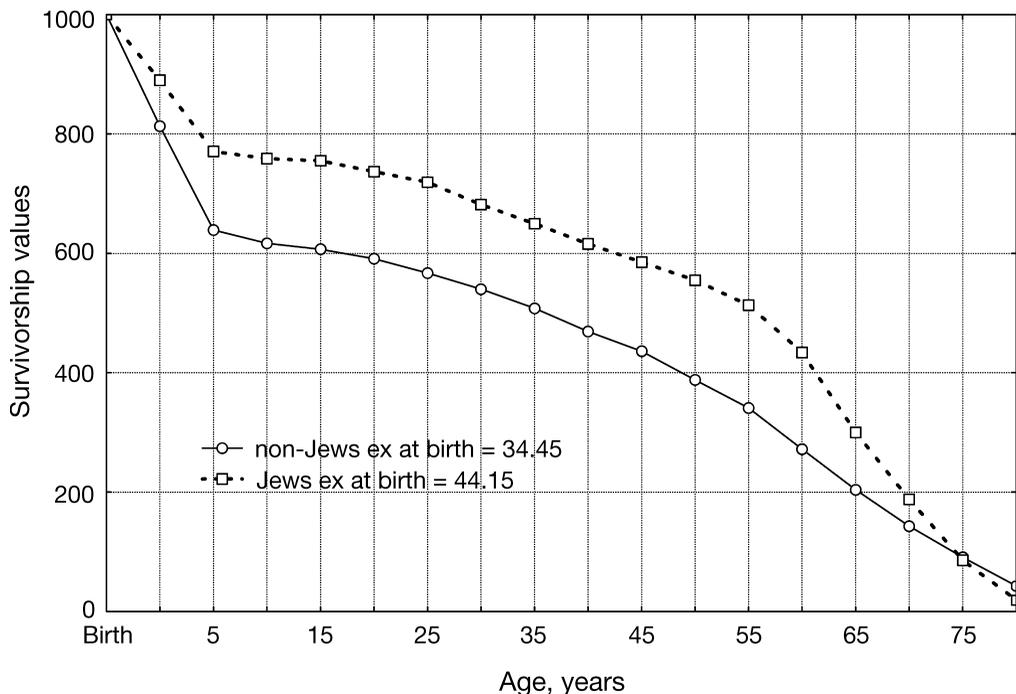
The inhabitants of this small, rocky, limestone territory would ultimately pay a high price, their very well-being, for this commercial prosperity. As an important garrison post for seasoning troops, military personnel grouped together in large numbers and moved rapidly from place to place, providing the ideal medium for the spreading infectious diseases of foreign origin into Gibraltar. As an important port of call, Gibraltar played host to hundreds of foreigners daily. The first of the deadly visitations from abroad occurred in 1804, when yellow fever struck and, literally within months, half the population died, victim to what is now recognized as a highly virulent vector-borne viral disease. Searching for the cause of this catastrophic event, the colonial government appointed a public health commission. The appointed officials claimed it was the Barbary Jews, who, because of their "habits and uncleanness," caused the spread of the disease. The lack of hygiene, overcrowding, and perceived poor moral character unfairly attributed to Jewish immigrants were mistakenly thought to be factors in the spread of the disease. All too often colonial authorities were unwilling to admit that Gibraltar or its militaristic hegemonic actions could be responsible for introducing the contagion, as this admission could damage the perception of British authority and threaten commercial relations. Admitting a local source of contagion would also lead to the intuitive next step—costly measures of cleanup. As a result, demonizing a visible minority group was a convenient explanation for an outbreak of a disease.

Gibraltar was an ideal location for the outbreak of deadly epidemics given the commingling of men and women from near and far within a limited territory and densely packed population. From an epidemiological perspective, the inhabitants of Gibraltar, throughout most of the 19th century, were subjected each day to the force of high background mortality and the uniformly high death rate among the young due to the continuous action of infectious disease, malnutrition, and the synergism between them. Having assumed the dubious reputation as an overcrowded and filthy population beyond any in the world (Hennen 1830), Gibraltar was the site of further deadly visitations of yellow fever (1813–1814 and 1828) and cholera (1834, 1865) (Sawchuk 2001). Within this unfavorable sanitary setting resided a numerically dominant Christian community and a smaller Sephardic community.

Unlike many other Jewish settlements there was no residential segregation; the inhabitants of different religious persuasions co-resided in communal tenement buildings known as “patios.” Here, members of a patio would share common entrances, courtyards, potable and sanitary water supplies, and communal privies. Even despite this communal living style, however, the Jews still enjoyed lower death rates relative to their non-Jewish neighbors during this period. The “Jewish advantage” documented in Gibraltar is by no means singular, and this phenomenon has been observed elsewhere with consistent regularity across time and space (see Derosas 2003, for example). To appreciate the magnitude and specifics of this Jewish advantage that characterized the medical history of the Sephardim of Gibraltar, two specific examples will be provided.

The first illustration comes from a period of high background mortality, when knowledge of basic disease transmission was lacking, sanitary conditions and overcrowding was excessive, and Gibraltar’s inhabitants relied principally on rainwater as their source of potable, or drinking, water. Using material derived from an excellent registration system, analysis of cause-specific death registers and census material using Smith’s (2004) survival program yields supportive evidence of this advantage. One measure, the expectation of life at birth, serves as a sensitive barometer of the social and sanitary state of health in a community. The results, depicted in the figure, show clearly that the Jews have a significantly higher life expectancy

**Gibraltarian Jews and non-Jews: 1869–1880 survivorship values (lx) and life expectancy (ex) at birth**



up until age 10. Further, there is empirical evidence that a significant portion of the advantage can be ascribed to a single cluster of diseases—weanling diarrhea or deaths attributable to gastroenteritis and diarrhea as well as marasmus, anemia, and starvation (Sawchuk, Herring, and Waks 1985).

Weanling diarrhea is the product of a synergy between enteric infections, malnutrition, and repeated insults from infectious disease. Strongly influenced by the timing of the cessation of breast feeding and subsequent exposure to the contaminated environment, weanling diarrhea is a proxy measure of the impact of high ecological stress on the health of a population. The search to further identify a single source or disease cluster for the higher Jewish survivorship has proven to be interesting, as Table 1 indicates, but the results are unrewarding from a statistical point of view, as the observed differentials by specific cause of death may have arisen by chance alone. There is one highly suggestive finding related to tuberculosis mortality: Christians were 1.7 times more likely to die from this local endemic disease than their Jewish counterparts. Although there is a genetic component to resistance to tuberculosis, environmental factors such as household overcrowding, poor personal/public hygiene, and a protein-deficient diet, are also likely to contribute to a mortality differential. Collectively, the implications of these findings point to a generalized advantage that is likely to be the by-product of interrelated sociocultural, religious, demographic, and possibly biological factors. Unlike Derosas (2003), who

**Table 1 Cause-specific Mortality Differentials According to Religious Affiliation in Gibraltar, 1869–1880<sup>a</sup>**

Age (Years)	Disease	Ratio of Christian to Jewish Mortality Rates	Z Score and Significance Level
<5 years	Pneumonia and bronchitis	1.06	0.11, ns
	Tabes mesenteria (tuberculosis of lymph glands)	1.66	0.501, ns
	Scrofula (tuberculosis of abdomen)	2.84	1.09, ns
	Smallpox (influenced by inoculation practices)	2.12	0.76, ns
15–49	Respiratory tuberculosis	1.70	1.94, borderline significant
<b>Women only</b>			
15–49	Puerperal fever (deaths arising during childbirth)	1.77	0.569, ns

<sup>a</sup>Z score and significance level indicate that the difference is not statistically different between the two groups; therefore, the observed differential could have arisen by chance alone (e.g., Z scores must be greater than 1.96 to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance). The expression “ns” indicates nonsignificance at the 95 percent level of confidence. Other notable observations include the following: there were 53 Christian deaths and 0 Jewish deaths in persons under the age of 5 due to whooping cough and no cases of measles and 34 deaths among the non-Jewish children.

posits that the observed mortality differential is the result of a higher mortality for Catholics through poor child care or child neglect, it is likely that Jewish advantage was grounded primarily in relative wealth coupled with mosaic-Talmudic hygienic rituals and values of community care for the poor and ill.

The second example of the Jewish advantage focuses on a period when Gibraltar experienced a sudden and dramatic increase in the death rate arising from a common, unusual causal factor operating for a brief time, or what demographers have called “crisis mortality.” During the 1865 outbreak of cholera, the residents of Gibraltar were subjected to four months of political and economic isolation from neighboring Spain, resulting in economic hardship and a dramatic increase in the death rate. Caused by a deadly bacillus, cholera is spread through contaminated water, soiled clothing, unwashed produce, and poor personal hygiene. During this major epidemic, the observed death rate among the Jewish inhabitants was significantly lower at 8.32 cholera deaths per 1,000 population, compared with 17.28 per 1,000 for the non-Jewish residents ( $Z = 2.547, P < .05$ ). Given that the precise causal source of cholera was not discovered until the 1890s, and effective therapy was not available until the 20th century, it is unlikely that the observed advantage was the by-product of a specific knowledge base regarding cholera etiology. The Jewish advantage during this time of crisis mortality was more likely due to behaviors relating to hygienic principles and observances rooted in the Jewish community and household. The fact that Jews had lower cholera death rates while co-residing with non-Jews in patio units, underscores the importance of familial or household-based practices, particularly in the time of a high background mortality or crisis mortality.

By the 1910s, the nature of differential mortality by religious affiliation underwent a remarkable change as Gibraltar entered the third phase of the epidemiological transition where chronic degenerative disorders (e.g., circulatory diseases, cancer, lower respiratory disorders) replaced infectious diseases as the main cause of death. By the 1920s, Gibraltar’s more aged Jewish community was at a relative disadvantage as its older members (i.e., those 50 years or older) were more likely to suffer and die from a wide range of chronic diseases than their Christian neighbors. One illustration of this trend is shown by the fact that from 1918 to 1923, Gibraltar’s Jewish community experienced significantly higher death rates due to diabetes mellitus. Analysis of the cause-specific mortality shows that the death rate attributable to type 2 diabetes for persons over 50 among Jews was 3.04 per 1,000, compared with 0.08 per 1,000 for the non-Jewish group ( $Z = 2.88, P < .01$ ). This example shows that the Sephardic community assumed the position of a forerunner of the new epidemiological phase as older individuals began to succumb to adverse behavioral changes in lifestyle commonly found in the 20th century—overnutrition, lack of physical activity, and, concomitantly, obesity.

### Selected Bibliography

- Derosas, R. 2003. “Watch Out for the Children!” *Historical Methods* 36: 109–129.
- Hennen, J. 1830. *Sketches of the Medical Topography of the Mediterranean*. London: Thomas and George Underwood.

- Sawchuk, L. A., Herring, D.A., and L. R. Waks. 1985. "Evidence of a Jewish Advantage: A Study of Infant Mortality in Gibraltar, 1870–1959." *American Anthropologist* 87: 616–625.
- Sawchuk, L. A. 2001. *Deadly Visitations in Dark Times: A Social History of Gibraltar in the Time of Cholera*. Gibraltar Government Heritage Publications, Monograph 2. Gibraltar: Gibraltar Government Heritage Division.

## Jews in Greece

*Frederick Ehrlich*

---

**General Population:** 10 million

**Jewish Population:** 5,000

**Percent of Population:** 0.5 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** There are 3,000 Jews in Athens and 1,000 in Thessaloniki, a tiny remnant of the former community. Isolated Jews are in other towns.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** There are virtually no Romaniotes left. Jews in present-day Greece are partly of Sephardic origin, dating from the expulsion from Spain, but there have been additions of Ashkenazi Jews from Europe.

**Languages Spoken:** Greek is the most commonly spoken language, although there are still traces of Ladino speakers.

---

### Historical Overview

**6th century BCE** The earliest Jewish settlements are established in Greece.

**3rd century BCE** Various books of the Bible begin to appear in Greek translation; eventually, the whole Bible is translated into the Septuagint.

**2nd century BCE** The Maccabean Revolt occurs after King Antiochus attempts to impose Greek religious customs on the Jews and desecrates the Temple in Jerusalem.

**5th century CE** Romaniot communities develop in the Byzantine period.

**15th century** Ottoman rule brings religious tolerance and an influx of more than 20,000 Sephardic Jews to Thessaloniki in one year.

**17th century** Thessaloniki becomes the home of Sabbatai Zevi and his messianic movement. This persists even after his (forced) conversion to Islam, and the Donmeh followers continue their version of Judaism. This influence persists to the present day in many parts of Turkey.

**Early 19th century** The Greek War of Independence is marked by a massive massacre of Ottoman Turks and Jews, because the Jews had supported that regime.

**Early 20th century** A mass exodus of Greeks from Asia Minor and a strong Hellenization movement pressure Jews to assimilate. Synagogues are destroyed and pogroms are carried out by some Greeks and Armenians.

Jews have lived in Greece for more than 2,500 years. When Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their homeland after the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BCE,

early encounters with Greeks occurred. There may have been occasional Jews living in Greek cities even before that, but before the fourth century BCE there were almost no Jewish communities in Greece. Their numbers increased in the third century BCE because of the enlightened attitudes of Alexander the Great.

There was much assimilation, and in the third century BCE, King Ptolemy recruited 70 scholars to translate the Bible into Greek. The resulting Septuagint has been the basis of much Bible scholarship by non-Jews. After the Maccabean revolt, many Jewish communities appeared throughout Greece, and this was recognized by Saint Paul when he visited Greece in the first century CE.

These early Jewish communities were known as the Romaniotes. They eventually developed their own customs and laws and used prayers written in Greek, but using Hebrew letters. The Romaniotes lived protected lives and followed their own customs over a period of 1,000 years, until the Ottoman conquest. The Ottomans, based on their Islamic Law, did recognize the Jews as a separate nation with legal autonomy, but the major changes occurred after the 1492 expulsion of Jews from Spain, when large numbers of Sephardic Jews arrived in Greece, settling mainly in Thessaloniki. Many of these had been converted, and these Marranos tended to overshadow the Romaniotes with their superior culture. After this movement, the Sephardi language, Ladino, gradually became the accepted language of Greek Jewry. During the 17th century, the Sephardic community in Thessaloniki represented more than half of the town's population, and the number of Jews had reached about 80,000 by the 19th century.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Thessaloniki had 50 synagogues, 20 Jewish schools, and numerous Jewish institutions, and it was a major center of Torah learning for all of Europe. There was a marked rise in Greek anti-Semitism in the early 20th century accompanied by the destruction of Jewish institutions and resulting in the emigration of many Jews. The final destruction of the community was virtually completed during the Holocaust.

## Contemporary Overview

### Religious Denominations

All of the eight synagogues in Greece are Sephardic, and they are served by rabbis based in Athens and Salonica, as well as some from Israel. There is a Chabad Centre in Athens, which provides some adult education, hospital and prison visitations, marriage preparation, and pastoral work.

Today, the Athens Community Center contains a library, meeting rooms, and small schools. There is also a monthly publication.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Greece is probably the most anti-Semitic country in Europe, and anti-Semitism is widespread throughout society. Jews are often not perceived as true Greeks, although many families have lived there since the 15th century. The mainstream media use terms such as genocide and holocaust to describe the behavior of Israel,

and the general level of rhetoric is similar to that in Syria or Iran. Since the end of World War II, about half the Jewish population immigrated to Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bowman, Steven. 2006. "Jews in Byzantium." In *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, edited by Steven T. Katz. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bowman, Steven B. 1984. *The Jews of Byzantium, 1204–1453*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Mazur, Belle D. 1935. *Studies on Jewry in Greece*. Vol. 1. Athens: Printing Office Hestia.
- Zvi, Ankori. 1981. *Giacomo Foscarini and the Jews of Crete*. "Michael on the History of the Jews in the Diaspora." Tel Aviv, Israel: Diaspora Research Institute.

## History of the Jews of the Island of Rhodes

*Marc D. Angel*

---

The Island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea was prized throughout history for its beauty and strategic military location. Part of the ancient Greek world, it became allied with the Roman Empire (164 BCE) and was included in the Byzantine Empire (395 CE). In 773, it fell to Islamic forces, which held it for about eight years. Rhodes was subsequently ruled by local lords and by the Genoese before returning to Byzantine rule in 1261. In 1307, it was turned over to the Knights of St. John who controlled Rhodes until the Ottoman Empire conquered the island at the end of 1522. The Ottomans lost it to Italy in 1911, and it was officially ceded to Italy in 1923. After World War II, Rhodes was granted to Greece.

Although Jews have lived in Rhodes since antiquity, there is little information about a Jewish community before the 16th century. Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro found 22 Jewish families when he visited the island in 1487. Early in the 16th century, the grand master of the Knights of St. John decreed the expulsion of Jews from Rhodes, unless they accepted baptism. With the Ottoman conquest, Jews were again allowed to practice their religion. Those who had been forcibly baptized returned to Judaism, and their numbers were augmented by Sephardic Jews, who were encouraged by the sultan to settle there. In the latter 16th century, several Christian travelers commented that most city dwellers in Rhodes were Jews. Although these seem to be exaggerated accounts, they point to the conspicuous presence of Jews at that period.

A traveler who passed through Rhodes in 1621 estimated that there were 200 Jews in the city. By mid-18th century, Chief Rabbi Ezra Malki reported that the community had shrunk, as some Jews had emigrated because of poor economic conditions. By the mid-19th century, Rabbi Raphael Israel estimated that there were 300 Jewish families in Rhodes. In 1900, Jewish leaders claimed a community of

3,600. In 1935, Abraham Galante put the Jewish population at 5,000, which seems to be a high estimate. During the first decades of the 20th century, many Jews from Rhodes left for the United States, Europe, Africa, and other destinations in search of greater economic opportunity. Many also left with the onset of fascist Italian rule. In 1944, when the Jews of Rhodes were deported to concentration camps, about 2,000 Jews were victimized. Only about 150 survived the Nazi brutalities.

When the Sephardim arrived in Rhodes beginning in 1523, they soon came to dominate communal life. The small native-Greek-speaking Romaniot community was absorbed by the Sephardim, and Judeo-Spanish became the language of all Jews. They lived in a Jewish Quarter—known among them as the *Juderia*—within the walled city. Their original synagogue, built during the 1480s, was known as Kahal Kadosh Gadol (or *kahal grande*). Another synagogue, built mid-16th century, was known as Kahal Kadosh Shalom. During the 19th century, as the Jewish population grew, other synagogues were established, including Kahal Kadosh Camondo and Kahal Kadosh Tikkun Hatsot.

From the 16th century, Rhodes's Jews followed the general organizational pattern of Sephardic communities in the Ottoman Empire. Lay officials oversaw the functioning and financing of communal institutions. They enacted communal ordinances (*haskamoth*), with the approval of the hakam (chief rabbi). They operated a system of taxation, whereby Jews were assessed for the maintenance of community institutions as well as for remittance of taxes to the Ottoman government. Revenue was also raised by selling rights (*hazakoth*) to work in certain businesses; and by sales tax (*gabella*) on certain items such as meat, wine, and cheese.

Although the synagogues employed religious functionaries, the community as a whole was under the religious authority of a hakam. As chief rabbi, the hakam was responsible for the religious life of the community. He headed the rabbinic court, supervised kashruth, taught Torah classes, answered questions in Jewish law, ensured the Halachic status of the mikvah and erub, implemented communal ordinances, and so on.

The Sephardic community of Rhodes boasted fine rabbinic scholars from its early years. Among the rabbis during the 16th and 17th centuries were Rabbis Yehiel Bassan, author of a book of responsa; Moshe de Vushal, author of a volume of sermons/lectures, *Yismah Moshe*; and Hayyim Algazi, author of a Halachic tome, *Banei Hayei*. Rabbi Moshe Israel became chief rabbi in 1714. During his 12-year tenure, Rhodes developed as an important Torah center in the Sephardic Diaspora. He authored three volumes of responsa, *Masat Moshe*, as well as a book of sermons/lectures, *Apei Moshe*. More important, he began a line of rabbis in Rhodes that continued through the early 20th century. Rabbis of the Israel family not only provided religious leadership for Rhodes, but also served in other communities. Many wrote books of rabbinic scholarship, including Rabbis Abraham Israel, Eliyahu Israel, Hayyim Yehudah Israel, Michael Yaacov Israel, Moshe ben Eliyahu Israel, Rahamim Hayyim Yehudah Israel, Raphael Yitzhak Israel, and Reuben Eliyahu Israel. Aside from rabbis of the Israel family, Rhodes also had other rabbinical leaders, scholars, and authors of rabbinic works. Among them were Rabbi Ezra Malki, in the 18th cen-

tury, and rabbis Rahamim Franco, Hizkiah Kodron, Mordecai Krespin, Hizkiah Shemuel Tarica, Yedidiah Shemuel Tarica, and Hayyim Tarsa in the 19th century.

It is indeed remarkable that such a tiny community as Rhodes produced so many rabbinic scholars and authors. Even into the 20th century, a high level of rabbinic scholarship was evident in the works of Rabbi Reuben Eliyahu Israel, the last official chief rabbi of Rhodes, who served as hakam from 1922 to 1932.

Although the community maintained an elite group of scholars over the centuries, the religious and general education of the masses of Jews began a serious decline by the early 18th century. Along with the rest of the Ottoman Empire, Rhodes suffered economic stagnation. Education beyond the elementary level became a luxury for the privileged few, rather than an opportunity available for most children of the poor. As the community's tax base weakened, so did support for communal institutions and schools. Writing in the mid-18th century, Rabbi Ezra Malki lamented the "screaming in the markets and in the streets" because of the widespread poverty among the Jews of Rhodes.

Most boys attended communal or privately run schools where they learned the rudiments of Hebrew reading, the prayers, and rote memorization of sacred texts. Most girls received no formal education at all until the early 20th century.

In 1889, Abraham Galante founded a progressive school that offered a comprehensive curriculum. In 1901, this school went under the aegis of the Alliance Israelite Universelle. In 1902, the Alliance opened a school for girls. Before the Alliance schools were established, the educational situation in Rhodes was far from satisfactory. According to a report by community leaders in 1900, 92 students attended the community Talmud Torah; 400 attended the poorly run elementary schools known as *meldars*; and 150 children did not attend school at all. Of the 92 students in the Talmud Torah, 48 attended at no charge due to poverty. The opening of the Alliance Schools not only provided good education for their students, but they also stimulated the existing schools to improve their methods. By 1914, it was rare to find a single school-age Jewish child in Rhodes who was not enrolled in school.

When Italy took possession of Rhodes in 1923, the Alliance schools were soon transformed from French to Italian language and culture. The Italian influence was also evident in the establishment of a rabbinical school in Rhodes in 1928. Known as the Collegio Rabbinico, it was accredited by the Italian government. Students were expected to gain mastery in rabbinics, but they also had to meet requirements in secular subjects taught by Italian professors. The Collegio Rabbinico, which attracted students from various communities and had shown so much promise, was closed in 1938 by the fascist Italian government.

Although the economic life of Jews was problematic during the 18th and 19th centuries, a financial elite continued to flourish, providing jobs for their coreligionists and support for communal institutions. The most significant business venture among the Jews of Rhodes in the 19th century was a bank opened by Bohor Alhadeff in 1819. Later known as the bank of Salomon Alhadeff's Sons, it was one of the major financial institutions of the Levant. During the 20th century, economic opportunities expanded during the early years of Italian rule. By the late 1930s, though,

the fascist government imposed discriminatory laws against Jews, and their condition deteriorated rapidly.

From its inception in 1523 to its destruction by the Nazis in 1944, the Jewish community of Rhodes maintained a vibrant Judeo-Spanish culture. Although few Jews live in Rhodes today, many Jews of Rhodes descent visit the island and support its remaining synagogue, Kahal Shalom, and an adjoining museum.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Angel, Marc D. 1978. *The Jews of Rhodes: The History of a Sephardic Community*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press.

## **Jewish Commerce in Salonica: 1881–1912**

*Orly C. Meron*

---

The cessation of Salonica port activity on Saturday but not on Friday, the Muslim day of rest, demonstrates how exceptional a phenomenon was Jewish domination of the city's economy during the last decade of Ottoman rule. Jewish and non-Jewish visitors have stressed the link between the Jewish population's demographic dominance in multiethnic Salonica and its relative economic superiority. According to a published report compiled by Alliance Israelite Universelle (1884), the Jewish labor force in Salonica comprised 4,000 tradespeople, 4,000 shopkeepers, 2,000 porters, 600 boatmen, 250 brokers, 250 butchers, 250 tinkers, 150 fishermen, 150 donkey drivers, 100 domestic servants, 60 coal dealers, 60 turners, 50 chair manufacturers, and 500 people plying various other trades. These occupations indicate that since the first half of the 19th century, Salonica was home to an entrenched religious community of Ottoman Jews, impoverished and lacking modern education and skills.

Legal reforms initiated by the Ottoman Empire removed obstacles for private capital accumulation, thereby creating new opportunities for non-Muslim groups while encouraging foreign investment in its territories. Creation of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (1881) laid the foundations for European semicolonialism based on reallocation of authority between economic (European) and political-legislative (Ottoman) spheres. Foreign investment in Macedonia's infrastructure, including construction of a modern port (1891), penetration of new agricultural technologies, and remittances from Macedonian emigrants promoted formation of a huge new consumer market. These developments spurred Salonica's emergence as a commercial and industrial center, administrative capital, and casern for Ottoman troops.

Anti-Semitic incidents in Europe and the Empire revived solidarity between local Jewish elites, the larger local Jewish population, and their counterparts in

Europe. The educational revolution initiated by the Jewish elite with the help of Jewish philanthropic associations, especially the Alliance Israelite Universelle, induced Westernization and acquisition of modern skills. Furthermore, the community remained politically faithful and pro-Turkish even during the brief Young Turks regime. Because Jews, unlike Balkan national minorities, lacked political and territorial aspirations, they became favorites of the Ottoman elites. Thus, with their dominant demographic presence, political loyalty and repository of suitable skills, the Jews were uniquely positioned to fulfill functions that were beyond the abilities or desires of the demographically or politically Ottoman dominating class.

A report written by delegates of the Union des Associations Israélites in 1912 portrays the Jewish professions on the eve of the Greek annexation of Salonica in broad strokes. According to the report, the Jewish labor force included 24,385 employed persons distributed in five main branches: commerce (46 percent), industry and crafts (41 percent), transportation (6 percent), finance and brokerage (5 percent), and professional services (2 percent). Jewish absence from agriculture resulted from the Jews' historic urbanism, designed to sustain Jewish communal life. Although 100 Jewish families earned their livelihood from fishing in the Bay of Salonica or in the open seas, their activities were considered urban "maritime occupations," not maritime agriculture.

Being a minority, the Jewish presence in the public administration was negligible as Ottomans dominated this sector even after the Tanzimat (1839) reforms theoretically opened the sector to non-Muslims. Instances of Jews participating in the senior Ottoman military command or as officials in the Salonica Province administration were few. Salonica's municipal bureaucracy also remained monopolized by the Muslim majority although it rested on Sabbateans (*Donme*), a group considered part of the majority population and familiar with the workings of modern administration.

In 1912, Jewish employment in the professions and professional services was distributed between the Jewish community's public and private sector, which included about 2 percent of all the Jews employed in Salonica (430 out of 24,385). It was composed primarily of teachers (70 percent, 300 out of 430), but there were also 40 pharmacists, 30 lawyers, 25 dentists, 20 physicians, 10 journalists, and 5 engineers and architects. Table 2 shows the percentages of professionals by ethnic origin.

**Table 2 Professionals in Salonica in 1912 by Ethnic Origin**

Profession	Jewish (%)	Greek (%)	Turkish (%)	Other Nationalities (%)	Total Professionals (No.)
Doctors	37	35	7	21	68
Pharmacists	54	31	4	12	26
Lawyers	42	19	39	0	36
Engineers and architects	23	31	8	38	13
Opticians	63	13	0	25	8
Midwives	50	0	0	50	4
Journalists	78	0	0	22	9

According to a list of professionals adapted from an undisclosed 1915 report in German, compiled and issued by the Museum of Commerce by order of the Austro-Hungarian authorities, the Jewish presence among professionals was large compared with the number of professionals belonging to the Ottoman majority, but small in relation to this segment among the Greeks, and even smaller in comparison with “others,” mainly Europeans. The last group was especially dominant in medicine and consisted primarily of European physicians, including Jews, who had been imported from Central Europe to ease the scarcity of physicians.

Limited opportunities to acquire higher education in the Ottoman Empire influenced participation in medicine and engineering by sons of Jewish families sufficiently wealthy to send their offspring to study in European universities. In tandem, a clear preference was observed among the educated Jewish elite for profitable occupations linked to commerce, such as law, dentistry (32 percent of Jewish physicians) and pharmacy (about 54 percent of all pharmacists).

The concentration of Jews in commerce, industry, and crafts aligns with their traditional urban occupations. Jewish entrepreneurs stimulated industrial and commercial growth in the final decades of semicolonial Ottoman rule in Macedonia. Excluding European concerns that developed public infrastructure projects for the Ottoman state, Jewish firms filled the entrepreneurship gap observed in the dominant population. Most of Salonica’s urban firms were in Jewish hands (538 out of 931). Hence, the share of Jewish enterprises (58 percent) was large compared with that of Turkish enterprises (8 percent; Table 3).

Dispersion of the Turkish population throughout rural Macedonia, the Turkish elite’s traditional inclination for government and military service—which prevented the creation of a business tradition—and delayed development of a modern public

**Table 3 Firms in Salonica in 1912 by Ethnic Origin and Branch (N = 931)**

Branch	Ethnic Origin of Firms by Branch				Total Number of Firms in a Branch
	Jewish	Greek	Turkish	Other	
Food and beverages	61	27	6	6	100
Chemicals	17	5	1	5	28
Construction materials	31	11	1	6	49
Energy and public utilities	8	1	1	6	16
Metal	15	5	5	17	42
Wood	20	5	3	1	29
Hides, leather, and footwear	28	18	3	8	57
Textiles	34	8	5	3	50
Clothing	48	10	23	17	98
Printing, paper, and office equipment	26	8	4	14	52
Tobacco	10	2	4	2	18
Domestic wares and furniture	30	3	2	6	41
Trade in agricultural products	77	34	4	20	135
General wholesale and retail	24	2	6	7	39
Finance and commission trade	109	25	8	35	177
Total number of firms per ethnic group	538	164	76	153	931

education system created a vacuum that Jewish entrepreneurs were well equipped to penetrate with the new niches by virtue of their commercial skills, available labor, and political loyalty. Ottoman Jews, as favored co-citizens and trustees of the old Ottoman elites, and “foreign” Jews, as representatives of European economic semicolonialism, cooperated in assuming key roles in the local economy by virtue of their competitive advantages over the Ottoman majority and other minorities.

Compared with the ruling elite and other competing minorities, such as the Greeks, the scope of commercial and industrial branches benefiting from Jewish entrepreneurship in Salonica was quite broad. Jewish entrepreneurs favored participation in growing niches connected with rising local consumer markets, the regional Imperial market, and international industry. The distribution of Jewish firms thus demonstrates their horizontal involvement in the city’s economy. Three groups of prominent niches can be identified: banking, international commerce, and import of semi-raw materials and Jewish domestic production (Table 4). Jewish banks served as substitutes for nonexistent Ottoman institutions. Domination of financial facilities, in addition to political support from Ottoman elites, granted Jewish businesspeople a clear advantage over their Greek competitors while it facilitated financing of large-scale trade. In international commerce, the Jews’ pervasive financial activity included organizing primary agricultural exports to core states and importing semi-raw materials and manufacturing products from Western states on their way to the Macedonian periphery. Finally, activities in the import of semi-raw materials, and, the Jewish domestic production niche, demonstrate that Jewish manufacturers in Salonica displayed a pronounced preference for importing semi-raw manufacturing inputs.

**Table 4 Jewish Entrepreneurial Niches in Salonica in 1912**

Sub-branch	Total Firms (No.)	Jewish Firms	
		(No.)	Percentage of Total Firms in Sub-branch
Banking	39	33	84.6
Grain and flour	34	29	85.3
Silkworms and cocoons	13	11	84.6
Opium	10	7	70.0
Pharmaceuticals	13	9	69.2
Watches and valuable articles	19	17	89.5
Colonial commodities	47	38	80.9
Bones and rags	5	5	100.0
Cotton yarn (commercial)	7	7	100.0
Wood coal	8	8	100.0
Glass, plates, and metals	17	16	94.5
Leather	8	7	87.5
Ropes and jute sacks	15	12	80.0
Wool, yarn, and fabrics	14	10	71.4

As laborers, Jews were concentrated in tobacco and transportation. As a profitable, growing, labor-intensive industry, tobacco attracted unskilled or semiskilled Jews of both genders at the expense of the traditional employment in textiles. In 1908, about 63 percent of the workers registered with the Tobacco Workers Syndicate in Thessalonica were Jewish men, and 90 percent of the workers in the cigarette-manufacturing factories owned by the tobacco monopoly were likewise Jews, primarily women.

Whether self-employed or salaried, Jewish workers were prominent in the overland and maritime transport industries, involving carriages and carts ( $n = 500$ ), porters ( $n = 600$ ), seamen and stevedores ( $n = 400$ ). Guilds of Jewish porters, which survived dissolution of other guilds in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, monitored competition within the Jewish economy by means of internal allocation of storage areas.

Jewish preference for menial jobs in the port was attributable to the relatively high wages received, which was a result of personnel shortages in the face of growing demand for labor. The control Jewish traders exercised over trade passing through the port facilitated entry of Jewish workers. Concurrently, the Ottoman regime preferred to employ loyal Jewish port workers because of the Turkish public's mistrust of local Greeks, who were suspected of cooperating with Greek nationalists intent on annexing the port. Furthermore, Jewish labor was in sufficient supply, had diversified experience in maritime labor and trade, and had managerial skills and knowledge of Western languages. These qualities allowed the Jewish minority to dominate the full range of occupations needed by the port. Jews thus exercised horizontal control over activities associated with international trade and vertical control over entrepreneurial investment. This was accomplished through supply of commercial services (e.g., customs, insurance), including unloading and delivery before transport.

### Selected Bibliography

- Dumont, Paul. 1979. "The Social Structure of the Jewish Community of Salonica at the End of the Nineteenth Century." *Southeastern Europe* 5 (2): 33–72.
- Issawi, Charles. 1982. "The Transformation of the Economic Position of the Millets in the Nineteenth Century." In *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1, edited by B. Braude and B. Lewis, 262–285. New York: Holmes & Meier.
- Meron, Orly C. 2005. "The Jewish Economy of Salonica (1881–1912)." *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 47 (1 and 2): 22–47.
- Meron, Orly C. 2005. "Jewish Entrepreneurship in Salonica during the Last Decades of the Ottoman Regime in Macedonia (1881–1912)." In *Frontier of Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West*, vol.1, edited by Colin Imber, 265–286. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Quataert, Donald. 1993. "Premières fumées d'usines" [The First Smoking Chimneys of the Factories]. In *Salonique, 1850–1918: La ville des juifs et le réveil des Balkans* [Salonica, 1950–1918: The Jewish Metropolis and the Balkan Revival], edited by Gil Veinstein, 177–194. Paris: Éditions Autrement.
- Quataert, Donald. 2002. "The Industrial Working Class of Salonica, 1850–1912." In *Jews, Turks, Ottomans—A Shared History, the Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*, edited by Avigdor Levi, 194–211. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

# Jews in Italy

*Steve Hall and Shoshannah Zirkin*

---

**General Population:** 57,226,000

**Jewish Population:** 29,400

**Percent of Population:** 0.5 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** At present, the Italian Jewish population is concentrated in Rome (15,000) and Milan (10,000). Smaller communities exist in Turin (1,600), Florence (1,400), and Leghorn/Livorno (1,000). Several hundred Jews also reside in Bologna, Genoa, Trieste, and Venice; and smaller numbers of Jews can be found in Alessandria, Ancona, Asti, Ferrara, Gorizia, Mantua, Merano, Modena, Naples, Padua, Parma, Perugia, Pisa, Siena, Spezia, Vercelli, Verona, Viareggio, and Casale Monferrato.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Eastern European Immigrants after World War II and approximately 3,000 Libyan immigrants in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

**Languages Spoken:** Italian

---

## Historical Overview

161 BCE The first Jews to travel to Rome are the envoys of Judah Maccabee.

66 BCE The Israelites' migration to Rome continues when Israel is conquered by Rome.

100 CE Western Europe's oldest known synagogue is established at Ostia.

212 Emperor Caracalla establishes new standards of Roman citizenship, including, for Jews, property ownership, benefits, and taxations.

312 Italy is conquered by Constantine, and Christianity is promoted throughout the lands. Under Constantine, the Roman Church begins to develop anti-Semitic convictions.

5th century Various anti-Semitic laws are passed, including restrictions on Jewish dwellings and clothing, the holding of public office, the repeal of the right to own slaves, and bans on the opening of synagogues.

600 The Catholic Church uses anti-Semitic restrictions and incentives for conversion to encourage Jews to adopt Christianity.

825 The Charter of Protection to Jews is issued by the Holy Roman emperor, resulting in Jewish trade and looser political restrictions.

10th century The early manifestations of Yiddish appear, as result of communication with German speakers. Kalonymus and R. Moses of Lucca, in northern Italy are said to have been the pioneers of Ashkenazi Jewry, when they move to Mainz, though historian Thietmar von Merseburg has suggested this may be attributable to Otto II (973–983), who was saved in a battle with the Saracens by Kalonymus.

1179 The Third Lateran Council adopts measures to prevent Jews from attaining status in Italian society; Jewish converts to Christianity are allowed to have possessions.

1215 Canons issued by the Fourth Lateran Council force Jews to live in separate quarters from Christians and wear a mark on their clothing, ban Jews from

- holding public office, and forbid Christians to pay interest on loans from Jews.
- 1240 The Italian Talmudist, Zedekiah ben Abraham Anav, details the liturgy and holiday customs of Roman Jews, which are distinct from those of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews
- 1288 The first expulsion of Jews takes place in south Italy.
- 1290–1293 A campaign to convert Jews in southern Italy decimates the Jewish community in Naples.
- 1300 Around 15,000 Jews live on the Italian Peninsula.
- 1399 To solve the problems of anti-Jewish measures throughout Italy, Italian Jewish synods are established and used throughout the 15th and 16th centuries.
- 1416 Jews from Forli and Bologna stand up to Franciscan anti-Semitic propaganda; later, Pope Martin (1417–1431) will make efforts to control the Franciscans.
- 1442 Further Diaspora movement to other areas of Italy becomes inevitable after Pope Eugenius IV issues anti-Semitic edicts.
- 1464–1492 Lorenzo Il Magnifico of Florence offers Jews official protection and supports Jewish scholarship. Under his leadership, the city experiences a renaissance of Jewish activity, including the creation of the chair of Hebrew at the University of Bologna and the revival of the use of Hebrew for theological and secular research.
- 1470s–1480s In Calabria and Pieva da Sacca, the first two Hebrew presses are established, while others are set up in Mantua and Naples. Later in 1480, the Soncino family opens Hebrew presses throughout Italy, leading to the first complete edition of the Hebrew Bible, by Abraham ben Hayyim.
- 1491 As part of their efforts to expel all the Jews from Ravenna, Franciscan and Dominican friars destroy synagogues.
- 1492 The Spanish possessions of Sicily and Sardinia are included in the expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. Most refugees from the Spanish expulsions head for Italy, specifically Venice, Leghorn, and Rome.
- 1494 When Italy is invaded by France, the Jews of Florence are expelled and the Medici are dethroned.
- 1495 Charles VIII of France's occupation of the Kingdom of Naples leads to new levels of persecution of Jews; two major expulsions later take place, in 1510 and 1541, under King Ferdinand of Spain.
- 1513 Jews are allowed to return to Florence.
- 1516 The ghetto of Venice is established.
- 1529 Scuola Grande Tedesca, the oldest synagogue in Venice, opens.
- 1537–1570 Under Cosimo I of Florence, Jews enjoy four decades of prosperity and growth.
- 1541 Jews are granted permission to reside in Venice, but are expelled from Naples.
- 1550s The Catholic Church declares that the Talmud is anti-Christian. It orders thousands of copies of Jewish religious texts to be burned in cities throughout the Italian Peninsula, and places restrictions on the printing of Hebrew books. Pope Paul IV imposes economic restrictions on Jews and requires them to live in ghettos.

- 1569 There is a further expulsion of Jews from the Papal States, with the exceptions of Rome and Ancona.
- 1570 Cosimo trades his protection of the Jews for the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany, thereby establishing the ghetto in Florence.
- 1573 In the ghetto of Rome, the Cinque Scole Synagogue is erected.
- 1593 When Jews are expelled from all the Papal States save Rome, Avignon, and Ancona, they are invited to settle in Leghorn in Tuscany.
- 1597 Nine hundred Jews are expelled from Spanish-controlled Milan.
- 1616 Modena's *The History of the Hebrew Rites* provides non-Jews with a systematic description of Jewish customs and is said to be one of the earliest attempts to do so. Eventually, it is translated into English, French, Dutch, and Latin.
- 1808 Jews are freed from the ghetto of Florence under Napoleon but are forced to return in 1815, when the House of Lorraine is restored.
- 1848 The Piedmontese constitution leads to the full emancipation of the Jews of northern Italy.
- 1860 The Alliance Israelite Universelle is established as the first modern international Jewish organization; its mission is to defend the civil rights and religious freedom of Jews in all across the globe.
- 1861 Italy is united, Jews are emancipated, and their ghettos are abolished.
- 1890 Florence's ghetto is demolished, and the town center undergoes renovations.
- 1902 Italian-Jew Giuseppe Ottolenghi is named minister of war, eventually rising to the rank of lieutenant general.
- 1904 Rome's Great Synagogue is built.
- 1930 As part of Italy's new legal practice, the legal status of Italian Jewish communities is standardized, Jews are required to join the Union of Italian-Jewish Communities, local leaders must now be elected, mandatory contributions are established, the role of rabbis is defined, and the law decrees that the community is subject to the protection and supervision of the state.
- 1930s Between April 1933 and May 1939, 5,000 Jews emigrate from Germany to Italy.
- 1938 Racial laws are passed against Jews in September. The Italian government bars Jews from studying or teaching in educational institutions of higher learning and revokes citizenship of foreign Jews obtained after January 1919. Their expulsion is ordered within six months. In later November, marriage between Jews and Aryans is prohibited, and Jews are excluded from military and civil administrative positions.
- 1939–1945 During World War II, the fascist Italian government and military frequently stand up to German demands to hand over Jews. In 1943, Italy switches sides and joins the Allies, after which German forces on Italian soil commit numerous atrocities and deport Jews. The number of Italian Jews who perish during the war numbers more than 7,000.
- 1956 A Jewish museum is opened in Venice.
- 1962 The Leghorn Synagogue, destroyed during World War II, is rebuilt.
- 1993 The Vatican and Israel establish formal diplomatic ties.

## Contemporary Overview

### Religious Denominations

Most Jewish temples in Italy are Sephardi. Over the past two millennia, a distinct tradition of prayer, similar to the Sephardi and Ashkenazi traditions called the *Nusach Italki*, or Italian rite, developed within Italy's Jewish community. This tradition has its own order of prayer and song and is followed in many synagogues throughout Rome, including the Great Synagogue.

The chief rabbi of Israel runs the Great Synagogue of Rome. He also heads the country's rabbinical council. Pope John Paul II's visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome in 1986 marked a new beginning in the relationship between Italian Jewry and the Vatican.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Jewish educational institutions exist in Rome, Milan, Florence, Genoa, Livorno, and Trieste. More than 60 percent of Jewish children in Italy attend Jewish primary school, but most community members choose to send children to secular schools for secondary education. Schools of advanced studies, including rabbinical study, are present in Rome, Turin, and Milan.

In Rome, the Unione delle Comunita Ebraiche Italiane is directly involved in providing religious, cultural, and educational services for the Jewish community.



Great Synagogue in Rome. (Hedda Gjerpen)

One of the union's major projects was the organization of a five-year program for Jewish-Zionist education. To make this program possible, the union worked in conjunction with the cooperation of the Education Department, the Torah Education Department of the Joint Authority, the Pincus, and Joint Funds. Together they established seminars and in-service training for Hebrew language and Jewish studies. Seminars are held in both Italy and Israel. This program provides high school students with the opportunity to spend two months of the school year at the Yemin Orde youth village, studying Hebrew and enriching their Jewish/Zionist studies. The same organization offers a two-year training program for Italian preschool and elementary school teachers. The program includes 8–10 hours of weekly training in Italy, seven weeks of study in Israel, and four annual seminars in Italy lasting 7–10 days each. There are two guest lecturers from Israel at each seminar.

In addition to its contributions to education, the Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane represents the Italian Jewish community politically. Although individual communities and associations are independent, they all maintain firm cooperative links with the Rome-based union. Until Israel and the Vatican secured a diplomatic accord in 1993, the union was a critical link between the Catholic Church, Israel, and world Jewry.

In addition, many of Italy's Jewish communities also produce regularly scheduled publications. *Shalom* in Rome, and *Bollettino delle Comunità* in Milan are both distributed monthly. Other publications are produced by independent organizations, such as *La Rassegna di Israel*, an academic quarterly.

International organizations, such as B'nai B'rith and the Women's International Zionist Organization, are active in major cities throughout Italy. B'nai Akiva and Hashomer Hatzair are two organizations that provide activities for youth. Other organizations help provide welfare and cater to cultural concerns.

There are also several branches of Chabad-Lubavitch in Italy. Locations include Milan, Rome, Trieste, and Venice.

Kosher food is available throughout Italy. There are kosher restaurants in Bologna, Florence, Milan, and Rome.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

At first, anti-Semitism did not characterize Benito Mussolini's Fascist movement. In fact, some Italian Jews were enthusiastic Fascists until Italy's alliance with Germany during World War II. Nazi pressure to implement discrimination against Jews was largely ignored. However, anti-Semitic remarks were prevalent in Mussolini's speeches, foreshadowing the tragedy that was to come. In 1931, there were 48,000 Jews in Italy. By 1939, nearly 4,000 were baptized, and thousands more chose to emigrate, leaving a mere 35,000 Jews in the country. During the war, Jews in Italy were interned in labor camps. Beginning in 1943, when the Germans effectively occupied northern Italy, the position of Jews grew significantly worse. German forces tried to deport Italian Jews east, to death camps in other parts of Europe, but they were largely unsuccessful because of the willingness of the Italian civilian population to protect Jews in danger. By the end of the war, 7,750 Jews had died at the hands of the Nazis and Italian Fascists.

Ladispoli, a small town near Rome, was used by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee as a transit for Soviet Jewish emigrants who sought refuge before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since 1948, 4,170 Italian Jews have emigrated to Israel.

### Instances of Anti-Semitism

In March 2002, a synagogue was vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti and received two arson threats. The perpetrators opened a coffin and damaged headstones, including those with Hebrew writing and the Star of David.

### Selected Bibliography

- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. 2001. *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Della Pergola, Sergio. 1972. *Jewish and Mixed Marriages in Milan, 1901–1968*. Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University.
- “Global Anti-Semitism: Selected Incidents around the World in 2002.” 2002. Anti-Defamation League Web site. [http://www.adl.org/Anti\\_semitism/anti-semitism\\_global\\_incidents.asp#](http://www.adl.org/Anti_semitism/anti-semitism_global_incidents.asp#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- “Jewish Communities: Europe: Italy.” 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Malissa, Elizabeth D. 2000. “Italy and the Jews—Timeline.” Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/italytime.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Milner, Stephen J., ed. 2005. *At the Margins: Minority Groups in Premodern Italy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Minerbi, Sergio I. 2003. “Neo Anti-Semitism in Today’s Italy.” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 15: (3–4, fall). Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Web site. <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-minerbi-f03.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Pugliese Stanislao G., ed. 2002. *Most Ancient of Minorities: The History and Culture of the Jews of Italy*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Toaff, Ariel. 1996. *Love, Work, and Death: Jewish Life in Medieval Umbria*. Translated by Judith Landry London. Portland, OR: Newbury House.
- Wistrich, Robert S., and Sergio Della Pergola, eds. 1995. *Fascist Anti-Semitism and the Italian Jews*. Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University.

## Jews in Milan: 1535–1597

*Orly C. Meron*

---

The story of the Jewish population in the Duchy of Milan during the Spanish regime, until its expulsion by King Philip the II of Spain, is an important chapter in the history of the Italian Diaspora and, more broadly, the Iberian Diaspora. From the late 14th century on, the presence and regional distribution of the Jewish population in the Duchy of Milan was dictated by the Jew’s major current occupation:

moneylending and banking. Official recognition of this *raison d'être*, the temporary Charter of Privileges (*condotta*), was already granted to the Jewish bankers collectively by Duke Francesco Sforza II in 1533. It declared that Jewish bankers and their attendants—family members, servants, and agents—could live and work safely throughout the state. Although the Spanish authorities adopted the charter in word and spirit (1535), its scope was limited by Carlo V, who in 1541 forbade Jews to live in Milan, the Duchy's capital. The charter, continuously renewed until 1566, in lieu of a "reasonable" payment to the Royal Treasury, was afterward renewed sporadically and with limitations until 1591, when the Edict of the Expulsion was issued.

At the beginning of the Spanish period (1535), Jews settled in the Duchy's main towns (Cremona, Pavia, Lodi, Alessandria, and Como), which served as metropolitan centers for the outlying villages (*contadi*). Large banks opened in these centers; by means of their agents and underwriters, activities were extended to more than 40 outlying localities. Jews circumvented the ban on their residence in Milan, a major commercial center, by settling in a belt around the city. From their location in Abbiategrasso, Binasco, Monza, Melegnano, and Vigevano, they had easy access to the city, where their credit activities were based. The map of Jewish settlement, motivated by considerations of security and politics, was therefore reinforced by opportunities to make handsome profits from banking. The latter were achieved through perceptive integration into locations where Milan's commercial heart was beating.

Patterns of Jewish urban settlement demonstrate still another strategic reason for this choice: ready access to the entry routes used by potential customers, villagers entering the town from outlying areas. Because bankers worked mainly from home, it appears that they chose their residences according to the advice offered by the author of *The Book of the Lender and the Borrower*: Be close to the town center as well as near crossroads. So, despite the ineffectiveness of ghettoization in the Duchy, Jewish urban settlement after 1566 was characterized by concentration.

To illustrate this pattern, consider Cremona. In 1576, the Jewish population was concentrated in three main areas: around the city's new communal center, in the vicinity of the traditional town center proximate to the main cathedral, and at the entrance to the road connecting Cremona to Milan. The S. Sofia quarter, located near the communal center, is described as quite densely populated by Jews, to the point of their outnumbering their Christian neighbors; the census—the *descrittione delle bocche* ("mouths," i.e., the number of mouths consuming wheat)—lists 179 of Cremona's 307 Jews (58 percent) as residing in this quarter. Evidence supporting the recorded information's veracity is found in a complaint made by the local church rector in 1571. He states that urgent repairs to his church could not be undertaken because most of the parish's populace was Jewish; hence, the 100 ducats required to pay for the repairs could not be raised among the inhabitants.

In 1584, Jewish residential areas, with their fine houses, were considered to be the most elegant in Cremona. In April 10, 1597, on the eve of expulsion, Cremona's Jewish population had spread to the new urban center, close to the *podestà*, the Spanish local governor's palace (Table 5). With its high percentage of Jews, the S. Sofia quarter also housed a synagogue, the center of Jewish communal life. A similar pattern was observed in Pavia and Lodi, where Jewish residences were concentrated

**Table 5** Distribution of the Jewish Population by Town, the Duchy of Milan, 1589–1590

Town	No. of Jewish Households	No. of Jews	Percentage of Jewish Population in the Duchy
Cremona	92	456	51.2
Pavia	23	123	13.8
Lodi	N/A	131	14.7
Alessandria	21	103	11.6
Casalmaggiore	10	71	8.0
Caravaggio	N/A	6	0.7
Total	N/A	890	100.0

Cremona, Lodi, Alessandria, and Pavia) and two smaller (Casalmaggiore and Caravaggio) communities. Attempts to confine Alessandria's Jews in a ghetto were opposed by the local Jewish community on the grounds that the site was less centrally located. Indeed, although the transfer of Jews to *Contrada Correggio* was completed in 1585, neither their ghettoization nor the intended special form of ghetto administration was realized. Moreover, the Jewish and Christian inhabitants of the town continued to share a common well and courtyard in the new quarter.

The only precise information available regarding the total number of Jews in the Duchy of Milan in the period considered pertains to the years 1589–1590. In spring 1589, the Spanish king asked the governor of Milan to write a report on the Jews living in the Duchy—their numbers and the benefits to be gained by extending their Charter of Privileges for 12 more years. The census of householders and their dependents, conducted by local authorities, recorded a total of 890 Jews living in the Duchy. This community constituted 3.6 percent to 4.2 percent of all Italian Jewry (estimated at 21,000–25,000 by 1600), whereas Milanese Jewry constituted 4.7 percent to 5.6 percent of all Italian Jews living outside ghettos. The average size of Jewish households derived from this census was about five persons, which agreed with known contemporary trends in family size encountered elsewhere in Italy.

Knowledge of the demographic characteristics of the Jews in the Duchy of Milan, like that of Jewish communities throughout Italy in the 1500s, is insufficient. These characteristics depended on mobility patterns materializing throughout the duchy, immigration of foreign Jews into the duchy, and conversions. Estimates of the size of the duchy's Jewish population during the earlier Spanish period and other points of time enable identification of the main trends appearing throughout the Spanish period. These estimates are based on partial lists, including census figures in which Jewish *bocche* were also tallied, Jewish bankers' lists, and partial lists naming Jews who stored wheat reserves. These lists generally exclude poorer Jewish residents. Two basic assumptions enable approximations of these figures: first, less prosperous Jews constituted approximately one-third of the Duchy's total Jewish population; second, Jewish households contained five members (see Table 6).

in prestigious residential quarters, in the city's center and close to the towns' major cathedrals, sites strategically chosen for their economic benefits. The premises rented by the Jewish community in Milan for use as a hostel by coreligionists coming to the capital on business were also located in the heart of the city.

The 1566 edict prohibiting moneylending led to changes in the distribution of Jewish residence. Smaller settlements were totally erased between 1566 and 1590. By the end of the Spanish period, Milanese Jewry was concentrated in four major (Cre-

**Table 6 Temporal and Spatial Distribution of the Jewish Population, the Duchy of Milan, 1522–1600: Partial Data and Estimates (Absolute Figures)**

Year	Duchy of Milan	Alessandria	Lodi	Pavia	Cremona
1522	450	–	–	–	–
1556	525*	–	–	–	–
1568–1569	–	–	–	–	158*
1571–1572	–	–	–	–	228*
1576	–	–	–	–	307*
1585	–	145	–	–	–
1591	–	–	–	–	400
1594	–	–	–	120*	–
1597	700*	170*	100*	60*	370*
1600	48*	25*	8*	–	15*

\* Estimates.

Calculation of Jewish population concentrations in the Duchy confirms the overall trend: A moderate increase in population from the beginning of the period accelerated after the mid-1550s. From 1590 on, the Jewish population decreased until the expulsion in 1597, after which it reached an unprecedented low. These fluctuations demonstrate the connection between demography and the scope of Jewish banking.

Irrespective of natural increase, growth in Milan's Jewish population from the beginning of the Spanish period until the late 1560s was influenced by Jewish immigration. Rising demand for cheap credit, resulting from intensified commercial and industrial activity and simultaneous increased Church restrictions on Christian credit activity, encouraged Jewish bankers to migrate to the Duchy. After the 1555 Edict of Counter-Reformation restricted the interest rate to 12 percent and confined Jews to ghettos, Jewish immigrants from central Italy were drawn to the duchy, which was now ruled by the king of Spain. The king, considered an enemy of the pope, delayed the application of the Catholic reform edict in the duchy for a decade, until 1566; significantly, contrary to events in central and northern Italy, no ghetto was established in the duchy. Furthermore, within the duchy, the prohibition on Jewish moneylending proved to be only declarative. Formal termination of this service's provision, absent the availability of Catholic credit facilities, led to the search for legal loopholes that were designed to avoid the order's execution. Hence, Jewish credit activity continued—albeit disguised as trade in precious stones or the purchase of gold and silver on credit.

The Jewish refugees who flowed into the Duchy of Milan from the Papal State, as well as from Udine, Venice, and Tuscany, strongly influenced the ethnic composition of the local Jewish population, strengthening its Italian component while weakening its former majority, the Ashkenazi component. The terms *moderni* (“new”) for Italian Jews and *vecchi* (“old”) for Ashkenazi Jews thus began to appear

in the responsa and in public records. Urbanization likewise brought internal Jewish migrants from the *contadi* flowing to the Duchy's main towns. A 1590 list of Jews from Cremona includes names such as Moise Como, Abraam Dina of Fontanella, Isaco Cremasco, Rafael Crema, Rica Monza, and Viviano da Bozzolo. This mobility should, however, be considered part of a general trend in the duchy, prompted by prohibitions on moneylending together with growing urban demand for credit in the wake of crafts industry development.

Housing shortages began to appear as growing numbers of Jews entered the Duchy's towns, particularly Cremona, which contained the Duchy's largest Jewish community. Although epidemics of plague (1576–1577) left their mark on the general population, they had little effect on the Jewish population, according to Hala-chic and notarial documentation.

Beginning in the early 1590s, the declining Jewish presence was inevitably the product of political and economic uncertainties. By motivating the establishment of a public bank (Bank of S. Ambrogio) in Milan in 1593 to replace credit facilities formerly provided by private bankers, including Jews, the Edict of Expulsion issued by the king of Spain in 1591 removed any formal justification for continued Jewish residence in the duchy.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bonfil, Roberto. 1982. "The Settlements of Wanderer Jews in Italy during the Late Middle Ages." In *Migration and Settlement in Israel and the Other Nations* [Hebrew], edited by Menachem Ben-Sasson and Joseph Hacker, 139–153. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center.
- DellaPergola, Sergio 1989. "Distribution résidentielle des juifs dans quelques villes Européennes et à Rome en particulier" [The Jews' Residential Distribution in Selected European Cities, Particularly in Rome]. *Revue des Etudes Juives* 148 (1–2): 69–92.
- Harris, Alan Ch. 1967. "La demografia del ghetto in Italia (1516–1797 circa)" [The Demography of Italy's Ghettos (circa 1516–1797)]. *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* [The Monthly Review of the Jewish People] 33 (1–5): 1–68.
- Invernizzi, Carlo. 1905. "Gli ebrei a Pavia" [The Jews in Pavia]. *Bollettino della Società Pavese di Storia Patria* [Bulletin of the Pavese National Historical Society] 5: 191–240, 281–319.
- Meron, Orly C. 1990. "The Decline of Jewish Banking in Milan and the Establishment of the S. Ambrogio Bank (1593)—Were the Two Interrelated?" *Nuova Rivista Storica* [New Historical Review] 74: 369–384.
- Meron, Orly C. 1993. "Demographic and Spatial Aspects of Jewish Life in the Duchy of Milan during the Spanish Period (1535–1597)." In *Papers in Jewish Demography 1989*, edited by Uziel O. Schmelz and Sergio DellaPergola, 37–47. Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University.
- Roth, Avraham Naftali Zvi. 1955. "The Book of the Lender and the Borrower Fallacy Related to Zecharia Pugliesi." *Hebrew Union College Annual* (Hebrew Section) 26: 39–74.
- Segre, Renata. 1973. *Gli Ebrei Lombardi nell'età spagnola: storia di un'espulsione* [The Jews of Lombardy during the Spanish Era: History of an Expulsion]. Turin, Italy: Accademia delle scienze.
- Shulvass, Moses A. 1951. "The Jewish Population in Renaissance Italy." *Jewish Social Studies* 13: 3–24.
- Simonsohn, Shlomo, ed. 1982–1986. *The Jews of the Duchy of Milan*, Vols. 1–4. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

# Portuguese Jews of the Diaspora: Italy and Beyond

*Joseph Abraham Levi*

---

Just like the Netherlands, the self-governing city entities of present-day northern and central Italy—Ancona, Ferrara, Florence, Genoa, Livorno, Mantua, Modena, Padua, Pisa, Turin, and Venice—as well as the kingdom of Naples, Rome, and the Pontifical States, were relatively friendly toward the Jews residing in their territories, be they local or foreign, provided they paid their taxes and did not disrupt the overall peace of the state. The same would apply to Portuguese Jews and Marranos.

As for the expelled Iberian Jews, a few made their way to Naples where a few decades earlier a contingent of Sephardic Jews enjoyed protection from King Alfonso I of Aragon and Sicily (1442–1458). King Alfonso's successor, Ferrante I (1458–1495), though solely guided by economic factors, treated these Iberian emigrants very favorably. In 1469, and again in 1491, he in fact issued a decree granting all foreign Jews residing in his kingdom the same privileges that his Jewish subjects enjoyed. Needless to say, their freedom had a price: 1,800 ducats in exchange for the right of (permanent) settlement in his territory. They were thus considered full citizens of the land, entitled to assistance and care, especially after the 1492 expulsion from Spain. Among the most notable exiles to settle in Naples were Isaac Abrabanel (1430–1508), his sons Judah, also known as *Leone Ebreo il filosofo* (Leon the Jew, the Philosopher), Joseph, and Samuel, as well as their uncle Jacob Abrabanel.

Iehuda Leão ben Isac Abrabanel (ca. 1465–ca. 1521) was a wealthy physician who left Portugal for Spain in 1483, where he remained nine years before continuing onto Italy in 1492. His brother Samuel was highly regarded among the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. In fact Samuel Usque calls him “tremagisto,” that is, “three times master;” great in law, nobility, and richness. Judah's father, Isaac Abrabanel, took refuge in Toledo after the conspiracy against the Portuguese monarch, King João II. After living in Naples, Messina, Corfù, Monopoli, Genoa, Venice, Florence, and a few other Italian cities, Judah eventually settled in Padua. He is famous for his *Dialoghi d'amore* (Love Dialogues), written in 1535 and published in Rome. In 1484, Joseph Abrabanel, Isaac's nephew and son-in-law, also left Portugal for Spain. Between September 1492 and December 1494, Isaac Abrabanel was in Naples, where he held an important position at the royal court. In 1495, he visited Palermo, Messina, and Corfù. Between 1496 and 1502, Isaac resided in Monopoli. Only in 1503 he was able to reach Venice, where he soon established commercial ties between this city and Portugal. The ever-enticing spices were in fact at the core of any trade transaction. Unfortunately, his political maneuvering did not lead to anything. Isaac thus spent the remainder of his life devoted to his writings, particularly the exegesis of the first four books of the Pentateuch.

In 1593, the Grand Duke of Livorno, Fernando I, opened his doors to all the Jews of the Diaspora, granting them immunity from any persecution; pardon for crimes committed or allegedly committed in other countries before their arrival in

his territory, as in the case of New Christian apostasy; no taxation; the right to vote; and, most importantly, the right to practice their faith in public without fear of retaliation. Portuguese Jews and Marranos thus began arriving in great numbers and soon contributed to the makeup of the local Jewish communities, covering areas as far as Pisa. Aided by the Portuguese Jews who came from Venice, the Sephardic community of Livorno soon became the prominent Jewish center of the entire southern part of Europe, rivaled only by Amsterdam in the North. The Santa Esnoga (Holy Synagogue) of Livorno became the home of a mixture of Portuguese and *Italkian* Jews. Undoubtedly, Portuguese Jews and New Christians contributed to the transformation of Livorno into one of Europe's most active cities and commercial centers of Europe. From Livorno, spices, corals, soap, silk, and woolen clothes made their way to the rest of the then-known world. Expatriated Portuguese Jews from Amsterdam also founded academic circles where poetry and science were discussed and analyzed. In a little over four decades the Portuguese Jewish community grew from 100 people to 7,000 members. The Portuguese language was, in fact, the lingua franca of trade, being used in all transactions down to the 18th century, when it was finally supplanted by Italian. The last known document written in Portuguese, dating from 1821, is a re-edition of an earlier publication governing the proper institution of the dowry. Most of the books, religious as well as secular, were printed in Portuguese or Spanish, with an occasional Italian edition/translation.

During this time of religious persecution, Ferrara was a known haven for many Sephardic Jews. Upon their arrival in Ferrara, the Usques openly declared their ties with Judaism, thus becoming active members of the Sephardic and *Italkian* communities. In Italy the Usque brothers established a Sephardic printing press, though it is still not clear if Samuel and Abraão were either brothers or close relatives. The Usques published their first book in Spanish in 1553, followed by the Jewish version of the Spanish Bible, prayer books for the Sephardic communities of the Diaspora, and, in 1554, Bernardim Ribeiro's *Menina e Moça* (Story of the Young and Innocent Maiden and Lass).

Bernardim Ribeiro (ca. 1475–ca. 1544) was a Portuguese poet and lyric writer credited with introducing bucolic poetry to Portugal. His work is a happy combination of three novelistic trends: the sentimental, the pastoral, and the chivalrous. His most famous work is *Menina e Moça*, by far the best example of the 16th-century Portuguese sentimental novel. The fact that *Menina e Moça* was printed by two Sephardic Jews of the Diaspora in Ferrara led some scholars to believe Ribeiro was most likely himself a Portuguese Jew or a converso. *Menina e Moça* is characterized by an almost complete lack of references to Christianity. Contrary to what seems to be the norm in Portuguese letters of the time, in Ribeiro's work there is no mention of or allusion to Jesus, Mary, or the myriad of saints that usually are seen in medieval and Renaissance Portuguese works. Similarly, when the situation calls for the inclusion of Christian rites, as in the case of weddings and funerals, once again, there are no references to a Christian, that is, Catholic, function. Perhaps Ribeiro was either an exiled Jew or was only visiting his coreligionists of the Sephardic Diaspora in Ferrara. As Samuel Usque does in his *Consolaçam às tribulações de Israel*, Bernardim Ribeiro perhaps uses his narration to vent his anguish and frustration

over how the Sephardic Jews of the Diaspora, particularly the Portuguese Jews, had suffered.

The Usques were originally from Spain. Abraão Usque, whose secular name was Duarte Pinhel, wrote in Portuguese, whereas Samuel expressed himself better in Spanish. The Usques must have left for Italy in or around 1545, escaping the Portuguese Inquisition, perhaps with a copy of Ribeiro's work still in manuscript form. They eventually took refuge in Ferrara where Abraão opened a private printing shop. Between 1551 and 1557 Abraão and Samuel published many books and treatises on Jewish matters, religious as well as secular, including philosophical essays.

In 1495, the French invasions of Naples brought to an end to this brief, yet unparalleled time of tolerance. On October 26, 1496, Jews were officially expelled from the kingdom. However, a few Sephardic Jews were asked, or rather, forced to remain and/or to return and establish loan offices, which were obviously taxed. Jacob Abrabanel and his nephew/son-in-law Samuel were also appointed chief loan officers. In 1525, the Portuguese David Ibn Yahia, rabbi of the exiled Iberian communities, gave a detailed account of daily life on Italian soil. Only 16 years later, in 1541, Jews were finally expelled from the kingdom of Naples, though a few, most of whom were of Iberian origin, succeeded in remaining at Empoli.

In November 1492, Duke Ercole I d'Este allowed 21 Iberian Jews, expelled from Genoa, to enter and establish themselves in Ferrara. The Este family governed over Ferrara (13th–16th centuries) as well as Modena and Reggio Emilia (13th–18th centuries), the latter cities with important Jewish communities in their midst. Among the notables stand out rabbi Santo Abennamias, his Hebrew name being Shem tov Nahmias, as well as two very famous physicians, Ferrer el Levi and Rabbi David Marich. Portuguese Jews and Marranos enjoyed protection under Ercole I, Alfonso I, and Ercole II d'Este. Their favorable attitude toward the Jews appears to be a family tradition. Their ancestor and founder of the dynasty, Duke Borso I, also sought and obtained from Pope Paul II (1464–1471) full absolution for all Jews residing in his territories. Mantua was also a chosen site for many Sephardic Jews who chose to live in the territories of rulers who were sympathetic with the Jewish cause, as in the case of the Gonzaga family (1328–1708).

In 1524, for example, Portuguese New Christians were allowed to settle in Ferrara and return to their ancestral faith freely. During the entire 16th century, this city was the most important center of Jewish life, where freedom of religious expression also contributed to the creation of a free printing press in Hebrew and/or Romance languages printed in the local vernacular or Hebrew characters.

This climate of religious tolerance continued even when the duchy of Ferrara fell under papal dominion in 1593. This was because most of the Portuguese New Christians were already first-generation Portuguese Jews; hence, they were born into the Jewish faith. Having never been baptized, they were thus, by law, immune from the Inquisitions—Portuguese as well as Italian.

Samuel Usque's fierce and unparalleled critique of the Inquisition, *Consolação às Tribulações de Israel* (Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel, 1553), the 1553 Ferrara Bible, and the 1554 publication, in Portuguese, of Ribeiro's *Menina e Moça*, are just a few examples of the intellectual fervor that the Italian duchy enjoyed during

the time. Considered by many as the most important Jewish literary piece ever written in Portuguese, this pastoral novel centers on the lament of shepherds and their speculations on a possible consolation from all the sufferings that befell the Jews.

Among the most prominent Portuguese names of 17th-century Florence are António Dias Pinto, a well-known jurist teaching canonical law at the University of Pisa, and the jurists Francisco Jorge and Duarte Pereira, the latter also known as Judah Lombroso.

From 1492 to 1570, the Italian Peninsula was the scene of Jewish migrations, internal and external Diasporas, that eventually led to a massive restructuring and changes in the “religious practices and attitudes” of the *Italkim*. These transformations influenced the demography and social-cultural makeup of Italian Jewry who, though never a monolithic group, had managed to keep a cultural Italic common denominator.

Already toward the end of the 13th century, and definitively during the first decades of the 14th, the Jewish communities residing in Italian soil saw themselves completely involved in the system of money-lending, both on a small and large scale. Given the papal prohibition against usury and money-lending practiced by Christians, Jews were gradually pushed into this profession, either willingly or unwillingly. At around the same time, many Italian Jews from Rome, the kingdom of Naples, and the regions to its immediate south, including Sicily, began to migrate north, particularly to the prosperous principalities, duchies, and city-states of Ferrara, Genoa, Livorno, Mantua, Modena, Perugia, Pisa, and Venice. Soon after, Ashkenazi Jews, French Jews, and Moroccan Jews also entered the Italian Peninsula, thus joining their Italian coreligionists in the profitable business of money-lending and establishing banking institutions from which they could perform all kinds of monetary transactions.

The Iberian Diaspora to the Italian Peninsula should be analyzed against this background. Regardless of their Iberian origin, the *Italkim* called their Portuguese and Spanish coreligionists *Ponentini*—that is, those who came from the west, or rather, from the land where the sun sets—if indeed they had arrived directly from the Iberian Peninsula. On the other hand, if they had entered Italy from the Ottoman Empire they were nicknamed *Levantini*, or those who came from the East, where the sun rises.

In the 16th century, the Italian peninsula was politically and geographically divided into three major areas: the Papal States, which ruled central Italy, including Rome; the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, which, though officially part of the Aragonese crown, belonged to Spain; and Northern Italy, a mosaic of independent or semi-independent city-states, principalities, and/or dukedoms.

*Italkim*, Ashkenazim, Sephardim, North African Jews, and French Jews all contributed to the multi-composite nature of Italian Jewry at the time. Portuguese Jews and conversos were thus the latest stratum added to the mix. Needless to say, this living together was not always happy or desired, thus causing understandable rivalries and religious disputes.

In 1541, the physician Amato Lusitano (1511–1568), a Portuguese Jew of the Diaspora who had lived in Antwerp since 1534, accepted a teaching post at the

University of Ferrara. Also known as João Rodrigues de Castelo Branco, Amato Lusitano was born in Castelo Branco and studied medicine in Salamanca. At the age of 18, Lusitano was already practicing medicine. In 1521, he returned to Portugal, but in 1534, for fear of anti-Semitic persecution, he left for Antwerp. Lusitano is famous for having detected the existence of valves in human veins, thus opening the door for further investigations on blood circulation. Lusitano wrote all of his treatises in Latin where he reports his observations and theories. He was fluent in Greek, Latin, and Arabic and was a firm believer in the direct observation of pure facts. During the latter years of his life, fearing for his safety, Lusitano eventually moved to Salonika, one of the major Portuguese-Jewish centers in the east, where he later died. Between 1549 and 1561, Lusitano wrote *Centuriae*, a seven-volume work where he expounds his medical theories based on firsthand observations of human bodies.

Lusitano performed autopsies on real human corpses, and his lectures on anatomy were so renowned that even the Church and the Portuguese Crown were willing to overlook to his Jewish background. On many occasions Lusitano was in fact asked by Pope Julius III (1550–1555), his sister, and the Portuguese ambassadors to the Holy See, to cure them from their illnesses. By 1551, Ferrara had a Portuguese-Jewish cemetery; needless to say, the city had become the center of Portuguese presence in Italy, also owing to the migration of refugees from Ancona. In 1574, an anonymous complaint to the Portuguese Inquisition mentions at least 30 family members of Portuguese-Jewish origin residing in Ferrara. Their presence is put to an end in 1581, when Rome finally succeeded in forcing the city-state to take some action against them. A few remained, some were imprisoned, and the rest migrated northeast, finally stopping in Venice. In the 17th century, Ferrara still had more than 1,000 Portuguese Jews in its midst.

Toward the middle of the 16th century, Ancona and, later, Ferrara, became the receptacles of a sizable number of Portuguese New Christians. Given its geographical position, strategically located halfway between Venice and the Balkans/Ottoman Empire, the city of Ancona, in itself an important port on the Adriatic coast, was appealing to the Jews of the Diaspora, particularly Portuguese Jews and Marranos. Politically speaking Ancona was part of the Pontifical States, which comprised the following present-day Italian regions: Campania, Emilia Romagna, Marche, and part of Umbria. Therefore, before establishing long-term residence there Jews had to seek approval from papal authorities. In 1547, having already been in Ancona for 17 years, Portuguese Jews finally received permission from Pope Paul III (1534–1549) to reside in his territories. Pope Julius III (1550–1555) continued this policy of tolerance toward the Jews. Now more than ever Ancona prospered economically and socially, and the Sephardim partook in this affluence. Unfortunately, Pope Paul IV (1555–1559) ordered severe persecutions and autos-de-fé against all Jews living in his territories. In 1556, he devoted all his energies to the Roman Inquisition (established by the then Cardinal Caraffa, future Paul IV, in 1542), accusing the Jews of supporting the Protestant cause throughout Europe. With his July 12, 1555, Bull *Cum Nimis Absurdum* (Because it is Absurd), Pope Paul IV required that all Jews be confined strictly in ghettos and forced to wear special headgear.

On April 30, 1566, Pope Paul IV ordered all Portuguese Jews and conversos who settled in Ancona arrested and sentenced as criminals. Fifty were imprisoned and 24 were burned at the stake. Ironically, the Portuguese Jewish presence came to an end as a result of an economic embargo on the port of Ancona devised by New Christians Grácia Nasi Mendes (ca. 1510–1569) and her nephew José Nási (ca. 1524–1579).

Grácia Nasi was born in Portugal around 1510. From a New Christian family, she was baptized Beatriz de Luna. In 1518, Grácia married the New Christian Francisco Mendes, a prominent merchant and banker with numerous branches throughout Europe, particularly Holland. After the death of her husband in 1537, Grácia settled in Holland where she began her anti-Inquisition campaign. Her passionate desire to help exiled Portuguese New Christians took her first to Venice, where she was eventually denounced for her crypto-Jewish faith, and then to Ferrara, where she finally returned to Judaism and adopted the Jewish name Grácia Nasi. Toward the latter part of her life, in 1553, Grácia finally settled in Constantinople (Istanbul) dedicating the rest of her life to helping the Portuguese and Spanish communities of the Sephardic Diaspora. Her nephew and son-in-law, José Nási, was also of a Marrano family; his Christian name was João Micas. In Holland, José studied at the University of Louvain and worked at one of the family banks. Before joining his aunt in Constantinople, José also lived in France. In Istanbul, José's reputation soon reached the ears of the authorities, particularly the attributes regarding his moral integrity. Sultan Süleyman II, the Magnificent (1494–1566), who ascended the throne in 1520, in fact nominated José to be duke of the Isle of Naxos and, thanks to his aunt's intercessions, entrusted him with the construction of a rabbinical school on the Isle of Tiberius, which was completed in 1565. On Tiberius José also planted mulberry trees, a move that was instrumental in establishing the silk industry. José kept his title until his death in 1579. His legacy was continued by another Portuguese Jew, Ibn Yaish, also known as Salomão Abenais, a very wealthy merchant of the area

With the help of the Ottoman Empire the Portuguese succeeded in imposing a boycott of the city and conveying all business transactions to the nearby port of Pesaro. Both the Christians and Jews living in Ancona, most of whom were traders relying on overseas commerce, suffered from this economic drawback. As a way of recovering from their huge losses, Portuguese Jews and Marranos decided to leave Ancona heading north to Ferrara and, when this city was annexed to the Papal States in 1593, then to Venice, by far the most important center of Jewish culture—*Italkian* as well as Sephardim—in the entire Italian Peninsula.

Unlike her sister cities in Italy, Venice offered the Portuguese Jews and (former) Marranos freedom of worship and a relatively safe place where they could establish permanent residence, that is, the ghetto, a separate section of the city, away from the city proper. The word “ghetto” was apparently first used in 1516 in Venice. One of the city's islands had an old foundry, which was called, in Venetian, *gheto*. There are, however, many controversies as to the veracity of this account and the exact etymology of the word “ghetto.” In all likelihood the Venetian *gheto* derives from the Latin *jacto*, meaning “throwing” or “I throw.” Its equivalent in standard Italian is *getto*.

The Venetian ghetto soon became the model for many Sephardic communities of the Diaspora, from Amsterdam, London, and North Africa to the Balkans and the Americas. The ghetto was composed of *Sephardim* who, in their turn, were divided into *Ponentini* (Westerners)—that is, Portuguese and Spanish Jews who arrived from the West—and *Levantini* (Eastern), that is, Sephardic Jews who came to Venice from the east, mainly Constantinople, Corfù, and Salonika (Thessalonica). Both groups were deeply involved in Venice's lucrative maritime trade. Their synagogue was in a sense a manifesto to their role and prestige within Venetian society. Rabbis, doctors, philosophers, writers, scientists, and wealthy merchants all contributed to the renaissance of Portuguese Jewry outside Portugal. By 1541, the *Ponentini* and the *Levantini* were in the Ghetto Vecchio, and the Ghetto Nuovo was set aside for the increasing number of Ashkenazim of German, Hungarian, Romanian/Moldavian, and/or Slavic stock who were making Venice their safe haven. Of all the "foreign" Jews residing in Venice, the exiled Portuguese and Spanish soon became the most numerous and, because of their expertise in trade, the most prosperous, mainly thanks to their commercial ties with the Ottoman Empire.

Venice's role as the center of Portuguese Jews and Marranos was however being challenged by Livorno, soon to be followed by Pisa, Modena, and Reggio Emilia. Charters were quickly drawn by their respective rulers to attract *Ponentini* to settle in their dominions, continue performing their business transactions as usual, and, at the same time, enjoy full religious freedom, including the right to erect new synagogues.

On July 10, 1593, with the *Livornina* Chart, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand I, declared the city-port of Livorno a free zone, a place where people from all religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds could live and work freely without fear of persecutions, including the Inquisition(s).

It is obvious, then, that the Grand Duke of Livorno was specifically inviting into his territories Portuguese and Spanish Marranos who by this time were already residing in nearby city-states, principalities, and Pontifical State possessions, namely, Ancona, Ferrara, Pisa, and Venice. In doing so, Ferdinand I was following in the footsteps of his father, who extended similar privileges to Ottoman Muslims in 1551, as well as other rulers of the Peninsula, including Duke Ercole II d'Este and the duke of Savoy who, respectively in 1550 and 1572, guaranteed protection for the Marranos who chose to live in their midst. In less than 50 years Livorno saw its Jewish population grow in numbers never before seen, and it soon rivaled Amsterdam for prestige and economic weight. Economically speaking, Livorno also became one of the major trading centers of the Mediterranean, the linking point between northern and western Europe from one side, and the Levant from the other. Because of the overwhelming presence of Portuguese Jews and Marranos in the area, Portuguese became the official lingua franca for the entire Mediterranean basin area—from the Tyrrhenian and the Adriatic to the Ionian and the Aegean—as well as the trading centers of northern Europe, position it held into the middle of the 19th century, when all trade transactions gradually stopped being conducted solely in Portuguese. Religiously speaking, Portuguese had to compete with Spanish as the sacred language of the Sephardic communities in Italy. Services were conducted

in either or both Iberian languages; burial tombstones also bore witness to this predilection for the Sephardic element. The Judeo-Portuguese and Judeo-Spanish secular hold on local *Italkian* traditions and values was also pervasive and all-encompassing, imposing itself over the local and foreign Jewish communities for a little over 200 years, that is, approximately until 1715, when it was finally supplanted by Italian.

Until the end of the Renaissance, the three branches of Judaism residing in Italian soil, namely, the Sephardic/Oriental, the Ashkenazi, and the autochthonous *Italkim*, usually referred to as the *tre nazioni* (the three nations), lived side by side, at times interacting, but most of the times at odds with one another. During the last two decades of the 16th century, though, some signs of fusion and assimilation appeared. In a short time these diverse Jewish peoples finally seemed to converge into mainstream Italian Jewry. Once the linguistic barrier was broken, the cultural and ritual differences soon followed suit.

During the first decades of the 17th century, a few European centers, particularly those connected to international trade, saw an unparalleled increase in Jewish population. Cities like Amsterdam, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Prague, and Venice, as well as the Italian principalities of Livorno and Mantua, were literally inundated by Jewish merchants and their families. Most of them were Portuguese Jews and/or former Portuguese New Christians who, while living in the Ottoman Empire, reverted to Judaism without fear of retaliations. In 1629, Portuguese New Christians were finally allowed to travel without any restrictions. Portuguese Jews in Italy thus followed the fate of their Italian coreligionists not only in matters of faith but also in an economical sense: trade and business with the rest of the world. Given its central position in the Mediterranean, the city-states of the Italian Peninsula encouraged their Jewish citizens to establish commercial ties with the East, mainly the Ottoman Empire; the West, namely, the Iberian Peninsula and northern Europe; and the southwest. North Africa and, beyond the sea, the Americas were additional places where *Italkim* and Sephardic Jews of the *Nação Portuguesa* took their economic expertise and incredible survival skills. Italian and Portuguese Jews both contributed to the passage from Renaissance Europe, initiated by the Italian city-states, to the modern age of mercantilism, which was only possible with the aid of the Portuguese New Christians. It was in fact from cities like Livorno, Venice, and Ferrara that Portuguese Jews and Marranos reached the New World, thus opening new doors for international and transatlantic trade, which continued uninterrupted for three centuries.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Altabé, David Fintz. 1993. *Spanish and Portuguese Jewry. Before and after 1492*. Brooklyn, NY: Sepher-Hermon Press.
- Barnett, Richard David, and Walter Manfred Schwab, eds. 1989. *The Sephardi Heritage: Essays on the History and Cultural Contribution of the Jews of Spain and Portugal*. Vol. 2. Grendon, UK: Gibraltar Books.
- Finkelstein, Louis, ed. 1960. *The Jews. Their History, Culture, and Religion*, 3rd ed. 2 vols. New York: Harper and Row.

- Finn, James. 1841. *Sephardim; or, the History of the Jews in Spain and Portugal*. London: J.G.F. and J. Rivington.
- Gubbay, Lucien, and Abraham Levy. 1992. *The Sephardim: Their Glorious Tradition. From the Babylonian Exile to the Present Day*. London: Carnell.
- Katz, Israel J., and M. Mitchell Serels, eds. 2000. *Studies on the History of Portuguese Jews from Their Expulsion in 1497 through Their Dispersion*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press.
- Levi, Joseph Abraham, ed. 2002. *Survival and Adaptation. The Portuguese Jewish Diaspora in Europe, Africa, and the New World*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press.
- Levi, Joseph Abraham. 2003. "Bernardim Ribeiro." In *Dictionary of Literary Biography. Portuguese Literature*, vol. 1, edited by Monica Rector and Fred Clark, 259–267. Detroit: Gale Thomson.
- Milano, Attilio. 1972. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Italy," vol. 9, 1115–1132. Jerusalem: Keter.
- Roth, Cecil. 1946. *The History of the Jews of Italy*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Usque, Samuel. 1964. *A Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel. Third Dialogue*, edited and translated by Gershon I. Gelbart. New York: Bloch.

## Jews in Luxembourg

*Shoshannah Zirkin*

---

General Population: 437,000

Jewish Population: 600

Percent of Population: 1.4 percent

Jewish Population by City: Approximately 80 percent of the total community resides in Luxembourg City. A much smaller community exists in the adjacent town of Esch-sur-Alzette.

---

### Historical Overview

963 Luxembourg is founded by Count Siegfried.

1276 The first Jews to live in Luxembourg settle in Luxembourg City, the capitol.

1349 Jews in Luxembourg are blamed for the Black Death, massacred, and expelled from cities in Luxembourg and the surrounding region of Echternach.

1391 All Jews are officially expelled from Luxembourg and surrounding regions.

1405 Jews began to return to Luxembourg and established a small community.

1478 Jewish homes and property are pillaged and destroyed in a series of uprisings. All but two Jewish families flee the country.

1515 Fifteen Jewish families resettle in Luxembourg and the surrounding regions of Echternach and Arlon.

1530 With the exception of a small Marrano population, the Jewish community is expelled from the country again. This expulsion is strictly enforced, and no Jews resettle in Luxembourg until the late 18th century.

1808 Seventy-five Jews reside in Luxembourg.

1815 Luxembourg gains independence.

- 1823 The first synagogue is built in Luxembourg City.
- 1843 Samuel Hirsch is appointed the first chief rabbi of Luxembourg. He serves the community for more than 20 years.
- 1880 Luxembourg's Jewish population increases to 150 families, most of whom reside in an area called Gutland.
- 1894 The first Great Synagogue is constructed in Luxembourg City.
- 1899 The first provincial synagogue in Luxembourg is built in Echternach.
- 1927 The Jewish community numbers 1,171 individuals and continues to grow, largely because of Russian pogroms and the immigration of refugees from Germany.
- 1930 Approximately 4,000 Jews reside in Luxembourg and surrounding areas.
- 1940 Although neutral, Luxembourg is invaded by Germany. Local *Volksdeutsche*, ethnic Germans, aid the Nazis. Approximately 1,000 Jews escape to France and Portugal. Luxembourg remains under the control of a German military government for several months. On August 2, a Nazi civil government, headed by Gauleiter Gustav Simon, is established. By early September the Nuremberg laws are introduced to Luxembourg. Conditions for the Jews continue to worsen. On September 13, the Gestapo announce that Jews who did not flee would be deported on the following Yom Kippur.
- 1941 Approximately 200 Jews flee overseas, and 1,000 people are evacuated to the unoccupied zone in France. Most of those in France are later deported to concentration camps in Poland. About 850 Jews remain in Luxembourg. A political body called the *Aeltesternrat der Juden* is established to oversee the Jewish population. They are interned in a German transit camp, Fuenfbrunnen, not far from Ulfingen, a city in northern Luxembourg.
- 1942 Of the Jews held in Fuenfbrunnen, 127 are able to emigrate.
- 1943 Luxembourg is officially *Juddenrein*, cleansed of Jews, as the Jewish population is transported to the Chelmno, Lodz, Auschwitz, and Theresienstadt extermination camps. Only a handful of Jews remain in hiding. The synagogue in Luxembourg City is destroyed.
- 1944 The Allies liberate Luxembourg on September 9. Only 1,555 of the 3,500 Jews who lived in Luxembourg in 1939 survive the Holocaust. Of all the Luxembourg Jews who are deported to concentration camps, only 36 survive.
- 1947 Luxembourg votes in favor of the partition plan to create a Jewish state.
- 1949 Luxembourg establishes diplomatic relations with Israel.
- 1953 The government gives funds to help the postwar Jewish community build a new synagogue.
- 1959 Rabbi Emmanuel Bulz becomes the chief Rabbi of Luxembourg. In addition, the Luxembourg government receives 18 million Deutschmarks from Germany as compensation for losses suffered during World War II.
- 1998 Betty Preston establishes Luxembourg's first and only Reform Jewish congregation.
- 2002 Luxembourg establishes a commission to research material losses suffered by the Jewish community during World War II.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Luxembourg's Jewish community is small, but many Jews have achieved prominence within the larger professional community. Edmond Israel is the former president of the Luxembourg stock exchange. Alain Mayer once served as vice president of the Jewish community and is currently an active member of Luxembourg's Council of State.

### Present Economic Conditions

Luxembourg voted in favor of the partition plan to create a Jewish state in November 1947. Two years later, Israel and Luxembourg established full diplomatic relations. Because of Luxembourg's small size, the Israeli embassy is located in Brussels. The Belgian embassy represents Luxembourg economically, and the Dutch embassy controls political relations.

### Religious Denominations

Luxembourg's main synagogue is Modern Orthodox and located in the town center. Moroccan-born Rabbi Joseph Sayagh, who is believed to be the first Sephardic rabbi in Luxembourg history, conducts services in both French and Hebrew.

Betty Preston, an American expatriate, established Or Chadash, a small Reform congregation in 1998. Or Chadash holds monthly Shabbat services at the local Baha'i Center. Rosh Hashanah services are held at the Hilton Hotel. Each year, a guest rabbi comes from England to lead High Holiday services.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

The Consistoire Israelite is the community's legal representative to the government. The government finances this group, which is responsible for appointing the chief rabbi and one of the communal functionaries.

Luxembourg has only one kosher grocery store, Boulangerie Philip, which provides food for approximately 30 families. There is no local production of kosher meat, but such products are brought into Luxembourg from Brussels and Strasbourg.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Emigrants from Germany fled to Luxembourg in the 1930s, increasing the Jewish population from 1,500 to 4,000 persons. Of these Jews, about 2,000 were deported and 690 were killed. Most of those who were not deported survived. Some fled to France, and a small number remained in Luxembourg and were looked after by Christian rescuers. Victor Bodson, the former justice minister and chairman of Luxembourg House of Representatives rescued approximately 100 Jews during the Holocaust by aiding them along organized escape routes. He was named Righteous Among Nations for his efforts. After World War II, approximately 1,500 Jews returned to Luxembourg. Most came to rebuild their prewar businesses. The government

supported them financially. Since 1948, 84 Jews have emigrated from Luxembourg to Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Jewish Communities: Europe: Luxembourg.” 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Sloame, Joanna. 2008. “Luxembourg.” The Virtual Jewish History Tour. Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/Luxembourg.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).

## Jews in Malta

*Tito Benady*

---

General Population: 404,000

Jewish Population: Approximately 80

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Sephardi Jews from North Africa

Languages Spoken: Maltese and English

---

### Historical Overview

- 870 Malta is captured by Arabs and the existing Jewish population continues to live on the island.
- 1091 Malta is captured by the Sicilian Normans, and the Jewish community is not disturbed by the change in sovereignty.
- 1283 Sicily becomes part of the Kingdom of Aragon and subsequently Spain.
- 1492 Jews are expelled from Spanish territories, including Malta.
- 1530 The Emperor Charles V cedes Malta to the Knights of St John, and during the following two and a half centuries Jews are not allowed to settle on the island.
- 1798 Malta is captured by Napoleon, who expels the Knights of St John.
- 1799 The Maltese rise against the French with British assistance.
- 1800 The French on the island surrender, and Malta becomes a British possession. Jewish merchants begin to settle there shortly afterward.
- 1804 Anti-Jewish riots take place.
- 1815 A British Jews Committee is formed to regulate the community’s affairs.
- 1881 The Jewish community numbers 145.
- 1979 A new synagogue opens in Ursola Street.

### Selected Bibliography

- Coburn, Kathlen. 1949. *Notes on the Notebooks of S. T. Coleridge*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Davis, Derek. 1984. "The Jewish Cemetery at Kalkara." *Miscellanies of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 13: 145–170.
- "Malta." 2008. *The World Factbook*. CIA Government Web site. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mt.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Roth, Cecil, 1931, "The Jews of Malta." In *Transactions of The Jewish Historical Society of England* 12: 187–251.

## Jews in the Netherlands

*Shoshannah Zirkin*

---

**General Population:** 15,575,000

**Jewish Population:** 30,000

**Percent of Population:** 0.19 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Amsterdam (15,000) is the center of Jewish life in the Netherlands. Other sizable Jewish communities exist in Rotterdam and The Hague. Small communities reside in Amersfoort, Arnhem, Bussum, Eindhoven, Enschede, Groningen, Haarlem, Hilversum, Leeuwarden, Leiden, Utrecht, and Zwolle.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** During the 18th century, many Jews settled in Dutch colonial territories to participate in international trade. However, the Dutch were unsuccessful at establishing competitive trade routes. Towns in rural areas collapsed as people moved to larger cities in search of work. Small Jewish communities collapsed overnight, and the Jewish population of the larger cities grew exponentially. At the turn of the 18th century, the Jewish population in Amsterdam was 6,200; 100 years later, it had increased to 20,335.

---

### Historical Overview

- 1100 The first Jews settle in the "low lands" (present-day Belgium). They are persecuted and expelled.
- 1349–1350 The Jews are accused of spreading the Black Plague and are violently persecuted. Most Jews are massacred, and those who survive are expelled.
- 1500 Amsterdam becomes a center of world trade and shipping. Many Portuguese Marrano merchants flee to the Netherlands to escape the Inquisition and pursue business opportunities.
- 1593 The Marrano population continues to grow, particularly in Amsterdam, as they are not permitted to live in Middelburg and Haarlem.
- 1603 The Netherlands officially recognizes one religion, Protestantism. The Jewish Marrano community is discovered, and the leaders of the community are arrested.
- 1608 A second Marrano community is established, which replaces the one forced to disperse five years earlier.
- 1618 The Sephardi community splits because of a disagreement concerning how liberal the community should be. This split is evidence that although life is

fairly calm and anti-Semitism in the Netherlands is low, the Jews have internal community problems.

- 1619 The government is eager to repress the Jews, but the Dutch population is unwilling to participate as many Jews have become important traders and merchants. To limit the political rights of the Jews, a law is passed giving individual cities the right to dictate all matters concerning Jews in their territory. Amsterdam allows Jews to settle but prohibits them from holding citizenship. Most territories follow this example.
- 1620 The first Ashkenazi Jews arrive in Amsterdam as refugees from the 30 Years' War (1618–1648). They are very poor and quickly outnumber the Sephardim; however, many survive because of the generous aid granted by the Sephardic community.
- 1621 The Dutch West Indies Company is established, largely due to relationships between the Dutch and South America.
- 1632 Many Jews study medicine and law at the university in Amsterdam, as they are allowed to be doctors and lawyers. The city of Amsterdam passes a law excluding Jews from entering trade guilds, although exceptions are sometimes made.
- 1635 The Ashkenazi Jewish community is officially formed.
- 1656 Baruch Spinoza, a Sephardic Jew in the Dutch community is excommunicated after giving a speech on the nature of God from his book *Ethics*.
- 1780–1784 The Anglo-Dutch war leads to a great decline for the Netherlands and ends with French occupation of the country.
- 1796 A law is passed granting full civil rights to all inhabitants of the Netherlands. As a result, Jews are now able to reside anywhere in the country with no restrictions.
- 1799 In accordance with the new laws of emancipation, Jewish congregations, like Christian congregations, receive grants from the government treasury.
- 1806–1810 Louis Napoleon, who wants to create real equality for the Jews, rules the Netherlands. He implements several changes, such as moving market day from Saturday to Monday; however, his reign is too short to make a lasting impact.
- 1812 The Napoleonic government forces all Dutch Jews to register with civic authorities, and many Jews fight for the Netherlands at Waterloo.
- 1814 A law is passed officially ending the French regime, and the Netherlands is again an independent country. The Jewish population of the Netherlands grows steadily until World War II.
- 1939 As many as 34,000 Jewish refugees enter the Netherlands in attempt to flee Nazi Germany. Many reside in Westerbork, a shelter the Dutch government arranges for those fleeing Nazi Germany. The Nazis later use Westerbork as a transit camp to concentration camps elsewhere.
- 1940 Germany invade and occupy the Netherlands. They immediately begin to pass anti-Jewish laws forcing Jews to leave their jobs and quit their schools. At the time of occupation, 140,000 Jews live in Holland—1.6 percent of the total population.

- 1941 Thousands of ethnic Dutch hold a strike against the Germans to protest the treatment of the Dutch Jews. Although many ethnic Dutch aid the Germans in the deportation of Jews, this is the only protest of its kind held in an occupied country during World War II.
- 1942 A deportation plan is put into effect to remove all Jews from the Netherlands. It begins in the town of Zaandam on January 14. By October 2, more than 12,000 Jews have been deported.
- 1943 The deportation of Jews from the Netherlands increases. Most of these Jews are sent to Auschwitz and Sobibor.
- 1944 Deportations of Jews from the Netherlands ends.
- 1946 Approximately 30,000 Jews live in the Netherlands, only 20 percent of the prewar population. This is one of the lowest survival rates in all of the Nazi-occupied countries. The government pays generous reparations to the surviving community; however, a large number of Jews choose to immigrate to Palestine.
- 1948 The Netherlands establishes diplomatic relations with Israel.
- 2005 The prime minister, Jan Peter Balkenende, publicly apologizes for Holland's collaboration with the Nazis during World War II.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

During the golden age of the 1600s, many Jews, Sephardim in particular, contributed largely to the economic expansion of the Netherlands, helping the country become a world center for trade and commerce. Jews also took part in the tobacco, sugar refining, and printing businesses as well as medicine. Portuguese Jews were involved with international trade and shipping, and some of the wealthiest businesspeople held shares in the East Indies Company. Most importantly, the Jews held an informal monopoly on the diamond industry, not because others were prohibited, but simply because they were extremely successful at the craft.

The Netherlands experienced a sharp decline during the 18th century, and everyone, including the Jews, experienced tremendous economic hardship. However, the Netherlands regained its independence from France in 1814 and conditions began to improve. The Jews became involved with in the cotton industry and returned to the diamond industry.

Jews who lived in small towns outside big cities were usually involved in commerce, shopkeeping, and cattle trade/slaughter. Every town had a ritual slaughterer and inspector. Depending on the wealth of the community, they would also employ a rabbi, cantor, teacher, and scribe. Because the Dutch Jews were so successful, they integrated into society with less difficulty than elsewhere in Europe.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Amsterdam has many historical Jewish sites and museums. The Rembrandt House is located on Jodenbreestraat, and contains a sizable collection of works, including biblical scenes and portraits of prominent 17th-century Jews. The Resistance Museum

has many sections of Jewish interest, and there is also a small museum at the Hollandsche Schouwburg, where Jews were held before deportation during World War II. The detention camp at Westerbork was preserved, and a memorial center was established. An old Jewish cemetery is preserved at Ouderkerk-on-the-Amstel.

The Jewish Historical Museum is located in four old Ashkenazi synagogues: the Great Shul (1670), the Obbene Shul (1672), the Dritt Shul (1700), and the Neie Shul (1730). Directly across the street is the Snoga, a famous Sephardi synagogue that has been used by the Jewish community since 1672. It has a magnificent interior with sand-covered floors. The Snoga houses a library, which contains priceless copies of scholarly works dating back to the golden age. Synagogues in Amsterdam, Middelburg, Rotterdam, and Breda have been restored. The most popular Jewish historical site is the hiding place of Anne Frank, which is located at 263 Prinsengracht and now contains a museum.

### Religious Denominations

There are three councils of Dutch Jewry: Ashkenazi Orthodox (*Nederlands-Israelitisch Kerkgenootschap*, commonly referred to as the NIK), Ashkenazi Reform (*Verbond van Liberaal Religieuze Joden*), and Sephardi Orthodox (*Portugees-Israelitisch Kerkgenootschap*). The NIK has approximately 5,000 active members, who make up 36 congregations. Their presence is overwhelmingly larger than the other two councils of Dutch Jewry. The NIK has 10 synagogues in Amsterdam alone and an active presence in The Hague, Rotterdam, Amersfoort, Arnhem, Bussum, Eindhoven, Groningen, Haarlem, Hilversum, Leiden, Leeuwarden, Utrecht, and Zwolle.



Anne Frank House in Amsterdam.  
(Feije Riemersma)

German-Jewish refugees introduced Ashkenazi Reform, or Liberal Judaism to the Netherlands in the 1930s, and it is the only denomination of Judaism currently experiencing growth. Six rabbis lead the community, and active synagogues are located in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Tilburg, Utrecht, Arnhem, Enschede, Almere, and Heerenveen. Approximately 1,100 Dutch-Jewish families are affiliated with a Liberal Jewish Synagogue.

The Sephardi Orthodox community is comparatively small, with about 270 families centered in Amsterdam. Another Jewish community, called Beit Ha'Chidush, was founded in the Netherlands in 1995. It was started by secular and religious Jews together in attempt to create a more open and diverse community. Rabbi Elisa Klapheck, the first female rabbi in the history of the Netherlands, leads the community. They have connections to Reconstructionist Judaism and Jewish Renewal as well as communities in Amsterdam and Groningen.

Historically, the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities of the Netherlands co-existed and often intermingled. Cross-cultural influences and high rates of intermarriage resulted in a unique closeness not found elsewhere. As such, both sects of Judaism have adopted traditions from the other. For example, Dutch Ashkenazi Jews name their children after living grandparents. This tradition is common among Sephardim, but traditionally the Ashkenazi do not name after living relatives.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Amsterdam has several Jewish day schools. The Ashkenazi community runs a primary and secondary school, and the untra-Orthodox community runs separate schools of its own. For those who wish to continue their studies, there is a seminary and an Institute of Jewish Studies in Leiden.

Many Jewish groups are active in the Netherlands, and Zionist activity is high. Rabbi Moshe Stiefel heads Chabad-Lubavitch in the Netherlands, which has locations throughout the country, including Almere, Amersfoort, Amsterdam, Haarlem, Maastricht, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht. These Chabad centers offer a variety of services, including adult education, Hebrew school, bar and bat mitzvah instruction, holiday awareness classes, communal lectures, kitchen koshering, circumcision, seniors visitation, hospital visitation, prison visitation, marriage preparation classes, funeral services, and Shabbat hospitality.

The Women's International Zionist Organization and B'nai B'rith are active. In addition, there are several other youth movements.

The Jewish community distributes two publications regularly. The *Nieuw Israelitisch Weekblad* is distributed weekly. The *Studia Rosenthaliana* is a biannual journal published twice a year by the *Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana* (the Judaica library of Amsterdam University).

There is a Jewish hospital in Amstelveen and Jewish retirement homes in Amsterdam and Scheveningen. Kosher food is available in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Before the Holocaust, some 140,000 Jews resided in the Netherlands. Throughout the 1930s, the Dutch Jewish community was very active in rescuing people from

Germany, and as a result, nearly 30,000 German Jews escaped to the Netherlands. As the war progressed, however, many Dutch people collaborated with the Germans, resulting in the death of nearly 100,000 Dutch Jews. In the years after World War II, more Jews from the Netherlands immigrated to Israel than to any other Western country. More than 10,000 Dutch Jews have immigrated to Israel over the past 30 years.

### Selected Bibliography

- Brasz, Chaya, and Yosef Kaplan, eds. 2001. *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others: Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands. Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- "Four Hundred Years of Dutch Jewry: Settlement of Jews in the Netherlands." Jewish Historical Museum Web site. <http://www.jhm.nl/netherlands.aspx> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Fuks, Lajb. 1995. *Aspects of Jewish Life in the Netherlands: a selection from the writings of Leo Fuks*. Edited and with an introduction by Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld. Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum.
- Israel, Jonathan, and Reinier Salverda, eds. 2002. *Dutch Jewry: Its History and Secular Culture (1500–2000)*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- "Jewish Communities: Europe: Netherlands." 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Katchen, Aaron L. 1984. *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis: Seventeenth Century Apologetics and the Study of Maimonides' Mishneh Torah*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies.
- Michman, Jozeph, and Tirtsah Levie, eds. 1984. *Dutch Jewish History: Proceedings of the Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands (November 28–December 3, 1982), Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem*. Jerusalem: Tel-Aviv University.
- "Protest Following the Dismissal of a Jewish Professor of Law (November 26, 1940)." Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/dutchprof.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Shoyvitz, David. "The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Netherlands." Jewish Virtual Library. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/netherlands.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Wessels, Benjamin Leo. 2001. *Ben's Story: Holocaust Letters with Selections from the Dutch Underground Press*, edited by Kees W. Bolle. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

## Jews in Portugal

*Shoshannah Zirkin*

---

General Population: 9,808,000

Jewish Population: 900

**Jewish Population by City:** Lisbon has the largest Jewish population and serves as the center for Jewish life. Small communities of conversos, people in the process of returning to Judaism, reside in Belmonte and Oporto.

**Languages Spoken:** Portuguese

---

## Historical Overview

- 1139 Jews in Portugal enjoy protection from the crown. The Jews are recognized and respected. King Affonso Henriques entrusts Yahia ben Yahi III as royal tax collector. Shortly after his appointment, Yahia ben Yahi III becomes the first chief rabbi of Portugal.
- 1493 Jews without permanent resident status who fail to leave Portugal after eight months are declared slaves of the king. Approximately 700 Jewish children are separated from their parents and sent to live on the island of São Tomé off the west coast of Africa where they are converted to Christianity.
- 1506 Lists of Marranos, newly converted Christians who continue to practice Judaism in secret, are presented to the king, and 3,000 New Christians are massacred in Lisbon.
- 1540 The first trial of the Portuguese Inquisition is held. Newly every prominent New Christian family is tried and executed.
- 1654 Twenty-three Portuguese families flee to New York in an attempt to evade the Inquisition. They are the first Jewish settlers in the United States.
- 1765 The last public Inquisition trial in Portugal is held.
- 1821 A liberal revolt formally ends the Portuguese Inquisition.
- 1892 The Jewish community is officially recognized and Shaare Tikvah Synagogue is built in Lisbon on the condition that it does not face the street.
- 1912 The Portuguese Republic restores rights to the Jewish community. They were permitted to slaughter animals according to Jewish law; register births, deaths, and marriages; and collect money for charity.
- 1930 Arthur Carlos de Barros Basto, a Marrano Jew who converted to Orthodox Judaism at the age of 33, leads a brief resistance. He establishes a synagogue in Oporto encouraging Jews to rejoin their faith, and he travels throughout Portugal with two doctors who perform circumcisions.
- 1991 Portugal opens an embassy in Israel.
- 1993 A ceremony is held to commemorate the children sent to São Tomé Island.
- 1996 The government of Portugal officially apologizes for the forced expulsion of Jews in the 1490s. Portugal's president, Jorge Sampaio, joins Israel's Parliament speaker and members of the Catholic Church in marking the 500th anniversary of the expulsion. Events include the inauguration of a synagogue in the town of Belmonte, where Jews secretly preserved their traditions for centuries.
- 1999 Historian António José Telo, with the support of the Portuguese government, publishes a book about Jewish gold stolen by the Nazis during World War II that was smuggled into Portugal.

## Contemporary Overview

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

The 13th and 14th centuries were the golden age for Jews in Portugal. Jews lived in separate areas called *Judiarias*. There were 135 *Judiarias* in various locations throughout the county, and each had its own synagogue, slaughterhouses, hospital,

jails, bathhouses, and other communal institutions. Although Jews lived separately, they traveled freely throughout the country.

### Religious Denominations

In the early 1930s, Arthur Carlos de Barros Basto established a synagogue in Oporto and encouraged Jews to rejoin their faith. The synagogue grew and eventually moved into a new building donated by Elly Kadoorie. Shortly after, another synagogue was established in Braganca. Basto also established a yeshiva in Oporto, which ran for nine years. Following Basto's lead, more than 10,000 Marrano families admitted that they practiced Judaism in secret. The government forced Basto to close the yeshiva, ending the Marrano resistance.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

The *Comunidade Israelita de Lisboa* is an organization that unites the Jewish communities throughout Portugal. There are active Sephardi synagogues in Lisbon, Belmonte, and Oporto, and one Ashkenazi synagogue in Lisbon. An ancient synagogue still stands in Tomar. The remnants of a Jewish quarter can be visited in Castelo de Vida as well as the old Jewish cemetery in Faro.

Kosher food is available in Lisbon and Belmonte.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Since 1948, 248 Portuguese Jews have immigrated to Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Adler, Elkan Nathan. 1908. *Auto de fé and Jew*. New York: H. Frowde.
- Benveniste, Arthur. 1997. "500th Anniversary of the Forced Conversion of the Jews of Portugal." <http://home.earthlink.net/~benven/annivers.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Bloch, Joshua. 1938. *Early Hebrew Printing in Spain and Portugal, 1890–1957*. New York: New York Public Library.
- Dias, Eduardo Mayone. 2000. "Crypto-Jews in Portugal—A Clandestine Existence." *HaLapid*, Winter. Society for Crypto Judaic Studies Web site. <http://www.cryptojews.com/cryptoJewsinPortugal.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Edgar, Samuel. 2004. *At the End of the Earth: Essays on the History of the Jews in England and Portugal*. London: Jewish Historical Society of England.
- "Information About Jewish Portugal." 2003. International Survey of Jewish Monuments. <http://www.isjm.org/country/portugal.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Jewish Communities: Europe: Portugal." 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Lindo, Elias Hiam. 1865. *History of the Jews of Spain and Portugal, from the Earliest Times to Their Final Expulsion from Those Kingdoms, and Their Subsequent Dispersion; with Complete Translations of All the Laws Made Respecting Them During Their Long Establishment in the Iberia*. London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans.
- "Resources." Saudades: Portuguese Sephardic History Web site. [http://www.saudades.org/resource\\_topics.htm](http://www.saudades.org/resource_topics.htm) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Roth, Cecil. 1931. "The Religion of the Marranos," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 22 (1): 1–33.

- Singerman, Robert. 1975. *Jews in Spain and Portugal: A Bibliography*. New York: Garland Publishers.
- Weiner, Rebecca. 2008. "The Jewish Virtual History Tour: Portugal." Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Portugal.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. 1976. *Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion.
- Zucker, George K., ed. 2005. *Sephardic Identity: Essays on a Vanishing Jewish Culture*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

## Jews in Scotland

*Nathan Abrams*

---

General Population: 5,062,011

Jewish Population: 6,400 (2001 census)

Percent of Population: 0.13 percent

Jewish Population by City: Glasgow, 4224; Edinburgh, 768; Aberdeen, 150; Dundee, 33

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Dutch and German Jews arrive in the 1700s and 1800s; Eastern European immigrants, in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The majority are Ashkenazi, but a small proportion are Sephardic. Almost 87 percent of Scottish Jews were born in the United Kingdom. There has been a small immigration from the United States, the Middle East, other European Union countries, Eastern Europe, South Africa, and Ireland.

Languages Spoken: English

---

### Historical Overview

- 1180 Individual Jews, such as financiers, have business interests in Scotland without actually settling there. The bishop of Glasgow passes an official regulation forbidding churchmen to "ledge their benefices for money borrowed from Jews."
- 1641 Julius Conradus Otto, a converted Jew from Vienna, becomes professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages at Edinburgh University.
- 1665 A boatload of Jews is reported to have docked at Aberdeen.
- 1691 David Brown is given permission to trade in Edinburgh and becomes the first openly practicing Jew to settle in Scotland.
- 1700s Jewish individuals and families settled in Edinburgh. Sephardi Jewish doctors in England received medical degrees in absentia from Aberdeen's two medical schools—King's and Marischal Colleges. As they do not require religious oaths, they are the first universities in the English-speaking world to allow Jews to study and graduate in medicine.
- 1779 Joseph Hart Myers is the first Jew to study as an undergraduate at Edinburgh University and graduate with an MD.

- 1788 Herman Lyon, a dentist and “corn operator,” comes to Edinburgh from Prussia.
- 1790s The first Jews settle in Glasgow. They are predominantly Dutch and German merchants, furriers, and businessmen.
- 1795 Lyon obtains a burial plot for himself and his family on Calton Hill.
- 1812 Isaac Cohen, a hatter, who came from Manchester to Glasgow (which at that time had the largest hat industry in Europe) is admitted as a Freeman of the City of Glasgow in 1812.
- 1816 The first synagogue in Scotland opens in a lane off Nicholson Street in Edinburgh and serves 20 families.
- 1820 Scotland’s first Jewish cemetery opens in Braid Place (now Sciennes House Place) in Edinburgh. It is used until 1867 and contains around 30 plots.
- 1823 The first synagogue opens in the High Street in Glasgow in the tenement home of Moses Henry Lisenheim, rabbi, Hebrew teacher, and butcher.
- 1825 The synagogue in Edinburgh moves to a converted tenement in Richmond Court.
- Early 1830s There is a community of around 50 people in Glasgow.
- 1832 The first Jewish cemetery opens in Glasgow—a Jewish enclosure in the newly opened Necropolis, a prestigious burial ground overlooking the cathedral. The first burial in the Necropolis, of the quill-maker Joseph Levi, takes place the same year.
- 1833–1840 An independent congregation is formed in Richmond Court, Edinburgh.
- ca. 1834–1862 Rev. Moses Joel is minister, teacher, baker, and butcher to the small Jewish community of Edinburgh.
- 1838 A Jewish Philanthropic Society is formed in Edinburgh.
- 1840 German-Jewish textile merchants begin to settle in Dundee. They revolutionize aspects of the jute trade and play a vital role in the city’s civic and cultural life.
- 1878 A minyan is formed in Dundee and a synagogue opens.
- 1879 The Glasgow community is around 800 strong, and the first purpose-built synagogue in Scotland is opened in Garnethill.
- 1881–1917 Jewish settlement increases in Scotland as an influx of East European Jewish immigrants, fleeing religious persecution, discrimination, and severe economic hardship, many of them en route for America, settle there. Large-scale immigration is facilitated by the quicker and lower-priced mass transportation made possible by the railway and steamship. Jews looking for new places from which to conduct business and that offers a greater range of economic opportunities and competitiveness spread out in Scotland. Some choose to live in remote places, scattered and isolated throughout the Scottish isles, as far as Lerwick in the Shetland Isles.
- 1893–1917 Seven new synagogues are opened across Scotland.
- 1918 Dr. Salis Daiches becomes minister of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Under his leadership, which lasts 27 years, until his death, he unites the Edinburgh community into a single cohesive unit and becomes the spokesman for

Scottish Jewry as a whole. His profound impact earns him the title of *de facto* chief rabbi of Scotland.

1922 Emmanuel (Manny) Shinwell is elected as the member of Parliament for Linlithgowshire. He serves until 1924 and is reelected in 1928.

1930s A small number of middle-class, affluent, educated, and assimilated German and Austrian Jews fleeing Nazism settle in Scotland.

1930s and 1940s At its peak, the Scottish Jewish community numbers some 15,000.

1945 The Scottish Jewish community begins to decline, and all but two (Aberdeen and Dundee) of those outside the principal cities closed in the postwar period. The Aberdeen Hebrew Congregation moves to new premises in Dee Street.

1981 The first recorded anti-Semitic incident takes place in Dundee. Swastikas are painted on the synagogue, shortly after Dundee is twinned with the West Bank town of Nablus.

1993 The Argyll and Bute Jewish community is established (later renamed the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands) to connect those Jews (approximately 15–30) scattered in the more isolated regions of Scotland.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Former generations included peddlers, artisans, family businesses, shops, pharmacies, furriers, and middle-class businesspeople. The modern Jewish community has focused on higher education and professions. Jews became involved in most sectors of Scottish society, and there were no barriers to advancement.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Cultural and religious organizations have flourished. Jews are active in all sectors of Scottish society. The Scottish Jewish community has produced a number of important personalities in a range of fields, including the arts, politics, journalism, literature, and so on. These include Ronni Ancona, comedienne; Charlotte Auerbach, geneticist; Chaim Bermant, writer; Lady Hazel Cosgrove, judge; Ivor Cutler, poet; David Daiches, writer and literary critic; Hannah Frank, sculptor; Hannah Primrose, Countess of Rosebery, a Rothschild and a philanthropist; Harry Primrose, 6th Earl of Rosebery, son of Hannah Primrose, and secretary of state for Scotland in 1945; Jeremy Isaacs, broadcaster; Malcolm Rifkind, politician and secretary of state for Scotland, minister of transport, secretary of state for defense, and foreign secretary; Jerry Sadowitz, comedian and magician; Benno Schotz, sculptor; and Emmanuel (Manny) Shinwell, politician. A number of German Jewish émigrés also came to Scotland and were later to make their names, such as Emil Fackenheim, philosopher/theologian; Karl König, founder of Rudolf Steiner-Camphill schools; and Otto Hahn, founder of Gordonstoun School.

### Present Economic Conditions

The Scottish Jewish community today has a relatively high socioeconomic standing.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The Jewish community in Scotland may be statistically small, but it nevertheless maintains a wide range of structures and services. Because the bulk of Scottish Jewry has clustered in Glasgow and its surrounding suburbs, much of the Jewish infrastructure is located in that region. Currently, there are six synagogues (five Orthodox and one Reform), a primary school, a yeshiva, a *kollel*, two nursing homes and sheltered housing for the elderly, a welfare center, facilities for those with learning difficulties, a golf club, a sports center, a community newspaper (the Glasgow edition of *The Jewish Telegraph*), youth groups, and two delicatessens. These services cover the range of Jewish identification and affiliation from Orthodox to Reform to secular, both assimilated and religious. Nonetheless, Jewish interests, irrespective of these factors, are looked after by the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, founded in 1914.

Although Glasgow is often taken as a synonym for the whole of Scotland, Jewish life thrives outside of that city. In Edinburgh there are two synagogues (Liberal and Orthodox), as well as a series of welfare organizations (the Lunch Club, Edinburgh Burial Society, Board of Guardians, Ladies Guild, and Shul Events Committee), clubs and organizations (Parent & Toddler Group, Junior Maccabi, Senior Maccabi, Scottish Friends of Alyn, Council of Christians & Jews, Maccabi Cricket Club Jewish Community Centre, and Rambling Group). The Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation also has its own magazine (*The Edinburgh Star*) and literary society, founded in 1888, which is reputed to be one of the oldest in the United Kingdom. Elsewhere, Aberdeen and Dundee both have Orthodox synagogues. Aberdeen Hebrew Congregation runs a series of regular events, including Shabbat and Holy Day services, meals, lectures, and discussions, whereas Dundee Hebrew Congregation meets less regularly, as befitting a smaller community. Furthermore, the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands seeks to maintain contact with Jews living in and visiting the west of Scotland. It provides a focal point for Jews to meet up periodically and discuss topics of Jewish interest. In addition, the universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and St. Andrews all have student Jewish societies that meet regularly and include students from all over the world. They are served by a student chaplain based in Glasgow.

With the exceptions of the Reform and Liberal congregations, it is assumed that the bulk of Scottish Jewry is nominally Orthodox in affiliation if not in personal practice, as is often norm in Britain. Both Edinburgh and Glasgow possess a mikvah, Orthodox burial societies, cemeteries, and other institutions. Aberdeen and Dundee also have dedicated Jewish burial grounds. However, the available statistics do not allow for a precise analysis of rates of congregational affiliation. The 2001 census records a 0.2 percent difference between those who gave Judaism as their current religion and those who list it as their religion of upbringing and that only covers those who chose to volunteer such information. Furthermore, as a result of the difficulties and despite the best of intentions, Jews in Scotland do not and perhaps cannot always maintain a strictly Orthodox lifestyle and have made some compromises in their personal observance. It can be said with some certainty

that some Jews do not participate at all and that intermarriage is a continuing feature of Scottish-Jewish life. What is more, as reflected the United Kingdom as a whole, numbers of Scottish Jews are declining both as a result of intermarriage and nonaffiliation but also as young Jews seek economic opportunities, a great Jewish infrastructure and social life, and a university education elsewhere (typically London). There is a strong Glasgow-Jewish Diaspora in North London in particular. Nonetheless, Zionist feeling and activity is strong in Scotland, and a number of groups are devoted to this cause (the Edith Wolfson Mizrahi Group, Friends of the Hebrew University, Habonim Dror, Glasgow Israel Committee, Jewish National Fund, Tel Aviv University Trust, United Jewish Israel Appeal, and the Women's International Zionist Organization).

All of these organisations fall under the umbrella of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, which is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland and of students studying in Scottish universities and colleges. It aims to advance public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture, and community, and it represents the Jewish community in Scotland to government and other statutory and official bodies, monitors the Scottish Parliament, and liaises with members of the Scottish Parliament and others on matters affecting the Jewish community. It also works in partnership with other organizations and stakeholders to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Four Corners*, for the smaller Scottish Jewish communities and organizes current issues briefings for professionals in the Jewish community.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

In general, Jews have been treated well in Scotland, which prides itself on being one of the only European countries with no history of organized anti-Semitism. Although there has been bigotry and racism over the years, many Jews believe it is possible to write a history of Scotland without using the word anti-Semitism. This is undoubtedly overplayed, but there have been sporadic outbreaks of racism, most notably in Dundee in the 1980s and in Glasgow, as that is where most Jews are concentrated. Overall, however, the Scottish record of tolerance toward its Jews is a good one.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The community is not growing, and many are emigrating to other countries, in particular England. Since 1945, the Scottish Jewish community has declined drastically. The drop in figures is due to a number of factors: an aging population; intermarriage; and emigration, as children move away to university in search of employment and/or a suitable marriage partner, or families with young children relocate to a location with a more developed Jewish infrastructure. The downturn in the Scottish economy after 1945 especially accelerated this migration away from the small communities toward the central belt and England, in particular, London. There are no accurate figures for assimilation.

## Selected Bibliography

- Abrams, Nathan, and Kaplan, Harvey. 2006. "Jews in Scotland: Myth and Reality." *The Edinburgh Star* 53 (February): 3–6.
- Collins, Kenneth, ed. 1987. *Aspects of Scottish Jewry*. Glasgow, Scotland: Glasgow Jewish Representative Council.
- Collins, Kenneth. 1988. *Go and Learn: The International Story of Jews and Medicine in Scotland*. Aberdeen, Scotland: Aberdeen University Press.
- Collins, Kenneth. 1990. *Second City Jewry: The Jews of Glasgow in the Age of Expansion, 1790–1919*. Glasgow, Scotland: Scottish Jewish Archives.
- Collins, Kenneth. 2001. *Be Well! Jewish Health and Welfare in Glasgow, 1860–1914*. East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001.
- Collins, Kenneth. 2005. "Maintaining a Jewish Identity in Scotland." In *Scottish Life and Society: The Individual and Community Life. A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, Vol. 9, edited by John Beech, Owen Hand, Mark Mulhern, and Jeremy Weston, 486–496. Edinburgh: John Donald Ltd.
- "Edinburgh Jewish History." Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Web site. <http://www.ehcong.com/JewishHistory.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Jewish Communities and Congregations in Scotland." Jewish Communities and Records—United Kingdom Web site. <http://www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/scotland.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Phillips, Abel. 1979. *A History of the Origins of the First Jewish Community in Scotland: Edinburgh, 1816*. Edinburgh: Donald.
- "Scotland's Jewish Community—Reference Page." Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain. <http://www.jgsgb.org.uk/scot01.shtml> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Shields, Jacqueline. "The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Scotland." 2008. Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Scotland.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).

## Jews in Spain

*Shoshannah Zirkin*

---

**General Population:** 39,647,000

**Jewish Population:** About 14,000

**Percent of Population:** 0.035 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Spain's largest Jewish communities reside in Madrid (3,500) and Barcelona (3,500). Smaller Jewish communities are found in Ibiza, the Canary Islands, Malaga, Majorca, Alicante, Benidorm, Cadiz, Granada, Marbella, Majorca, Torremolinos, and Valencia.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Many Jews migrated to Spain in the years after World War II. These Jews came from Morocco, the Balkans, and other European countries. The most recent immigrant community of substantial size came from Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Languages Spoken:** Spanish

---

## Historical Overview

- 589 The Visigoths, who rule the Spanish peninsula, adopt Christianity under King Reccared and their well-disposed attitude toward the Jews begins to change.
- 613 The Visigoths force the Jews to convert to Christianity or emigrate. As a result, many Jews begin to practice their religion in secret. If they are caught it is a serious offence, met by drastic punishment.
- 694 All of the Jews who fail to convert and remain in Visigoth controlled areas are enslaved.
- 711 Muslim Moors invade Spain, and the Visigoths lose power. The Jews are released from slavery and permitted to organize their own communities. The Moors rule Spain for eight centuries during which the Jewish community flourishes. The Moors rely on the Jews to aid economic advancement. In addition, many Jews serve as diplomats to court advisers. They are allowed to contribute to society in many ways, including medicine, philology, and literature. This dramatic change is reflected in Jewish art, architecture, and literature.
- 1200 Christian dynasties begin to reconquer Spain. They place restrictions on the Jewish community by controlling their dress and prohibiting them from holding positions of authority. However, Jewish communities are allowed to maintain internal autonomy and handle legal matters among themselves.
- 1250 The first Spanish blood libel case is recorded and causes tension within the Jewish community. Many turn to the study of mysticism. As a result, the Zohar is produced.
- 1391 Persecution of the Jews heightens tremendously. Thousands of Jews are killed in riots. Synagogues are turned into churches, and holy books are destroyed.
- 1413 A public debate between Christian and Jewish theologians is held in Tortosa. Thousands of Jews convert to Christianity.
- 1481 Catholic Spain is unified for the first time through the marriage of Isabella of Castille and Ferdinand of Aragon. The Spanish Inquisition, headed by Father Tomás de Torquemada, is introduced in attempt to purify Spain.
- 1492 The Inquisition drives Muslims to flee Granada. Shortly after, a movement is introduced to complete Spanish unity by expelling all Jews from Spain. Jews are given four months to evacuate the country. More than 100,000 Jews flee by the end of the year, and many people die on the journey. Those who succeed in escaping to Turkey are among the most fortunate, as Sultan Bajazet welcomes them warmly. Those who flee became known as Sephardim or *Sefarad*, the Hebrew word for Spain. This community of Jews, now spread throughout Europe and the Arab world makes an informal ban prohibiting Jews from ever living in Spain again. Of the Jews who remain in Spain, a large community is baptized and continues to practice Judaism secretly. These newly converted Christians (conversos) are called Marranos (which means “swine”). The Inquisition accuses tens of thousands of Jews of being Marranos. These Jews are burned at the stake.
- 1834 The final suppression of the Inquisition occurs.
- 1868 The Spanish Republic makes a pledge of religious tolerance, which results in a small number of Jews moving to Spain.

Early 1900s Synagogues are established in Barcelona and Madrid.

1936 The Spanish Civil War breaks out.

1944 As a result of Spain's neutrality during World War II, 25,600 Jews take refuge there. Spanish diplomats abroad are able to protect an additional 4,000 Jews in France and the Balkans.

1960s Spain's Jewish American population grows from those avoiding the draft for the Vietnam War.

1968 The Spanish government officially repeals the Expulsion Edict established in 1492, and a new synagogue is opened in Madrid.

1986 Spain formally recognizes the State of Israel and establishes formal diplomatic relations.

1992 King Juan Carlos symbolically repeats the repeal of the Expulsion Edict on the edict's 500th anniversary.

## Contemporary Overview

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Jewish cultural and historical sites are located throughout Spain. For example, the former Jewish quarters still exist in Barcelona, Besalu, Burgos, Caceres, Gerona, Granada, Hervas, Madris, Montblanc, Secovia, Seville, Tarazona, Tarragona, Toledo, and Tudela.

Many of Spain's ancient synagogues have been converted to churches, including some in Avila, Bembibre, Caceres, Estella, Monthlanc, Seville, and Toledo. Toledo has two popular sites, the Church of Santa Maria La Blanca (an ancient synagogue), and the Museo Sephardi (Sephardi Museum) located in El Transito synagogue.

### Religious Denominations

The great majority of Spain's Jewish community is Sephardi.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

The Federacion de Comunidades Israelitas de Espania unites the various Jewish communities throughout Spain and presents their interests to the Spanish government. Both Sephardic and Ashkenazi synagogues are found in Barcelona and Madrid. In Barcelona, the two synagogues are located within the same building. Other cities with active synagogues include Alicante, Benidorm, Malaga, Marbella, Seville, Torremolinos, and Valencia.

There are active Jewish day schools in Barcelona, Madrid, and Malaga. Both the Women's International Zionist Organization and M'nai B'rith are active in Spain.

Most of Spain's Latin American Jewish population is secular. However, they have formed several organizations to cultivate a sense of religious community. The Circulo de Reflexion Group, The Spinoza Center, and a magazine called *Raices* (Roots) are three examples of organization within the Latin American community.

The Mounds, a local Jewish family who reside in Ibiza, have made their private home a central meeting place for the present Jewish community. Anyone interested

in heritage or history is welcome. They run Shabbat and holiday religious services, organize cultural events, and have a small school.

Chabad-Lubavitch centers are located in Barcelona, Madrid, and Marbella. They provide many services for the local Jewish communities, including day camp for children, Hebrew school, bar and bat mitzvah instruction, women's group, private study, communal lectures, adult education classes, and marriage prep classes. The synagogue in Barcelona has a Judaica Shop and library. The community organizes hospital and prison visitations. They have kosher private kitchens and run restaurants of their own.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Jews have lived on Ibiza, one of the Balearic Islands, for more than 2,000 years. Unlike the Jews of Majorca, The Jews of Ibiza, called *Ibicencos*, survived the Spanish Inquisition, which did not come to Ibiza with the same fervor as it did elsewhere. The first vicars general of the Inquisition came to Ibiza in 1410, and they stayed until the Inquisition was permanently suppressed in July 1834. Regardless of persecution against them, many Jews were able to maintain strong positions within the salt trade. At this time, salt was a vital commodity throughout Europe, and the entire continent's supply was manufactured in the southern Balearic Islands. Salt exports were carried on Jewish-owned ships, allowing *Ibicencos* to travel throughout Europe and maintain connections with Jews elsewhere. Those captured by *Ibicenco* pirates were often hidden from authorities and helped to escape the Inquisition.

Although their presence on the island was obvious, Jews were forced to live in secret. There was no open practice of Judaism anywhere on the island during the Inquisition. Some historical evidence indicates that Jews maintained their faith behind closed doors. Prince Luis Salvador of Hapsburg wrote about Ibiza's Jewish community in 1868, remarking that they appeared Catholic to the outside world, but that they lived distinctly among themselves. In the 1930s, Isadoro Macabich, a priest in Ibiza, still conducted Jewish wedding ceremonies in the Marrano fashion. *Ibicinos* did not marry outside the community.

In comparison to other parts of Spain, the *Ibicencos* lived in a peaceful multi-communal society. At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Ibiza's Jewish community comprised about 50 Jewish families. They met regularly and valued many of the historical relics that survived through the years. Today, the *Ibicencos* are experiencing a revival of community, largely because the younger generation has shown an interest in preserving their past.

The *Ibicencos* were not the only secret Jewish community in Spain. The *Chuetas* (pork eaters) lived in Ivica, the smallest of the Balearic Islands. These Jews practiced many of the traditional Jewish customs secretly, including lighting Sabbath candles and practicing the rite of circumcision. The community was led by a rabbi who doubled as a Catholic priest.

Many Jews sought refuge in Spain during World War II. Approximately 25,600 Jews escaped to Spain where they survived the duration of the war. Jews in Ibiza were protected by the chief of the secret police, who failed to deport those who lacked proper paperwork. In addition, Spanish diplomats were able to save nearly

4,000 Jews in France and the Balkans. The vast majority of the Jews who took refuge in Spain, later left for other countries. Since 1948, 1,412 Jews have emigrated from Spain to Israel.

Today, nearly all Spaniards are Catholic, making Spain one of the most homogeneous countries in the world. Anti-Semitic stereotypes and expressions are socially accepted and commonly used. There are no laws restricting hate crimes against Jews or Holocaust denial. As a result, convicted Nazi war criminals are able to seek refuge in Spain's borders. In addition, much neo-Nazi and extreme rightist literature is published throughout Spain.

### Selected Bibliography

- Benbassa, Ester, and Aron Rodrigue. 1995. *Jews of the Balkans: The Judeo-Spanish Community, Fifteenth to Twentieth Centuries*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Cooperman, Bernard Dov, ed. 1998. *In Iberia and beyond: Hispanic Jews between Cultures: Proceedings of a Symposium to Mark the 500th Anniversary of the Expulsion of Spanish Jewry*. Newark: University of Delaware.
- Cowans, Jon, ed. 2003. *Early Modern Spain: A Documentary History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Ezratty, Harry A. 1997. *500 Years in the Jewish Caribbean: The Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the West Indies*. Baltimore, MD: Omni Arts.
- "Jewish Communities: Europe: Spain." 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html#](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html#) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "The Jewish Community of Spain." The Shema Yisrael Torah Network Web site. <http://www.amyisrael.co.il/europe/spain/index.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Katz, Solomon. 1937. *The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms of Spain and Gaul*. Mediaeval Academy Monograph no. 12. Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America.
- Kayslerling, M. 1928. *Christopher Columbus and the Participation of the Jews in the Spanish and Portuguese Discoveries*. Translated from the author's manuscript with his sanction and revision by Charles Gross. New York: G. Dobsevage.
- Marcus, Jacob. 1938. *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Sourcebook*, New York: JPS.
- Milman, H. H. 1909. *The History of the Jews*. Vol. II. London: J. M. Dent.
- Mound, Gloria. 1988. "Survivors of the Spanish Exile: The Underground Jews of Ibiza." Jerusalem Letters of Lasting Interest. February 10. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Web site. <http://www.jcpa.org/jl/hit12.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Perednik, Gustavo D. 2003. "Naïve Spanish Judeophobia" *Jewish Political Studies Review* 15: 3–4.
- Scott, S. P., trans. 1910. *The Visigothic Code*. Boston, MA: Boston Book Company.
- Ziegler, A. K., 1930. *Church and State in Visigothic Spain*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America.
- Zohar, Zion, ed. 2005. *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times*. New York: New York University Press.

# Jews and Jewish Communities in Medieval Spain

*Norman Roth*

---

Jews lived in the Iberian Peninsula from at least the fourth century. They suffered persecution under the Christians, particularly during the Visigothic reign in the following centuries, during which period they were compelled to be baptized, until the Muslim conquest in 711 freed them. During the long Muslim rule, at least to the 12th century, the Jewish population increased dramatically by immigration, mostly from North Africa, Babylon (Iraq), and Iran, but also from Christian France. This was the period commonly called the golden age of Jewish history in Spain, when significant cultural developments took place, including the rediscovery of Hebrew grammar, which led to scientific biblical analysis and commentary, the creation of secular Hebrew poetry and literature, scientific and philosophical writing, and translations from Arabic into Hebrew and Spanish. This continued even after the Christian reconquest of most of southern Spain (Andalusia, but including “new Castile”) at the end of the 11th century and culminating in the 13th century. Rulers such as Jaime I of Aragon-Catalonia (1213–1276), who extended his kingdom to include Valencia and Majorca, and his son-in-law, Alfonso X of Castile and Leon (1252–1284), were both tolerant of the conquered Muslims and influenced by their culture and particularly favorable toward the Jews of their kingdoms. This favored status of the Jews continued for the most part throughout the medieval period in Spain.

In the early period of Muslim rule, in the 9th and 10th centuries, Jewish populations of some cities were so numerous that Arabic sources refer to them as “Jewish cities.” Lucena, in fact, may have been entirely Jewish, or nearly so. Other cities, such as Granada, had entire Jewish sections. After the civil war of the early 11th century brought an end to the Cordoba caliphate, Muslim Spain was divided into separate city-states (*taifa* kingdoms). The largest of these, Granada, had a Jewish prime minister and commander of its army, the famous Samuel Ibn Naghrillah, who was also a scientist, Talmudic scholar, and accomplished poet. He was not, however, the only Jewish prime minister of Muslim states (earlier, Hasdai Ibn Shaprut had served the caliph of Cordoba as a minister of state, although not prime minister).

After the reconquest, Toledo became the most important city in Castile, with a significant Jewish population that included a number of scholars, translators, and scientists who composed most of the scientific treatises sponsored by Alfonso X, the “wise” king (if he was wise, it was due chiefly to the Jewish and Muslim scholars he supported). In the 14th century, the emigration from Germany of a leading Jewish scholar, Asher b. Yehiel, brought further renown to Toledo, and it rivaled Barcelona as the center of Jewish learning. Other major Jewish population centers in Castile included Seville and Burgos, but Jews lived in almost every city and town in

Spain, including small villages where only a few lived. Many were farmers or artisans, and those in larger towns were craftspeople and merchants. Jewish physicians were also famous, and several cities as well as royal families and nobles had Jewish physicians permanently on their payrolls. It is interesting to note that several Jewish women physicians were licensed to practice. Jewish and Christian women in Spain were relatively free of the restrictions in other lands; for instance, they could own property and engage in business. Nevertheless, aside from a few who wrote in Arabic in the Muslim period, there are no examples of a Jewish woman writer or scholar.

In the extensive kingdom of Aragon-Catalonia, which included Languedoc and most of Provence until the late 13th century, Jews also flourished. Major centers included Zaragoza (where, as there remained a significant Muslim population, Jews still used Arabic), Huesca, Calatayud, Gerona, Barcelona, Lerida, and numerous smaller towns and villages. Valencia, a separate kingdom but under the authority of the Catalan rulers, also had many Jews in several cities; as did neighboring Murcia. Several hundred Jews lived in the Basque province, in regions such as Cantabria (the beautiful northern coastal region of Castile), and of course in the kingdom of Leon.

The Jewish population increased, particularly in Aragon-Catalonia, through immigration from France and even Germany. After the repeated expulsion (and recall and further expulsion) of French Jews in the 14th century, for example, many refugees were welcomed (also by the rulers) into the kingdom. To some extent, this changed the cultural life of Jews in these communities; for example, Hebrew pronunciation was strongly affected by the Ashkenazic (German, but also French) usage, and certain customs and practices were also influenced by them. Some rabbinical authorities held out strongly for adherence to traditional "Spanish" customs.

The use of the term (and the language) "Spanish" deserves comment. Interestingly, although there were separate medieval kingdoms, five in all, both their rulers and the inhabitants considered themselves Spaniards, and the language chiefly used was what is referred to as "Castilian" today. Certainly Catalan, Aragonese, and other dialects were used in daily speech and in some documents, but the official language of communication was Spanish. Jews were no different; all were fluent in Hebrew and some in Arabic, but they spoke and often wrote Spanish and referred with great pride to their land as Spain (*Sefarad* in Hebrew), although sometimes that term was reserved for southern Spain. Nevertheless, there are several examples of documents and even complete texts composed by Jews in Catalan and Catalan written in Hebrew letters. In fact, one of the earliest literary texts in Catalan was written by a Jew (Judah Bonsenyor, d. 1331; *Sentencias morals*, or *Libro de palabras y dichas de sabios y filosofos*), similar to the much better known Castilian work by Sem Tov de Carrion (14th century), *Proverbios morales*. Jews also continued to serve as official translators and interpreters of Arabic, as secretaries and diplomats, for the Spanish rulers in their relations not only with the still Muslim kingdom of Granada but also with those of North Africa.

While the largest Jewish centers were, of course, the major cities, throughout the medieval period Jews continued to live in smaller communities and even isolated

on farms. These communities number in the hundreds throughout Spain. Significant smaller communities include Tarragona, Teruel, Cervera, Daroca, all the towns of Languedoc-Provence, Majorca, Zamora, Salamanca, Segovia, and many others.

All of this was possible because of the special relationship that existed not only between Jews and the kings but even more between ordinary Jewish and Christian citizens. The term for this in Spanish is *convivencia*, an almost untranslatable word that means much more than “living together”; it implies mutual respect and daily contact on terms generally cordial. This meant Jews did not fear living even in small numbers in villages and towns surrounded by a Christian population. More than this, as extensive documentation proves, they were perfectly willing to apprentice their sons and daughters for a period of years to Christian families or craftsmen, for example. These documents specify that the apprentice be fed kosher food and be allowed to observe all Jewish religious practices. In turn, Christians also apprenticed their own children to Jewish craftsmen or to serve in Jewish homes.

Unlike other Christian lands, in Spain Jewish physicians were allowed to treat Christian patients. As mentioned, many were on city payrolls as official physicians or were in the service of kings and their families, as well as nobles and church dignitaries. Jews also served in other capacities, such as jewelers and clockmakers to the kings, administrators of cities and provinces, collectors of taxes and financial ministers (particularly in Castile), and even such amusing occupations as minstrels or musicians or royal lion keepers.

On a more common level, many Jews were artisans and craftsmen, often found as shoemakers, makers and sellers of clothing, metalworkers, and bookbinders. All of this, of course, brought them into daily contact with their Christian neighbors. Bishops and other officials sometimes left gifts or other benefits to Jewish friends in their wills, and Jews sometimes designated gifts for the Christian poor, to be distributed by the local church, in their wills.

This *convivencia* could have religious implications that were sometimes problematic, as when Christian neighbors entered a Jewish house during Passover carrying or eating food not permitted on that holiday, or when they sent nonkosher food items as gifts to Jews. Sexual intimacies were an even more serious problem, and although intermarriage was supposedly impossible, some cases exist. More frequent were incidents of prostitution or illicit sexual relations between Christians and Jews. Some individual Jews found it convenient to go to another town where they were not known and there live ostensibly as Christians so that they could do what they wished.

### Leadership of the Jewish Community

Official leadership of Jewish communities has always been in the hands of laypeople and not rabbis. In fact, the role of the rabbi until the modern period was that of scholar and teacher. He was not a religious leader, or clergyman like the Christian priest. There were often several rabbis in any one community, rarely associated with a particular synagogue, whose (honorary) title represented supposedly a high level of Talmudic learning. In fact, not all rabbis were particularly learned,

and there is much criticism of some of them in the literature. Slowly, beginning apparently in the 13th century, rabbis increasingly did take a leadership role in the community, and in spite of scholarly objections began to receive salaries as the official rabbi of a community. Nevertheless, they (as well as teachers and other officials) were hired and to an extent supervised by members of the community.

The governing body of each community was an elected council that consisted of several members and with an executive council referred to as the “seven good men,” although the number was often more than seven. These groups enacted the ordinances that governed the community and took care of the day-to-day affairs and control of the synagogues and schools.

Public meetings were held at least annually, at which everyone could voice concerns or make recommendations to be carried out by the councils. There were also elected officials who supervised “morals” and punished those who violated such laws.

Education was, of course, a primary concern. Jewish law requires that every person be fluent in Hebrew, at least enough to read the prayers and the Torah, and in fact beyond that to at least a basic mastery of the Talmud. To this end, elementary and advanced schools were established in virtually every community no matter how small. Teachers were hired, and scribes were also needed to copy the books necessary for study as well as the Torah scrolls and prayer books necessary for community use.

In addition to these officials, slaughterers of meat (according to rigid Jewish regulation), collectors and supervisors of various charitable funds, and other minor officials were necessary. Guilds, or more correctly “brotherhoods,” modeled after the Christian fraternities, were also established for such things as support of learning, burial, marriage, and provision for widows and orphans. There were also guilds properly speaking, composed of members of a particular trade or craft.

Visitors to a community had to be provided with housing and food, and in larger cities there were sometimes hospices for this, although the duty of hospitality is the responsibility of every individual Jew. There were also, again usually in the larger communities, hospitals for the care of the sick or injured. Most of these were staffed by laypeople, but certainly local doctors were on call to attend patients when needed and even to perform surgery (sometimes very complex, such as eye surgery).

Jewish scholars who attained a high level of knowledge of the Talmud and Jewish law, whether officially rabbis or not (the famous Nahmanides, Moses b. Nahman, for example was not a rabbi), became *de facto* heads of the entire Jewish community. Some, such as Nahmanides and others, were recognized in this capacity by the kings, who indeed sought the advice of these and other Jewish leaders on many issues. In practical terms, this meant local rabbis, as well as any individual Jew or Jewish community, could write to these scholars with legal questions and receive detailed replies.

Many thousands of such questions and answers (“*responsa*”) have survived, from the earliest period to the end of the 15th century, and are a major source for today’s knowledge of Jewish life. Some of the most important scholars were Joseph

Ibn Megas, Meir Abulafia, Nahmanides, Asher b. Yehiel, Solomon Ibn Adret, and Isaac b. Sheshet. Sheshet was particularly interesting because he moved from one community to another, from Catalonia to Valencia and then after the attacks on Jews in 1391 finally to North Africa. He was in communication with virtually all of the rabbis of this period. The most important collection of responsa, nevertheless, consists of the several printed volumes of Ibn Adret, which are a treasure of information for all aspects of Jewish life and thought.

### Daily Life as a Jew in Medieval Spain

From the point of view of religious or cultural duties and life, a Jew in Spain was not markedly different from one in any other country. With the exception of those who ignored some or all of these requirements (and were usually ostracized by the community), medieval Jews were scrupulous in their observance of the commandments and the regulations of the rabbis. Prayers three times a day, the wearing of tefillin (phylacteries) by males over the age of 13, observance of the Sabbath and holidays, and the eating of kosher food, all were strictly observed by most Jews. This meant that a good part of their day, and life, was devoted to observance of some practice or fulfilling of a commandment or other rule.

In addition, most Jewish males attempted to fulfill at least the minimal requirements of learning. This meant they devoted part of the day or evening to the study of Talmud or the study of compendia such as the laws of Isaac al-Fasi or the more comprehensive code (Mishneh Torah) of Maimonides (born in Cordoba, where he already wrote some work, he lived and wrote in Egypt). Many young men studied in special academies (yeshivas) with famous scholars. This learning was not only theoretical, a every aspect of personal and communal life was subject to Jewish law. Therefore, it was essential to know these laws as a practical part of ordinary life.

Books were highly prized, and it is noteworthy that in a period when few Christians had any books at all and most libraries in monasteries were remarkably small (and the books mostly in Latin, which few could understand), private libraries of ordinary Jews were common and contained many books, the lists of several of these having survived. Indeed, some Jews were known to travel great distances and spend significant sums to acquire an important manuscript.

In areas of daily life not strictly controlled by Jewish law, Jews lived in a manner nearly identical to that of Christians. Houses were usually small, often one story; except in larger cities where people lived in homes of two or more stories, often shared or with the bottom floor used as a store. Streets in cities, particularly in Catalonia, were often narrow and crowded with such buildings in close proximity. In other parts of Spain, however, separate houses were common, and particularly in Andalusia these usually had courtyards and fountains and were open and spacious. Private baths, although not unknown, were not common and Jews, Christians and Muslims shared public baths, although on separate days.

Generally, there were no restrictions on Jewish clothing such as existed in Christian Europe. Jews in Catalonia customarily wore a hooded cap, but these are seen also on Christians; otherwise, there were no distinctions in clothing. When

the Church imposed the wearing of a special sign (the so-called badge) for Jews in 1215, these regulations were simply ignored in all Spanish kingdoms. Only later, in the 15th century, were serious efforts made to require such a sign, usually a circular patch of cloth on the outer garment.

Food was also quite similar to that consumed by Christians, with the exception of dietary regulations imposed by Jewish law (essentially, this meant no pork; Jews in Spain also hunted wild game, just as did their Christian neighbors). The diet then, as now, was rich in vegetables and fruit largely unknown in Christian Europe, and of course an abundance of fresh fish. All of this was also important for health, and it is significant that with the exception of some communities in Catalonia, or large cities such as Toledo, few Jews were affected by the Black Plague, or other plagues, of the mid-14th century. Far fewer Christians also died in Spain than in the rest of Europe, and it has been suggested that this was due not only to better diet and health but also to sanitation and such things as bathing (virtually unknown in medieval Europe).

### **Changing Conditions in the Jewish Community**

The generally harmonious relations between Jews and Christians were subject to serious challenges along the way. One example was the famous Barcelona disputation (actually two different disputations) in 1241 and 1262 (the latter involving Nahmanides). Jewish books were temporarily confiscated and investigated on charges of alleged heresy, and although the king rescinded the order and apologized when the charges were proved false, much harm had been done.

However, worse was yet to come. The unsettled political and economic conditions were certainly a major cause of the unrest, but it was the preaching of a fanatic church official that was the immediate cause of the riots in the summer of 1391. Throughout Spain, synagogues were burned and Jewish communities were attacked and robbed by roaming bands of hoodlums. Some Jews were killed and many more were baptized, often of their own choice out of fear. The rulers did everything possible to prevent such attacks and punish those responsible, but the damage was done. Although it is not true that the famous community of Barcelona came to an end as a result, it was severely diminished and never recovered its former glory.

The mass conversions that took place had serious repercussions for the viability of the Jewish community as a whole and were to be repeated in even larger numbers as a result of the missionary campaign of the greatest preacher of the medieval period, Vicente Ferrer, in the first part of the 15th century. Thousands, or hundreds of thousands, of Jews converted as a result, including in some cases entire Jewish communities. Shortly after, another disputation was held at Tortosa (1413–1414), called by Benedict XIII, the anti-pope who was recognized by Spain. By this time, all of the important Jewish scholars were either dead or had converted, and the few remaining rabbis converted as a result of this disputation (with the exception of Joseph Albo and one or two others). Demoralized by this, many more Jews converted.

As a result, combined with constant warfare and political unrest in Castile, the Jewish community was seriously depleted. Its leadership was effectively gone, morale was low, yeshivas were closed, and Jewish learning virtually ceased; it was not to be restored until near the end of the century when new rabbinical scholars emerged.

Nevertheless, perhaps remarkably, normal daily relations between Jews and Christians did not change significantly. There is very little evidence of open hostility toward Jews, although intolerant monarchs in Castile and Aragon-Catalonia at the beginning of the 15th century temporarily imposed restrictive legislation. The real challenge for Jews came from the New Christians, or conversos, who had willingly abandoned their people and chosen to become Christians. They now sought their own interests and advancement, both politically and economically, and were not concerned with Jews. From their side, the Jews despised these renegades and did everything possible to cause harm to them (such as informing on them to the Inquisition, established to root out alleged heresy among the new converts). Although the Inquisition was not concerned at all with Jews, the theoretical basis for which they could act against New Christians (who, in fact, were not guilty of any heresies at all) was to create a fictitious category of "Jewish blood," or racial impurity, which supposedly would taint "old Christians." This certainly had dangerous implications for real Jews, and although in fact such charges were never used against them, the psychological impact both on Christians and Jews must have existed.

### The Final Stage and the Expulsion

Although the Jewish population was considerably depleted by the 15th century, and conversions continued on a large scale, Jews continued to live in numerous towns and villages and were by no means concentrated only in large cities. This in itself is an indication of how little change there was in normal relations between Christians and Jews. True, there were a few isolated incidents of hostility, particularly in some Castilian communities, in the latter half of the century. However, Jews continued to serve as administrators for important and powerful nobles, as tax collectors and financial officers for the kings, and in all of the other positions and professions that they had traditionally held.

Only in one area, that of officials for the kings, were Jews now mostly replaced by conversos. This had two disastrous results: it isolated Jews from the center of power and from intimate knowledge of what was going on at court, and it increased resentment of the conversos on the part of many Christians who thought they were being kept from these offices. That, in turn, resulted in increased anti-Semitism; directed not at Jews but also at the new converts. The irony was that the more "Christian" they became, the more they were despised.

From the mid-15th century, Jewish communities were once again thriving, both economically and culturally. The significant difference was that the cultural revival was almost entirely limited to traditional Jewish learning. By 1470 there were already again important rabbinical scholars, primarily if not exclusively in Castile; and even if they did not compare to the giants of previous times, at least

they renewed the study of the Talmud, and some were not entirely unaware of secular knowledge as well. Hebrew poetry and some literature was, peculiarly, now confined to a few examples in Catalonia; once this had been the imitator of Jewish traditions that had their roots in Arabic culture and flourished in Andalusia. Although there were still Jewish doctors, there was no longer independent scientific or medical writing of any significance. It would be fair to say that Jewish culture in Spain in the second part of the century was not basically different from that anywhere in Europe during the whole medieval period: focused almost exclusively on Talmudic interpretation.

There were signs to be read, had anyone been perceptive enough to understand them, of the impending disaster. Ferdinand and Isabella were far from being the bigots, hostile to Jews, that they have popularly been portrayed. On the contrary, they maintained the same cordial relations with Jews that their predecessors had. Nevertheless, religious fanatics on the one side, such as those behind the creation of the Inquisition, and certain hostile elements in various communities on the other, forced the monarchs into enacting an increasing number of restrictions on Jews. These included the first laws in Spain restricting the right of Jews to live where they chose. Separate Jewish quarters, or sections of cities, were now created in various parts of the country, chiefly in Castile. The growing Jewish population of Cordoba, for instance, experienced severe hardship from this when they had to sell their homes and move into a confined area of the city where there was barely room to contain them. Again, vast numbers converted because of this. One may judge from the remains of the area of the Jewish quarter in the city, and especially the tiny synagogue, how few Jews actually remained.

It might be supposed that the anti-Jewish elements in society would have been satisfied with the massive conversions of Jews, without precedent in any period of Jewish history. However, the anti-Semite knows no logic, and the increased bitterness toward the converts now began to turn itself against the Jews. The argument was invented, for it was pure fiction, that Jews were corrupting the conversos (just as they were supposedly corrupting the old Christians) by daily conversations and dealings with them. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the Jews in fact hated the conversos passionately and for the most part had nothing to do with them.

On this false pretext, nevertheless, the king and queen were convinced to issue an order for the expulsion of all the Jews from the kingdom in 1492. Part of the propaganda that resulted in this decree was certainly the successful war against the Muslim kingdom of Granada, the conquest of which finally united the entire peninsula into one Christian kingdom. There were once again utopian visions of a world Christian empire, united under the glorious Spanish monarchs.

Of all of this the Jews had no clue, and literally up to the very eve of the Expulsion relations continued with Christians on a favorable basis. When the decree was enacted, many Christians felt real compassion for their departing friends and neighbors. The monarchs, on their part, also took many measures to ensure the fair treatment of Jews in the purchase of their property (except for synagogues and other public buildings, which were seized by local communities). Nevertheless,

with the exception of a very small number who now chose conversion rather than expulsion, the Jewish community of Spain came to an end.

Today there remain numerous Jewish sites in Spain—synagogues, cemeteries, and remains of Jewish castles; some actual homes remain much as they were. For those who know where to look, even such large and modern cities as Barcelona have remnants of their Jewish past. Perhaps more encouraging, Jewish communities once again exist in several cities in Spain. While these are a pale shadow of what was once there, with few inhabitants who either know or care about the glories of the Jewish past in Spain, Hebrew is again being taught and used by Jews and prayers are again being recited in synagogues. The story of the Jewish culture and history of Spain, however, is being told, as it has been for over a century, by Spanish Christian scholars.

### Selected Bibliography

- Baer, Yitzhak. 1966. *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols., abridged English translation. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Roth, Norman. 2002. *Conversos, Inquisition and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, rev. ed. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

## Relations between Jews and Muslims in Medieval Spain

*Norman Roth*

---

In 711, the Muslim invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by Berber forces from North Africa ended the theocratic Visigothic kingdom and freed the Jews from centuries of persecution that ended in forced conversion. Liberated Jews were used to garrison newly conquered cities as the Muslim forces swept on to drive the Christians from the land, with the exception of a small enclave in the extreme northwestern portion of Spain.

By the ninth century, most of Spain from the southern coast to Barcelona and beyond was in the hands of the Muslims. A central government was established with Cordoba as its capital. Later, the last surviving member of the Umayyad Dynasty, which had once ruled the vast Muslim empire, fled Baghdad and came to Spain in 756, and as Abd al-Rahman I established an emirate (princedom) under his control. His most famous successor, Abd al-Rahman III, achieved numerous victories against the early attempts of Christian forces to regain parts of Spain, and declared himself caliph in 929. This title had traditionally been reserved for the ruler in Baghdad, head of the entire Muslim world, and thus he was declaring the complete independence of Muslim Spain (al-Andalus, which also included northern Spain) from Baghdad. The Spanish caliphate came to a catastrophic end with the uprising of Berbers in Cordoba in 1010, who resented the control by so-called

Arabs, immigrants from Syria and Egypt, and their second-class status. This resulted in a civil war, which brought an end to the caliphate by 1016. The country was then divided into a series of *taifa* kingdoms, or independent city-states.

As noted, the Muslim population increased enormously in the 8th through 11th centuries due to immigration. On a smaller scale, but no less dramatically, Jewish immigration was also significant in this period, chiefly from other Muslim countries but also some from northern Christian lands. Indeed, according to Muslim sources several cities were known as “Jewish,” in which all, or at least most, of the inhabitants were Jews. Although this is undoubtedly exaggerated, certainly there was a significant Jewish population in Cordoba, Lucena, Jaen, Granada, Seville, Toledo, and other cities and towns in the south and Zaragoza, Huesca, Tudela and other northern cities.

Jews and Muslims shared many common cultural and even religious elements. To begin with, they had a common language, Arabic, which meant Jews availed themselves of all the secular learning for which the Muslim world was famous. This was seen particularly in education, where indeed Jewish boys studied together with Muslims and learned mathematics, physics, astronomy and other sciences, philosophy, and medicine. All of this was accomplished before the age of 18. While not every Jew, or Muslim, completed this demanding curriculum, neither was it limited to the aristocracy, as some have thought. In fact, few if any of the greatest Jewish poets, philosophers, and scientists in Muslim Spain had any such aristocratic background. In addition to secular subjects, Jews also had to fulfill the requirements of their own law by learning Hebrew, the Bible, and the Talmud. This was a learning process that continued throughout life.

Religiously (although no such distinct category of life would have been recognized by Muslims or Jews, for whom all of life was governed by law and religious principles), Jews and Muslims shared many concepts and practices. In fact, most of these were borrowed by Islam from Jewish traditions and included such ideas as absolute monotheism and God conceived of as not having any bodily image, daily obligation of prayers (three times a day for Jews, five for Muslims), required washing or immersion for certain purposes, the obligation to provide for the poor or widows and orphans, certain dietary regulations (although much less stringent for Muslims), and other things.

The similarity of many Arabic and Hebrew words, particularly relating to religious matters, is also noteworthy. All of this resulted in a common cultural heritage, or outlook, which meant Jews certainly had more in common with Muslims than either did with Christians.

In the more mundane areas of daily life, Jews also shared with Muslims a style of clothing (which Jews adopted entirely from Muslims), the houses in which they lived, the love of gardens and open and airy space both in the home and in the city itself, the use of public baths, a healthy and comprehensive diet that included many varieties of fruits and vegetables unknown in Christian Europe, and for recreation a love of music and the ubiquitous “wine parties.”

Jews had begun participating in government already in the 10th century, and a famous state minister in the caliphate of Cordoba was Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, in the

service of Abd al-Rahman III, who was a scholar (responsible for the translation of the famous pharmaceutical work of Dioscorides), physician, and warrior. Even more famous was Samuel Ibn Naghrillah (933–1056), who became the prime minister and commander of the army of the kingdom of Granada. Renowned also as a Talmudic scholar, astronomer, and poet, he achieved fame throughout the Muslim world. He also attracted bitter opponents, however, and engaged in polemical disputes with a famous Muslim jurist and religious fanatic, Ibn Hazm. His military victories over other Muslim kings who were enemies of Granada also earned him enemies. Other Jews were also prime ministers and high-ranking government officials in Muslim city-state kingdoms, although some were required to convert to Islam.

All was not sweetness and light, however. While there were as yet no general persecutions of Jews, there were increasing attempts to impose restrictions on them, and there were instances of Jews being attacked and even murdered. Some Muslim sources speak very favorably of Jews in general, and of important officials such as Ibn Naghrillah or famous Jewish scholars, but others condemn them just as strongly. Although Jews were technically, as the *ahl al-qitab* (people of scripture), protected (*dhimmis*) under Muslim law, they were definitely second-class citizens. The Koran itself, full of vitriolic hatred of Christians and Jews, seems not to have had any particular impact on real relations, but there were already signs of the hostility that would develop in the 12th century under the fanatic Almoravid and Almohad regimes.

After the death of Samuel Ibn Naghrillah, his son Yusuf succeeded him as prime minister of Granada, but his alleged overbearing behavior led to a rebellion in which he and many other Jews were killed. Life for Jews became impossible in that kingdom for centuries to come. The invasion of the North African Almoravids (actually they were invited by the weak Muslim kings to aid in their campaign against the Christians who were increasingly conquering Muslim territory) resulted in only minor changes for the Jews. The famous restrictive laws written by a Muslim judge of Seville may or may not have been put into practice; there is little evidence for this. Yet clearly Jewish cultural life, at least, suffered a decline in southern Muslim Spain. The last important Jewish poet and scholar, Moses Ibn Ezra, fled Granada and settled in remote Estella in Navarre. Tudela, the chief city of that kingdom, was the birthplace of two great scholars and poets who succeeded him, Judah Halevi and Abraham Ibn Ezra. The first made his way to Granada, to visit Moses Ibn Ezra before he left the city, and then determined to go to the Land of Israel (he journeyed to Egypt and from there set sail for his ultimate destination, but the ship sank in a storm and he died). He was motivated not only by religious reasons but even more by his determination that life under the Muslims was growing intolerable. The same feeling seems to have motivated the decision of his close friend Abraham Ibn Ezra to leave Spain and begin his wanderings in Italy, Provence, and apparently France, before finally returning to die in Spain.

The even more fanatical Almohads (in Arabic, “unifiers of God”) invaded Spain in the latter part of the 12th century and instituted full-scale persecution of Christians and Jews. Many Jewish communities were depleted, if not completely

destroyed, and large numbers of Jews ostensibly converted to Islam as they were no longer allowed to live as Jews. Those who could, like Maimonides and his family, fled Spain (in his case, first to Morocco and then Egypt). Others later went to Christian Spain and resumed life as Jews.

The Christian reconquest of Muslim Spain continued in force, nevertheless, and by the mid-13th century all but the kingdom of Granada was under Christian control. This is not the end of Jewish-Muslim contact, however, for Muslims were not persecuted by the Christians and in fact played an important role in the development of the new Christian territories. Significant Muslim populations remained in Aragon, particularly in Zaragoza and Huesca, but also in smaller towns, where there were also many Jews. Although there were some tensions, in general cordial relations continued between Jews and Muslims in these areas, and also in Christian New Castile, in cities such as Toledo. Throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, Arabic remained the chief spoken language of the Jews in these areas, and this was the period of important translation of Arabic scientific and some philosophical work into Hebrew and Spanish. Jews served as diplomats and official translators for the Christian rulers.

Although the sources are scanty, there is sufficient evidence to show that Jews and Jewish culture continued to thrive in the remaining Muslim kingdom of Granada, including Malaga, throughout the late medieval period, until it was conquered by Ferdinand and Isabella at the end of the 15th century, when Jewish captives were treated as virtual slaves. After the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, most of the Jews decided to go to Muslim North Africa and later to the Ottoman Empire, where they expected to receive better treatment than in Christian lands, an expectation that largely was justified.

### Selected Bibliography

- Roth, Norman. 1994. *Jews, Visigoths & Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation & Conflict*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Roth, Norman, ed. 2003. *Encyclopedia of Medieval Jewish Civilization*. New York: Routledge.

## Jews in Minorca: 18th Century

*Tito Benady*

---

Minorca was captured by a British expedition in 1707 during the War of the Spanish Succession and ceded to by Spain Britain in 1713, under Article 11 of the Treaty of Utrecht. Within a few years Jewish merchants were present in the island, and a Jewish community was formed at Mahon, which became the administrative and commercial capital of the island. The community was made up mainly of immigrants from North Africa, but there were also a few merchants from Livorno.

Little is known of the early years of the community, but in 1756 the Seven Years' War broke out, and British officers in the island were concerned that the Jewish

merchants might leave. They seem to have been well-off, for when the governor asked the inhabitants for loans for the defense of the island he received \$4,000 from the Jews while the rest of the civilians only came up with \$7,227.

When the French invaded Minorca later that year, there were 15 Jews besieged with the garrison in Fort St. Philip, 11 of whom took up arms. After the fort surrendered, all nonnative civilians, including the Jews, were forcibly put on transports and sent to Gibraltar; but when the island was restored to Britain in 1763, the Jews returned. Their number seems to have increased because in 1766 they decided that the room they were using as a synagogue was no longer adequate and they should build a proper synagogue. On learning this, the *jurats* (city councillors of Mahon) protested vehemently as did the *paborde* (the vicar general of the island), and Lieutenant-Governor Johnston withdrew his permission for the construction of the new building.

The Jews of Mahon wrote to the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in London explaining the situation. After consulting the governor, Lord Howard, who was in London at the time, they presented a petition to the secretary of state in conjunction with the Board of Deputies, and permission was given for the construction to continue. The Minorcans did not take this defeat lightly, and the following year Johnston had to write to the *paborde* complaining of the anti-Jewish sermons of the local parish priest and of his prohibiting anybody dealing with them. He ended his letter with the hope that the anti-Jewish action would cease, as otherwise he would have to ensure that the Jews who had settled in Minorca with the permission of the king of England “may have the necessaries requisite for human society.” After this the situation seems to have calmed down, and the Minorcans accepted the presence of the Jews. There are instances of joint commercial ventures.

Minorca was again invaded during the American Revolutionary War. In August 1782, a Spanish force under the Duke de Crillon landed. A week afterward and while Fort St. Philip was still resisting, Crillon issued a proclamation that the Jews would have to leave the island in accordance with the laws of Spain, which did not permit Jews to settle.

Transport was arranged for the 400 Jewish inhabitants to carry them to Marseilles, and, until the ships were available, they were confined to their house. Only one woman in each family was allowed to go out to buy food. Ten of the principal merchants were to remain behind to settle the affairs of the members of the community. On October 13, these gentlemen wrote to Crillon to thank him for ending their confinement so they could settle their affairs and offering a gift of 300,000 reales (about £5,000) for the troops. No doubt some of the officers with whom they had to deal had forced them to do this. Crillon must have realized what had happened for he forbade them to make this *douceur*.

At the peace, Britain gave up possession of Minorca, and this ended the 74 years of occupation. The Jews were not allowed to return, and the community was not reestablished.

### Selected Bibliography

Benady, Tito M. 1992. “Menorquines en Gibraltar.” *Revista de Menorca* 2: 205–226.

- Benady, Tito M. 1992–1994. “The Role of Jews in the British Colonies in the Western Mediterranean.” *Jewish Historical Studies* 33: 45–63.
- Gregory, Desmond. 1990. *Minorca, the Illusory Prize*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses.
- Roth, Cecil. 1936. “Jews in Minorca under British Rule.” In *Orient and Occident*, edited by Bruno Schindler and Arthur Marmorstein, 51–63. London: Taylor’s Foreign Press.

## Jews in Switzerland

*Avram Hein*

---

General Population: 7,523,934 (July 2006 estimate)

Jewish Population: 17,900

Percent of Population: 0.24 percent

---

### Historical Overview

- 1213 Switzerland is one of the largest communities in Europe.
- 1291 The Swiss Confederation is founded.
- 1348 The Jewish community is blamed for the spread of the Black Death and poisoning wells. As a consequence of this libel, 600 Jews are burnt at the stake.
- Middle Ages Jews are primarily engaged in moneylending. In Basel they are required to loan the church money without interest. They are despised and ostracized. With the rare exception of Jewish physicians, they are forced to wear a special hat called the *Judenhut*. As their principle occupation is moneylending (as this was the only occupation permitted to the Jews, as in most of the rest of Europe), when Christian inhabitants are in debt to moneylenders, the Jews are blamed, tortured, or expelled. Jews are required to live in certain neighborhoods and reside on certain streets, where their infrastructure (e.g., schools, synagogues, cemeteries, ritual baths) are also located. Jews have to pay high taxes for these “privileges.”
- 1349 Most of the Jews are expelled from Switzerland.
- 1352 Jews return to Zurich.
- 1361 Jews return to Basel. Their return does not herald an end to persecutions and maltreatment continues.
- June 25, 1401 Accused of blood libel, all of Jews living in Schaffhausen are condemned to death, and 30 are burned alive. Four weeks later, 18 men and women are burned at the stake in Winterthur.
- 1622 With the exceptions of doctors, all Jews are expelled from Switzerland.
- Late 18th century A Jewish community is established in Geneva.
- 1868 The Great Synagogue in Basel is built.
- 1874 Freedom of religion is granted after years of pressure from France, England, and the United States. The only countries that emancipate Jews later are Spain and Portugal.

- 1886 The Aargau Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals demands that the government prohibit ritual slaughter.
- 1887 The Jews of Baden asks for ritual slaughter to be permitted.
- August 1893 An article is inserted in the Constitution after a referendum that prohibits *shechitah* (ritual slaughter).
- 1897 The First World Zionist Congress is held in Basel, Switzerland. Theodor Herzl intends to center the Zionist movement in Basel. While that does not come to fruition, Basel serves as the host for nine more Congresses.
- 1919 The Jewish Agency is established in Switzerland at the World Zionist Congress.
- 1928 An article in the *American Journal of Sociology* shows a rapid rise in intermarriage among Swiss Jews between 1888 and 1920. According to the study, most intermarriage (including Christians marrying other Christian sects) in Switzerland involves Jews.
- World War II Despite Switzerland's veneer of neutrality, it aids the Nazis. Swiss banks guard the assets of Nazi war criminals. They hold the assets of Jews who were murdered by the Nazi regime. Swiss financing helps sustain the Reich and provides the Zyklon B used in the gas chambers. Jewish refugees who enter Switzerland are sent to work camps. Germany adds the letter "J" to Jewish passports at the request of the Swiss. Swiss banking secrecy laws are not applied to the Jews.
- 1942 A law barring asylum on the basis of race serves as a justification to keep out thousands of Jews seeking escape from the Nazis.
- 1947 The Great Synagogue in Basel is restored.
- 1972 The Jewish community of Basel is the first Jewish community to be recognized as a sanctioned corporation.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Jews are well represented in the textile and clockwork industries, although Jews are underrepresented in the chemical industry—Switzerland's largest industry. Jews also do not play a large role in Switzerland's banking industry, despite their international representation elsewhere, although Edmond Safra ran his banking magnate from Switzerland.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

In 1999, Switzerland elected its first Jewish president, Ruth Dreifuss. She was also Switzerland's first female president. Some prominent Jews to have called Switzerland their home include businessman, philanthropist, and banker Edmond Safra, Albert Cohen, Nobel Laureate Elias Canetti, Jeanne Hersch, literary critic Jean Starobinski, international law expert Paul Guggenheim, violinist Yehudi Menuhin, and composer Ernest Bloch. Albert Einstein spent his youth in Switzerland and obtained his doctorate in Zurich. Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky studied law in Switzerland. Chaim Weizman spent time in university in Switzerland. Prominent Jews

who became part of the Russian Revolution, such as Lenin and Leon Trotsky, also spent time in Switzerland.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The Swiss Jewish population is well organized. The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities (SIG/FCI) serves as an umbrella organization representing more than 23 different Jewish organizations. The umbrella organization of the Swiss Jewish community does not include the ultra-Orthodox community or the Reform community. The Schweizerischer Israelitischer Gemeindebund (the Swiss Jewish Community) was established to protest the prohibition against kosher slaughter.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the federation was working on the issue of dormant accounts held by Jews in Swiss banks, an issue that only gained international prominence in the last decade of the 20th century. The federation was also a founding member of the World Jewish Congress. Many international Jewish organizations have offices in Switzerland. Particularly in the large cities, Switzerland has thriving Jewish institutions, youth groups, synagogues, kosher restaurants, and Jewish bookstores. Traditional, ultra-Orthodox, Sephardi, Reform, and Conservative synagogues operate in Switzerland. Nine Jewish schools operate in five cities of Switzerland. There are also three German Jewish newspapers and one French Jewish newspaper.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

The SIG/FCI plays an important role in distributing kosher food, because of the prohibition on ritual slaughter in Switzerland. Thus, kosher meat is imported. Many animal rights activists, however, have led campaigns against the importation of kosher meat. They have been joined by anti-Semites who use animal rights as a cover for their anti-Jewish positions. In 2002, the government considered rescinding the ban on domestic slaughter, but in the wake of a public campaign with anti-Semitic overtones, the government surrendered to public opposition and maintained the prohibition on domestic slaughter while permitting importation of kosher meat.

Switzerland has generally been seen as supportive toward Israel, while maintaining its noted neutrality. This support seems to have strengthened in the 1960s and 1970s due to a terrorist attack against an El Al plane in Zurich in 1969 and sabotage on a Swissair flight headed to Israel in 1970.

Anti-Semitic attacks have been fueled by the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the issue of Swiss control of Jewish assets during the Holocaust, and Muslim terror. In 2004, Switzerland began imposing taxes on Israeli exports that come from Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (before Israel's pullout from Gaza in the summer of 2005). More than a dozen Palestinian and left-wing organizations in Switzerland launched a boycott against Israeli goods in 2003. Aimed not only at Israeli products, the boycott is also aimed at Jewish-owned businesses. In 2003, a Jewish senior foreign ministry official, Ambassador Thomas Kupfer, the head of the ministry's Middle East department, wrote a letter to a pro-Palestinian group that referred to Palestinian suicide bombers as "resistance fighters."

In 2003, the Swiss government provided sponsorship to the Geneva Initiative between a group of Israeli and Palestinian academics and political leaders. The sponsorship was criticized by a small group of Swiss legislatures, arguing that it harmed Swiss-Israel relations and violated Swiss principles of neutrality.

A Swiss government report made claims that anti-Semitic acts would lead to violent extremist responses by the Jewish community. It also referred to Jewish students as armed radicals; before being edited, the original version of the report stated that “Jewish political extremism manifests itself in the conduct of associations fighting for the Zionist cause.”

Additionally, certain Swiss cantons have laws that deny Jews (as well as Muslims) the right to practice their religion. Jewish and Muslim law require that coreligionists be buried in a religious cemetery; however, the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel mandate burial in state-owned cemeteries.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Jews make up only a tiny percentage of Switzerland’s population, although there have been Jews in Switzerland for hundreds of years. Making up only 0.2 percent of the population, the Jewish population is mostly centered in the four major cities of Zurich, Geneva, Basel, and Bern. About 18,000 Jews live in Switzerland. While mostly centered in the major communities, there are also Jews who live in smaller nearby cantons. The number of Swiss Jews has remained fairly stable since the early 20th century, but the relative proportion has declined owing partly to emigration, an aging population, and intermarriage.

Many Ashkenazi Jews settled in Switzerland after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and the crushing of Prague Spring in 1968. After decolonialization in North Africa, many North African Jews settled in Switzerland. There has also been more aliyah (immigration to Israel) than in other similar European communities.

### Selected Bibliography

- Blau, Gisela. 1999. “Swiss Jews Raise their Guard.” *The Jerusalem Report*, November 22.
- “Communities/Switzerland.” 2005. European Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.eurojewcong.org/ejc/news.php?id\\_article=121](http://www.eurojewcong.org/ejc/news.php?id_article=121) (accessed May 4, 2007).
- Elazar, Daniel J. “The Jewish Agency: Historic Role and Current Crisis.” Jewish Center for Public Affairs Web site. <http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles/ja-role.htm> (accessed May 4, 2007).
- Engelman, Uriah Z. 1928. “Intermarriage among Jews in Switzerland 1888 1920.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 34 (3, November): 516–523.
- Finder, Joseph. “Unaccountable.” *The New Republic* 219 (November 23, 1998): 21.
- Hein, Avi. 2008. The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Switzerland. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/swiss.html> (accessed May 4, 2007).
- Jacobs, Joseph, and Meyer Kayserling. “Switzerland.” *Jewish Encyclopedia*. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1201&letter=S> (accessed May 4, 2007).
- Rosenthal, John. 2003. “Anti-Semitism and Ethnicity in Europe,” *Policy Review* 121 (October): 17–38.
- “Swiss Group Boycotts Israeli and Jewish Products” JTA Global News Service Web site. [http://www.jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=12928&intcategoryid=2](http://www.jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=12928&intcategoryid=2) (accessed May 4, 2007).

- “Swiss Keep Kosher Slaughter Ban, But Will Guarantee Import of Meat.” JTA Global News Service Web site. [http://www.jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=11060&intcategoryid=2](http://www.jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=11060&intcategoryid=2) (accessed May 4, 2007).
- “Swiss Legislators Blast Government for Its Support of the ‘Geneva Accord.’” JTA Global News Service Web site. [http://www.jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=13640&intcategoryid=2](http://www.jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=13640&intcategoryid=2) (accessed May 4, 2007).
- Tal, Rami, ed. 2005. *The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Annual Assessment 2004–2005: The Jewish People between Thriving and Decline*. Jerusalem: Gefen.
- Traynor, Ian. 2005. “Swiss Jews Furious at Report Warning of Violent Extremism.” *The Guardian*, January 5. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,1383271,00.html> (accessed May 4, 2007).
- “Uproar over Swiss Officials’ Letter Condoning Suicide Attacks on Israel,” JTA Global News Service Web site. [http://www.jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=12566&intcategoryid=2](http://www.jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=12566&intcategoryid=2) (accessed May 4, 2007).

## Jews in the United Kingdom

*William D. Rubinstein  
and Avram Hein*

---

**General Population:** 60,000,000

**Jewish Population:** 280,000 to 330,000

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Most Jews live in London. Manchester is home to some 30,000 Jews, and Glasgow, Leeds, and Liverpool are home to substantial Jewish communities.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Sephardic Jews from Spain in the 15th and 16th centuries; Ashkenazim from Russia and Eastern Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries

**Languages Spoken:** English and Yiddish

---

### Historical Overview

**First millennium CE** Individual Jews may have visited England in the early centuries of the first millennium, perhaps as merchants from Phoenicia buying tin from Cornwall, but there is no settled community of Jews in England until after 1066. Jews are recorded as having lived in England in the ninth century CE.

**1066–1290** After the Norman conquest of England in 1066, Jews from France and Germany are permitted to settle in London and other large towns of medieval England exclusively to work as royal tax collectors and moneylenders, activities forbidden to Catholics. These Jews and their families, maybe 3,000 in total, are the King’s property. The Jewish community has its own structure of government, headed, from about 1183, by an “arch-presbyter” (Presbyter Judaeorum), appointed by the king, who apparently combines a secular and religious role. Medieval English Jews can only live in designated ghettos. Although they enjoy

the protection of the Crown, they are subject to increasing attacks, to some extent encouraged by the Church.

1144 On Passover a Christian boy, William of Norwich, is found murdered. Local Jews are accused of ritual murder, the first such accusation in British history.

1190 The Jews of York are burnt alive in Clifford's Tower, where they had sought protection from a mob; it is one of the worst pogroms of the Middle Ages.

1255 A Christian boy, Hugh of Lincoln, is found murdered. Eighteen Jews are falsely executed for the crime, and Hugh is declared a saint by the Church.

In 1290, King Edward I expels Jews from England. Jews are legally forbidden to live in England from 1290 until 1656, although it is known that small groups of Marranos live in London, and there are other notable exceptions.

1594 Dr. Roderigo Lopez, Queen Elizabeth's Jewish physician, is executed as a Spanish spy. He is generally believed to have been the model for Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. As his example suggests, Jews are still viewed antipathetically by both writers and ordinary people, although Shakespeare's depiction is unusually three-dimensional.

1650s After the execution of King Charles I and the installation of a military dictatorship led by the Puritan commander Oliver Cromwell, the political climate becomes distinctly philo-Semitic. The Puritans who had abolished the monarchy have a great deal of sympathy with all things Jewish. Puritan divines read the Old Testament in Hebrew. Some are even circumcised.

1650 Manasseh Ben Israel's *Spes Israel* (The Hope of Israel) is published; it is believed to be the trigger for Cromwell's interest in Judaism. The book argues that the Second Coming of Christ, desired by the Puritans, will not occur until Jews are allowed to live in every country, and therefore should not be barred from living in England.

1651 Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel petitions Cromwell to allow Jews to reenter England. This petition unleashes five years of furious debate among the Puritan divines and the army that runs the country during the Interregnum.

June 1656 Lord Protector Cromwell's Council of State agrees to permit Jews to meet together for private worship. In truth, however, the Cromwellian resettlement is not a resettlement at all. Sephardic Marranos, crypto-Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition, had been living in England, very quietly, since at least 1536. It is not Menasseh's petition that is granted in 1656, but that of seven Marranos already living in London. Furious with Menasseh for having poked his unwelcome nose into their business, they argue simply for the right of private worship for Jews already settled here, and for permission to purchase land for a cemetery outside city limits. A synagogue is established in London as early as December 1656.

1660s After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, with Charles II as king, it is feared that Jews would again be compelled to leave, but the new king is also favorable to the Jews. As early as 1667 it is established that Jews may swear in courts on the Old Testament.

1670s Moves in Parliament to make Jews subject to a special tax are thrown out, never to be raised again.

- 1690 A small Ashkanazi synagogue is established.
- 1700 A Jewish community of about 850, mainly Sephardic, exists in London.
- 1701 The synagogue at Bevis Marks is rebuilt. This synagogue, a replica of the Great Synagogue in Amsterdam, is still standing and in regular use, the oldest surviving synagogue in Britain.
- 18th century Ashkenazim eventually outnumber Sephardim, a situation that is intensified when, in 1714, the elector of Hanover becomes a King George I of England. Several large and imposing Ashkenazic synagogues are built in London, which by the mid-18th century also boasts a number of smaller houses of worship, *shtiebls*, established by less wealthy Jews of German and Polish origin. During the course of the century, large numbers of Polish Jews settle in England—small tradespeople and itinerant peddlers. Jewish communities begin to thrive in the large provincial towns, such as Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds, as well as in Glasgow and Edinburgh, Scotland, and Cardiff and Swansea, Wales. Most of these congregations were so small they could not afford to appoint a full-time rabbi. Instead, they looked to the rabbi of the oldest Ashkenazic synagogue in England, the Great Synagogue in London, as their religious leader. Successive rabbis of the Great Synagogue came to be regarded as the chief rabbis of the German and Polish Jews of Britain. The community of Spanish and Portuguese Jews languish. At the beginning of the 18th century there are some 2,000 Spanish and Portuguese Jews in England. The number had not grown significantly by the end of the century, mostly because of intermarriage and assimilation.
- 1750 The Jewish population of Britain is around 8,000.
- 1753 The government of George II agrees to sponsor legislation to make it easier for foreign-born Jews to become naturalized British citizens. No sooner has the legislation passed than a vicious agitation is whipped up against it by opposition politicians. After these “Jew Bill” riots, the act is quickly repealed in 1754.
- 1760 The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the central representative body of the Jewish community, is founded.
- 1780 The rabbi of the Great Synagogue in London is recognized as the chief rabbi of the British Empire.
- 1790s–1815 The period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars marks a watershed in the history of British Jewry. Further immigration of foreign-born Jews to Britain all but ceases. At the same time, Jewish financiers enter into lucrative partnerships with the government and are especially helpful in financing the war effort. When the Duke of Wellington’s army needs to be paid in gold in Spain, the only banking house in London that can guarantee such payments is the English branch of the House of Rothschild. At the other end of the social scale, Jews serve in Admiral Lord Nelson’s navy and fight under his command at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805). At this time the Jewish population of Britain numbers around 20,000.
- 19th century The religious leadership of British Jewry, in the shape of successive chief rabbis, Solomon Hirschel (1802–1842) and Nathan Adler (1845–1890), is

ambivalent on the issue of political emancipation of British Jews. Although neither Hirschel nor Adler opposes political emancipation, neither is enthusiastic about a process they fear will encourage assimilation. The two issues that preoccupy these rabbis are the religious laxity of British Jewry overall and the establishment of a Reform synagogue in London in the early 1840s. Hirschel issues a ban on the Reform congregation, and Adler forms a strong alliance against it with the acknowledged lay leader of British Jewry, banker and born-again ultra-Orthodox Moses Montefiore, who as president of the board of deputies ensures that no “Reformer” can be elected a deputy. The deputies play a minimal role in the campaign for political emancipation.

- 1835 Jews receive the right to vote in parliamentary elections, a right they had in practice been exercising freely, though illegally, for some considerable time hitherto. Jews can vote, but if elected to Parliament they can take their seats only if they swear an oath “on the true faith of a Christian.” Converted Jews can, of course, take their seats if they swear this oath; Benjamin Disraeli, the future prime minister first elected to Parliament in 1837, was one such.
- 1840s Reform Judaism is founded in 1840–1842, and a weekly Jewish newspaper begins printing in 1841.
- 1847 Lord Palmerston, the foreign minister, makes a famous speech defending the use of force to protect Don Pacifico, a Jew who is a British subject, who was the victim of an anti-Semitic riot in Athens.
- 1855 The first Jewish lord mayor of London is elected, and Jews College, an Orthodox rabbinical seminary, is established.
- 1870 Most Orthodox Ashkenazi synagogues group together in an association known as the United Synagogue, which recognizes the chief rabbi as its head. Most Jews live in London.
- 1887 The Federation of Synagogues is founded; it represents right-wing Orthodox and is a rival to the United Synagogue.
- 1880s–1910s The assassination of Czar Alexander II of Russia in 1881 and the subsequent persecution of Russian Jews results in a profound and fundamental change in the size and social composition of British Jewry. In the mid-Victorian period, there are perhaps 60,000 Jews living in the British Isles. This number increases to 85,000 in 1880, 240,000 in 1900, and 300,000 in 1914. Many of these immigrants settle in Whitechapel, in London’s East End, which becomes well-known as a heavily Jewish area. This “native” community is then swamped by at least twice that number of Jewish refugees from Russia and Russian-Poland. Mostly poor, Yiddish-speaking, Orthodox, socialist and Zionist, these new arrivals, the bulk of whom came in the period 1882–1906, pose major challenges for the existing community.
- 1904 Zionist Chaim Weizmann comes to England to teach chemistry at Manchester University; eventually, he becomes the first president of the State of Israel.
- 1905 Chiefly because of alarm at Russian Jewish immigration, Parliament passes the Aliens Act, which gives immigration officials the right to refuse entry to “aliens,” the British legal term for anyone not a citizen of the British Empire.

This cuts the number of Jewish immigrants in 1905–1914 by about one-third. Immigration is even more heavily restricted after 1918.

1909 Herbert Samuel is the first professing Jew to enter the British cabinet.

1910s–1920s When Britain takes control of Palestine from Turkey, the government offers it to the Jews as a “national home,” in the famous Balfour Declaration. Britain’s control of the Palestine Mandate from 1917 until 1948 makes England one of the most important centers of the Zionist move movement. About 60,000 Jews serve in the British military during World War I. General Sir John Monash, of German Jewish parentage, is commander-in-chief of the Australian armies during the war. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and war unrest brings about heightened British anti-Semitism in 1917–1922, with, for instance, the dissemination of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* for the first time in Britain in 1920.

Late 1930s Britain admits about 75,000 Jewish and “non-Aryan Christian” refugees from Nazi Germany, especially after 1938.

1939–1945 Britain declares war on Nazi Germany in September. During World War II, British Jews play a prominent role in society and the military, and thousands of Jews serve in the armed forces. In 1943, Anglo-Jewish film star Leslie Howard and Wilfrid B. Israel, a member of an important British Jewish family, are killed when their civilian airliner is shot down by the German Luftwaffe off the coast of France. Their plane was returning to Britain from Spain, where Howard had been actively supporting Britain’s war effort and Israel was aiding Jewish refugees.

1946–1947 An anti-Semitic backlash occurs in Britain after violent reprisals against British troops by Zionist extremists in Palestine.

1950s–1960s Israel receives almost universal support in Britain, and levels of anti-Semitism decline except among neo-Nazi groups. Internal issues come to dominate Anglo-Jewry, for instance the so-called Jacobs Affair of 1961, concerning the appointment of Rabbi Louis Jacobs, an Orthodox rabbi with liberal views, to head Jews College. This leads to the beginnings of the Masorti (Conservative) movement in Britain. This period also sees a considerable growth in strictly Orthodox and Charedi movements, virtually unknown in Britain before World War II, and among Reform and Liberal synagogues. The growth of the two extremes weakens the influence of the mainstream Orthodox United Synagogue and the chief rabbi. Considerable friction emerges between the various strands in Anglo-Jewish religious life. After about 1950, Jews virtually abandon the East End, moving to north and northeast London, especially to such neighborhoods as Golders Green and Stamford Hill. Provincial Jewish communities decline; only Manchester, Leeds, Gateshead, and south coast towns like Brighton show vigor. Britain’s Jewish population likely peaked at about 390,000, or higher, around 1955.

2002 The British government enacts an annual Holocaust Memorial Day.

2004 Michael Grade, a Jew, is appointed to head the BBC, which is often seen as hostile to Israel.

2005 Notable Anglo-Jewish writer Harold Pinter wins the Nobel Prize in Literature.

## Contemporary Overview

### Demography

Two-thirds of British Jewry lives in the London area. The rest are centered in three major cities: Manchester (30,000), Leeds (10,000), and Glasgow (6,000). Smaller communities exist in Birmingham, Liverpool, Leicester, Brighton, Gateshead, Southend, Bournemouth, Newcastle, and Edinburgh, and scores of Jews are spread out in smaller communities.

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Anglo-Jewry is solidly middle class: 52 percent of Jews are in the professions, compared with 9 percent of the general population. Twenty-one percent of Jews hold managerial positions. The Jewish community is disproportionately represented in commerce, retail, and the professions.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

British Jewry enjoys a rich cultural life. The United Kingdom has several museums and art galleries focusing on Jewish life and culture. Jewish studies courses are available at major universities.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

Anglo Jewry has traditionally been centered on the synagogue. In recent years, there has been a shift away from the synagogues in favor of professional institutional agencies. Nevertheless, unlike North America, there are no community centers. Communal activity is also centered on the synagogue. The main organization is the Board of Deputies of British Jews, founded in 1760, which comprises synagogue representatives and several other Jewish organizations. It purports to serve as the official voice of British Jewry.

The United Synagogue serves as the main synagogue body of British Jewry, yet it only represents the Orthodox community. The chief rabbi of Great Britain, Dr. Jonathan Sacks, was formerly the head of the United Synagogue. There is also the London beth din (religious court), which also operates under Orthodox auspices.

Although much of the “official” structure of Anglo Jewry is Orthodox, most British Jews do not identify as Orthodox. According to a 1998 survey, 10 percent identify as Orthodox, 2 percent identify as Traditional (many Masorti/Conservative), 15 percent as Progressive (liberal or Reform), 20 percent as “Just Jewish” and 23 percent as secular. Nevertheless, two-thirds of all families belong to a synagogue, mostly centered in London.

Other synagogue bodies include the Spanish and Portuguese Jews’ Congregation, the (Orthodox) Federation of Synagogues, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, the (Conservative) Assembly of Masorti Synagogues, and the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain and the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. The Assembly of Masorti Synagogues was founded by the late Rabbi Dr. Louis Jacobs, who split from the Orthodox establishment over disputes over his acceptance of academic scientific biblical criticism.



Interior of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation Synagogue, London. (Photo by Jono David)

Several newspapers focus on Anglo Jewry. The largest, read by 75 percent of Jewish families, is the *Jewish Chronicle*. The London *Jewish News* is a relatively new addition to Anglo-Jewish media. The *Jewish Telegraph* publishes editions in Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, and Liverpool. The *Jewish Quarterly* is a monthly magazine.

BICOM, the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre, is a pro-Israel organization founded in the wake of the second Intifada that aims to serve as a lobby in the United Kingdom. It engages in educational and advocacy work to promote relations between the United Kingdom and Israel.

The Anglo Jewish community hosts an annual week-long pluralistic Jewish learning seminar during the last week of December. Founded in 1981, the Limmud conference is Europe's largest Jewish educational event, with over 2,300 participants and 370 speakers from North America, Israel, and Europe. This grassroots learning event is pluralistic and nondenominational. Events range from musical performances, storytelling, lectures from Jews and non-Jews, and traditional text study.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Most hostility to Jews in Britain today comes from left-wing and Muslim anti-Zionist groups, now generally regarded as far more threatening than right-wing neo-Nazi groups. After the London terror attacks of July 7, 2005, which killed three Jews, including one Israeli, the Jewish community significantly beefed up its security. The attacks were not directed at Jewish targets, but it was assumed that Islamic terrorism

is a threat to Jewish sites. In the wake of the second Intifada, the Jewish community has had a security service since the 1930s called the Community Service Trust.

Several prominent teachers unions were hijacked by a vocal anti-Israel minority. This vocal minority advocated divestment from Israel and a boycott of Israeli scholars, refusing to publish them in academic journals or engage in research with Israeli lecturers. In addition, several Muslim leaders called on the British government to abolish Holocaust Day in exchange for a Genocide Day in order to avoid alienating the Muslim community. They demanded that other atrocities, including what they claim to be Israel's genocide of the Palestinians, be included in this commemoration. This demand was not supported by the British government.

Former mayor of London Ken Livingstone is known to have made numerous anti-Israel and anti-Semitic remarks. He once said a Jewish reporter behaved like a Nazi guard. He maintains positive ties with Sheikh Yusuf al Qaradawi, who has publicly embraced suicide bombers.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Jews make up 0.5 percent of the United Kingdom population. United Kingdom Jewry is steadily shrinking from a high of 450,000 people in 1950 to approximately 300,000 in 2001. Estimates of the Jewish population in 2003 range from 280,000 to 330,000.

The population has declined by 25 percent largely because of emigration (mostly to Israel), low birthrates, and assimilation. The birthrate of 10 per thousand population is lower than the death rate of 12.5 per thousand (slightly higher than the average rate in England and Wales). Because of the negative balance, there is an annual negative population growth of approximately 1,000 people. The population is also undergoing a rapid graying process despite the immigration of about 30,000 Israelis to the United Kingdom. Today, most British Jews live in the affluent suburbs of London and Manchester and the south coast towns of Southend, Brighton, and Bournemouth. They work for the most part in professional occupations. And on average they are about a third wealthier than their non-Jewish counterparts. In addition, there is a high rise in intermarriage: 38 percent of all married Jewish men are married to non-Jews and 50 percent of married Jewish women under 30 are also married to non-Jews. This is being recognized by the Jewish community and some Progressive synagogues are now performing mixed marriages.

### Selected Bibliography

- Alderman, Geoffrey. 1992. *Modern British Jewry*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Bulkacz, Vanessa. 2006. "One Year after London Attacks, U.K. Jews Stress Communal Security." Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), July 11. [http://jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=16806&intcategoryid=2](http://jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=16806&intcategoryid=2) (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Cesarani, David, ed. 1990. *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Endelman, Todd. 2002. *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hyamson, Albert M. 1928. *A History of the Jews in Britain*. London: Methuen.
- Katz, David S. 1996. *The Jews in the History of Britain, 1485–1850*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Langham, Raphael. 2005. *The Jews in Britain: A Chronology*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lipman, V. D. 1990. *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858*. Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press.
- Morris, Andrew. 2004. "At Limmud Conference, Approach Is Inclusive, and From Bottom Up." Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), January. [http://jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=13642&intcategoryid=5](http://jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=13642&intcategoryid=5) (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Peled, Daniella. 2005. "Row over Holocaust Memorial Day Shows U.K. Muslim-Jewish Tension." Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), September 13. [http://jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=15835&intcategoryid=2](http://jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=15835&intcategoryid=2) (accessed May 3, 2007).
- Roth, Cecil. 1978. *A History of the Jews in England*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Rubinstein, W. D. 1996. *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain*. Basingstoke, UK: St. Martin's Press.
- Tigay, Chanan. 2006. "Groups Mobilize as British Teachers Consider Another Boycott of Israelis." Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), May 16. [http://jta.org/page\\_view\\_story.asp?intarticleid=16618&intcategoryid=2](http://jta.org/page_view_story.asp?intarticleid=16618&intcategoryid=2) (accessed May 3, 2007).

## History of Jewish Wealth in Britain

*William D. Rubinstein*

---

The economic elite of the Jewish community of Britain had a number of distinctive characteristics that set it apart from its equivalents elsewhere. Evidence suggests that Jews made up a considerably smaller percentage of top wealth holders than in many other European societies. A Jewish community existed in England in the Middle Ages, between about 1066 and 1290, when it was expelled. These Jews were chiefly engaged as tax collectors on behalf of the Norman kings. A number were also moneylenders and became very wealthy, although it is difficult to compare their wealth with that of the richest Christians. Aaron of Lincoln (d. 1186), the richest member of this community, was reputedly worth £25,000, an extraordinary sum at the time.

After their expulsion, Jews were not legally able to live in England until they were readmitted by Oliver Cromwell in 1656. In this long period when Jews were absent from English society, the institutions and culture of the country altered profoundly. Protestantism replaced Catholicism. As a result, the Catholic ban on usury vanished and, by the Elizabethan age (1558–1603), the English had already become renowned merchants and traders, with a sophisticated infrastructure and laws that protected property. At the fringes of the established Anglican Church, so-called Non-conformist Protestant sects (e.g., Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers) emerged that often exemplified Max Weber's "protestant ethic" thesis, which sees an affinity between Protestantism and capitalism. Scotland adopted Prebyterianism as its official religion, a Calvinist form of Protestantism that was also favorable to capitalism. Jews thus reentered a highly sophisticated society with a relatively advanced capitalist framework highly favorable to entrepreneurship. It had few, if any, feudal

survivals and no peasants or serfs; it was permeated by what Thomas Carlyle termed the “cash nexus.” By 1750, however, a small, mainly Sephardic community of Jewish financiers and merchants existed in London. It suffered from few overt legal restrictions, and in general could operate freely as businesspeople. Some, like Sir Sampson Gideon (1745–1824) became very wealthy and—after converting to Anglicanism—even joined the aristocracy. Jews were often close to the dominant Whig government, especially as loan contractors.

Nevertheless, Britain increasingly diverged from the Continent in many ways that affected the Jewish economic structure. From about 1760, Britain saw the world’s first Industrial Revolution, which revolved around the mass production of cotton goods in factories, railways, coal mining, engineering, and other facets of heavy industry and manufacturing. These classical industries of Britain’s Industrial Revolution had little or no Jewish presence, being overwhelmingly dominated by Protestants, often Nonconformists like Quakers or Unitarians. There was thus little or no Jewish presence in the economic elites of such industrial cities as Birmingham, Glasgow, and Newcastle. A number of largely industrial cities like Manchester and Bradford did have a successful Jewish presence, chiefly of German Jewish migrants, but they generally worked as merchants rather than as manufacturers, and the Jewish presence was comparatively small. Britain’s tremendous economic and demographic growth after about 1760 also enriched its landed aristocracy, which often owned vast tracts of urban property and minerals as well as agricultural land. The very wealthiest British landed aristocrats like the dukes of Westminster and Devonshire remained probably the richest men in Europe until the 20th century.

Jews were, however, much more prominent in the City of London, the square mile in the eastern part of central London that functions as its financial hub, similar to Wall Street in New York. A Jewish economic elite did emerge there from the 18th century on. In the period between around 1860 and 1914, when it was at its zenith, it was largely centered in a number of interrelated families known as the “Cousinhood,” which included the Rothschilds, Sir Moses Montefiore (1784–1885), Sir Isaac L. Goldsmid, Sir Samuel Montagu (Lord Swaythling), and their relatives, as well as such older families as the Cohens, Mocattas, and D’Avigdors, and relatively new families like the Sterns and Sassoons. Most were of Sephardic or German Ashkenazi background and usually remained Orthodox Jews for most of this period. They were regarded as the acknowledged leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community. Sir Moses Montefiore was the preeminent figure in Anglo-Jewish life for 70 years until his death at the age of 101. When the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, it was addressed to Lord Rothschild, although he held no official position in either the Anglo-Jewish community or the British government.

During this period, the Anglo-Jewish community secured equal rights in all spheres of public life and met relatively little anti-Semitism before the arrival of 200,000 Jews from Russia after 1881. The “Cousinhood” was, however, relatively divided over a range of issues, including religion and Zionism.

Probably about 10 percent of Britain’s nonlanded millionaires and richest men of the period 1870–1914 were Jews, with about three per cent, a much lower figure, among all British persons who bequeathed £100,000 or more. These levels were

almost certainly much lower than in Germany—where, it seems, about 31 percent of the country's richest families around 1910 were Jewish or originally Jewish—or elsewhere in central Europe, although higher than in the United States, where Protestants comprised the overwhelming majority of America's super-rich during the period of Gilded Age capitalism (1865–1929). Anglo-Jewry's economic elite probably seemed to observers to be larger and more influential than it really was. Minorities are always noticed. The Prince of Wales (later Edward VII, king from 1901–1910) was particularly close to this Jewish elite and was said by some to have had a Jewish “court,” which included English families like the Rothschilds, Sassoons, and the banker Sir Ernest Cassel, and South Africans like the Beits. The Anglo-Jewish economic elite was centered in the West End of London and was in the public eye. Nevertheless, its limitations should be kept in mind. It was disproportionately represented only in merchant banking, stockbroking, and a few other similar areas of finance. Even here it was far from predominant. The Barings, the great rival family to the as international financial titans the Rothschilds, were Gentiles. Jews had virtually no connection with any clearing bank (branch banks like Barclays and Lloyds), which were mainly founded and owned by Protestant Nonconformist families. Jews were virtually unrepresented in shipping, the lifeblood of Britain's worldwide commercial empire, or large-scale retailing. As noted, Jews were almost unknown in the economies of many big cities outside London. As a result, Jews probably attracted less hostility than in other countries, especially as Jewish merchant bankers had little nexus with ordinary persons as employers and seldom owned factories or mines where they might well be hated by their workers.

The power of the Cousinhood was adversely affected by World War I and, essentially, never recovered. The war ended the financial hegemony of the city of London. In the interwar period, however, new Jewish families emerged as highly successful in the British economy. These included (for the first time) a number of great retailers, especially the Marks and Sieff families of Marks & Spencers, the most famous British chain store; Sir Monatgue Burton of Burton's, a famous chain of men's clothiers; Sir Isaac Wolfson; and Sir Charles Clore. Jews also played a role in the entertainment industry, founding cinema chains and record companies (Decca records), and in restaurant chains like J.Lyons & Co. The Marks and Sieff families, who began in Manchester rather than London, were probably the greatest donors to the Zionist movement in the world. The appearance of these families probably reflected a shift of the British economy toward domestic rather than international capitalism and toward more “modern,” consumer-oriented businesses.

After World War II, British Jews were especially prominent in property development, one of the few areas in which it remained possible to become wealthy in postwar Britain, where taxation had reached extraordinary levels. Many used the opportunities created by rebuilding and rehousing after the destruction caused by the war. A few, like Howard Samuel and his cousin, Lord Samuel of Wych Cross, Harry Hyams, and Jack Cotton, became well known. Most of the second and third generation of the wave of immigrants of 1881–1914 entered the professions or family businesses, and there have possibly been fewer Jewish self-made millionaires after about 1965 than in the past. Some, however, still appear, such as Philip Green,

the retailing king who is one of the wealthiest individuals in Britain. Successful Jewish immigrants can still be found as well, such as Roman Abramovitch, the Russian oil mogul and owner of the Chelsea football team. Probably about 8–10 percent of persons on the *Sunday Times* Rich Lists are Jews, compared with the Jewish overall percentage of 0.5 percent, but it would be more accurate to describe the contemporary Anglo-Jewish community as more notable for high levels of affluence rather than for a handful of the astronomically wealthy. It is probably also more accurate to view Anglo-Jewry as a component of the Jewish Diaspora in the English-speaking world rather than part of a pan-European Jewish world, in a society with little hostility to capitalism or to Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bermant, Chaim. 1971. *The Cousinhood*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode.
- Pollins, Harold. 1982. *The Economic History of the Jews in England*. East Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press
- Rubinstein, William. 2001. "Jewish Top Wealth-holders in Britain, 1809–1909." *Jewish Historical Studies* 37: 133–162.
- Rubinstein, William D. 2000. "Jews in the Economic Elite of Western Nations and Antisemitism." *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 42 (1, 2): 5–35.

## The British Chief Rabbinate

*Raymond Apple*

---

Britain has had a chief rabbi, the recognized spiritual head of the community, since the early 19th century, though the office has a long prehistory. Before the expulsion from England in 1290 there was an *Episcopus Judaeorum*, who was possibly a chief rabbi, and King John acknowledged a certain Rabbi Jacob of London as "Presbyter of the Jews of all England." After the resettlement in 1656, the dominant group was the Sephardim whose spiritual leader was generally styled hakam. Later in the 17th century, the first Ashkenazi congregation was founded, with several brief rabbinic incumbencies until the appointment of Aaron Hart as rabbi of the Great Synagogue. He held office from 1709 to 1756, supported by wealthy members of his family. Hart's brother Moses was largely responsible for erecting the Great Synagogue, and Moses' daughter gave a large amount to enlarge the synagogue. Aaron Hart had a Halachic controversy with the rabbi of a rival synagogue, and both published Hebrew tracts stating their case—probably the first post-resettlement Hebrew works to appear in England, though there were significant pre-Expulsion Hebrew scholars.

Hart was succeeded as rabbi of the Great Synagogue by Hart Lyon (Hirschel Levin; 1756–1764); some lists of chief rabbis include his son Saul Berlin, who never actually held office and was the author of forged responsa, *Besamim Rosh*, which created great controversy. After an incumbency by David Tevele Schiff (1765–1792)

there was an interregnum until 1802 when the position was given to Solomon Hirschel, who was born in England, another son of Hirschel Levin. At that period there were no significant rabbinic rivals to Hirschel, who by default became acknowledged as rabbinic head of the whole community (the Gentile population generally called him “High Priest of the Jews”).

Unlike his brother Saul, Hirschel was highly traditional in his views and barely acquainted with modern intellectual movements, though he was not without some general education. He could speak English but when he preached it was generally in Yiddish. His long incumbency saw the community lose its essentially “foreign” character and become increasingly anglicized. Hirschel found it hard to come to terms with the growing religious laxity of his constituents, especially when, late in his career, the Reform movement came to England, even though here it was less radical than in Germany and, later, in the United States. To Hirschel any type of reform was scandalous and he placed a ban (*herem*) on the “seceders.” Not only did he oppose the movement and its policies, but it offended him that the minister appointed by the reform congregation, which became known as the West London Synagogue of British Jews (“British” because it rejected the existing demarcation between “Portuguese” and “German” Jews) was his former student David W. Marks, who, though he had no university degree, became professor of Hebrew at University College, London.

Hirschel died in 1842. It was clear that the Hirschel model would no longer suffice in the changed circumstances of British Jewry, and his successor would need to be not merely a *rav* but a rabbiner. The community chose Nathan Marcus Adler, who was university trained and had a broad general education and wide experience of ecclesiastical administration in Germany. Adler had family connections with the chief rabbinate: his grandmother was the sister of David Tevele Schiff. A competing candidate was Samson Raphael Hirsch, later the pioneer of neoorthodoxy on the European continent. Cecil Roth wrote that where “the office of chief rabbi had as it were come into being spontaneously, *de facto*, it was necessary to recognize it *de jure*.” Hence Adler was appointed on the basis of a communal electoral process. His rabbinical authority extended from the beginning to the provinces, the colonies and parts of the United States. Adler reorganized the synagogue system, encouraged regular vernacular preaching, and took part in Jewish and national debates. He was close to the lay head of the community, Sir Moses Montefiore. His scholarly works included *Netinah LaGer*, a commentary on the Targum Onkelos. To reinforce his rabbinic authority, Adler endorsed the title “reverend” for all the ministers under his jurisdiction with only one—that is, himself—bearing the title rabbi.

His system, dubbed “Adlerism” by its critics, became increasingly controversial with the arrival of eastern European immigrants who included learned rabbinic figures. Adler’s son Hermann, preacher of the Bayswater Synagogue, was delegate chief rabbi in the final years of Adler’s life, and succeeded his father in 1891. Called by some “the willing captive of the gilded gentry,” Hermann Adler held office for 20 years but found it difficult to reconcile both the strictly Orthodox and the liberal factions to his rule. He was firm in his Orthodoxy but had a congenial relationship

with the Reform section; indeed, suggestions were made that the Reform as well as the Orthodox should join in electing a new chief rabbi. Hermann's son Solomon Alfred Adler might have continued the Adler dynasty, but he died in his father's lifetime, and in 1913 Joseph Herman Hertz, the first graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, was appointed chief rabbi after holding posts in South Africa and New York.

Hertz was a strong character (his secretary called him "decisive and incisive"), at home with all sections of the Orthodox community and respected though not automatically followed by the Reform and liberal elements. He was a fighter, not only for his fellow Jews, especially at the time of the Nazi onslaught, but also for the retention of the seventh-day Sabbath against the proponents of calendar reform. He had a troubled relationship with Sir Robert Waley Cohen, president of the United Synagogue, and on his death Waley Cohen and others determined that the new chief rabbi had to be quieter and more amenable. Hertz was a prolific writer, and his *Book of Jewish Thoughts* as well as his popular pew editions of the Pentateuch and prayer book reinforced the chief rabbinate as the embodiment of establishment Judaism. Hertz died in 1946. As Britain had just emerged from World War II, the community wanted the new chief rabbi to have had military chaplaincy experience.

The chosen successor was Israel Brodie, later knighted, who combined chaplaincy experience in both world wars with a distinguished period of ministry in Australia and some years on the academic staff of Jews' College, the rabbinic seminary. A mellifluous preacher and gentle personality, Brodie worked through the Conference of European Rabbis to reestablish Jewish life on the Continent of Europe. Like Hertz, but not Hermann Adler, he was a firm Zionist and rejoiced to hold office at the creation of Israel. At the end of his incumbency he vetoed Rabbi Louis Jacobs as principal of Jews' College on the basis of untraditional views on Revelation. In the ensuing controversy, the community split into what were called Israelites and Jacobites. Brodie was not a prolific writer; his works included a three-volume edited version of the *Etz Hayyim*, written by a medieval London scholar.

Brodie retired in 1965, and the appointment was offered to Jacob Herzog, an Israeli diplomat, the son of Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog. When Herzog withdrew for health reasons the choice fell on Immanuel Jakobovits, scion of a rabbinic family, a former chief rabbi of Ireland, and a rabbi in New York, who was a pioneering scholar in Jewish medical ethics. Jakobovits, inducted in 1967, became the leading voice for traditional morality in Britain, consulted by political leaders in preference to Christian prelates; he was knighted and then raised to the peerage for his services to Britain. Highly regarded in all sections of the community, his status was sporadically called into question by the progressive groups, who resented the power of establishment orthodoxy.

Jakobovits was succeeded by Jonathan Sacks, an elegant writer and speaker whose philosophical writings have brought him wide acclaim, though some strictly Orthodox rabbis object that his theology of other faiths is too accommodating. Sacks received a knighthood in 2005.

The British Jewish community is now less homogeneous than before, and some groups refuse to recognize the chief rabbi as the spokesman for all British Jews to

the general community. In the Council of Christians and Jews, the chief rabbi had long been the one Jewish co-president, though acknowledgment of the progressive groups has now been conceded. Beyond Britain the congregations that formerly regarded themselves as coming under the chief rabbi's jurisdiction now mostly insist on their own independence; the chief rabbinate can no longer claim jurisdiction over the Jews of the Commonwealth as a whole, though there is great respect for the chief rabbi and his views are frequently sought but not always adopted.

### Selected Bibliography

- Jacobs, Louis. 1962. "The Beth Din: The Jewish Ecclesiastical Court." *Lawyer* 5: 19–25
- Kirsch, Harvey J. 1971. "Conflict Resolution and the Legal Culture: A Study of the Rabbinical Court." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 9: 335–357.
- Levy, Elkan D. "The History of the Chief Rabbinate." <http://www.chiefrabbi.org/history-index.html> (accessed May 07, 2007).

## Influence of British Jewry on World Jewry

*Raymond Apple*

---

British Jewry is not identical with English-speaking Jewry as a whole, which includes the United States. In the narrow sense, however, British Jewry has had a significant influence on world Jewry, on Israel and in some ways on human culture as a whole.

Religiously, it produced the urbane centrist Orthodoxy known as *Minhag Anglia* (The English Usage), which spread to and molded communities throughout the colonies and the Commonwealth. It created a professional ministry characterized more by general culture than deep rabbinic learning, and it was headed by a chief rabbinate that made religious decisions for constituent congregations. It was a Jewish echo of many patterns of the British environment. The chief rabbi was the Jewish equivalent of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the United Synagogue was equated to the established church, the Singer prayer book was the Jewish Book of Common Prayer, the minister was a religious functionary like his Christian counterpart, and, though not a strictly religious publication, the *Jewish Chronicle* was the Jewish version of *The Times*.

It developed a community structure based on a principle of voluntary identification with the community as well as centralized organisation and cohesive institutions, though many of these were at first patrician and undemocratic. British terms such as board of deputies, though archaic, were adopted when communities organized themselves on British lines in many parts of the Commonwealth.

The Jewish community became a model of integration into the host society, believing participation in both general and Jewish life could be combined. Often the same people held office in both Jewish and public life, and prominent Jewish public

figures had at least a basic level of involvement in Jewish communal life. Until recently, residents of the Commonwealth regarded Britain as home, and Jews in British countries had a special feeling for Anglo-Jewry. Jews outside the Commonwealth respected British ways even though they had no wish to emulate them.

The Jewish community also contributed to the upbuilding of Israel, at first by promoting the Zionist idea (leading British Jews such as Chaim Weizmann and Chief Rabbi Hertz had an influence on the Balfour Declaration, though some of the Jewish gentry feared accusations of Jewish dual loyalty). During the British Mandate, a number of British Jews helped to bring British institutions, styles of administration, and academic methods to Palestine. Some, such as Edwin Samuel, son of the first British high commissioner, guided the administration of the new State of Israel.

British Jews, familiar with the political pattern in Britain, participated in Israeli debates on electoral processes by urging Israel to achieve better representation of the electorate and greater national stability by means of preferential voting and involving Knesset members with electors on the local level. Israelis had Anglophilia despite their resentment of the Mandatory government.

Leading Anglo-Jewish figures made seminal contributions to medicine, science, art, philosophy, literature, music, and other disciplines, including pre- and postwar Jewish immigrants to Britain. This pattern repeated itself in many other countries, and Britain was seen as a role model.

### Selected Bibliography

- Becher, H., S. Waterman, B. Kosmin, and K. Thomson. 2002. *A Portrait of Jews in London and the South-east: A Community Study*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.
- Board of Deputies of British Jews. 2002. *Compilations of Communal Vital Statistics*. London: Board of Deputies of British Jews.
- Goodkin, J., and J. Citron. 1994. *Women in the Jewish Community: Review and Recommendations*. London: Women in the Community.
- Graham, D. 2003. *Secular or Religious? The Outlook of London's Jews*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.
- Graham, D. 2003. "So How Many Jews Are There in the UK? The 2001 Census and the Size of the Jewish Population." *JPR News* Spring: 4–6.
- Holman, C., with N. Holman. 2001. *Orthodox Jewish Housing Need in Stamford Hill*. London: Agudas Israel Housing Association.
- Holman, C., and N. Holman. 2002. *Torah, Worship and Acts of Loving Kindness: Baseline Indicators for the Charedi Community in Stamford Hill*. London: The Interlink Foundation.
- Kosmin, B. 1999. "The Demographics and Economics of the Jewish Market in North America." In *Creating the Jewish Future*, edited by M. Brown and B. Lightman, 216–233. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Kosmin, B. 1999. *Ethnic and Religious Questions in the 2001 UK Census of Population: Policy Recommendations*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

# Central and Eastern Europe and Russia

## Jews in Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Russia

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

General Population: 400,000,000

Jewish Population and Percentage by Country: Albania, 200, 0.005 percent; Belarus, 24,300, 2.4 percent; Bulgaria, 2,300, 0.3 percent; Croatia, 1,300, 0.3 percent; Czech Republic, 4,000, 0.4 percent; Hungary, 51,300, 5.1 percent; Moldova, 55,500, 1.3 percent; Poland, 3,500, 0.1 percent; Republic of Macedonia, 100, 0.00005 percent; Romania, 10,800, 0.5 percent; Russian Federation (former Soviet Union), 410,000, 1.9 percent; Serbia and Montenegro, 1,700, 0.2 percent; Slovakia, 3,300, 0.6 percent; Slovenia, 100, 0.1 percent; Ukraine, 100,000, 2.0 percent

---

### Historical Overview

The regions of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia are some of the most important areas for the growth and spread of the Jewish Diaspora over 1,000 years. A number of the most important social developments for the Jews were fermented there.

Jews started immigrating during the Roman Empire. Some of the most interesting developments in Jewish community organizations and structures, the commentaries on Talmudic law, Jewish schools and academies, religious and mystical teachings, and a broad range of social developments formed within the Jewish communities of these regions. Thousands, if not tens of thousands, of works of literature and science, religious texts, and historical volumes were penned there. The advent of the Hasidic movement emerged from the Ukraine and spread throughout Eastern Europe and Russia. The enlightenment of the Jews from the ghettos and inequality spread from Germany to Central Europe and beyond and was an important stage in Jewish development. In addition, the participation of Jews in philosophical inquiry and the natural and social sciences, including physics, math, psychiatry, sociology, and of course, the emergence of the great political movements, including Marxism and Communism, were staged and made possible in this area. The Zionist movement also emerged from Eastern Europe and Russia and was informed and inspired by 19th-century European nationalism.

The bulk of the contemporary Jewish consciousness is staged against the backdrop of Eastern European Jewish life. The major trends of Jewish orthodoxy and religious behavior are molded from the Eastern European Jewish experience. The greatest destructions of Jewish people and communities ever to be recorded took place in these regions. The largest immigrations of Jews and the relocation of their

religious and intellectual heritage to Western lands came from these regions and emerged in a number of waves beginning in the 1900s and continuing into the present day.

Central and Eastern Europe was ravaged by the Nazis, and millions of Jews were killed and transported. The Communist revolution, the emergence of the Soviet Union, and its aftermath destroyed many areas of Jewish religious life in Russia and other Soviet countries; people, communities, buildings, and libraries, the social and intellectual sum of a thousand years of religious and communal life, were repressed, and some believed them to be terminated, though over time it appears that Jewish culture did survive, Jewish personalities worked through the Communist system and Jewish culture was able to reemerge.

Although many survivors left the region for Western shores or for the State of Israel, many were not able to leave, not able to form Jewish organizations, and remained in a state of fossilized limbo. In the 1980s, this began to change. Communities started to reorganize, and a number of international Jewish organizations, Israeli government departments, wealthy Russian Jews, and individual donors have been increasingly involved in building and supporting regrowth of Jewish communities and culture.

## Contemporary Overview

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

In Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, there was a vibrant and developed Yiddish civilization before the Holocaust and Stalin's anti-Semitic regime. After the destruction of Yiddish, any subsequent efforts to revitalize it were completely suppressed. Presently, efforts to restore Yiddish heritage may be considered a part of the ongoing process of reconstruction, made possible only after the 1980s. Community groups, under the umbrella of international Jewish organizations, attempt to replicate Yiddish heritage (although this does not include formal teaching of the Yiddish language)—Yiddish songs, literature, and theater, along with the traditions and beliefs of the Jewish people.

Jewish cultural development has been facilitated by the approval of educational programs, especially since 1988 in the states of the former Soviet Union, which focus on Jewish themes and issues. Nevertheless, Jewish original creativity and complete cohesive understanding of the community, both internally and externally, cannot be considered restored.

### Present Economic Conditions

The Jewish community in most states of the former Soviet Union is said to enjoy a higher standard of living and is mainly positioned in areas with ongoing urban development projects. Official demographic information, such as job occupation and income level, are believed to be unreliable, and financial transactions are said to have been constructed within the grey areas of Russia's financial legal system; thus, the exact socioeconomic status of people is not known. Since the 1990s, a host of Jewish business and industry leaders have made large sums of monies and been

called “oligarchs,” mainly in the Russian Federation, but also in the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and other Asiatic states. Some might speculate that the wealthiest of Russian Jews are worth billions. Russian Jewish community organizations are not presently capable of self support and would not function without the assistance of outside organizations and institutions and their wealthy patrons.

Belarussian and Ukrainian Jews are white-collar workers and professionals or businesspeople of the middle class. They enjoy the improvements in the region’s economy, although poverty exists due to the aging population and other factors.

The newly established Jewish institutional structures—schools, offices, and so on—offer employment in teaching and administration positions, and many people in poorer regions are financially supported by the existence of these institutions.

#### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

Over the past decade, many dozens of Israeli- and Jewish-sponsored high schools, vocational schools, Hebrew schools, and Sunday schools have opened throughout Central and Eastern Europe and Russia. The Lauder Foundation, the Chabad movement, Eastern European branches of the World Jewish Congress, the Jewish Agency, and other Israeli organizations, as well as the joint efforts of smaller organizations and wealthy sponsors, have made an impact on Jewish life in this region. About 12,000 pupils are said to be studying in Jewish schools alone, half of whom study in religious schools.

One of the major hurdles to this regrowth was the need to wait for formal permission for organized legal Jewish activity. Once given, however, the road to a renewed Jewish presence in Russian and Eastern European society was steadier. Israel, along with Western Jewish organizations, was permitted to conduct open activities within the borders of the former Soviet Union, and Jewish identity and association are in the process of becoming increasingly normative.

Lack of Jewish participation may be attributed to several factors. For instance, most Jews of the former Soviet Union consider themselves to be (or might possibly proclaim themselves to be, in order to avoid anti-Semitism) highly secular and far removed from expressions of Jewish identity. Jewish communities in many states have long been detached from Jewish heritage. Youth commonly live in mixed family arrangements, reducing their ethnic-Jewish connection.

#### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionist Movements, and Existential Problems within the Community

Anti-Semitism is present throughout Eastern Europe; it is generally accepted that it has served as a tool in the internal political struggles of the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltics. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, active anti-Semitism was sponsored by Communist propaganda tools to deflect the failings of the regime onto a Jewish-related presence. Though this has subsided, there are lingering feelings of anti-Semitism, which are commonly brought up in political campaigns and in the free press. As the Jewish presence increases and Jewish businesses succeed and prominent Jews assert themselves in public life, these feelings may intensify.

The revival of Muslim-related nationalism is a factor in Russia's position regarding the Jews. The Chechnya war and extremist Chechnyan-Islamic terror activities gave rise to the sentiments of anti-Semitic hatred and violence, which some suggest is a permanent feature in Russian society. Although the present anti-Semitic scenery does not present serious questions for Jewish survival, should there develop a constant wave of anti-Semitic activity for Soviet Jews, questions of immigration will also become important.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Large numbers of Jews immigrated to Israel, and from there to the United States or other places, and others immigrated to Western Europe, most notably Germany. More than 1.5 million Jews have left the Former Soviet Union, including 950,000 immigrants to Israel; 400,000 immigrants to the United States and Canada; and 210,000 who left for Germany, other European countries, and Australia. Presently, there are only about 12,500 immigrants per year, but there were as many as 60,000 per year during the 1990s.

As the economy improves there has been a halt to this trend, and young Jews are increasingly finding employment and their place in society. Many leave for a few years to study and gain experience, but as the economy improved they returned with skills and integrated into their country's workforce. Israeli Russians, Ukrainians, and Polish are returning to their native lands to do business and reside. Many older Eastern European Jews choose to remain, creating a large elderly and relatively poor community.

Negative natural growth in the population is mainly attributed to the aging population, as witnessed by the rate of deaths to births, which was 13:1 in 2000. In 2002, some 40 percent of the population was over the age of 60.

As is the case across the Jewish Diaspora, there is the trend of intermarriage. The exact figures are hard to estimate but are assumed to be more than 50 percent. However, this phenomenon can work both ways as children of mixed marriages are coming to identify as Jews and seeking Jewish education and identity. What was assumed to weaken and halve the Jewish population may serve to double it or increase it in unlikely places as highly assimilated mixed Jewish-Gentile offspring develop a sympathy for their Jewish roots. The future of this trend is fascinating, has implications for Jewish identity and Jewish law, and will no doubt need to be addressed in the coming decades.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abramson, Henry. 1999. *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Altshuler, Mordechai. 1987. *Soviet Jewry Since the Second World War: Population and Social Structure*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Aster, Howard, and Peter Potichnyj, eds. 1990. *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspectives*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta.
- Della Pergola, Sergio, and Amos Gilboa. 2005. *The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Annual Assessment 2004–2005: The Jewish People between Thriving and Decline*. Jerusalem: Jewish People Policy Planning Institute.

- Dubnow, Simon. 1916. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times Until the Present Day*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Gitelman, Zvi. 1994. "The Reconstruction of Community and Jewish Identity in Russia." *East European Jewish Affairs* 2 (24): 40.
- Gitelman, Zvi. 2001. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*. 2nd exp. ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Iwanou, Mikola. 2001. "Die jüdische Welt in Weißrussland vom Ende des 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Holocaust" [Jewish World in Belarus from the Beginning of the 19th Century until the Holocaust]. In *Handbuch der Geschichte Weißrusslands*, edited by Dietrich Beyrau and Rainer Lindner, 392–408. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Levin, Nora. 1988. *Paradox of Survival: The Jews in the Soviet Union Since 1917*. Vol. I. New York: New York University Press.
- Pinkus, Benjamin. 1988. *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Weinryb, Bernard D. 1973. *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

## Jews in Albania

*David Straub*

---

General Population: 3,581,655

Jewish Population: 10–40

Percent of Population: Less than 1 percent

Jewish Population by City: Most Albanian Jews live in Tirana.

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula and Ashkenazi from Eastern Europe

Languages Spoken: Albanian

---

### Historical Overview

1st–4th centuries CE During time of the Roman Empire the first Jewish population arrives in the coastal city of Valona (modern Vlorë, known in Hebrew as Avilona), which was then a Byzantine possession.

527–565 Justinian reigns as Byzantine emperor. Strict anti-Semitic rules are imposed, and this marks the beginning of a long period of repression and poverty for Valona's Jews.

1290 Jews in Apulia, Italy, are accused of blood libel. Fleeing persecution and forced conversion, many settle in Valona.

1417 Ottoman Turks conquer Valona. Repression of the Jews is lifted, and the city undergoes economic expansion. At this time Valona's Jewry consists of Romaniotes, descendants of Greek and Byzantine Jews, and Pugliese Jews, who originated from Italy.

- 1492 Spanish Jews are expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. Refugees settled in Valona, increasing city's Jewish population.
- 1497 Portuguese Jews are expelled and also settle in Valona.
- 1500s Bogumil Hrabak refers to Valona as "preponderantly a Jewish town." Trade expands as Valona's natural port provides routes to Dubrovnik, Greece, and other ports throughout the Mediterranean. Land trade expands into Eastern Europe. Jews dominate the city's commerce.
- 1520 Census notes that out of 945 families in Valona, 528 are Jews; there are 3,600 Jews in a population of less than 5,000.
- 1541 Isak Trink becomes the first Jewish consul, or commissioner, for trade with Ragusa, modern Dubrovnik. Jews dominate the consul position for the next century.
- 1550s Portuguese conversos in Ancona in northern Italy are accused of reverting to Judaism, and 24 are burned at the stake. Ottomans intervene and in 1557 a shipload of Jews from Ancona arrives in Valona.
- 1637 Angelo Kodutto, a member of Ancona Jewish family, becomes consul of Ragusa in Valona.
- 1676 The false messiah, Sabbatai Zevi, dies in Berat in 1676 after being exiled there for fomenting rebellion.
- 1688 The Ottoman-Venetian war results in fall of Valona to Venice. Jews flee the city, fearing Venetian cruelty. Those who do not leave city are enslaved and sent to Italy. Jewish refugees settle in Arnaut Belgrade (modern Berat in Albania) and other areas of Ottoman-controlled Mediterranean. Despite the Ottoman recapture of Valona, few Jews returned to the city.
- 1740 Epidemics in Berat result in the dispersion of Jews, mainly to Greece, the Balkans, and Istanbul.
- 1850 Romaniot Jews from Greece settle in Valona and form a small community. The ancestral cemetery and synagogue are returned to Jewish possession.
- 1915 Invading Italian forces occupy Valona and convert the synagogue into a military storage facility; the synagogue is later destroyed in fire.
- 1928 Zog I becomes king of Albania. Albanian Jews refer to the period of King Zog I's reign as the golden age of Jews in Albania.
- 1930 The census indicates that 204 Jews live in Albania. Herman Bernstein, an American Jew, is appointed American ambassador to Albania. Bernstein would serve until 1933 and was instrumental in negotiating with King Zog to provide European Jewish refugees with residency permits and safe passage to transit through Albania during their escape from the Nazis. .
- 1933–1939 An estimated 600–3,000 Jews use Albania as a transit point for escaping the Nazis. Wealthy Jewish merchants in Valona are instrumental in organizing the arrival and safe exit of non-Albanian Jews.
- 1936 Albania asks Greece for the return of a 1,500-year-old Torah from Valona, known in Hebrew as Sefer Avilona, or Book of Valona; Nazis later burn the text.
- April 1937 The Jewish community is officially recognized by Albanian government.
- 1938 Immigration restrictions are placed on Jews after King Zog bows to pressure from Italy. Officially there are 300 Albanian Jews in the country; many more

unofficial Jewish immigrants stay in the country on expired visas. The Jewish population of Valona is 15 Jewish families.

February 1939 One hundred Jewish families arrive in Albania from Vienna.

March 1939 Ninety-five Jewish families arrive in Albania, mostly from Austria and Germany.

April 1939 Italy invades Albania; thousands of non-Albanian Jews are stranded in the country; Jews suffer financial hardship and official discrimination. King Zog's policies of tolerance toward Jews would save thousands of lives during World War II

July 1940 The Italian commander in Albania orders foreign Jews to be repatriated to their home countries; in actuality no Jews are forced to leave the country, and Jewish refugees from Yugoslavia and Bulgaria find safety in Albania. Jews in the port city of Durres are ordered to relocate to the interior of country.

September 1941 A wave of Jews arrives from Kosovo.

April 1942 Another wave of Jews arrives from Kosovo, including 100 Jews arriving in Berat, and 79 Jews sent to Preza.

July 1942 An additional 88 Jews arrive from Kosovo.

1943 An estimated 800 foreign Jewish refugees are residing in Albania.

September 1943 Germany occupies Albania. Germans are undermanned and forced to cooperate heavily with Albanian government, which refuses German requests for handing over lists of Jews. Many Jews join the resistance and die fighting the Germans.

May 1944 Communist partisans form a new government in Albania under Enver Hoxha.

1945 By end of war an estimated 1,800 Jews reside in Albania. Not one Jew in Albania was turned over to the Germans during the war.

1949 Albania recognizes Israel but refuses to establish diplomatic or trade relations until the fall of Communism in 1991. From 1948 to 1991 aliyah is made by 356 Albanian Jews.

1950s The communist regime imposes strict, Stalinist-style rule over the entire country. Jews in Albania, including some foreign Jewish refugees who remained in the country after World War II, are not targeted for persecution, but they are not allowed to leave the country and visit relatives abroad.

1967 Albania is declared an atheist state. Religious buildings, including the synagogue in Tirana, are confiscated.

1985 Enver Hoxha dies. The new government relaxes restrictions and grants new freedoms.

December 1990 A secret evacuation of Jews to Israel commences. In total 350 Jews are airlifted to Israel by the Jewish Agency in what is code-named Operation Flying Carpet. Jews are flown in groups of 20 and 30 to Rome and Athens and then to Israel and the United States.

June 1991 Operation Flying Carpet is completed. The remaining Jews in Albania number around 20.

August 18, 1991 Albania and Israel establish diplomatic relations.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Traditionally Jewish occupations included merchant and urban laborer.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

In 1991, Albanian journalist Neshat Tozaj published a novel, *Shalom*, on the plight of the Albanian Jewry during World War II.

### Religious Denominations

Organized Jewish religious services are virtually nonexistent today. A synagogue still exists in Vlorë (Valona), but it is no longer in use.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

There is very little organized Jewish life in Albania. The American Jewish Distribution Committee provides essential support for the remaining Jews, including regular shipments of matzoth for Passover. The most notable Jewish organization is the Albania-Israel Friendship Society in Tirana. In 1990, Albanian Refik Veseli, head of the society, became the first of his compatriots to be invited to Israel and honored as one of the Righteous Persons at Yad Vashem. During World War II Veseli's family was one of many Albanian families to help save Jews. In total, 63 Albanians have received this honor. On February 2, 1995, Albania was added to the list of "Righteous Among Nations" at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. In June 1990, Jewish-American Congressman Tom Lantos and former Albanian American Congressman Joe DioGuardi traveled to then-communist Albania and met President Ramiz Alia who told of numerous unpublicized heroic deeds of hundreds of Albanians who rescued Jews during World War II.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

After the Shoah most Jews left Albania. Much of the remaining Jewry migrated from the old Jewish center of Vlora to Tirana, where educational and economic opportunities were greater. In 1990–1991 most of Albania's remaining 300 Jews made aliyah to Israel. Of the 60 Jews who remained in Albania, most emigrated during political violence that struck the country in 1997.

## Selected Bibliography

- Arbell, Mordechai. 2003. "The Jewish Community of Vlor-Valona-Avilona . . ." *Los Muestrros* 50. European Sephardic Institute Web site. <http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/050/html/page16.html> (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Cloyes-Dioguardi, Shirley. 2006. "Jewish Survival in Albania and the Ethics of Besa." *Congress Monthly*, January/February: 7–10.
- Fischer, Bernd J. "The Jews of Albania During the Zogist and Second World War Periods." *Illyria*. Albanischer Studentenverein Hamburg. [www.heimat.de/home/illyria/i.php3?p=2004\\_01\\_09\\_fisher\\_jews\\_in\\_albania&s=e](http://www.heimat.de/home/illyria/i.php3?p=2004_01_09_fisher_jews_in_albania&s=e) (accessed April 21, 2007).

- Gruber, Ruth E. 1997. "Last Jews of Albania Are Leaving." May 2. The Jewish News Weekly of Northern California. [http://www.jewishsf.com/content/2-0-/module/displaystory/story\\_id/6064/edition\\_id/113/format/html/displaystory.html](http://www.jewishsf.com/content/2-0-/module/displaystory/story_id/6064/edition_id/113/format/html/displaystory.html) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- "Jewish Communities: Europe: Albania." 2004–2005. World Jewish Congress Web site. [www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm\\_reg\\_europe.html](http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/comm_reg_europe.html) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Keinon, Herb. 1992. "The Albanian Exodus, A Jewish Community Ends." *Jewish Monthly* 106 (April): 30–33.
- Sarner, Harvey. 1992. *The Jews of Albania*. New York: Brunswick Press.
- Sarner, Harvey. 1997. *Rescue in Albania: One Hundred Percent of Jews in Albania Rescued from Holocaust*. New York: Brunswick Press.
- Ukraincik, Merri L. 1996. "Albanian Jews Search for Their Roots." *Jewish Education News* 17 (Fall): 17.

## Jews in Belarus

*Alexander Friedman*

---

**General Population:** 9,751,000 (2005)

**Jewish Population:** Official census 27,810 (1999); communal estimates are 50,000 (2006)

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 0.3–0.5 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** As of 2006, an overwhelming majority of Belarusian Jews live in the regional centers of Brest, Grodno, Vitebsk, Gomel, and Mogilev and in the capital of Belarus Minsk, which has the largest Jewish population in the country at nearly 60 percent. Smaller Jewish communities exist in Bobruisk, Mozyr, Baranovichi, Pinsk, Kalinkovichi, Lida, and Borisov.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Ashkenazi from Western and Central Europe and Poland, primarily during the Middle Ages. Almost all Jews are Ashkenazi.

**Languages Spoken:** Russian and Belarusian. The number of Yiddish or Hebrew speakers is very small.

---

### History of Jews in Belarus

**14th century** The oldest Belarusian Jewish communities are Brest, first recorded in 1388, and Grodno (1389). At this time much of what is present-day Belarus is controlled by Lithuania and Poland.

**1388** The Jews of Brest are granted the Privilege Code of Law by the Grand Duke Vitautas of Lithuania.

**15th century** Jewish quarters are recorded in Novogrudok (1445), Kobrin (1456), and Minsk (1489).

**1495** Jews are expelled from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, only to be allowed to return in 1503.

**16th century** In the first part of the century, there are known Jewish communities in Kletsk, Polotsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Orsha. Contemporary Belarusian areas are a significant part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which formed a com-

monwealth with the Polish Kingdom in 1569. Notable 16th-century Jewish merchants include Michael and Isaac Jesofovich from Brest, who play a tremendous role in the economical life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the first part of the century, and Shaul Wahl from Brest, a legendary “Polish king for one night” at the end of the 16th century.

1506 A Jewish community is recorded in Pinsk.

18th century After the partition of Poland in the latter half of the century the territory of Belarus is annexed into the Russian Empire. Prominent personalities in the Hasidic movement include Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk (ca. 1730–ca. 1787) and Shneur Zalman of Liady (1745–1812), the founder of Habad Hasidism. Notable Orthodox rabbis include the founder of the Volozhin yeshiva, Chaim Volozhin (1749–1821).

1791 The Pale of Settlement is created, incorporating much of what is modern Belarus; it exists *de jure* until 1917. At this time Jews play a key role in the economic life of what is today modern Belarus as dealers, merchants, and craftspeople.

19th century Under Russian rule Belarusian areas maintain a great world center of the Jewish religious life. Northern and western parts are under the strong influence of the Mitnaggedim, including well-known Lithuanian yeshivas in Mir and Volozhin. In the second part of the 19th century, the Musar movement spreads in the western part of Belarus. Meanwhile, Habad strengthens its leading position in the south and east. The Haskalah, especially the supporters of assimilation, which was widespread in Western Europe at this time, had not managed to extend its influence in Belarus. One great obstacle on the way to the spread of assimilation ideas was the anti-Semitic policy of the Russian authorities.

1880s–1890s Because of economic hardship and legal discrimination, a large number of Jews emigrate; most leave for the United States. Later, Jews made aliyah to Palestine. At this time Zionist or radical parties are organized and continue to operate into the beginning of the 20th century.

1897 The census reveals large communities of Jews across Belarus, most notably in Minsk, 47,562 (52 percent of the total population); Vitebsk, 34,440 (52 percent); Mogilev, 21,547 (50 percent); Pinsk, 21,065 (74 percent), Bobruisk, 20,759 (60.5 percent); and Gomel, 20,385 (55 percent). In shtetls the percentage of the Jewish population is even higher: 1,127 Jews out of 1,568 inhabitants in Kolyshki, 1,080 out of 1,523 in Krupki, and 1,310 out of 1,768 in Kopatkevichi.

1903 The Gomel pogrom takes place.

1905 A pogrom occurs in Orsha.

1915–1918 During World War I, Belarus is the epicenter for fighting between Russian and Austrian-German forces along the eastern front. During the war, the Jewish population suffers severely from anti-Semitic violence on the part of the Russian military.

1919–1920 Fighting takes place on Belarusian soil between the Soviet Red Army, Polish troops, and White Russian forces, resulting in a large number of casualties among soldiers and civilians and unleashing a great deal of social instability. All sides target Jews for violence, and pogroms are carried out in Belarus.

- 1921 Poland and Soviet Russia sign a peace treaty in Riga, which divides Belarus in two parts. Western Belarus becomes part of Poland and the east remains under the control of the Bolsheviks.
- 1920s–1930s Polish authorities do not interfere in the activity of the Jewish community, which leads to the flourishing of Jewish culture, education, and religious life in Western Belarus. Despite this, actual discrimination against Jewish citizens exists. Jews remain an essential element in the Western Belarusian economic system. Many Western Belarusian Jews sympathize with Zionists and communists. In the Belarus Soviet Socialist Republic, attempts to organize Jewish collective farms in the latter half of the 1920s, and the intensification of the Jewish resettlement in the Crimea and, later, in the far eastern regions of Russia, have only limited success. In the latter half of the 1930s, the government encourages Russification of national minorities, which severely damage the Jewish culture in Belarus. Jews do play a significant role in party and state apparatuses of the Belarus Soviet Socialist Republic, yet many Jews suffer under the Bolshevik repressive policy, *lishentsi*. Former members of the forbidden parties, intellectuals, including communists, and anyone labeled a counterrevolutionary element fall victim to Stalin's purges.
- September 1939 Poland is divided between the Soviet Union and Germany; many Jews see the Red Army as a liberator.
- 1939–1941 Thousands of Jewish refugees escape from German-occupied Poland into Western Belarus; there are as many as one million Jews in Belarus before the German invasion of the Soviet Union.
- 1939–1945 During World War II, the German invasion into the Soviet Union marks the greatest tragedy in the history of Belarusian Jewry. The Nazis and their collaborators execute about 810,000 Belarusian and foreign Jews in the territory of Belarus. Maly Trostenez, near Minsk, is one of the largest Nazi exterminations camps in Europe; more than 200,000 victims perish there. Jews fight in the war as partisans and Soviet Army officers, including Jewish partisan commanders Shalom Zorin (1902–1974) and the Bielski Brothers (Tuvia [1906–1986], Asael, Aharon, und Zus), who fight against Nazis in the Naliboki Forest (Western Belarus); and Soviet officers Colonel Efim Davidovich (1924–1976), Colonel Lev Ovsishcher (born 1919), and Lieutenant-Colonel Naum Alshansky (1917–1991).
- Late 1940s–1950s In years immediately after the end of World War II Soviet authorities complete the destruction of Jewish culture in the Belarus Soviet Socialist Republic; until the Gorbachev's perestroika there are no Jewish schools or cultural institutions in the Belarus Soviet Socialist Republic. At this time latent anti-Semitism is a central part of Soviet state policy.
- 1960s Soviet authorities refuse to allow Jews to emigrate, and thus the number of the "refuseniks" increased dramatically.
- 1970s Symbols of the protest of the Belarusian Jews against Soviet anti-Semitic policy are the annual illegal memorial assemblies, which take place on May 9, Victory Day, at a place where the prisoners of the Minsk ghetto were executed during World War II.

- 1980s Jews across the Soviet Union are permitted greater freedoms for emigration. Thousands of Belarusian Jews make aliyah or immigrate to the West.
- 1991 Belarus gains independence. Emigration controls for Jews are lifted, but anti-Semitism rises in the next decade.
- 1999 In April in Minsk the entrance to a synagogue is destroyed, a fire is set on the first floor, and anti-Semitic graffiti is spray painted on the walls. The incident elicits international condemnation. In May the Belarus public prosecutor's office publicly chastises local media in Minsk for the use of anti-Semitic materials.
- 2000 The Association of Belarusian Jews accuses President Alyaksandr Lukashenka of not doing enough to prevent a rise in anti-Semitism, including the vandalizing of Jewish graves and synagogues.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Historically, Jews were farmers, merchants, craftspeople, and worked in taverns or inns. A very high educational level is a distinctive feature of Belarusian Jewry, and Jews were employed by the state as doctors, teachers, engineers, and university professors and in private institutions, companies, and organizations. Generally, Jews have not played an important role in contemporary Belarusian cultural, economic, or political life. One notable exception is Mikhail Finberg (b. 1947), art director of the state symphony, People's Artist of Belarus, and member of numerous governmental committees and councils.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

After the creation of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, life underwent radical changes. The national policy of the Bolsheviks in the 1920s included the support of a culture of national minorities, which corresponded to the principle "national in form, socialist in content." As a result of this policy the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic became one of the leading centers of the Soviet Jewish culture. In particular, Yiddish schools, Belarusian State Jewish theater (1926), the Jewish Sector of the Belarusian Academy of Science, and Yiddish literature underwent tremendous development. Yiddish had been recognized as one of the official languages in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. There were also Jewish courts and local soviet political organizations.

Notable Belarusian Jewish artists, writers, and scientists include painter and scenery and costume designer Leon Bakst (born Lev Rosenberg, 1866–1924); painter and designer Marc Chagall (1887–1985); painter Chaim Soutine (1894–1943); painter Michel Kikoine (1892–1968); sculptor, painter, and lithographer Pinchus Kremegne (1890–1981); sculptor Zair Azgur (1908–1995); painter and pedagogue Yehuda (Yudel) Pen (1854–1937); philosopher Solomon Maimon (1753–1800); historian Simon Dubnow (1860–1941); psychoanalyst Max Eitingon (1881–1943); and physicists Yakov Zeldovich (1914–1987), Vitaly Goldansky (1923–2001), and Arcady Migdal (1911–1991). Belarus has also produced some of the most important

politicians in Israeli history, including Israeli prime ministers Menachem Begin (1913–1992), Yitzhak Shamir (b. 1915), and Shimon Peres (b. 1923) and presidents Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952) and Zalman Shazar (1889–1974).

### Present Economic Conditions

In recent years, Jews have benefited from the rebound of the Belarusian economy after the long recession of the 1980s and 1990s. Generally, the standard of living in Belarussian Jews has improved, though there are many poor old Jewish pensioners.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Organizations

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union Belarusian Jewry has experienced a renaissance of religious organizations. Mainly, they are concentrated in the capital of the country, which is also the center of Judaism in Belarus.

- *Religious organizations:* Union of Religious Jewish Congregations (Orthodox), Union of Jewish Religious Communities (Chabad-Lubavitch), and Religious Union for Progressive Judaism.
- *Cultural, educational, and youth organizations:* Jewish History and Culture Museum of Belarus, a few Jewish schools, several kindergartens, and *Beit Hillel* Student Organization, among others.
- *Welfare organizations:* Jewish community center *Emunah*, Jewish Family Outreach Service, Jewish Welfare Fund Hesed Rachamim, and Institute of Communal and Welfare Workers, among others.
- *Organizations of Jewish war veterans and Holocaust survivors:* The Belarussian Union of Jewish War-disabled and Veterans of War, Partisans and Underground resistance fighters, Gilf Ghetto and Nazi Camps Survivors Organization.
- *Representatives of the foreign Jewish organizations:* American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Union of Communities in Defence of Jews of the Former USSR, and the Jewish Agency for Israel, among others.

The leading Jewish institution of the country is the Union of Belarusian Jewish Organizations and Communities, which unites more than 100 organizations from 26 Belarusian towns.

Notable Jewish religious leaders from Belarus include Israel Meir HaCohen Kagan (Chafetz Chaim; 1838–1933), founder of the Radun Yeshiva and one of the most influential Orthodox rabbis in the 20th century, and Lithuanian Orthodox rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895–1986), who was widely recognized as supreme authority on Orthodox Jewry of North America.

### Anti-Semitism, Existential Problems, and Future Prospects

Pessimistic predictions about the coming end of Jewish life in Belarus, examined in the beginning of 1990s under the influence of the mass emigration, were not justified. Belarus remains an important Jewish center in Eastern Europe. Jewish emigration continues, but its pace has remarkably declined in recent years as most

Jews willing to leave the country have already left it. On the one side, the contemporary Jewish community is represented by elder Jews who do not want or are not able to emigrate; increasingly, a significant part of the Jewish youth see their future in Belarus because of the improvement of the economy. Equally important is a relatively low level, in comparison to neighboring countries, of anti-Semitism in Belarus. Basically, this is the result of traditional tolerance of the Belarusians in relation to national and religious minorities. Still, it is important to note that there are anti-Semitic publications in mass media; the defilements of Jewish monuments and further anti-Semitic actions do take place.

The Jewish community mainly depends on financial aid from abroad, from organizations in the United States and Israel. The crucial obstacle to strengthening the Belarusian Jewish community is lack of money.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The creation of the so-called Pale of Settlement in 1791, combined with the prohibition of residing the Jews in the countryside, caused the concentration of the Jews in big and small towns (shtetls) of Belarus, where they made a considerable part and often even the majority of the population. In the western part of Belarus, under Polish rule (1920–1930s), this situation remained, while in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, an important number of Jews stayed in big cities and shtetls, but the percent of urban Jewish inhabitants decreased. This state of affairs can be explained by the fact that some Jews of the Soviet Belarus took advantage of the repeal of the Pale of Settlement and moved to larger towns, particularly Leningrad



Abandoned Jewish cemetery in Zaslavl, a former shtetl near Minsk, Belarus. (Alex Potemkin)

and Moscow, or to Crimea or the Jewish Autonomous Republic in the far eastern region of Russia (Birobidzhan). In the country, Jews were organized on collective farms; at the same time, Jews from shtetls were resettled in the greater towns of the republic.

After the Nazi genocide, Belarusian towns and shtetls lost their Jewish peculiarity. Remarkably, there are many shtetls that once had a high Jewish population density up to the Holocaust, but now have only few Jewish inhabitants or even none at all. The Jewish population in Belarus was considerably reduced in the last decades after the Holocaust. On the one hand, this development was the result of growing emigration, but it was certainly related to strong adverse demographic tendencies after the 1986 nuclear disaster in Chernobyl. According to the 1989 Soviet census, 111,977 Jews (1.1 percent of the entire population) lived in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, but the first census in the independent Republic of Belarus (1999) reported only 27,810 Jewish inhabitants. However, the 1999 data are met with skepticism from Belarusian Jewish organizations, which estimate that there were about 50,000 Jews living in the country in 2006.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bjadulja, Zmitrok. 1918. *Žydy na Belarusi. Bytavyja štrychi* [Jews in Belarus. The Facettes of Customs]. Minsk, Belarus: Drukarnja A. Ja. Grynbljata.
- Botvinnik, Marat B. 2000. *Pamjatniki genocida evreev Belarusi* [Monuments of the Genocide of the Jews of Belarus]. Minsk, Belarus: Belaruskaja navuka.
- Friedman, Alex. "The History of Belarusian Jews." [www.beljews.info](http://www.beljews.info) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Gerlach, Christian. 1999. *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrussland 1941 bis 1944* [Calculated Murder: The German Economic and Extermination Policy in Belarus]. Hamburg, Germany: Hamburger Edition.
- Ioffe, Emmanuil G. 1996. *Stranicy istorii evreev Belarusi* [Pages of the History of the Jews of Belarus]. Minsk, Belarus: Arti-Feks.
- Iwanou, Mikola. 2001. "Die jüdische Welt in Weißrussland vom Ende des 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Holocaust" [Jewish World in Belarus from the Beginning of the 19th Century until the Holocaust]. In *Handbuch der Geschichte Weißrusslands*, edited by Dietrich Beyrau and Rainer Lindner, 392–408. Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Persin, Stephanie. "The Jewish Virtual History Tour: Belarus." <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Belarus.html> (Accessed April 22, 2007).
- The Projektgruppe Belarus, ed. 2003. *"Existiert das Ghetto noch?" Weißrussland: Jüdisches Überleben gegen nationalsozialistische Herrschaft* ["Does the Ghetto Still Exist?" Belarus: Jewish Survival Against the National Socialist Rule]. Berlin, Germany: Assoziation A.
- Rozenblat, Evgenij, and Irina Elenskaja. 1997. *Pinskie evrei 1939–44* [The Jews of Pinsk 1939–1944]. Brest, Belarus: Brestskij Gosudarstvennyj universitet.
- Skir, Aron Ja. 1995. *Evrejskaja duchovnaja kul'tura v Belarusi* [Jewish Spiritual Culture in Belarus]. Minsk, Belarus: Mastackaja litaratura.
- Smilovickij, Leonid. 2000. *Katastrofa evreev v Belorussii 1941–1944 gg.* [Holocaust in Belorussia 1941–1944]. Tel Aviv, Israel: Biblioteka Matveja Čornogo.
- Smolar, Hersch. 1989. *The Minsk Ghetto: Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against the Nazis*. New York: Holocaust Library.

# Jews in Bulgaria

*Frederick B. Chary, Emil Kalo, Julina Dadova, and Robert Levi*

**General Population:** 7,450,000 (2006)

**Jewish Population:** 3,461 (1992 census); 6,000 Jews in Bulgaria-Shalom (OJB)

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 0.05 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Sofia, 3,000; Plovdiv, 400; Varna, 100

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Jews entered the lands in Roman times. Many Jews lived in the Second Bulgarian Empire (1186–1396). Most Jews came from Spain after 1492. These were Sephardim—90 percent of the modern population. A minority of Ashkenazim migrated from central Europe.

**Languages Spoken:** Bulgarian; before 1945, Ladino; a minority speak Yiddish

## Historical Overview

356–323 BCE Evidence of Jewish settlers in the land of contemporary Bulgaria dates from the late ancient period, during the reign of Alexander of Macedonia, when many Jews head for the Balkan Peninsula. The Apostles' Deeds, a memorial stone with an inscription in honor of the Archisynagogus Josephus dating from the second century CE, which is found near the village Gigen (Pleven region), is one of the earliest archaeological monuments proving the presence of Jews at that time. It describes Jewish communities in Thessalonica (Salonika), Philippi, and Beroia (Beria). A Greek inscription found on a marble book in the same place has a picture of a Jewish menorah on it. These two findings indicate there were Jewish settlements in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire at the time. A large part of the Jewish population is concentrated in settlements along the Danube River, the northern border of the empire, and plays an important role in its protection. These places develop as significant trade centers, along which Jewish settlements appear. Such centers are Benonia (Vidin), Istria (Silistra), and Nikopolis ad Istrum (Nikopol). Besides, there are Jewish settlements in Serdica (Sofia), as well as in Philipopolis (Plovdiv), one of the most significant towns in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, beginning in the second century, and home of the oldest known synagogue in Bulgaria, dating from the third century. Two dedicatory inscriptions have been deciphered on the remaining part of a floor mosaic, the first dates from the middle of the first century and the second from the fourth century; the inscriptions indicate that the synagogue was destroyed during the Gothic invasions and reconstructed after that. Vidin is another important center of Jewish life during that period. An inscription in Latin has been found in Vidin's Jewish cemetery that mentions the Jewish name Anius, which corresponds to the masculine name Hanana, known from the Old and the New Testaments.

- 5th century After the Roman Empire disintegrates in 476, the Jewish population of the eastern provinces remains in Great Byzantine. Greek becomes the spoken language. It influences the Jewish population, which starts using it in everyday life. The first compact group appears, known as Kaal Kadosh Romania, the so-called Grekos, or Romaniotes. Many Bulgarian Jewish family names, such as Polikar, Pilosof, Parasko, Kalo, Yavani, Pizanti, and Moskona, originate during this period. Christianity becomes the official religion, and hostility based on religious differences grows against the Jews.
- 527–565 During the reign of Justinian, anti-Jewish legislation comes into force, restricting the right of Jews to occupy public positions and forcing them to pay taxes to the Church. Later, they are forbidden to testify against Christians. Restrictions are also imposed on the performance of religious rites. Anti-Jewish measures are often accompanied by mass persecutions.
- 681 The foundation of the Bulgarian state (the first Bulgarian Kingdom) has a positive impact on the Jewish population. Many Jews from Byzantine find refuge in it.
- 811 Many come to Bulgaria as prisoners of war after the victory of Khan Krum over the Emperor Nikiphor. In the newly created Bulgarian state, the Jews live in peace among the Bulgarian population. The Bulgarians of Khan Asparukh have been familiar with the Jews ever since the time they inhabited the lands of the Khazar Empire (6th–11th centuries) in southern Russia. The famous 10th-century medieval work *Sefer Josefon*, the final version of which was edited by Leon-Judas Moskona (born in Orhrid in 1320), testifies that the Jews had contacts with ancient Bulgarians since the time of Khan Kubrat's Bulgaria in the 630s. The favorable environment facilitates the penetration of some ideas of Judaic monotheism in the upper circles of Bulgarian aristocracy. For example, when Prince Boris adopts Christianity as the official religion of Bulgaria, he turns to Pope Nikolas I (866) to clarify certain issues related to rituals and everyday life. The answers to the 106 questions he asks, which still exist today, show good knowledge of Jewish religion. The Jewish influence is also manifested in the propagation of the Slavonic alphabet created by the Salonika-born brothers Cyril and Methodius. They borrow several letters (denoting consonants that do not exist in the Greek alphabet) from old Hebrew and introduce them into Slavonic alphabet. The brothers have a good command of old Hebrew and translate the Bible from the original to the spoken language to make it more comprehensible to the common people.
- 11th century During the first Crusade, many Jews from Central and Western Europe—mostly Bavaria, Bohemia and Hungary—are forced to move to the east as a result of mass persecutions and violence against them. Many reach Bulgaria and establish their communities, which are separate from earlier Jewish settlements. The settlement of the Ashkenazim continues during the next centuries, their larger part concentrating in the towns along the Danube River, although some choose Sofia and Plovdiv.
- 1097 Tovia ben Eliezer (b. 1050), from the Jewish community in Kastoria (Kostur), writes *Lekah Tov*, which contains instructions and commentaries to the Torah,

as well as a Jewish grammar. Yehuda Lev Mung, author of *Menor Enahim*, is a famous disciple of Eliezer who adopts Christianity; he is elected Archbishop of Ohrid, owing to his great erudition. Another Bulgaria-born Jewish man of letters is Shimon Set (b. 1080) who wrote *Stehanit and Ihnilat*.

12th century A Jewish traveler, Rabbi Benjamin de Tudella, crosses these lands on his way to Asia Minor and India and collects comprehensive data about Jewish communities on the Balkan Peninsula. When the Bulgarian kingdom is conquered by the Byzantine Empire, hard times begin for the Jews with the introduction of laws for persecuting Jews on the occupied Bulgarian territories. When Bulgaria regains its independence in 1187, the Bulgaria rulers invite many Jewish merchants from Dubrovnik, Ragusa, and Genoa, who contribute to the economic prosperity of the state. During the period of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1186–1396), the Jews benefit from the positive attitude manifested toward them. For example, King Ivan-Assen II receives the “heretic” Jews from Hungary, and this provokes a conflict between him and Pope Grigorius IV (b. 1238).

14th century In 1360, Jews from Southern Germany settle in Sofia. Also during the second half of the 14th century, many Jews from Western Europe settle in Vidin, after being accused of spreading the Black Death (the plague). Two famous rabbis are among them—Moshe Yavani and Shalom from Neustadt. The latter establishes the first rabbinic school (yeshiva) in Bulgaria. During the period of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, a Jewish community also exists in the capital, Tarnovo. It is particularly noticeable during the reign of Ivan Alexander (1331–1371). After dissolving his dynastic marriage, the king marries Sarah, a Jewish woman who adopts Christianity and is baptized as Theodora. She becomes known as a fervent Christian and restores many churches. The church opposes the heretical trends in religion and philosophy based on dualism, which refuses to recognize the divine nature of Jesus Christ and therefore rejects the canon of official Christianity. Along with the Bogomil and Adamite heresies, these trends included the Judaizing heresy as well. The Jews are condemned by a number of ecumenical councils (the council that convenes in Tarnovo in 1360 being the most well-known). During the second half of the 14th century, the Ottoman Turks invade the Balkan Peninsula, and in 1396 Bulgaria falls under Turkish domination.

1492 The Jews and the Moors are chased from Spain by virtue of a special decree issued by the Spanish kings Ferdinand and Isabella. In 1496, the same happens to the Jews in Portugal. The baptized Jews, the Marranos, shared the same fate. Some move to Holland and France, and others head for the Ottoman Empire. They found communities and synagogues, which became known as Sephardic (after the Jewish name for Spain: Sepharad). Initially, the newcomers settle in big towns like Constantinople, Edirne, and Thessalonica, and from there they gradually spread throughout the empire to reach the Bulgarian territory. The Jews in the Ottoman Empire are organized according to the millet system, which separates the non-Muslim population into religious communities with internal autonomy. Thus, along with the Greek Orthodox and Armenian

Gregorian millets, the Yehudi millet appears. The Jews are represented by the chief rabbi (hakam bashi) with a seat in Constantinople. In compliance with the requirements of the official authorities, the Jewish community has its internal functions, combining the rights of spiritual and temporal power on its members. At same time its responsibilities include maintaining and regulating the community's relations with the state, such as collecting taxes and regulating the economic activities of its members.

1493 The settlement of Sephardic Jews within the Ottoman Empire facilitates the development of printing. The first printing house in the Empire is founded in Constantinople. Run by David and Shmuel ibn Nahmiyas, it functions until 1518. The first printed book it produces is *Sefer Aturim* by Jakov ben Asher. During the following decades, printing houses are established in other important towns, including Salonika, Izmir (Smirna), Sofia, and Belgrade. The Sephardic Jewish newcomers, with their knowledge and expertise in such different fields as trade, crafts, and science, have a positive impact on the development of the economic and cultural life of the Ottoman Empire. Textile production, centered mostly in Salonika, is their major craft. The Sephardic Jews are distinguished specialists in silk production and wool textile and dyeing. Ever since the reign of Sultan Bayezid (1481–1512), they have been granted privileges (*berat*) for buying wool from certain regions at lower price.

16th century The Ottoman Empire's conquest of vast territories facilitates the control of the big trade roads between Europe and Asia. This enables Sephardic merchants to occupy key positions, especially in international trade. The Bulgarian lands became an important link for the Ottoman Empire in two directions: southwest (Dubrovnik, Constantinople, Salonika) to the Mediterranean and northwest (the Danube region, Transylvania, and Central Europe). The Jews engage in trade in the interior regions of the Balkan Peninsula, thus playing a major role in the regional markets. Beside the privileges ensured by the Ottoman government, the Jewish merchants also have privileges guaranteed by the treaties signed by the Sublime Porte and the European forces. These treaties mark the decline that started in the Ottoman Empire after the 16th century; it motivated Jews to migrate to the West in search of new possibilities for accomplishment.

1523 Rabbi Josef Kapo, author of the famous work *Shulan Aruh*, comes to Nikopol, an important educational and religious center, where he teaches for some time at the local Talmudic school. One of the biggest achievements of the Sephardic cultural tradition, the Judeo-Hispanic language known also as Ladino, is enriched lexically under the influence of the Balkan, Arabic, and French languages. Wine production is another important occupation Sephardic Jews engage in (Salonika, Sofia, Bitolya, Edirne, Dupnitsa), as well as production of golden jewelry, glass, leather items, and dairy products (Vidin, Sofia, Salonika, Chorlu). Their expertise in medicine and physics, as well as their good command of foreign languages, facilitates the rise of Sephardic Jews to high positions in the sultan's court. Money exchange is another occupation that attracts many Jews. They are also active in collecting taxes and engage in direct money lending to different layers of the population.

- 17th century During the second half of the century, the movement of the self-proclaimed messiah Sabbatai Zevi gains popularity. His influence reaches the Bulgarian territories occupied by the Turks and finds fervent followers, especially among the Sofia Jews. In the 17th and 18th centuries, a number of works on religious matters are published in old Hebrew and Judeo-Hispanic, among them are also books on moral issues and commentaries. Special attention must be paid to the work of Yakov Kuli and Isak Magrisso Meham Loez (b. 1733), which includes commentaries on the Bible and has an enormous impact on Spanish Jews in the Orient.
- 18th century Another pseudo-messiah, Jakov Frank, makes a strong impact on the Bulgarian Jews, in particular in Nikopol.
- 1817 The first secular schools of Alliance Israelite Universelle, with teaching in French, start functioning in Shumen, Samokov, and Russe; these schools also provide education for girls. After the liberation, schools of the Alliance open in Plovdiv, Vidin, Sofia, and Pazardjik. Gradually, the schools supported by the communities start the process of modernization and adjust to the educational programs of Bulgarian schools. Along with Hebrew, they also teach Bulgarian, which greatly facilitates the integration of young Jewish people into the economic and social life of the country.
- 1877–1878 In spite of their loyal attitude toward the sultan, many Jews are inspired by the ideas proclaimed by the Bulgarian revolutionaries during the period of the National Revival. They join the national liberation struggle of the Bulgarian people and participate in the Russo-Turkish war. Vassil Levski, founder and leader of the revolutionary organization, often finds refuge in the homes of Bulgarian Jews in Vidin, Russe, Pazardjik, and Plovdiv. Eliezer Kalev from Plovdiv and Moshon Garti from Stara Zagora make significant contributions to the revolutionary movement. During the Russo-Turkish war, many Jews join the Bulgarian volunteer troops. Mosei Kalev and Leon Krudo from Samokov participate in the battle on Mount Shipka at the end of August 1877. When the Turkish troops withdraw from Sofia in the beginning of January 1878, the rabbi of Sofia, Gabriel Almosnino, actively tries to prevent the destruction of the town by fire. He participates in the unsuccessful negotiations with the commander-in-chief of the Turkish army, Syuleiman Pasha, pleading for him not to set the town on fire. When his request is denied, Almosnino helps organize a fire brigade, which puts out the fire. He is also elected as the representative of Bulgarian Jews in the first Grand National Assembly in Tarnovo in 1879.
- 1880 Promulgated July 2, the Temporary Rules for Spiritual Guidance of Christians, Muslims, and Jews, which set the frame of the religious objectives of the Jewish communities, are signed by Prince Alexander Battenberg. The document also recognizes Rabbi Gabriel Almosnino as official representative of Bulgarian Jewry.

Jewish communities are established in 34 Bulgarian towns. The survey of 1880 lists 20,503 Jews living in Bulgaria, 4,117 in the territory of Eastern Rume-  
lia and the others in the Principality of Bulgaria. During the next 20 years, the

Jewish population increases by approximately 70 percent. Trade and crafts are the major occupations of the Jewish population.

- 1885 The Principality of Bulgaria and the autonomous region of Eastern Rumelia, created under the Berlin treaty, are unified. The Constitution of the Principality of Bulgaria is adopted on April 16, 1879, and the Organic Statutes of Eastern Rumelia on April 14, 1879. The liberation of Bulgaria marks a new stage in the development of the Jewish communities. The legal status of Jews as citizens of the state is regulated by internal legislation and the international treaties signed by Bulgaria—the Berlin treaty (1878) and the Neuilly peace treaty (1919), which stipulate the legal equality of all citizens regardless of their faith and nationality.
- 1896 Jews from Bulgaria found the Hartuv settlement in Palestine. The leaders of the Bulgarian Zionist movement in its early stage are distinguished figures with international experience, such as Josef Marko Baruh, Zvi Belkovski, Hirsh Ramalovski, and Markus Ehrenpreis, as well as the Bulgaria-born Yeshua Kalev, Karl Herbst, and Albert Romano. The Bulgarian Jewry welcome with enthusiasm the ideas of political Zionism, which gain great popularity after the publication of the book *The Jewish State* by Theodore Herzl (1896).
- 1898 The first conference of Bulgarian Zionists is held in Plovdiv.
- 1901 Bulgarian Zionists begin publishing *Hashofar*, the central organ of Zionists.
- 1909 The Jewish Singers' Society is founded at the Central Sofia Synagogue. It is directed by some of the most distinguished professionals in choral singing: Petar Rendev (1909–1910), Mois Tsadikov (1910–1938), Menahem Bensusan (1938–1940), and Israel Aladjem (1945–1962).
- 1914 On April 6, an ordinance of the Foreign Ministry recognizes the Central Consistory of the Jews in Bulgaria as the representative organ of Bulgarian Jewry. This marks the beginning of the Jewish community's secular administration. The communities carry out their activities in economy, charity, education, religion, and culture through different organizations and funds. Before the liberation, the melder religious schools are widespread in Bulgaria. After World War I, under the influence of the Zionists, the Jewish schools start a process of Hebrewization at an accelerated rate. The consistory pays special attention to professional training in order to meet the needs of emigration for Palestine. Courses and schools in crafts are opened free of charge with the financial assistance of the consistory, the Zionist Federation, and the Carmel B'nai B'rith Lodge. Jewish citizens are loyal to the Bulgarian state and participate in all its wars: the Serbo-Bulgarian war (1885), the Balkan War (1812–1813), the war between the Balkan Allies (1913), and World War I (1915–1918), as brave warriors; many sacrificed their lives for the national ideals of the Bulgarian state. Rahamim Moshonov Garti, Avram Tadjer, Moisei Kohinov, Moreno Grasiani, Sason Alkalai, and other officers distinguished themselves in the battles. The total number of Jews who die in the Bulgarian wars of that period is 942, and 31 of them are officers. The favorable conditions created by the democratic development of the state after the liberation facilitate the expansion of the Zionist movement among Bulgarian Jewry. The Zionist movement is also inspired by

the ideals of the Bulgarian national liberation movement. The first Zionist organizations, created soon after the liberation, include Ezrat Ahim in Sofia, Carmel in Plovdiv, and Dorshei Zion in Haskovo.

- 1919 The first Jewish *chitalishte*, Obsht Podem (1919–1924), is founded in Sofia. Jewish centers of the *chitalishte* type function actively. They house public universities, theater groups, choruses and orchestras, arts and literature clubs, and so on. In the years to come, other institutions of the same type are established in Sofia: Heinrich Heine Chitalishte (1921–1924), Ch. N. Byalik Chitalishte (1926–1935), Jewish Popular Chitalishte (1936–1943), and, after 1944, the Emil Shekerdjiiski Chitalishte. Similar institutions are founded in other towns with concentrated Jewish populations, such as Plovdiv, Yambol, Haskovo, Russe, Kyustendil.
- 1920 The Central Consistory's program is connected with the revival of the Jewish national home in Palestine. Fund-raising is organized by Keren Aiesod (the main fund for the construction of Palestine). Societies of women, young people, sports, culture, charity, and other Zionist organizations set the pace of Jewish social and political life. The Maccabi gym society (the first branch of which was founded in Plovdiv in 1897), the left-wing Zionist youth organization Hashomer Hatsair, the Women's International Zionist Organization, and the revisionist movement Betar establish branches in Bulgaria. Ehalutz organizes agricultural societies (like the one near Pazardjik) that train pioneers for emigration to Palestine. Many Jews settle there during the British Mandate and found the settlements Kfar Hitin and Bet Hanan.
- 1933 The rise of the Nazi regime in Germany and the enactment of the Nuremberg racist legislation pave the road for the mass extermination of European Jewry. Bulgaria forms an alliance with Nazi Germany, which encourages the government to adopt anti-Semitic laws modeled after the Nuremberg racist legislation.
- 1940 Although there had not been marked anti-Semitic feelings in Bulgaria before, the enactment of the Law for Protection of the Nation on December 24 gives anti-Semitism the status of official policy for the first time in the country's history. As a result, Jews are excluded from Bulgarian economic, social, and cultural life. The adoption of this legislation is strongly opposed by the representatives of different professional associations—lawyers, physicians, journalists, artists—and by intellectuals, politicians, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, members of the Bulgarian Workers' Party, and ordinary citizens. Protest declarations sweep the National Assembly. The Jews express their own position in a declaration issued by the Central Consistory. Many join the ranks of the underground antifascist movement and guerilla resistance groups.
- 1941 An ordinance mobilizes the entire male Jewish population to build roads and railways all over the country. The Nazi occupation of Greece and Yugoslavia gives Bulgaria a chance, as an ally of Germany, to annex Macedonia and Greek Thrace, which had been taken from it under the Neuilly treaty after World War I. Bulgarian legislation is introduced to these territories by force under the Bulgarian police and the army. The decree that regulates citizenship on the territories liberated in 1941, enacted by the Council of Ministers on July 5, 1942, denies Jews living in these territories the right to acquire Bulgarian citizenship.

- 1942 The plan for the Final Solution, adopted at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin on January 20, envisages the destruction of the entire Jewish population in Europe, more than 11 million people, including the 48,000 Bulgarian Jews. After this, the restrictions imposed on the Jews are intensified. A commissariat for Jewish affairs is established at the Ministry of the Interior to implement the anti-Semitic legislation, organize the confiscation of Jewish property, and prepare for the deportation of the Jews. Alexander Belev is appointed head of the commissariat. A secret agreement, signed between Bulgarian Commissar Alexander Belev and SS Hauptsturmführer Theodore Dannecker, the German councillor on Jewish matters, provides for the deportation of 20,000 Bulgarian Jews from the so-called New Territories. Because the number of Jews on these territories does not exceed 12,000, the remaining Jews have to be taken from the Bulgarian borders to meet the deportation number.
- March 1943 At this time, 11,343 Jews from Vardar, Macedonia, and Greek Thrace are deported to death camps in Poland. The next measures involve the deportation of several thousand Jews from the Bulgarian borders. The news that preparations for the deportation are under way becomes known to the public in Kyustendil on March 9. A delegation that includes Petar Mihalev, Assen Suichmezov, and Ivan Momchilov heads for Sofia to inform their fellow citizen Dimitar Peshev, member of Parliament and deputy chairman of the National Assembly, of this plan. He arranges their meeting with P. Gabrovsky, minister of the interior, who is forced to admit that the government intends to deport the Jews from the country. Pressure from the delegation temporarily delays the implementation of the deportation order. The campaign to rescue the Bulgarian Jews is carried out with the participation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, members of the Bulgarian Workers' Party, public figures, and common people. On March 18, Peshev initiates a protest petition to the prime minister against the deportation, which is signed by 43 members of Parliament representing the ruling majority.
- May 21, 1943 The government adopts a plan to deport 25,000 Jews from Sofia to other places as a transitive measure for their future deportation from the country. The whole Bulgarian public—prominent cultural and political figures, representatives of the Holy Synod, common citizens—opposes this decision. Many letters and telegrams of protest are sent to the prime minister and the king. On May 24, a demonstration in which many Jews participate is carried out in Sofia and supported by the Bulgarian Workers' Party. The police broke up the rally, and many participants are sent to prison and concentration camps. In spite of strong public protest, the deportation of Jews to the countryside is implemented.
- August 1943 The advance of the allied armies and the political crisis after the death of King Boris III forces the Bulgarian government to distance itself from the plan for the Final Solution of the Jewish question. As a result, 50,000 Bulgarian Jews are saved from destruction.
- September 1944 Soon after a coup on September 9 that overthrew the pro-German government and allied Bulgaria with the USSR, a Jewish Popular Front (JPF) is founded and begins the task of normalizing the life of the communities and the

liquidating all consequences of the Law for Protection of the Nation. The Central Consistory is restored with its assistance. One of its first objectives is to provide humanitarian aid and to restore Jewish social and economic institutions. During the same period the United Zionist Organization (UZO) is established, which unites the restored Zionist associations: societies of women and young people, charity associations, and gymnastic groups.

After December 9, 1944 A government of the Popular Front coalition is established in Bulgaria. It completely abolishes all anti-Semitic laws from January 1941. Properties and civil and political rights of the Jews are restored.

1944–1947 Bulgaria is absorbed into the Soviet sphere of influence. Bulgarian Zionists meet with representatives of the world Jewish community and establish contact, which facilitates the foundation of their branches in Bulgaria and restores former structures. The American Joint Reconstruction Foundation, the Organisation for the Distribution of Artisanal and Agricultural Skills among the Jews (ORT) and the International Organization for Protection of Jews and Care of Jewish Children (OPJ) were actively functioning in Bulgaria at that time. Their objective is to extend humanitarian assistance, create real possibilities for the integrating Jews in Bulgarian economic and social life, and improve their social conditions. After 1944, Jewish *chitalishte* centers in Sofia, Plovdiv, Shumen, Sliven, Yambol, Russe, and Burgas launched large-scale cultural and educational programs. Their library funds are renovated; activities in art, music and literature flourish within their walls.

March 2, 1945 A decree announces the return of Jewish real estate taken away under anti-Semitic legislation.

1945 The Jewish Popular Chorus is founded under the direction of Israel Aladjem. After 1945, a Jewish Club of arts and journalism appears. Famous cultural personalities are related to the literature club directed by Yako Molhov: Armand Baruh, Valeri Petrov, Viktor Baruh, Haim Oliver, Anjel Vagenstein. A Popular University opens its doors. The Jewish *chitalishte* in Sofia launches the periodical *Novi Dni* (New Days). A theater group directed by Mois Beniesh and Yosif Rozanov becomes particularly popular.

A Jewish Academic Institute is founded at the Central Consistory. Dr. Asher Hananel, chief rabbi of Bulgaria, and Eli Ashkenazi, are among its main organizers. The institute receives the Jewish archives that survived wartime bombings, including valuable manuscripts and printed books from the 16th–17th century in old Hebrew and Judeo-Hispanic. The institute also maintains an archive of proverbs, sayings, and songs collected and a large number of materials related to important historical issues, such as schooling and the antifascist movement.

1947 After the State of Israel is founded on May 15, the City Committee for Assistance of Haganah is organized under the auspices of the consistory, and many volunteers join. The Bulgarian communist government favors Jewish emigration, especially after the Soviet Union officially expresses support for the establishment of the Jewish state. Parallel with that, the international activities of the Zionists become more dynamic. The Jewish institutions allocate a significant part of their means for preparing the emigration. An emigration commission is

formed that includes representatives of the consistory and three Zionists and is chaired by Jacques Natan. The commission prepares the lists of emigrants. A *sahliah* (messenger) arrives from Israel to sign the agreement with the Bulgarian government regarding the scale of the emigration and the means of implementation.

1948 The first group departs for Israel by the end of October. A month later, a second group of 2,903 persons departs. A third group of 2,857 persons departs at the end of 1948. The first emigrants are transported via Yugoslavia and, later, via Varna and Burgas, on the ships *Rodina* and *Bulgaria*. Organized emigration from Bulgaria to Israel from October 25, 1948, to May 15, 1949, reaches 32,106 persons, mostly craftspeople and merchants, as well as representatives of some categories of intellectuals and civil servants. After this aliyah, approximately 10,000 Jews remain in Bulgaria. The foundation of the Jewish Democratic Front (JDF) is an attempt to overcome the division and unite Bulgarian Jewry. Its program puts an end to the independence of young people and women's organizations, B'nai B'rith Lodge, and other groups that receive financial assistance from abroad or maintain relations with foreign organizations. After the big emigration of Jews to Israel in 1948, urban Jewish property gradually disappears. Most of it is sold and the Central Consistory receives the income from the deals. The control and the property of Jewish institutions, such as schools, a kindergarten, a Jewish popular hospital, a polyclinic, and banks, are transferred to the state. The cooperatives established by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Bulgaria are dissolved. The economic foundation of small-scale urban business disappears.

1948–1949 After the big aliyah to Israel, Zionist organizations discontinue their activities. Another actively functioning organization in the period.

1949–1952 Active Jewish life in Bulgaria comes to a halt. On March 8, 1949, the Communist activists at the Central Consistory hold a meeting that launches the idea to curb the social activities of the communities. Their religious functions are supposed to be funded mostly by the state. It is proposed that the Jewish *chitalishte* centers should become local institutions and abandon their Jewish character. Plans are also made to close the JPF and establish a Jewish Committee at the Commission for the Minorities of the Popular Front National Council. The Central Consistory is charged with a number of additional social functions. Many Jewish communities have to close, and only those in Sofia, Plovdiv, Russe, Stanke Dimitrov, Yambol, Varna, Kyustendil, Haskovo, Pazardjik, Pleven, Sliven, Burgas, and Stara Zagora are to continue functioning. The office of chief rabbi and the synagogues are preserved.

1951 The Central Israelitic Spiritual Council is founded, consisting of five members, with a seat in Sofia. It is decided that a spiritual council can be established wherever the Jewish population exceeds 50 persons. The chief rabbi is officially active in Bulgaria until 1960, and this post is held by Dr. Asher Hananel. After the Jewish emigration wave of 1948, religious life in many communities gradually fades. Many synagogues are closed and their property is transferred to the Central Sofia Synagogue. Normalization of public life raises questions about

the future of the Jewish community. The opposition between the two main ideological trends—Zionist and communist—becomes stronger. The difference of views is reflected in the confrontation between JPF and UZO.

- 1952 The fifth conference of the Jewish communities, held on April 20, formulates the notion that Jews are an ethnic minority.
- 1955 In October the Secretariat of the Bulgarian Communist Party discards the concept that the Central Consistory is an official representative of Bulgarian Jewry. In the years that follow, Jewish life centers mostly on cultural and educational activities. The National Organization of the Jews for Culture and Education (NOJCE) is founded in Bulgaria. It exists until 1990, when it is reorganized and renamed the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria-Shalom.
- 1981 Elias Canetti, a Bulgarian Jew born in Russe in 1905, wins the Nobel Prize for literature.
- 1990 Andrei Loukanov, born to a Jewish mother and Bulgar father, serves two separate terms as prime minister.
- 1992 The census reports only 3,461 people who identify themselves as Jewish.
- 1996 Loukanov is assassinated at his home in Sofia. The reason for his murder and the perpetrators of this crime remain unknown.

## Contemporary Overview

Bulgarian Jews are united in the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria-Shalom (OJB), which was founded in 1990 as the universal successor of the Central Consistory, which was created in the 1920s. After the big aliyah in the 1950s it was replaced by NOJCE, which existed until 1989.

The reform of an organization like NOJCE, which had a 40-year history and played a significant role during the totalitarian period, turned out to be a difficult task. Under contemporary conditions, it was necessary to rediscover the Jewish identity, which had been gradually disappearing; to reconstruct communal Jewish life; to remodel *Evreiski Vesti* (Jewish News), the newspaper of the Jewish community; to organize activities in a new way in order to incorporate communities from other Bulgarian towns; to perform indispensable social activities; and restore the international relations interrupted in the past as a result of the isolationist policy of the Bulgarian state.

All of these tasks necessitated the foundation of a new organization, the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria-Shalom, which consists of 19 regional organizations centered in different parts of the country. These regional organizations can also be registered as independent legal entities. Irrespective of their status, they elect their governing bodies and adopt their statutes. The statutes of the regional organizations that are registered as legal entities are created on the basis of the model statutes approved by the General Assembly.

The numerous activities and clubs of the OJB encompass young people's clubs; social, cultural, and educational structures; women's associations; and so on. The regional organizations have middle-age clubs, Ladino clubs, and so on. The General Assembly of the OJB is the supreme governing body. The OJB also carries out

numerous religious, cultural, educational, publishing, youth, and international relations activities.

The social programs of the OJB are supported by Claims Conference, World Jewish Relief, JDC, and other groups. Social activities include the following:

- Beit Avot senior citizens' home employs a physician and care staff for about 25 residents.
- The largest regional organizations in Sofia and Plovdiv have canteens that offer kosher food to more than 250 persons; in the other municipalities Shalom pays to restaurants to provide catering services.
- A daytime rehabilitation center attends to 150 persons every day;
- The Golden Age Club provides recreational opportunities and care to about 200 persons every Saturday.
- Cash allowances up to the level of the social minimum are provided to people with income lower than that level.

The OJB carries out formal and informal educational activities. Formal educational activities include care and financial assistance to kindergarten No. 1 in Sofia and the Dimcho Debelianov secondary school No. 134 with early foreign language education (its first-grade curriculum includes obligatory Hebrew studies for all children, irrespective of their ethnic background). The school is run by the state and has students of Jewish origin, as well as Bulgarian, Gypsy, and Turkish children. The OJB acts as a coordinator between the school and its sponsors (the Lauder Foundation and ORT).

Informal education is run by the Youth Centre for Jewish Non-formal Education (YCJNE). Programs include Yom Sababa (for children 6 to 11 years old) in which the children, supervised by *madrikhim*, acquire knowledge of Jewish traditions, religion, and culture through games; Ein Gvulot, in which 12- to 14-year-olds are engaged in different activities ranging from media and journalism to fashion; and Hadraha College, which trains *madrikhim* for the two programs for younger children.

In terms of religious activities, the chairman of the Central Israelitic Spiritual Council is entitled to be a member of the executive bureau of Organization of Jews in Bulgaria-Shalom. Beside the synagogue in Sofia, there is also a functioning synagogue in Plovdiv, and there are midrashim in Varna, Russe, and Burgas. The Sofia synagogue is one of the biggest and most beautiful synagogues in Europe. During World War II it was partially destroyed, but restoration began in 1990, and in 1997 the big hall was opened for services in its entire splendor. Every year since the Hanukkah shammash has been lit by a prominent state leader—the president, prime minister, or mayor of Sofia. The OJB pays the salaries of the synagogue staff in Sofia and Plovdiv, and services are regularly performed in the synagogues. The chief rabbi of Bulgaria is Behor Kahlon. OJB organizes mass Passover Seders, children's carnivals for Purim, and other events on religious holidays. The Sofia synagogue also houses a Jewish museum under the directorship of Vladimir Paunovski.

OJB is in charge of cultural activities that are rich and varied. The Jewish theater Keshet, directed by Eva Volitzer, has a repertoire that includes the classical Jewish



Synagogue in Sofia, Bulgaria. (Yana Downing)

play *Dibbuk* by Solomon Anski and plays by Jewish and Bulgarian playwrights. *Dibbuk* was shown on Bulgarian national television. Musical activities include the Agada chorus and Dulce Canto, a vocal group directed by Lika Ashkenazi.

OJB has two cultural centers in the very center of Sofia and 10 centers in different regions of the country. One of the Sofia centers houses a kosher restaurant that offers concerts every evening and hosts meetings with famous cultural figures.

OJB also has a publishing center that publishes books important for Jewish culture in four major fields: Jewish authors from around the world, Bulgarian Jewish authors, history, and Judaism. Major publications include *The Jewish State* by Theodor Herzl (the first foreign language translation of this book was in Bulgarian); books by Amos Oz, Shalom Ash, Efreim Kishon, Albert Einstein (*My People*); Lion Feuchtwanger's trilogy on Josephus; and books by Isaac Bashevis Singer.

OJB has diverse international activities. After 1990, OJB resumed its active cooperation with American Jewish Joint & Distribution Committee (AJJDC), which was interrupted during the 1950s by the then ruling Communist regime. AJJDC, the Jewish Agency (Sohnut), the Lauder Foundation, and ORT participate in different OJB projects. OJB is also a member of the two European Jewish structures—the European Council of the Jewish Communities and the European Jewish Congress. Contacts with the American Jewish Committee, BB International, the Conference for Jewish Material Claims, and many other international Jewish and non-Jewish organizations are also very effective.

### Important Personalities

Prominent members of the OJB include Eddy Shwartz (1937–2006), the first chairman of the OJB, who contributed to the unity of the community and founded the *Mabat* journal; Dr. Emil Kalo, chairman of OJB and former president of B'nei B'rit-Bulgaria; Dr. Maxim Benvenisti, chairman of the Sofia Regional Organization and sponsor of the OJB; Sara Cohen, executive director of OJB; Dr. Emil Astrukov, chairman of B'nai B'rith Lodge Karmel-Bulgaria; Becca Lazarova, director of the Lauder Foundation for Bulgaria, who is responsible for the educational and editorial activities (Shalom Publishing House); Mihailina Pavlova, editor-in-chief of the *Jewish News* newspaper; Simantov Madjar, chairman of the Plovdiv Regional Organization (the second-largest regional organization in the country); and Robert Djerassi, chairman of the Central Israelitic Spiritual Council.

Notable Bulgarian Jews involved in cultural activities in the 1920s and 1930s include artists Boris Shatz, David Perets, Eliezer Alsheh, and Sultana Surozhon; journalists Leo Koen, Karl Herbst, Mois Benaroya, theater directors Boyan Danovski, Mois Beniesh, Isak Daniel, and Grisha Ostrovski; actors Leo Konforti, Yosif Rozanov, and Isidor Hershkovich; painters Jules Pascin, the Nobel laureate Elias Canetti, and composer Pancho Vladigerov.

### Contribution to the Country

The Jewish community in Bulgaria consists mostly of intellectuals, as it is typical for Jews to have a high level of education. The Jews have contributed to practically all fields of the social and cultural life of the country.

In the area of politicians and public figures, the Jewish community has always had representatives in the National Assembly ever since the beginning of the transition period (1990) and in the government of the Republic of Bulgaria. The most important political figures include the following: Ilko Ashkenazi (member of Parliament in the Grand National Assembly and the one that followed it and former vice prime minister of Bulgaria); Solomon Passi (member of Parliament in the Grand National Assembly, founder and first chairman of the Atlantic Club, advocate for Bulgaria's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, former Bulgarian minister of Foreign Affairs, and member of Parliament); Nina Chilova (member of Parliament in the 36th and 37th National Assembly and former minister of Culture and Tourism); Nansen Behar (former member of Parliament).

Following is a list, although far from complete, of some of the people who have made important contributions in the areas of the arts, culture, and science: Leon Daniel (theater director), Andrei Daniel (painter), Ida Daniel (poet), Valeri Nisim Mevorah (pseudonym Valeri Petrov; poet, translator, and one of the most significant names in the Bulgarian culture), Anjel Vagenstein (writer, whose books have been translated into several European languages; scriptwriter, former member of Parliament in the Grand National Assembly), Roni Vagenstein (editor, owner of Kolibri, one of the biggest and most prosperous Bulgarian publishing houses), Grisha Vagenstein (film operator, producer), Grisha Ostrovski (theater director, professor in the Krastyo Sarafov National Academy of Theatre and Film), Nikolai Kaufman

(professor, musicologist, ethnologist, popular for his work in arranging Bulgarian and Jewish folksongs and collecting authentic folklore), Leon Levi (professor of psychology in the St. Kliment Ohridski State University in Sofia), Vladimir Pilosof (physician, chairman of the Tzedaka Foundation, and assistant professor); Fenya Dekalo (ethnologist who studies the Bulgarian aliyah in Israel); Eddi Shwartz (1937–2006: theater director, writer, founder and editor-in-chief of the *Mabat* journal), Itzko Fintzi (popular theater and film actor), Eva Volitzer (actress, acting technique instructor, director of the theater school for children and young people), Kasiel Noah Asher (actress), Dessi Tenekedjieva (actress, pop singer), Greddi Assa (painter), Yana Levieva (painter, book illustrator), Zafer Galibov (photographer), Simon Versano (photographer), Etien Levi (pop singer who teaches in New Bulgarian University), Venice Levi (chorus conductor), Milcho Leviev (world-famous pianist and jazz musician), Mayer Frank (pianist), Viktor Baruh (writer), Viktor Samuilov (poet, journalist), Albert Benbassat (head of the journalism faculty in the St. Kliment Ohridski State University in Sofia), Moni Shwartz (director, scriptwriter), and Robert Levi (anthropologist, poet, journalist).

Prominent journalists include Tatiana Vaksberg (popular research journalist, author of documentaries), Emi Baruh (journalist, member of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee), Viktoria Behar (television presenter, correspondent of the Bulgarian national television in Israel), and Elizabeth Levi (television presenter, producer).

The Jewish community as a whole and the OJB in particular have contributed to preserving and enhancing ethnic peace in the country with their participation in the activities of the Centre of Ethnic Problems at the Council of Ministers and in a number of important discussions, like the one that focused on the International Convention for the Protection of Minority Rights. The annual Shofar Prize of the community includes a category “contribution for ethnic and religious tolerance.”

### Selected Bibliography

- Barouh, Emmy, ed. 2001. *Jews in the Bulgarian Lands: Ancestral Memory and Historical Destiny*. Sofia, Bulgaria: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations.
- Bar-Zohar, Michael. 1998. *Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews*. Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corporation.
- Chary, Frederick B. 1972. *Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution, 1940–1944*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Elazar, Daniel J. 1984. *Balkan Jewish Communities: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Haskell, Guy H. 1994. *From Sofia to Jaffa: The Jews of Bulgaria and Israel*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Tamir, Vicki. 1979. *Bulgaria and Her Jews: The History of a Dubious Symbiosis*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press for Yeshiva University Press.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 2001. *Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust*. Translated by Arthur Denner. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

# Jews in the Czech Republic

*Cooper Childers*

---

General Population: 10,235,455

Jewish Population: 4,000

Percentage of Population: Less than 1 percent

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Most came from Germany, Hungary, Austria, Spain, and the Byzantine Empire and are of Bohemian, Moravian, and Silesian decent

Languages Spoken: Czech

---

## Historical Overview

**10th century** The earliest Jews to arrive in the present-day Czech Republic (ancient kingdom of Bohemia) date from 970. Most arrive along trade routes and are merchants and artisans. A major settlement eventually forms in Prague's old town on the right bank of the Vltava (Moldau) River.

**11th century** The period of the Crusades witnesses tense relations between the Jewish population and Christians, and the Jews suffer greatly in a string of pogroms, most notably at the hands of Christians of the First Crusade in 1096.

**12th century** The next period of the Crusades witnesses severe limitations on civil rights for Jews, and the Jewish quarter is limited to the right bank of the Vltava, close to Prague's old town square.

**1142** Prague Castle is besieged. The oldest synagogue and a large section of the Jewish quarter on the left bank of the Vltava River are burned.

**1215** The Lateran Council mandates that Jews wear distinctive clothes, prohibits Jews from holding public office, and places limitations on the amount of loan interest Jews could charge. This marks Jews as a minority group and is the origin of the Jewish ghetto in Prague.

**14th century** Early in the century Emperor Charles IV and his successor, Wenceslas, loosen government control of the Jewish quarter in Prague. This is the beginning of the power struggle among the nobility, the burghers, and the Hapsburg royalty over control of Jewish affairs and business.

**1389** On Easter, Prague clergy claim Jews desecrated the Eucharist. Mobs burn most of the Jewish quarter, and the entire Jewish population of Prague is killed or converted.

**15th century** In the early 1400s, the Hussite Wars weaken royal power and control shifts to the burghers and the landed nobility. City burghers begin to hold positions once held exclusively by Jews, such as banking. However, in the last half of the century, a free Jewish press opens in Prague, and its releases become the model for European Haggadoth.

**1501** The landed nobility (Bohemian Landtag) reinstates ancient Jewish rights and fosters economic activity.

**1522–1541** The Jewish population of Prague almost doubles as refugees from Germany, Austria, Moravia, and Spain flood into the city. The Jewish ghetto expands.

- 1541 Under pressure from the burghers, Ferdinand I expels the Jews from Prague for two years.
- 1557 Jews are again expelled from Prague.
- 1564 Ferdinand's death improves the situation for the Czech Jewry. During the reigns of Maximilian (1564–1576) and Rudolf II (1576–1612), the Counter-Reformation in the Hapsburg Empire is ignored, and a large number of Jewish intellectuals settle in and around Prague. Economic freedom is given to the Jews.
- 1707 More Jews live in Prague than anywhere else in the world, and they account for one-quarter of Prague's population.
- 1724 The first census of the Jews in Czech lands is carried out, showing 30,000 Jews living in 168 towns and 672 villages in Bohemia, approximately 20,000 Jews living in Moravia, and 10,500 Jews in Prague.
- 1726 Charles VI limits the number of Jewish families to 8,541 in Bohemia and 5,106 in Moravia. *Familianten* (only the first-born children of Jewish families were allowed to marry) is issued to enforce the quota, *numerus clausus*. Jews begin to immigrate to Hungary in search of marriage permits.
- 1740s Empress Maria Theresa expels the Jews from Prague between 1745 and 1748, ending the golden age of Prague Jewry.
- 1780s Jews return to Prague under the reign of Joseph II (1780–1790), and in October 1781, the Edict of Toleration gives Jews religious and economic freedom.
- 1849 Jews on Czech land have temporary civil equality under law. Shortly after, the Jewish population splits because of the culture conflict between Czech nationalists and the German-speaking members of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By the end of the 19th century, three antagonistic groups emerge among the Jews: those who accept German acculturation, those who favor Czech-Jewish acculturation, and those who favor Zionism. These divisions remain through the 1940s.
- 1918 Czechoslovakia gains independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Jewish nationalists plan individual Jewish "statelettes" within Czechoslovakia as early as 1917 but do not achieve their ambitions before the Nazi invasion.
- 1930 The Jewish population of small towns decreases by half as Prague, Brno, and Ostrava receive an influx of Jews from the countryside. The Jewish population of Czechoslovakia stands at 356,830.
- September 29, 1938 The Munich Agreement cedes the Sudetenland to Nazi Germany.
- March 14, 1939 Slovakia declares its independence from Prague and signs a treaty of protection with Nazi Germany. The next day German troops cross Czech borders. The Bohemia-Moravia Protectorate is established. After the invasion approximately 26,000 Czech Jews escape to Palestine, Poland, Great Britain, France, the United States and South America, but 92,000 Jews remain in occupied Czech lands. Of the 80,614 Jews who are deported by the Germans during World War II, 10,090 survived.
- May 5, 1945 Czechoslovakia regains sovereignty; 2,803 Jews remain in Bohemia and Moravia.
- February 1948 A Soviet backed coup establishes a communist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia. From 1948 to 1949 the Soviet block recognizes Israel, allowing Jews to

- make aliyah: between 1948 and 1950, 18,879 Jews immigrated to Israel. Czechoslovakia offers strong support of Israel during Israel's war of independence and is one of the first countries to officially recognize Israel. During the Soviet period, there are no rabbis on Czech lands and only eight Jewish communities: Prague, Brno, Usti nad Labem, Olomouc, Ostrava, Levice, Pizen, and Pribram.
- 1989 Under pressure of mass protests, the communist leadership in Prague resigns in the Velvet Revolution
- 1990 Czechoslovakia has its first free election since 1946.
- 1991 A museum is opened dedicated to Franz Kafka, a Czech Jew whose works are repressed during the Soviet period.
- 1993 The Czech Republic and Slovakia peacefully separated.
- 1994 The Prague Jewish Museum in the city's historic Ghetto is returned to the Jewish community.
- 1997 A Jewish elementary school opens in Prague.
- 1999 A Jewish high school opens in Prague.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Most Jewish Czechs are professionals or members of the service industry.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Prague has been the traditional cultural center for the Czech Republic and Central Europe. During the Renaissance, several prominent Jewish intellectuals emerged, and Jews became mathematicians, astronomers, historians, geographers, philosophers, and artists. Another period of cultural activity was during the years between World War I and World War II; it produced writers such as Ludwig Winder, F. C. Weisskopf, Egon Erwin Kisch, Franz Werfel, Max Brod, and, most notably, Franz Kafka. Since World War II there has been little cultural activity among the tiny Czech Jewish population.

### Religious Denominations

Orthodoxy, Havurah, Bet Simcha, Bet Praha, and Reform are the prominent denominations. Most young Jews are outside Orthodoxy because of a high degree of cultural assimilation and a lack of being Halacha.

### Jewish Educational and Communal Institutions

The Jewish population of the Czech Republic is too small to merit special schools from the government, though a Jewish kindergarten opened in Prague in 1994. In addition to the kindergarten, an old age home was established in Prague in 1993. Prague is the residence of the only rabbi in the Czech Republic, the formerly exiled playwright, Karol Sidon. After the fall of communism many new societies and clubs were formed by Czech Jews, most notably the B'nai B'rith Lodge and the Franz Kafka Society. In 1991, a memorial museum was opened on the site of the Jewish

ghetto in Terezin. In 1992, work began to restore the Holocaust memorial in the 500-year-old Pikkas Synagogue in Prague. Prague continues to be the host for various interreligious forums on anti-Semitism.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

During the brief period of official contact between Czechoslovakia and Israel, 18,879 Jews made aliyah. Others migrated to the United States through Western Europe. Most Jews remaining in the Czech Republic live in urban centers and most of the Jewish population is still centered in Prague.

### Selected Bibliography

- Epstein, Helen, and Kovaly, Heda Margolius. 1997. *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941–1968*. Teaneck, NJ: Holmes & Meier.
- “The Genocide of the Czech Jews.” [http://old.hrad.cz/kpr/holocaust/hist\\_zid\\_uk.html](http://old.hrad.cz/kpr/holocaust/hist_zid_uk.html) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Heitlinger, Alena. 2006. *In the Shadows of the Holocaust & Communism: Czech and Slovak Jews Since 1945*. Edison, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Rothkirchen, Livia. 2006. *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust (Comprehensive History of the Holocaust)*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Yahil, Chaim, et al. “Jewish History of the Czech Republic.” Porges Families Web page. <http://www.porges.net/JewishHistoryOfCzechRepub.html> (accessed April 21, 2007).

## Jews in Hungary

*Jordan Auslander and Frederick Ehrlich*

---

General Population: 10,006,835 (estimate July 2005)

Jewish Population: Estimates range from 50,000 to 100,000

Percent of Population: Less than 1 percent

Jewish Population by City: Budapest, 80,000; smaller populations reside in Debrecen, Miskolc, Szeged, and Pecs.

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Galician

Languages Spoken: Nearly all speak Magyar. Yiddish is rarely spoken.

---

### Historical Overview

ca. 300 Jews migrate to Pannonia, Roman Empire’s border with Germania, now southwest Slovakia

962 Jewish merchants from Byzantine Empire are observed in Bohemia.

1001 The Magyar, Saint Stephen, is the first Catholic crowned king of Hungary. German and Czech Jews begin to settle in Buda, Esztergom, Sopron, and Tata.

1092 While King Koloman protects Jews in exchange for a special levy, Catholic clergy restrict intermarriage and business practices; conditions are still favorable for the region.

- 1222 Jews face restrictions on holding noble titles, but further harsher measures are vetoed by king
- 1251 King Bela IV grants Jews legal rights and welcomes Jewish immigration.
- 1349 Jews are blamed for the spread of the bubonic plague.
- 1458–1490 The reign of Matthias Corvinus is favorable to Jews.
- 1490–1516 King Ladislas VI cancels debts owed to Jews. Anti-Semitism is condoned during his reign.
- 1494 Blood libel accusations in Tyrnau result in 16 Jews being burned at the stake and riots in towns with significant Jewish minorities, including Pressburg (Presov), Buda, and others.
- 1526 Ottoman Turks defeat Hungarians. Sephards from Istanbul settle in Subcarpathia, and others disburse into the Balkans.
- 1541 Conquered Hungary is incorporated into Ottoman Empire where Sephardim had always sought haven from harsher regimes. The Jewish population moves from Asia Minor to Buda and Kecskemet.
- 1614 Sectarian registration era begins when Pope Paul V issues *Rituale Romanum*, which codifies the keeping of five types of parish registers of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, congregation numbers, and burials. In areas under Hungarian control, the Roman Catholic becomes the de facto church of record, registering Protestants and others until 1781.
- 1686 Ottomans are defeated by an alliance where Hungarian nobles elect an Austrian Hapsburg king to rule Hungary. Turkish domination of the region ends in 1699.
- 1690s To consolidate their power base, Austrians and landed Hungarians encourage non-Magyar influx, including Slovaks and Jews, to resettle the wartorn land. Hapsburgs dominating the empire promote use of German language. The historic lands, Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, come under Austrian rule, and Slovakia and Transcarpathia come within Hungary's realm. Retaliatory Jewish expulsions take place.
- 1725 The Jewish census records about 1,700 households, in 40 communities, most in Western Hungary
- 1735–1738 The census shows that 8,000 of Slovakia's 12,000 Jews are originally from Moravia.
- 1740–1780 Anti-Semitic Maria Theresa, reigns as archduchess of Austria and queen of Hungary and Bohemia.
- 1772 Galicia is annexed by Austria.
- 1774 Bukowina is annexed by Austria.
- 1780–1790 Joseph II succeeds Maria Theresa and issues the Edict of Toleration (Toloranz Patent), which officially allows Jews to work as farmers and artisans and attend public schools; Jews are also allowed to settle in the royal cities, but changing residence still requires special permission.
- 1784 The October 24th Letter of Tolerance specifies that rabbis are to keep German-language registers of births, marriages, and deaths through 1895. Jewish jurisdictional autonomy is abolished.
- 1787 On July 23, Hungary's 81,000 Jews are ordered to choose German family names for taxation and the draft and to Germanicize their first names by January 1788.

- 1840 The civil registration era begins. Decree XXIX mandates the recording of births, marriages, and deaths. Jewish compliance is tempered by the absence of official recognition of citizenship. Debrecen is opened to Jewish settlement.
- 1848 The Magyars, led by Lajos Kossuth, rebel against Austrian domination. Austrians, with Russian help, crush the rebellion. Jews are punished collectively for their support of the rebellion with a tax; its levy is preceded by a Jewish census. “Enlightened despot” Franz Joseph I succeeds Franz II and rules through 1916.
- 1850 The Jewish population is 340,000. Religious marriage is officially recognized, and registry compliance increases.
- 1851 Beginning in July, Jews are required to maintain “parish” registry books for vital records; compliance expands.
- 1866 The dual monarchy establishes common military, foreign policy, and finances. Francis Joseph still rules.
- 1867 The Hungarian Diet passes the Emancipation Act granting Jews full citizenship; residence restrictions and serfdom are abolished. Place names are changed to Hungarian names.
- 1869 The Jewish population is 542,000. Anti-Semitism persists and conversions to Christianity increase.
- 1882 Blood libel is documented in Tiszaeslar.
- 1886 Jewish vital registers that were created in 1827 and 1840 laws become an enforced requirement as of January 1; compliance is virtually universal. Register districts are centralized and depot seats are established by Hungarian Minister of Culture and Education Decree #1924.
- 1894 The register agenda is nationalized; civil marriage is introduced along with general freedom of religion.
- 1895 The Jewish register becomes an official civil function as of October 1; formerly it was a rabbinical responsibility. Although the Jewish register/parish districting ends, Jewish records are kept as a separate category through 1948.
- 1896 The Hungarian Parliament enacts Article XVII. The Jewish faith is given equal standing with all other religions; some Catholic backlash ensues.
- 1910 The last census of the empire records 910,000 Jews, more than half of Hungary’s merchants
- 1914–1918 During World War I some 320,000 Jews serve in the Austro-Hungarian forces; 40,000 die in the conflict.
- 1918 On October 28, Czechoslovakia is created from a union of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Subcarpathian Ruthenia and formalized in a triumph of Pan-Slavic hopes.
- 1919 A Hungarian Soviet Republic is briefly established; 3,000 Jews die in the “White Terror” reactions.
- 1920 Anti-Semitism persists after the Treaty of Trianon, which dismantles the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Place names are changed to Croat, Czech, Slovak, Serb, Romanian, and so on.
- 1920–1938 New clauses begin to appear on the Hungarian law books curtailing a century of gains in rights for Jews.

- 1938 Hungary joins the German Axis powers and is rewarded with parts of Slovakia, Transylvania, Yugoslavia, and Transcarpathia, increasing the Jews under Hungarian rule to about 800,000.
- 1941 The “Third Jewish Law” is passed prohibiting intermarriage; “Jew” becomes a racial definition. Approximately 50,000 converted Christians are classified as Jews. In autumn, 20,000 Hungarian Jews are expelled to Kamentes-Podolsk and killed by SS and Hungarian troops.
- 1942 In and around Backska, 1,000 Jews are murdered in January. Another 50,000 die in noncombatant labor battalions from harsh conditions on the Russian front. Prime Minister Miklos Kallas, Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross party leader, orders Jewish property confiscated, and imposes economic and cultural restrictions. While parroting Hitler’s “Final Solution” rhetoric, Jews fare better in Axis countries than in countries Nazis conquer as most of their autonomy is retained.
- 1944 In March, Nazis occupy Hungary, ostensibly for its failure to deport its 800,000 Jewish-classified citizens, who were already stripped of most of their rights and property. The 63,000 Jews previously murdered could not prove they had three generations of Hungarian residency. In April, Adolf Eichmann conducts a three-generation Jewish census of 400,000 Jews uprooted from countryside who are now concentrated in ghettos created in major towns. Deportations to Auschwitz commence in May. Some 2,000 Jews avoid the ghettos, fleeing to Romania. Zionist organizations provide fake passports, food, clothing, and concealment. Hannah Szenes and Perez Goldstein, members of the Jewish defense organization Haganah, infiltrate Hungary with the intention of organizing Jewish resistance, but their success is mostly symbolic and both are captured and killed. The Europa Plan is the result of a philanthropist’s private negotiations with Eichmann to buy, at \$1,000 a head, passage for 1,658 Jews to Switzerland. Accounts from these refugees published in neutral countries prompts Heinrich Himmler to cancel the escape route, but the stories result in sanctioned and covert protection initiatives from Sweden, Switzerland, and Portugal, notably from Hungarian-based diplomats Charles Lutz of Switzerland and Raoul Wallenberg of Sweden.
- 1945 An estimated 98,000 Budapest Jews die in forced marches to Austria in January. By the Nazi surrender in May, 94,000 Jews survive in Budapest’s ghettos, perhaps another 25,000 survive in hiding. Returnees from Soviet labor camps and, to a much lesser extent, the countryside, bring the number of Holocaust survivors to 260,000; however, 565,000 Jews perish, most in the final 12 months of the war.
- 1945–1947 Hungary is reduced to its 1920 borders by victorious Allies per the Yalta and Potsdam agreements. Returning Holocaust survivors revive some Jewish institutions, but most communities reestablished outside the larger cities fail to take root. Pogroms occur in some towns, most significantly in Miskolc and Kunmadaras. Anti-Jewish laws are repealed with the significant exception of property restoration and restitution laws. The Soviet Union subverts elections and installs a communist regime (Hungary becomes a “People’s Republic”), which actively pursues war criminals, primarily for their anticommunism.

- 1948–1949 The Jewish community is officially recognized, and aid comes from American philanthropies, but many Jews, fearing Stalinist anti-Semitism, immigrate to the new, and officially recognized, State of Israel. This window soon closes in 1949, as the Communists curtail emigration and outside contact, close Jewish community schools and institutions, and crack down on Zionists and other activists.
- 1951–1953 As many as 20,000 urban Jews are compelled to disperse to rural areas, but are then allowed to return.
- 1956 The Hungarian Uprising takes place in October and November; eclipsed on the world stage by the Suez Crisis, it is brutally crushed by primarily Warsaw Pact troops and armored forces. The uprising costs tens of thousands of lives, and about 250,000 people, 10 percent of them Jews, escape to the West and elsewhere. Soviets reduce their visible profile and some liberalizations are enacted, but overt religious practice is discouraged.
- 1967 Persons of Jewish origin are estimated at 85,000, most in Budapest (this number would decline to about 50,000 throughout the remainder of communist rule), where the observant maintain 20 synagogues. In response to the Six-Day War, diplomatic, but not commercial, relations with Israel are cut officially until 1989.
- 1999 On March 12, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland are admitted into North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
- 2004 On May 1, Hungary, along with Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Romania, join the European Union. Relations, trade, and tourism with Israel continue to improve. Hungary exports matzoth and Kosher wines and meats.

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Until emancipation, which occurred in stages throughout the 19th century, Jews were limited from higher education and professional careers. Many produced wine and other alcoholic beverages in the vineyards east of the Danube, serving their products at their own inns (*korcma*) and taverns. By 1900, more than a third of Hungary's farmland was owned by Jews. As legal obstacles fell, Jews took advantage of the opportunities in a much higher proportion than the general Hungarian population, perhaps the result of the Jews' culture of education in contrast to the general population, 33 percent of whom were illiterate as late as 1918. A middle class with assimilationist tendencies grew, while religious community leaders debated the merits of these new freedoms. By the 1910 census more than half of Hungary's lawyers and commercial businesspeople and nearly 60 percent of Hungary's doctors were Jews, as well as a staggering 80 percent of financiers. Hundreds of Jewish families had even joined the nobility by 1914.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Hungarian Jews flocked more to science than the arts, or rather, their spectacular achievements in science overshadowed their cultural contributions. Many atomic theorists, Leo Szilard, Eugene Wigner, Edward Teller, John von Neuman, Theodor von Kámán, Michael Polanyi, and George de Hevesy, had roots in the Carpathian

basin and moved to universities in Szeged and elsewhere, but primarily Budapest, when fleeing the fascists in the 1930s.

### Alternative Jewish Culture

With emancipation and the freedoms of middle-class wealth and society came a pent-up radicalism for even more social justice. Many middle-class Jews joined bunds and socialist and communist causes, figuring prominently in the 1918 General Strike and Revolution centered in Budapest. In 1919, Bela Kun, a Jew, briefly establishes a Hungary-Soviet Republic. Many fled Admiral Horthy's "White Terror" reprisals in the 1920s, which claimed perhaps 5,000 lives, 3,000 of them Jews.

### Present Economic Conditions

Manufacturing sector gains have been concentrated in the former Hungarian regions of Slovakia and Romania (Transylvania). The legacy of prewar and Soviet higher education infrastructure has seen many Hungarian Jews join the emerging middle-class service sector.

### Jewish Education

The Carpathian basin of pre-World War I Hungary as well as the major cities that remained Magyar after the treaty of Trianon were all centers of Jewish secular and sectarian education and publishing. The Hasidic influence remained strong in its Carpathian cradle through World War II.

### Religious Denominations

Orthodoxy and Isaac Taub's Hasidim bloomed in eastern Slovak, for example, Moses Sofer of Pressburg/Presov, was a zealous adversary of the Enlightenment, and Carpathian basin (centered in yeshiva and publishing towns of Ungvar/Uzhorod and Munkacs/Mukacevo) in the late 1700s. In reaction to these strict interpretations, the Enlightenment or Haskalah spawned the Neolog movement in the 1830s, which took root in Budapest and other cities.

Assimilation and intermarriage increased with the Emancipation Act, which whetted the appetite for economic and social opportunity. For religious taxation and record keeping the Hungarian Dual Monarchy addressed the some of the internal divisions and recognized three Jewish communities:

- *Neolog*: The Neolog community is closer to American Conservative or English Liberal than Reform Judaism. It included liberalized services with new concepts like organ music, played by a Gentile, on the Sabbath, mixed choirs, and so on. Congressusi and progressive Halado are Neolog variants.
- *Orthodox*: The Orthodox broke away from Neolog and formed their own community, aligned with traditional Orthodox Judaism principles. For instance, the rabbi was not allowed to give a sermon in Hungarian, only Yiddish.
- *Status Quo Ante*: This community was Orthodox, not Autonom Orthodox (Hasidim or Oberlander Yidden). Similar in origin to American Conservatives,

this group thought the Neolog reforms were too liberal and the Orthodox too strict. In accordance with accepted Halacha (Jewish law), they kept no synagogue organ, all-male choirs, and so on. Like the Neologs, they omitted the piyyutim (poems) from Sabbath services.

Budapest has a Jewish Museum in Europe's largest synagogue, which is the site of an annual cultural festival each August. In addition Budapest has a Jewish community center, theaters, bands, choirs, and dance ensembles. Many of these events are touted in general tourist information and in Jewish publications originating in Budapest. Elsewhere in Hungary, the World Monuments Fund's Jewish Heritage Council, as well as other private and government funds, has restored synagogues, notably in Szeged, even in communities where Jews have not returned, such as Mad, where they serve as museums and cultural centers.

### Communal and Political Institutions

Zionism has roots in Hungary, but not because of Budapest-born Theodor Herzl. Aliyahs before and after World War II included many Hungarians for idealistic and pragmatic reasons. Although most of the current Jewish population is involved in commerce, there is a small but proportional representation in politics, especially as many postcommunist Hungarians discover that democracy is participatory.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

After the bloodletting of the White Terror, anti-Jewish sentiments persisted into the 1920 as Jews were linked with radical political thought. Zionist activities were banned until 1927.

Acceding to Nazi and some popular pressure, anti-Jewish laws were passed coinciding with Hungary's alliance with Germany in 1938. Quotas spread to the professions, bureaucracy, and commerce, followed by bans. Nearly all Jewish heads of households lost their livelihoods, and this was extended to those who could not document three generations of non-Jewish Hungarian (Magyar) roots.

Budapest's Jewish population swelled with those seeking work among their own to survive. Social organizations were formed but could not keep pace with needs.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Although assimilation, anti-Semitism, and general right-wing xenophobia persisted throughout Central Europe in the 1990s, much of this was curtailed by Hungary's making relatively successful transition into a free-market economy.

### Contemporary Overview

There were significant population movements during and after the Holocaust: new arrivals from Poland, Slovakia, and Romania and even a sprinkling of Sephardim. After the war, some 200 Jewish communities were reconstituted, but most dwindled through natural attrition, emigration, and migration to the capital. In 1946,

anti-Jewish sentiment led to pogroms in Kunmadaras, Miskolc, and elsewhere. The imposition of communist rule resulted in the closure of many Jewish institutions and the arrest of Jewish activists. Many Jews were expelled from Budapest but were later allowed to return. During the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, 20,000 Jews opted to leave the country. The situation of Hungarian Jewry began to improve in the late 1950s. The community was allowed to reestablish links with the Jewish world, and with the collapse of communism, all restrictions on ties with Israel were lifted. Since 1948, 30,029 Hungarian Jews have immigrated to Israel, 14,324 of them between 1948 and 1951. This figure does not include Hungarian-speaking Jews from Romania.

The present situation is one of very limited religious affiliation. About 20 synagogues and prayer houses function in Budapest, and there are others in the principal provincial towns in which Jews live. The bulk of the Hungarian Jews who are religiously active (a small minority) attend the Reform synagogues, but there are also four Orthodox synagogues, one of them Sephardi. Eastern Europe's only rabbinical seminary, Reform in its practice, is in Budapest, and students from some neighboring countries study and receive their ordination there.

Budapest has more than 10 kosher butchers and a kosher bakery and restaurant. Hungary exports matzoth, kosher wine, spirits, and meat.

Budapest has three Jewish day schools and a high school. One of the schools is Orthodox, another is Reform, and the third is sponsored by the Lauder Foundation.



Interior of the Dohany Synagogue in Budapest, Hungary. (Peter Spiro)

The Alliance of the Hungarian Jewish Communities is the leading communal organization. This framework embraces both the Reform community and the Orthodox community. The Hungarian media often deals with Jewish topics, and its coverage is sometimes tinged with anti-Semitism. During electoral campaigns in particular, there have been manifestations of anti-Semitism. A common charge is that Jews were responsible for imposing communism on Hungary. Nevertheless, even though many Jews left after the war and after 1956, and many assimilated, there is a degree of revival in most recent years. Jewish property is being reclaimed, Zionist organizations are active, and synagogues are being rebuilt. The huge Dohany synagogue in central Budapest is being beautifully restored, largely funded by Hungarian Jewish emigrant Estée Lauder.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is actively involved in community support services and the Chabad movement has a major presence, providing rabbis and numerous facilities, including adult education and Hebrew school (Chevrah Kadishah), an early childhood/preschool center, bar and bat mitzvah instruction, kitchen koshering, circumcision, and hospital and prison visitation services.

### Selected Bibliography

- Patai, Raphael. 1996. *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Perlman, Robert. 1991. *Bridging Three Worlds: Hungarian-Jewish Americans, 1848–1914*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Schonfeld, Louis. "Hungarian Jewish History." *Magyar Zsidó* 2 (1): 3–6.
- Suess, Jared. 1980. *Handy Guide to Hungarian Genealogical Records*. Logan, UT: Everton Publishers.
- Szalai, Anna, ed. 2002. *In The Land of Hagar, The Jews of Hungary: History, Society and Culture*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Beth Hatefutsoth, Ministry of Defence Publishing House.
- Ujvari, Peter. 1987. *Zsidó Lexikon*. Budapest: Blackburn International.

## Jews in the Republic of Macedonia

*Scott Meadows*

---

General Population: 2,034,000

Jewish Population: Around 200

Percent of Jewish Population: Less than 1 percent

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula

Languages Spoken: Macedonian, Albanian

---

### Historical Overview

70 The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple forces a wave of Jews to immigrate to the Balkans.

- 4th century The first synagogue in the region is built in the ancient town of Stobi.
- 1096–1097 The First Crusade devastates the Jewish population, particularly in Byzantium, Meglen, Pelagonia, Per, and Skopje.
- 1108 Leon Mung, a converted Jew, is made archbishop of Ohrid. He becomes popular for his assistance to Jews who are persecuted elsewhere in Europe.
- 1170 Benjamin ben Yonah de Tudela visits Macedonia. His writings explicate Jewish origins, language, and customs and their affable relations with other peoples, especially the Vlachs.
- 1328 Judah ben Moshe Moskona is born in Ohrid. His primary works focus on philology and geography.
- 1331–1355 Dushan the Great, who is crowned in Skopje, upholds restrictive laws against the Jews.
- 1366 Beth Aharon, the first known synagogue in Skopje, is built.
- 1371–1387 Expanding into the Balkans, the Ottomans, under Murad I, conquer Macedonia. Bitola-Monastir is occupied in 1382.
- 1481–1512 An immense migration of Jews from Western Europe occurs as Jews flee the Inquisition. Many of the Jews who escape are accepted into the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans.
- 1492–1498 The Jews are expelled from Spain by order of Tomás de Torquemada and Ferdinand I and Isabella. Many flee to Portugal, only to be banished again along with many conversos. Most migrate to the Balkans, creating the first Macedonian settlements of the Sephards in Bitola, Kratovo, Ohrid, Skopje, Stip, Struga, and Strumica.
- 16th century Several notable Jewish philosophers are born or live for a time in Macedonia, including Samuel de Medina, Josef ben Lev, Shlomo Koen, Jaakov tam David Yahia, Ishaak ben Samuel Adrabi, Aharon ben Josef Sason, and Salamon Molho.
- 1560 An Italian traveling through Skopje writes that Jews exceed other populations in number.
- 17th century The synagogue Bet Ya'akov is built, and Skopje becomes a hub for Judaism. Sabbatai Zevi and Nathan of Gaza both visit Bitola-Monastir and Skopje.
- 1680 Nathan of Gaza dies and is buried in Skopje, which becomes a world-renowned pilgrimage destination.
- 1688–1689 The Austrian army under General Piccolomini occupies Macedonia. Skopje is set ablaze because of a cholera epidemic. The Jewish sector and cemetery are completely destroyed, and families in Moravia are held for ransom.
- 1863 A devastating fire occurs in Bitola, destroying more than 2,080 houses, including 1,008 owned by Jews. Depression and poverty soar, and slums replace most of the old city.
- 1895 The Alliance Israelite Universelle establishes a school in Bitola. More than 30 percent of Macedonian Jews speak French at this time.
- 1912–1913 Upon the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the territory of ancient Macedonia is divided among Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia. Territories of the present-day Republic of Macedonia are named “Southern Serbia.”

- 1941–1942 The Bulgarian army invades Macedonia and soon enacts laws preventing Jews from being involved in any form of commerce. Jewish businesses are forcibly sold, and Jews are ghettoized.
- 1943 Deportation of Jews to Nazi concentration camps begins. The entire Jewish populations of Skopje, Bitola, and Štip are removed, wiping out nearly the entire Jewish community of Macedonia.
- 1944 Macedonia is liberated, and the few remaining Jews regroup in Serbia. Most immigrate to Palestine (which becomes Israel in 1948), and a few return to Macedonia. The area is one of the hardest hit by the Holocaust; only about 140 Jews survive.
- 1991 After being part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia since 1929, the country secedes and is renamed the Republic of Macedonia. September 8 is officially celebrated as their Independence Day.
- 1993 After a naming dispute with Greece, the country is admitted into the United Nations under the name “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.”
- 2003 The Jewish community builds a new synagogue in Macedonia.

## Contemporary Overview

### Industries, Trades, and Professions

Traditionally Jews work as merchants and urban laborers.

### Religion

Though several minority religions still experience difficulties in Macedonia, today Jews are free to pursue religious activities, and anti-Semitism is not a problem. However, because of Macedonia's unfortunate economic situation, its Jewish population was unable to build new temples until recently. Starting in 1999, Temple Beth Israel congregants in Scottsdale, Arizona, began raising funds for a new synagogue. The synagogue was built in 2003 and is now a cherished center for the practice of Judaism.

### Community

Contrary to most of Eastern Europe, the Jewish population of Macedonia comprises mostly young adults and middle-aged Jews, with only a small number of elderly. Inter-marriage rates among Jews are high in Skopje, where nearly all of the Jewish population resides. Outside the capital city, one family lives in Štip, and a single Jew remains in Bitola. Ties with the Jewish communities of Belgrade and Salonica are strong, and a rabbi travels intermittently from Belgrade to Skopje to conduct religious services.

### Programs

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has been involved in several Jewish programs and works in Macedonia. JDC gives welfare assistance to

needy Holocaust victims. The group also supports an ongoing Jewish revival in Skopje, with such events as monthly visits by the chief rabbi of Yugoslavia and Macedonia, a communal seder, and a Macedonian translation of the siddur. It also facilitates participation in such regional events as the annual Beyachad seminar in Croatia and the Lauder/JDC Summer Camp in Szarvas, Hungary. The JDC also sponsors a work/study program that enables volunteers to help clean and restore Bitola's 500-year-old Jewish cemetery, which has been neglected since World War II.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bickley, Tami. 1999. "Helping Hands: TBI Congregants Raise Funds for Synagogue in Macedonia." 23 July. *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix*. <http://www.jewishaz.com/jewishnews/990723/help.shtml> (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Brailsford, Henry Noel. 1971. *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future*. New York: Arno Press.
- Cohen, Mark. 2003. *Last Century of a Sephardic Community: The Jews of Monastir, 1839–1943*. New York: Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture.
- Daskalovski, Zhidas. 2000. "Remembering the Past: Jewish Culture Battling for Survival in Macedonia." January 30. *Central Europe Review*. <http://www.ce-review.org/00/4/daskalovski4.html> (accessed April 21, 2007).
- "Europe and Central Asia." World Report 2002. The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. [http://parl.gc.adventist.org/documents/world\\_reports/2002/Europe%20Central%20Asia.pdf](http://parl.gc.adventist.org/documents/world_reports/2002/Europe%20Central%20Asia.pdf) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- "Europe/Macedonia." 2005. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Web site. [http://www.jdc.org/p\\_ee\\_mace\\_current.html](http://www.jdc.org/p_ee_mace_current.html) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Gruber, Ruth E. Jewish Yugoslavia. Our Jerusalem Web site. <http://www.ourjerusalem.com/history//story/history20030601.html> (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Matkovski, Aleksandar. 1982. *History of the Jews in Macedonia*. Skopje, Macedonia: Macedonian Review Editions.
- Persin, Stephanie. "The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Macedonia." Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Macedonia.html> (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Sadikaro, Samuel. 1997. "Essential Facts about History of the Jews in Macedonia." <http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/031/macedoine01.html> (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Stefanidis, Yiannis D. "Macedonia in the 1940s." *Modern and Contemporary Macedonia* 2: 64–103. <http://www.gate.net/~mango/Stefan01.html> (accessed April 21, 2007).

## Jews in Poland

*Vladimir Levin and Piotr Goldstein*

---

**General Population:** 38,537,000 (2006 estimate)

**Jewish Population:** Estimates vary from 1,100 (2002 census) to around 8,000, according to the Jewish community. Many people are still afraid to admit their Jewish roots, so the actual size of the Jewish population may be much bigger.

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Main communities exist in Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, Szczecin, Gdańsk, Katowice, and Wrocław.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Jews from Germany immigrated in the 12th–17th centuries. There was an influx of Jews from Russia in the late 19th to the early 20th centuries; at the same time, there was a large exodus to the United States. The 1920s–1930s saw Jews depart to Palestine. The late 1940s saw immigration into Poland of Polish Jews from the territories annexed by the Soviet Union, and departures to the United States and Israel. In 1968, most of the remaining Jews emigrated.

**Languages Spoken:** Until the 20th century, the spoken language of the absolute majority of Polish Jews was Yiddish; the Polish language intensively spread in the first half of the 20th century. Nowadays, the spoken language of Polish Jews is Polish, but the older generation also knows Yiddish.

## Historical Overview

9th–11th centuries Jewish merchants travel to Poland but do not settle there.

Late 12th century First documentary evidence of Jewish settlement in Poland appears, including coins with Hebrew inscriptions.

1234 The first mention is found of the Jewish community in Kraków.

1264 A “privilege” (charter) of Prince Bolesław V the Pious of Kalisz to the Jews of Great Poland allows them freedom of movement and trade; prohibits assaults on Jews and their cemeteries and synagogues; and places Jews under the jurisdiction of the prince and his representatives, rather than city authorities.

1267 The Provincial Church Council in Wrocław (Breslau) demands separation of Jews from non-Jews. Jews are to be segregated in specified sections of towns and must wear special hats. The number of synagogues is restricted, and Jews are prohibited from employing Christians. The regulations are never fulfilled but become a cornerstone of the anti-Jewish positions of the church in the following centuries.

1356 The first mention of the Jewish community in Lwów is found.

1364–1367 King Kazimierz III the Great confirms the privilege of Bolesław V for Jews of all Poland.

1367 The first mention of the Jewish community in Sandomierz is found.

1379 The first mention of the Jewish community in Poznań is found.

15th century Intensive development of the Jewish settlement in Poland takes place. Jews are engaged in money-lending and almost all branches of trade, including international.

Late 15th century The struggle of Christian townspeople against Jews begins. A number of towns, including Warsaw, receive the right *de non tolerandis Judaeis*, or prohibition of Jewish settlement.

16th century A prominent yeshiva is established in Poland. Poland is developing into a center of Torah learning, attracting pupils from Germany.

1539 King Zygmunt I transfers jurisdiction over the Jews living in private towns and villages to the hands of the town officials.

Mid-16th century The highest institution of Jewish autonomy—Vaad Arba Aratsot (Council of the Four Lands) appears: the heads of the main communities and

prominent rabbis meet twice a year in fairs in Lublin and Jarosław and decide about matters concerning all Polish Jews, including the division of the per capita tax.

Late 16th–first half of the 17th century Jews take part in colonizing the Eastern areas of Poland that are today part of Ukraine, especially as managers of noble estates. Meeting restrictions and opposition in the old crown towns, Jews concentrate in the private towns belonging to the nobility.

1648–1649 The Khmelnitsky Cossack uprising takes place. The Jewish communities in Eastern Poland are destroyed and thousands of Jews are killed. Poland ceases to be a magnet for Jewish immigrants, and Jews begin to leave for the West.

Late 17th–18th centuries Polish Jewry recovers from the troubles of Cossack uprising and 30 years of war. Jews are increasingly engaged in managing the nobility's estates and leasing beverage production and sale.

1764 The Council of the Four Lands is abolished. The first census of Jews establishes that about 650,000 Jews live in the kingdom of Poland.

1772 In the First Partition of Poland, Prussia, Austria, and Russia receive territories with large Jewish populations.

1793 The Second Partition of Poland is led by Prussia and Russia. A Jewish regiment under the command of Berek Joselewicz participates in the uprising against the partitioning powers.

1795 In the Third Partition of Poland, by Prussia, Austria, and Russia, the independent Polish state ceases to exist.

First half of the 19th century Hasidism spreads in Poland. Jews begin to be acculturated into Polish culture.

1807–1815 Napoleon I organizes the Duchy of Warsaw on the Polish territories taken from Prussia and Austria. Jewish emancipation is proclaimed but postponed for 10 years.

1815 The Vienna Congress creates the Kingdom of Poland (Congress Poland) as an autonomous part of the Russian Empire on the territory of the Warsaw Duchy.

1822 Autonomous Jewish communities (*kahals*) are abolished. In their place, new communities are created, restricted to the religious and social help spheres.

1862 The Jews are emancipated in Congress Poland.

1881 An anti-Jewish pogrom takes place in Warsaw in December.

1890s–1910s Jews immigrate to Congress Poland from Lithuania (so-called *litvaks*). Jews take an active part in the developing the textile production. Anti-Semitism increases. There is mass emigration of Jews to the United States. Two major Jewish centers develop in Warsaw and Lodz. Warsaw becomes the largest Jewish community in the world, with 337,000 Jews in 1914, and a center of Yiddish and Hebrew culture.

1897 According to the First All-Russian census, 1,321,100 Jews are counted in Congress Poland, which is 14.5 percent of the total population and 37.7 percent of the urban population.

1906 Pogroms take place in Białystok and Siedlce.

- 1912 During the elections to the Russian Fourth State Duma a Jewish deputy, Dr. M. Bomasz, is elected in Lodz; in Warsaw the Jewish majority elects a Polish worker, E. Jagełło; nonetheless, Polish nationalists proclaim an anti-Jewish boycott.
- 1914–1915 Jews suffer persecutions by the Russian army during World War I; many communities are completely expelled to the east.
- 1918 The independent Polish Republic is created; it includes Congress Poland, Poznań, Pomorze, Silesia, Galicia, Volynia, West Byelorussia, and south Lithuania. Anti-Jewish pogroms take place in Galicia (November 1918) organized by the Polish army.
- 1919 Polish-backed anti-Jewish pogrom breaks out in Lithuania in April. The Minorities' Treaty is signed in Paris in June. The Polish government promises to Jewish schools, controlled by Jewish authorities and funded by the state, and not to compel the Jews to violate Sabbath.
- 1921 At this time, 2,855,318 Jews live in Poland—10.5 percent of the total population and more than one third of the urban population.
- 1920s–1930 The independent Polish state applies anti-Jewish policies: Jews are de facto not allowed work in state service or government-dominated branches of industry and trade, *numerus clausus* exists in high schools, and an anti-Jewish boycott becomes effective by the late 1930s. Governmental policies and the development of a native middle class cause the decline of Jewish economic well-being in Poland. The major Jewish political parties are the General Zionists, Agudat Israel, and Bund.
- 1931 At this time, 3,113,933 Jews live in Poland—9.8 percent of the total population.
- 1939–1944 During the Holocaust, about 3 million Polish Jews are killed by the Nazis; about 300,000 survive, mostly by fleeing to the Soviet Union. Thus, about 90 percent of Polish Jewry is annihilated. Six major extermination camps are situated in Polish territory: Auschwitz, Majdanek, Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec.
- 1946 Blood libel and a pogrom take place in Kielce in July.
- Late 1940s There is a revival of Jewish life in Poland, but all Jewish institutions are taken under full control of communist authorities; there is mass emigration of Jews.
- 1958–1959 About 50,000 Jews emigrate from Poland.
- 1967 After the Six-Day War between Israel and the Arab states, Poland and Israel break off diplomatic relations.
- 1968 The Gomulka's government initiates an intensive anti-Semitic campaign and most Jews emigrate; about 6,000 Jews remained.
- 1977 The government begins a counter campaign to improve the treatment of Jews.
- 1989 The communist government falls and a significant renewal of Jewish cultural and religious life takes place; communal and cultural activities are strengthened.
- 1990 Poland and Israel resume full diplomatic ties.

- 2004 At the site of the Great Synagogue in Oswiecim, where the Auschwitz death camp was located, archaeologists uncover important Jewish relics.
- 2005 The Centre for Public Opinion Research in Warsaw publishes a poll finding that 45 percent of Poles have some antipathy toward Jews.
- 2006 A memorial is unveiled for the Jews killed in Kielce in 1946; they were murdered by local residents after they returned to claim their property.

## Contemporary Overview

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The Union of Jewish Religious Congregations in Poland has a main office in Warsaw and branches in all cities with a sizable Jewish population. The union maintains the Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, charities, and daytime centers for elderly. The rabbi of Lodz and Warsaw—Michael Schudrich—is currently Poland's chief rabbi. The Lauder Foundation has established schools in Warsaw and Wrocław. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee supports Sunday schools and other communal activities. The Social and Cultural Society of Jews (TSKŻ) helps with the renewal of Jewish life and culture; it has 15 branches in all major cities of Poland and publishes *Dos Yiddishe Wort* (formerly *Folkssztyme*), a Yiddish and Polish bi-weekly. Other Jewish publications are the monthly *Midrasz*, and local community bulletins (all in Polish). Numerous Internet portals and Web forums are run by Jew-



The Reform Judaism Temple synagogue in Kazmierz, the Jewish district of Kraków, Poland. (Aga Grandowicz)

ish communities and organizations. Jewish institutions include the Jewish Historical Institute, the E. R. Kaminska State Yiddish Theater (most of the actors are non-Jews) in Warsaw, the Jewish Choir Tslil in Lodz and Warsaw, and the Jewish Cultural Center in Kraków.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

The change to a pluralist democracy in the late 1980s opened up opportunities for extremist nationalist groups using anti-Semitism as a tool in the political struggle. They identify Jews with the communist regime and blame them for all shortcomings of Polish life. The removal of restraints on freedom of expression meant anti-Semitism was now openly voiced in public and everyday life and grassroots anti-Semitism well attested in public polls. At the time of the 1990 presidential and 1991 parliamentary elections, anti-Semitic rhetoric was even used by the mainstream political groups.

The dispute over the Carmelite convent at the territory of the Auschwitz death camp, where nuns from the convent had placed a cross near the camp grounds to celebrate Catholic resistance fighters executed by the Nazis, was at the center of the crisis in Catholic-Jewish relations from 1984 until 1993, when the crisis was finally resolved and the nuns were relocated. Although some elements within the Catholic Church supported right-wing Christian parties with known anti-Semitic tendencies, the Polish bishops, in an effort to improve relations, issued an unprecedented statement in 1991 taking a clear stand against all manifestations of anti-Semitism.

Since the late 1980s, Polish-Jewish relations are constantly discussed in public. There is continuing interest in the history and culture of Polish Jews among the Polish intelligentsia, and courses on Jewish subjects are taught in universities.

### Rebirth of Young Jewish Life

After experiences of war, the 1948 Kielce pogrom, and intensive anti-Semitic propaganda in 1957 and 1968, most of the remaining Polish Jews have been cautious about admitting their Jewish roots. Jewish religious communities—*Kehilot* and secular TSKŻ clubs in larger Polish cities—would gather very few and mostly elderly Jews. After the transformations of 1989, with Polish public life becoming more open and with contributions from the Lauder Foundation, run at that time by Rabbi Michael Schudrich, many people found their way back into Jewish life. Now numerous Jewish organizations attract those who were previously afraid to admit being Jewish and those who have recently discovered their roots. Elderly Jews are becoming more confident about disclosing their Jewish origins to their children and grandchildren, which has had a ripple effect, and many people are discovering an identity as Poles of Jewish extraction. In 1993, the Polish Union of Jewish Students was established as a nationwide Jewish youth association. It has recently evolved into more locally based organizations such as Czulent in Cracow, ZOOM in Warsaw, and Yalla! in Lodz.

### Selected Bibliography

- Ben-Sasson, Haim Hillel, Ezra Mendelsohn, Stefan Krakowski, Isaiah Trunk, Sara Neshamith, David Sfarid. 2007. "Poland." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Vol. 16. 2nd ed. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA: 287–326.
- Cygielman, Shmuel Arthur. 1997. *Jewish Autonomy in Poland and Lithuania until 1648 (5408)*. Jerusalem: Self-published.
- Dubnow, Simon. 1916. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Gutman, Yisrael, ed. 1989. *The Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars*. Tauber Institute Series, No. 10. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Hundert, Gershon David, and Gershon C. Bacon. 1984. *The Jews in Poland and Russia: Bibliographical Essays*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kapralski, Slawomir, ed. 1992–1999. *The Jews in Poland*. 2 vols. Kraków: Jagiellonian University.
- Lerski, George J., and T. Halina. 1986. *Jewish-Polish Coexistence, 1772–1939: A Topical Bibliography*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Mendelsohn, Ezra. 1983. "Poland." In *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Polonsky, Antony, ed. 1993. *From Shtetl to Socialism: Studies from Polin*. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Polonsky, Antony, Jacob Basista, and Andrzej Link-Lenczowski, eds. 1993. *The Jews in Old Poland, 1000–1795*. London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Rosenthal, Herman, J. G. Lipman, Vasili Rosenthal, L. Wygodsky, M. Mysh, and Abraham Galante. "Russia." *Jewish Encyclopedia*. [www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=479&letter=R#11](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=479&letter=R#11) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Weiner, Rebecca. "The Jewish Virtual History Tour: Poland." Jewish Virtual Library Web site. [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Poland.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Poland.html) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Weinryb, Bernard D. 1973. *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

## Jews in Romania and Moldova

*Frederick Ehrlich*

---

**General Population:** Romania, 22.3 million (2006); Moldova, 4.5 million (2006)

**Jewish Population:** 15,000–30,000

**Percent of Population:** 1.5 percent (Romania) and 1.3 percent (Moldova)

**Jewish Population by City:** Kishinev, 20,000; Bucharest, 4,500; Belz, 2,000; Timisoara, 750; Cluj, 550; Iasi, 550; Oradea, 550; and between 50 and 1,000 in half a dozen smaller Moldovan towns. Most of the Jewish population in Romania is elderly; perhaps less than 1,000 are under 25. The pattern is quite different in Moldova where there is a much stronger preservation of Jewish traditions and many more social and educational opportunities for younger Jews.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** There has been very substantial emigration since World War II, mainly to Israel where some 350,000 of the 400,000 Romanian Jewish

survivors of the war went. The situation in Moldova is a little different; there has been a degree of immigration of postwar Jews from southwestern Ukraine, enhancing the local population.

**Languages Spoken:** Most Romanian Jews speak Romanian. In Moldova, Russian and Yiddish are more dominant, and the Moldovan population contains a substantial reservoir of Yiddish speakers, even among the youth, because of the educational opportunities for Yiddish at school and university level.

## Historical Overview

- 2nd century Some evidence of a Jewish presence exists in what is now Romania.
- 14th century Historical records mention a Jewish quarter in what was later to be Bessarabia.
- 15th century Jewish merchants establish a presence in Romania and Bessarabia.
- 16th century Sephardim appear in Bucharest.
- 17th century There is extensive evidence of Jewish life. Prominent rabbis visit the established community in Iasi, and the presence of Jewish doctors is noted. There are numerous other Jewish communities and a tombstone from that period is still in Moldava. A bill of rights and a public statement define the status of Jews and their relation to Christianity. Ukrainian Jews flee to the relative safety of Moldava in the face of the pogroms of Bohdan Chmelnitzki.
- 18th century There is extensive documentation of Jewish life throughout what is modern Romania and Moldova. Apothecaries and physicians feature prominently, and they have presence at court.
- 1731 The Jews of Oradea have official recognition of their *chevra kadisha*.
- 1741 The Iasi community decides to elect its secular leadership annually.
- 1756 A princely decree confirms the appointment of a hakam as supreme religious leader for what is now Romania and Moldova.
- 19th century Jews allowed to buy houses and shops in towns but not to lease land estates. Synagogues are built but political rights are limited. Jews are regarded as aliens, even though they might have lived there for centuries.
- 1848 Emancipation of the Israelites is proclaimed in 1848.
- 1852 A Jewish school opens in Bucharest.
- 1857 A Jewish newspaper is initiated in 1857.
- 1859 After the unification of Romania in 1859 Jews are promised emancipation.
- 1866 Jews are declared to be stateless; only Christians can be citizens.
- 1877 After the substantial Jewish support of the army in the 1877 war of independence it is decided that Jews can acquire citizenship, albeit in case-by-case scrutiny of merits.
- 1899 The census records 266,652 Jews, 4.5 percent of the total population.
- 1914–1918 During World War I, 20,000 Jews fight in the army.
- 1919 A new constitution grants Romanian citizenship and equal rights to the Jews.
- 1930 The census records 757,000 Jews.
- 1940 Prime Minister Ion Antonescu allies Romania with Nazi Germany.

- 1939–1945 During World War II, Romanian Jews are massacred or deported to Transnistria in Moldova, cutting the prewar Jewish population of some 800,000 in half.
- 1944 Romania withdraws from the Axis alliance and joins the Allies. Jews are active in the resistance against Germany and in the Romanian Communist Party, which has a Jewish wing, the Jewish Democratic Committee (JDC).
- 1948 The Zionist Organization in Romania participates in the World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, but the same year the communist government in Romania bans Zionism. Jewish organizations are harassed in the official press and suffer violent attacks. The JDC of the Communist Party is dissolved. Only the religious communities, or *kehilloth*, are allowed to continue to operate.
- 1949 The government organizes the Federation of Communities of the Mosaic Religion to regulate religious activities. Jews are allowed to maintain synagogues, train rabbis, and observe religious customs.
- 1956 The Romanian, Yiddish, and Hebrew language Jewish newspaper, *Revista Culturii Mozaic Din R.P.R.*, begins publication.
- 1960 Throughout Romania, 153 Jewish communities operate 841 synagogues.
- 1967 As the Romanian government distances itself from Moscow, Bucharest makes closer ties with Israel. An official Romanian economic delegation is sent to Israel, and the two countries develop substantial economic and cultural relations.
- 1968 The Jewish theater in Jassy, which has produced more than 100 works over 20 years, discontinues operations. The same year the Bucharest Jewish theater tours Israel.
- 1977 The official census counts 25,600 Jews, but the Federation of Jewish Communities estimates the Jewish population at 45,000.
- 1981 The European Rabbinical Conference is held in Romania, the first time the conference is held in Eastern Europe since World War II.
- 1986 Rabbi I. M. Marilus dies, leaving only two rabbis in Romania.
- 1989 The communist regime is overthrown in Romania.
- 1992 The census records 9,000 Jews in Romania.
- 1994 Rabbi Moses Rosen dies at the age of 83. For more than 40 years Rabbi Rosen had been chief rabbi and head of the federation of Romanian Jewish communities.
- 1995 Rabbi Yehezkel Mark, an Israeli of Romanian origin, becomes chief rabbi.
- 2004 President Ion Iliescu inaugurates the first Romanian Holocaust Remembrance Day. Since 1949, 300,000 Jews have emigrated to Israel.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The vast majority of Romanian Jews are very elderly, unemployed, and very poor, eking out their existence from very inadequate pensions and assistance from the JDC and other Jewish charities.

Moldova is largely preindustrial; agriculture and related activities are predominant. In the past, the Jews were prominent in commerce and the professions. Little

is known about the present situation, although many of those still in the workforce are engaged in Jewish communal and educational activities.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

There is a much more positive and well-integrated Jewish community in the smaller country of Moldova than in Romania, but both communities are shrinking because of the combination of youth aliyah and the high mortality of the disproportionately large geriatric remnant. Little more than a tiny fragment of Jewish life will likely be found in these countries in future decades.

The Romanian Jewish population is governed by the Federation of Jewish Communities. The federation has been separated from the office of the chief rabbi, which was for many of the postwar years a very effective agent for preserving the community and acting as its advocate.

Although a number of synagogues are still preserved, as are some kosher facilities, the main communal work is now concerned with supporting the increasingly elderly and frail population, which is very much depending on support services. Chabad has established a significant presence and provides a synagogue, library, preschool facilities, bar and bat mitzvah instruction, adult classes, and hospitality and humanitarian aid.

In Moldova there is also an umbrella organization for the country's whole Jewish population, located in Kishinev, where there are also two rabbis. The communal leaders indicate that relations are more harmonious than in many other communities of the former Soviet Union, or even abroad. The leadership has certainly been very effective in establishing educational institutions, as there are two day schools and a yeshiva in Kishinev. One has more than 400 pupils from elementary through high school and offers at least seven hours of instruction in Hebrew and Jewish history and tradition, as well as extracurricular activities such as Israeli dancing, and summer schools. A second, rather smaller, school is under Chabad auspices and offers a very full Jewish program, as does the yeshiva.

There are three Jewish Sunday schools in Kishinev and another five in provincial towns, as well as an adult Jewish university program. Kishinev State University has a faculty of Judaica, Jewish history, and Jewish culture and there is an active Hillel Society.

Because of the widespread poverty, there is much work for the JDC and its Hessed initiatives, which provide nutritious meals and the opportunity for companionship to the elderly as well as a variety of cultural and vocational opportunities for youth.

There is an Israeli consulate and at its cultural center there are youth clubs, Maccabi sports club, ulpan (with some 250 enrollees), as well as other activities with a focus on younger people.

Anti-Semitism is, of course, endemic in the region, although it is officially discouraged. The serious decline in living standards is a strong catalyst for aliyah, which has continued at a high level since emigration has been possible, and continues to deplete Moldovan and Romanian Jewry of its youth.

## Selected Bibliography

- Ancel, Jean. 1991. *Bibliography of the Jews in Romania*, compiled by Jean Ancel and Victor Eskenasy. Tel Aviv, Jerusalem: Goldstein-Goren Centre for the History of the Jews in Romania, Diaspora Research Institute, Tel Aviv University.
- Butnaru, I. C. 1992. *The Silent Holocaust: Romania and Its Jews*. Includes foreword by Elie Wiesel. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Carmelly, Felicia (Steigman), compiler, on behalf of the Transnistria Survivors Association Toronto. 1997. *Shattered! 50 Years of Silence: History and Voices of the Tragedy in Romania and Transnistria*. Scarborough, Ontario, Canada: Abbeyfield.
- “A History of Romania.” Romanian History Index. <http://vlib.iue.it/hist-romania/minorities.html> (accessed April 29, 2007).
- The UN Refugee Agency. <http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/41501c557.html> (accessed April 29, 2007).

# Jews in Russia

*Avram Hein*

---

**General Population:** 142,893,540 (2006 estimate)

**Jewish Population:** 228,000 (2006)

**Percent of Population:** 0.15 percent

**Migration Route and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Since the early Middle Ages, Jewish travelers (known in Hebrew as *halkhei Rusyah*—Russian travelers) traveled through Slavic and Khazar lands. In the eighth century, the Khazars converted to Judaism and their kingdom, in what is today part of the Ukraine and Russia, became a new Jewish kingdom.

**Languages Spoken:** Russian, Yiddish

---

## Historical Overview

**8th–12th centuries** Prohibitions begin: Jews are not permitted to reside in Moscow and the Russian Empire.

**Between the 16th and 18th centuries** Some Jews enter Russia illegally or gain entry permits for commercial reasons.

**Late 18th century** Because of the partition of Poland, the Jews from Lithuania come under Russian rule.

**1791** Czar Constantine I confirms the right of Russian Jews to live in the territory annexed by Poland. This area becomes known as the “Pale of Settlement,” and its borders are finalized in 1812.

**1815–1855** Emperors Alexander I and Nicholas I attempt to convert the Jews by imposing compulsory military service on young children. Under Nicholas, Jews are conscripted for a period of at least 25 years. The Jewish community is required to provide the Russian officials with a minimal quota of Jews between

- 12 and 25 years of age to serve in the czar's military. Kidnapping was often needed to fill the quota.
- 1844 State schools for Jews are founded, but most Jewish parents continue to send their children to *cheder*.
- 1876 Restrictions were placed on the Jews' military service. For example, Jews are prohibited from serving in high-status positions, such as the artillery and navy, from becoming officers and conductors in military bands, and from taking leave outside the Pale of Settlement, even if they are stationed elsewhere. Yet they are still disproportionately represented in the military. In 1897, Jews make up more than five percent of the army despite making up only four percent of the population.
- 1881–1883 The Hivvat Zion movement is established in the wake of pogroms during this period.
- 1881–1914 More than 2 million Jews leave Russia, mostly for North America and Palestine.
- 1889 A law is passed banning all non-Christians from practicing law. This discriminatory law only affected Jews. Quotas are also placed on the number of Jewish doctors.
- 1892 The Municipalities Law prohibits Jews from serving in local authorities.
- 1897 Workers unions establish the Bund, a militant workers' group advocating Jewish cultural autonomy and Yiddish as the national language for the Jews.
- 1903 A wave of pogroms lead to self-defense organizations being formed among a diverse array of Jewish organizations such as the Bund, Zionists, and Socialist Zionists.
- 1912 Limits on the right of Jews to vote are introduced.
- 1917 With the end of the rule of the Russian monarchy in March 1917, the Provisional Government ends restrictions on the Jews. After the October Revolution overthrows the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, denounce all forms of anti-Semitism and permit Jewish representatives in party institutions. This strengthens the Jewish community as long-dormant parties, such as the Socialists, Zionists, and religious groups, are revitalized.
- 1924 The Soviet Union is established. Traditional Jewish institutions are abolished or placed under direct government control. Some Jewish elites are able to become a part of the political structure of the Bolshevik regime, but its socialist economic policies weaken the masses.
- 1927 Rabbi Yosef Schneerson, the head of the Chabad Hasidic sect, is imprisoned and expelled.
- 1928 The Jewish Autonomous Region is formed in Siberia.
- Mid-1930s The Soviet regime begins a systematic anti-Jewish campaign.
- 1939–1945 During World War II, Russian Jewry is decimated by the Holocaust.
- Late 1940s to early 1950s Authorities close down yeshivas and *cheder* and forbid the printing of Jewish books.
- 1948 On May 18, four days after the State of Israel is established, the Soviet Union recognizes Israel and takes several pro-Israel positions in the United Nations.

The recognition of Israel leads Jews to believe they can display support for Israel and Zionism and leads to greater expressions of Jewish national consciousness. This is opposed by the Soviet regime, and leads to an outburst of state-sanctioned anti-Semitism and a clamp-down on Jewish culture, including harsh reactions against Israel's diplomatic representations, first led by Golda Meyerson (later Meir).

- 1950s The Jewish Autonomous Region undergoes its second round of purges, and Jewish expressions are prohibited even after Stalin's death in 1953. This leads to a rapid decline in Jewish literacy among Soviet Jewry.
- 1965 Only 60 synagogues remain in Russia. From 1965 to 1967, a few hundred Jewish families are permitted to emigrate to Israel.
- October 1966 In the United Nations, the Soviet Union suggests that Zionism is equivalent to the genocidal Nazism.
- 1967 The Soviet Union cuts diplomatic relations with Israel after the Six-Day War, and the government unleashes a media campaign denouncing Israel and Jews.
- 1970 After the trial of a group of Jews accused of trying to hijack a plane to Israel, the harsh sentencing leads to a worldwide outcry against the Soviet regime.
- 1973 The U.S. Congress passes the Jackson-Vanek amendment, linking trade with Jewish emigration. This law, and international pressure, lead to permission for some Jews to emigrate. However, mass emigration results in increased persecution and discrimination among the Jews who remain.
- 1980s Emigration is severely curtailed. Despite this, prominent refuseniks, such as Anatoly Shcharansky (Natan Sharansky) and Yosef Mendeleovich, are able to emigrate to Israel. It is only in the late 1980s, with the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev, that formal expressions of Jewish culture, mostly non-Zionist, are sanctioned.
- 1987 The Soviet Union permits mass emigration. Many Jews remain in Russia, however. Most Soviet Jews are not Zionists or committed to a Jewish way of life. Most who seek to escape do so because other family members have left, or for economic reasons.
- 1990s A sharp rise in anti-Semitism is seen in the media and by nationalist politicians.
- 1991 The Soviet Union is dissolved and Russia becomes independent.
- 1996 Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, polls surprisingly well in his losing bid in the presidential elections. Zhirinovsky, of Polish-Jewish descent, is a controversial figure with a nationalist bent who denies his Jewish origins, praises Hitler, and uses anti-Semitic rhetoric.
- 1998 Russian Duma member Albert Makashov elicits international condemnation for his frequent use of inflammatory anti-Semitic language.
- 1999 In December, scores of Jews from the Caucasus are expelled from Moscow as part of a drive to rid the city of immigrants from the southern regions of the former Soviet Union.
- 2000 Around 300,000 Jews have left Russia since 1989.



Interior of the Great Choral Synagogue in St. Petersburg, Russia. (Chaim Danzinger)

## Contemporary Overview

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, new Jewish institutions have been established that serve a small but important segment of the Jewish population. In recent years, more than 40 “Israeli” schools and 180 Jewish Sunday schools have opened. There are also some Chabad-affiliated religious schools.

Kosher food is available, and the facilities are available for observant Jews. However, most Russian Jews do not view their Jewish identity in religious terms but rather in ethnonational terms. Although most of the population is not religious, Moscow has five synagogues, six day schools, yeshivas, and a kosher restaurant.

There are more than 230 registered Jewish organizations in the Russian Federation, although many only exist on paper. The institutional structure of the Russian Jewish community since the mid-20th century consists of a Zionist stream, religious stream, and cultural stream. The Zionist stream is composed of organizations that aid in the teaching of Hebrew and provide information about Israel, but this stream has significantly weakened since the emigration of its activists in the 1990s. The religious stream developed only in the 1990s and relied mainly on financing and personnel from Israel and the United States. The cultural stream was established

in the 1980s and has developed since the 1990s. The religious stream is the central stream of Jewish activity in the Soviet Union.

A variety of Jewish organizations operate in Russia, mostly under the auspices of three umbrella organizations. Rossiiski Evriskii Kongress, the Jewish Russian Congress, was founded in 1996 by wealthy Jews, headed by media tycoon Vladimir Gusinski. It mostly operates in education and welfare. One of its branches is the Congress of Jewish Organizations and Associations of Russia. The other large umbrella organization is the Federatzia Evreiskih Obschin Rossii (Federation of Jewish Communities in Russia). It was founded in 1999 by Russian-Israeli tycoon Lev Leviev, with support from Chabad. In 2002, the Kazakhi businessman Alexander Mashkevich founded the Evroasiatski Evreiaskii Kongress (the Euro-Asiatic Jewish Congress). In July 2005, a new regional council of Sephardic Jews was established, serving Sephardi Jews throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Reform (Progressive) movement has maintained a presence in the Soviet Union since 1992. The Reform movement is strengthened in Russia for its welcoming attitude toward those who are not Halachically Jewish. The Jewish Agency also runs programs for children who are not Halachically Jewish. The Masorti (Conservative) movement has also increased its presence.

The government of Israel has representation in Russia through the Ministry of Education, which provides financing and administrative support for the teaching of Israeli subjects in a network of 44 schools. World ORT (Organisation for the Distribution of Artisanal and Agricultural Skills among the Jews) runs a network of vocational schools and provides technical support to Jewish schools. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee runs an extensive welfare network. It provides services to Russia's elderly and poor populations.

Since the 1990s, educational opportunities in the Jewish sphere have expanded. In 2003, Russia's network of Jewish schools included 17 day schools, 11 preschools, and 81 supplementary schools, educating a total of about 7,000 students, not all of them Jewish. In recent years, Russian universities have added Jewish and Israeli studies programs. There are four Jewish universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

With economic and political decline, Russia saw an upsurge in xenophobic attacks targeted at Jews and an increase in anti-Semitic publications. Despite a relative low level of anti-Semitism, the rise in anti-Semitism has given cause for Jews to worry. Some inquire about emigration to Israel, although there is little follow-up. In recent years, Jewish religious and cultural facilities have been targets of vandalism, and in January 2006, worshipers were attacked at the Chabad synagogue in Moscow.

In June 2005, Russian prosecutors opened an investigation against a Russian organization that published a Russian translation of the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*. The investigation of the Jewish holy book was instigated by a letter from a group of Russian leaders calling for a ban on Jewish organizations. Several of the signatories of the letter were representatives of the leftist Rodina party, which holds several seats in the Russian Duma. The investigation into the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* was closed after pressure from Jewish groups and the Israeli government.

Russia has also seen an increase in militant Islamic activity and is struggling with Islamic extremism. Many radical Islamic groups are funded by extremist Islamic factions in the Middle East.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Although Russia was once a major population center for the Jewish people, by the early 21st century, its Jewish community was in deep decline and made up only a small majority of the worldwide Jewish population. While the Jewish population of the Soviet Union made up more than 20 percent of Diaspora Jewry in 1970, in 2003 it made up only 5.3 percent of Diaspora Jewry. In 2020, the population is predicted to make up 2.4 percent of Diaspora Jewry and only 1.3 percent of world Jewry.

Since the mid-1980s, Russia has seen a mass exodus of its Jewish community. There has been a significant decline in the Jewish population because of emigration to the West, the graying of the population, low levels of fertility, and an out-marriage rate that is the highest in the entire Jewish world—80 to 90 percent.

In the early 1990s, some Russian emigrants began to return. Many were elderly people who could not acclimate to their new society, but others were younger, looking to make it in the new Russian business environment. The growing number of Russian-Israeli emigrants who return to Russia has brought additional strength, as well as new challenges, to the Jewish community, as some of them send their children to Jewish schools but provide a more realistic—and negative—view of life in Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Altshuler, Mordechai. 1987. *Soviet Jewry Since the Second World War: Population and Social Structure*. New York: Greenwood Press, 21–24.
- Ettinger, S. 1970. “The Jews in Russia and the Outbreak of the Revolution.” In *The Jews in Soviet Russia Since 1917*, edited by Lionel Kochan, 14–28. London: Oxford University Press.
- “Former Soviet Union/Russia.” 2005. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Web site. [http://www.jdc.org/p\\_fsu\\_rus\\_current.html](http://www.jdc.org/p_fsu_rus_current.html) (Accessed April 22, 2007).
- Gidwitz, Betsy. 1999. “The Role of Politics in Contemporary Russian Antisemitism.” *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints*. September 15, No. 414. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Web site. <http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp414.htm> (accessed April 28, 2007).
- Gitelman, Zvi. 1994. “The Reconstruction of Community and Jewish Identity in Russia.” *East European Jewish Affairs* 2 (24): 35–56.
- Gitelman, Zvi. 2001. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*. 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Levin, Nora. 1988. *Paradox of Survival: The Jews in the Soviet Union Since 1917*. Vol. I. New York: New York University Press.
- Pinkus, Benjamin. 1988. *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ro'i, Yaacov, ed. 1995. *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*. Essex, UK: Frank Cass & Co.
- Tal, Rami, ed. 2005. *The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Annual Assessment 2004–2005: The Jewish People between Thriving and Decline*. Jerusalem: Gefen.

## The Unique Relationship between Habad Hasidism and Russia

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

Habad Hasidism hailed from various small towns in Belarus. It emerged slightly later than the first Hasidic groups. After the death of the Magid of Mezeritch, his disciples, instead of finding a suitable sage and saint to replace him as their master, returned to their respective places of origin and began to attract their own disciples. Only a few disciples originated from Russia, which was disproportionate to the size of the Russian territory and the Jewish communities there. Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk (1730–1788) and R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812), the founder of the Habad Hasidic philosophy, was among this group of pioneering Russian Hasidic leaders.

Habad Hasidism grew in what is today Belarus (Byelorussia) White Russia and over one and a half centuries became increasingly influential in various towns and villagers, though Hasidism was not the standard identity of Russian Jews. By the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Hasidic leadership was one of the few to remain in Russia and de facto became its representation. Had the former leaders, rabbis, and dignitaries of Jewish Russia not escaped Russian territory by 1922, leaving the masses to fend for themselves, this leadership vacuum may not have occurred. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson stubbornly remained in Russia and rose to near exclusive prominence. He had recently become the new Lubavitcher rebbe with the death of his father, and he was making his first marks on the style of leadership and determination he would pursue throughout his life. Habad had already developed a more universalist temperament, its ideology and general concern for the welfare of the Jewish soul complemented his ambitions to become a general Russian Jewish leader beyond the confines of a small Hasidic group.

Rabbi YY Schneerson urged the Moscow rabbinic leadership, particularly R' Shmuel Rabinowitz to gather a clandestine meeting of Soviet rabbis to organize themselves for the future against the onslaught of communism. The latter rejected this call, suggesting the dangers involved. Schneerson went over his authority and managed to initiate the meeting and was selected as one of the three leaders of the council. His political, social, and organizational skills as an administrator, political strategist, and, later, as chairman of the council, established him in a non-Hasidic role as one of the official leaders of the whole of Soviet Jewry.

Protests by some people, claiming a Hasidic takeover of traditional Russian Jewry, were for the most part ignored. The situation was tolerated because of the urgency of the hour. The committee sent out questionnaires inquiring into the state of religion in the various communities. Additionally, it employed representatives to energize local communities. These people were handpicked by Schneerson and were often Habad Hasidim despite the nonpartisan character of the organization that he headed. These messengers went secretly, not as messengers of organiza-

tions. Their tactic was to contact a local heder teacher who had earlier been unemployed to gather a few students together. The teacher would be provided with a stipend in return for the students' regular instruction. Instructions were given to each teacher as to how to should behave in the event of an arrest. The teacher would then be left to his own devices. In this manner, many haderim were established in many communities that were suffering the pressures of communism. The emissaries traveled widely, replicating this model of religious outreach throughout the Soviet Union.

Rabbi Schneerson's strategy worked, and the clandestine nature of his activities remained undiscovered for years. It was first coordinated from the institution called the *merkaz* (the center) located in Moscow, but moved to Leningrad in 1924 so as to better facilitate Schneerson's work, because he lived there at that time.

In 1923, Schneerson appealed to the world Jewish organizations for funding for his general activities as a Soviet Jewish leader. His appeals were rejected because of concern that his activities were primarily on behalf of Habad Hasidic interests. At that time, American donors still did not consider him to be a general leader of Russian Jewry. Even the *Agudat Yisrael* and *Agudat Ha-Rabanim* of America did not come to his aid at that early stage. In 1924, Schneerson was successful in establishing ties with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and he received funding for cultural work in Russia. The French Alliance Israelite Universelle also gave financial assistance to him, which further enhanced his prestige and authority and his ability to help others.

Schneerson prioritized his allocation of funds to the maintenance of yeshivas and haderim as elite institutions integral to Jewish survival. He provided legal aid to teachers who were arrested while carrying out their jobs. Their defense was necessary, as teachers were, on the one hand, the basic instrument in Jewish reeducation and, on the other hand, the most vulnerable targets of Soviet authorities.

Rabbi Schneerson often commented that he worked within the framework of Soviet law and considered only certain marginal elements in the government, particularly the *yevseksiya*, to be anti-Jewish. Nevertheless he had no qualms about illegal operations when he considered them necessary for his educational activities and particularly when it was realized that the anti-Jewish policies were not limited to the marginal arm of the *yevseksiya*.

Schneerson encouraged Jews to become artisans, because at that stage artisans were not required to work for the Soviet-controlled factories run on Shabbat. He provided light machinery to religious families for this purpose. He aggressively fought the flow of Hasidic emigration out of Russia, insisting that his Hasidim should not be selfish and that Russian Judaism relied on them to be rabbis, cantors, shohetim, and teachers. Although many Hasidim went to Poland and Latvia with Schneerson's blessings, and even to pre-state Israel, nevertheless, Schneerson told his followers in Russia that there were enough Hasidim around the world to build there and that the problems were largely in Russia. He particularly argued against leaving for the United States, insisting that emigration was tantamount to desertion.

These instructions were given in no uncertain terms and were generally obeyed by his loyal followers. Their disciplined obedience to his instructions to remain in

the Soviet Union while others left, gave Habad activists clout as the few remaining religious functionaries in Soviet Russia. This contributed to Schneerson's authority as a general leader, but particularly as a Hasidic rebbe. His constituents (the Hasidim) were better off than most, as they were guaranteed jobs if they carried out Schneerson's instructions. In 1928, however, the rabbinic institutions (including two Habad yeshivas) and the main rabbinic seminary in Nevel were discovered and closed down by the authorities.

From 1930, large-scale crackdowns against rabbis, educational facilities, and artisans who avoided contact with the state economy were implemented. Religious life became extremely difficult to observe. It became clear to all that these antireligious policies were coming from the main arm of government and not from marginal influences. Everything Schneerson had established until then began to crumble. Soon there was no strategy for survival, no plans, and no organized leadership. Schneerson decided that he could do little more from his place in Riga and moved to Warsaw where he continued his activities and ran a yeshiva there. Eventually, he immigrated to the United States, which opened up a new chapter in the Habad movement and its leadership. He continued his efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry in a clandestine fashion from there. As of today there is a predominance of Soviet Jews in the Habad fraternity. Additionally, a high proportion of newly repentant Russian Jews embrace Habad Judaism over other ideological groups. This is largely because many Russian Jews still have recollections, or have heard stories, of Habad activities in the Soviet Union, and they associate the movement with their Jewish roots.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who succeeded as the seventh Chabad-Lubavitch leader, continued efforts on behalf of Russian Jewry. Born in the Russian city of Yakatrin Slav, Schneerson was a fluent Russian speaker and privy to the decimation of the country's Jewish communities. He was involved in clandestine efforts from New York to assist communities and emissaries during the Soviet era. When the Iron Curtain lifted in the 1990s, Habad moved back into former Soviet Union countries with zest and has since built extensive networks of Habad centers wherever Jewish populations exist. These compete with other Jewish organizations and even Israel-sponsored agencies, and, in most cases, because of the highly motivated religious vigour of Habad rabbis, have by far dominated the religious Jewish presence in Russia and the former Soviet Union.

Hundreds of Habad houses, rabbis, schools, and religious education programs in various forms have sprung up. Habad emissaries have raised a lot of money from the newly wealthy Russian Jewish oligarchs. Many of the emissaries speak Russian and have attracted returnees to religious Jewish life, who in turn are more effective in setting up education and religious institutions. Habad's presence in Russia and the Soviet Union appears to be just the beginning of a renewal of Russian Habad Hasidism.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Buber, Martin, and Olga Marx. 1947–1948. *Tales of the Hasidim*. New York, Schocken Books.  
Dubnow, Simon, and Helen Lederer. 1970. *A History of Hasidism*. Cincinnati: Self-published.

- Ehrlich, M. A. 2000. *Leadership in the Habad Movement: A Critical Study of Habad Leadership, History and Succession*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Ehrlich, M. A. 2004. *The Messiah of Brooklyn: Understanding Lubavitch Hasidism Past and Present*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV.
- Fishman, David E. 1992. "Preserving Tradition in the Land of Revolution: The Religious Leadership of Soviet Jewry, 1917–1930." In *The Uses of Tradition, Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, edited by Jack Wertheimer, 85–118. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
- Friedman, M. 1994. "Habad as Messianic Fundamentalism: From Local Particularism to Universal Jewish Mission." In *Accounting for Fundamentalism: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, edited by M. E. Marty and R. S. Appleby, 328–360. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gilbert, M. 1976. *The Jews of Russia*. London: National Council for Soviet Jewry of the United Kingdom and Ireland.
- Gitelman, Z. 1972. *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Levitats, I. 1943. *The Jewish Community in Russia 1772–1844*. New York: Octagon Books.

## Jews in Slovakia

*Norris Thigpen*

---

General Population: 5,400,000

Jewish Population: 2,700 mainly living in Bratislava

Percentage of Population: 0.05 percent

Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds: Most came from Austria, Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland.

Languages Spoken: Slovak, Hungarian

---

### Historical Overview

**2nd century** Jews followed the Roman armies that crossed the Danube River and occupied what is now southern Slovakia. They were primarily employed as slaves, soldiers, and, later, as merchants. When the Roman armies left, the Jews followed.

**9th century** Jewish peoples are recorded as living in the Great Moravian Empire.

**11th century** Jews are firmly established in Slovakia. Slovakia is conquered by the Magyars and integrated into the Hungarian Empire. Jews emigrate from Austria, Germany, and Bohemia. Hungary is their main destination, but many settle in Slovakia.

**13th–14th centuries** The Jewish people in Slovakia become urbanized as King Kalman decrees that Jews are only allowed to live in towns. In 1251, King Bela IV proclaims that the Jews will be granted legal status and protection from Christians. After King Bela IV's proclamation, the Jews move into ghettos inside the cities.

- The movement of the Jews from the countryside to the city shifts employment from agriculture and small-scale trade to finance, commerce, and civil service.
- 14th century The city of Pressburg (Bratislava) has 800 Jews living in it.
- 1494 In the city of Trnava, blood libel begins. On August 22, 16 people are burned at the stake.
- 1526 Turkish armies defeat the Hungarian Empire and force all Jews to leave the major cities.
- 1529 Another blood libel occurs in the city of Pezinok.
- Late 16th century By the end of the 16th century, the Jewish population of Slovakia has left the major cities and scattered throughout the countryside.
- 17th–18th centuries Jews are reurbanized into the cities. Most people move back to the cities their families were originally from. There is also a surge of immigrants from Moravia, Poland, and Austria because of anti-Semitic riots and laws. These immigrants settle in western Slovakia around the city of Pressburg.
- 1700 The first yeshiva is established in the city of Pressburg.
- 1783 The Emperor Joseph II issues the Edict of Tolerance. The edict declares that Jews are allowed to live nearly anywhere in the Hungarian Empire and participate in any type of occupation. In the late 18th century, the Jewish population expands along with their freedom. Jews live throughout the empire. However, they are not allowed to live in central and northern Slovakia.
- Early 19th century Jewish toleration broadens and Jewish communities increase in size.
- 1820s Jewish cultural and religious life expand. The first Torah centers open in Pressburg.
- 1840s Another round of governmental toleration acts allows Jews greater opportunities in the Hungarian Empire.
- 1867 Slovakia becomes part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The government enacts new laws that further liberalize the treatment of Jews, but there is a rise in nationalist sentiment among the Slovakian upper classes.
- End of the 19th century Jews experience toleration from the government and anti-Semitism from the people of Slovakia.
- 1882–1883 Major anti-Semitic riots take place throughout Slovakia.
- 1896 The Reception Law is passed, giving Judaism the same standing as Christianity and giving rise to further anti-Semitism.
- 1903 The city of Pressburg is in the forefront of the Zionist movement and holds the first Hungarian Zionist Movement convention.
- 1904 The first World Mizrahi Congress is held.
- 1918 Slovakia gains independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and is absorbed into the new state of Czechoslovakia.
- 1921 The first census of Czechoslovakia counts 135,918 practicing Jews.
- 1920s–1930s Slovak nationalism and anti-Semitism increase.
- 1938 Czechoslovakia and Nazi Germany sign the Munich Agreement on October 6. On November 2, two large areas of Slovakian territory, containing 45,000 Jews, are ceded to Hungary.
- March 14, 1939 Slovakia declares its independence from Czechoslovakia and signs a treaty of protection with Nazi Germany.

April 18, 1939 The first of a series of anti-Semitic laws is passed. By the end of 1939, laws are in effect that prohibit Jews from working in the government and military, using public buildings, and owning businesses. The deportation and extermination of Slovakian Jews begins in the spring of 1942.

1939–1945 Around 100,000 Jews from Slovakia die during World War II.

August 29, 1944 Many Jews take part in an uprising aimed at overthrowing the Nazi-led regime.

After World War II The Zionist movement experiences a renewal.

1948–1949 More than 11,000 Jews leave for abroad, many going to Israel.

1950s The rise of communism results in decreased Jewish involvement in the community and government.

1989 The collapse of the communist regime brings increased migration and involvement of the Jews.

1993 The Czech Republic and Slovakia peacefully separate.

## Contemporary Overview

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Slovakia's most famous Jewish rabbi was Chatam Sofer. During the 19th century, he opposed the enlightenment and championed Jewish Orthodoxy. He headed Slovakia's most important yeshiva in Pressburg.

### Jewish Educational and Communal Institutions

The Jewish population in Slovakia is aging, and many residents are over 70 years old. The aging structure of Slovakian Jews has prompted a renewed interest in preserving Slovakian Jewish identity. Synagogues are located in the cities of Bratislava, Galanta, Kosice, Piestany, Presov, and Trnava, and there are hundreds of cemeteries. The two rabbis in Slovakia are from abroad. Kosher meat is locally produced in the cities of Bratislava and Kosice. Many clubs and organizations promote Jewish awareness, and the Federation of Jewish Communities in Slovakia is the largest organizer of Jewish cultural identity services. Other organizations, such as Maccabi and B'nai Brith, are also engaged in promoting cultural identity. The Jewish Distribution Committee, the Lauder Foundation, and the Czechoslovak Union of Jewish Youth promote Jewish cultural awareness to youth. Of cultural interest is the Underground Mausoleum where many famous rabbis are buried.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

From 1948 to 1949, 11,000 Slovakian Jews emigrated to Israel. A smaller number moved to various other countries, primarily the United States. Today, most Jews live in urbanized areas, primarily in Bratislava.

## Selected Bibliography

Buchler, Yehoshua Robert, and Gila Fatran. "A Brief History of Slovakian Jewry." JewishGen Web site. [http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Pinkas\\_Slovakia/Slo0XI.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Pinkas_Slovakia/Slo0XI.html) (accessed April 21, 2007).

- Dawidowicz, Lucy S., ed. 1996. *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Kirschbaum, Stanislav. 2005. *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scheib, Ariel. "The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Slovakia." Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/slovakia.html> (accessed April 21, 2007).
- "Slovakian History for Genealogical Researchers." 2006. <http://www.iabsi.com/gen/public/history.htm> (accessed April 21, 2007).

## Jews in Slovenia

*David Straub*

**General Population:** 2,004,3942

**Jewish Population:** 200–600

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Most Slovene Jews live in Ljubljana; a dozen persons live in Murska Sobota.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Historic Jewish community expelled by 1700s. In the 18th century, Sephardic and Ashkenazi migrants arrived from areas of the Austrian empire. In the 20th century, Jewish migrants arrived from different areas of Yugoslavia.

**Languages Spoken:** Slovenian is universally spoken and a small number of people can speak Hebrew.

### Historical Overview

**5th century CE** Unearthed antiquities reveal the existence of a Jewish community during the Roman period, including an oil lamp from the fifth century with an engraved menorah found in Skocijan. Ptuj on the Istra peninsula is a region of Jewish concentration during the Roman period.

**12th century** Venetian Jews, relocating for economic opportunity, and Central European Jews, fleeing the Crusades, migrate to what is now Slovenia and establish settlements in Ljubljana, Maribor, Porec, Ptuj, Pula, Radgona Rovinj, Slovenj-Gradec, and Stanijel. The Ljubljana community has its own synagogue, school, and law court.

**1277** A Jewish community is first recorded in Maribor.

**14th century** Jewish quarters are burned in Ptuj, Gradec (Graz), and Radgona when Jews are blamed for the spread of the plague.

**15th century** The Jewish community in Maribor experiences a period of prosperity; Jews own numerous property and conduct trade with neighboring regions.

**1427–1435** Rabbi Israel Isserlein of Maribor takes the title "Chief Rabbi of Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola." Rabbi Isserlein documents theological and legal questions facing local Jews and the Jewish history of the region.

**1441** Ptuj's synagogue is converted into a church.

- 1496 The Jewish populations of Styria and Carinthia are expelled after Emperor Maximilian concedes to the demands of local nobility. The edict is to be implemented no later than January 6, 1497, and does not include the Jews of Carniola. After the expulsion, Jews move to rural areas in Slovenia, or to Italy and Central Europe. Archives in Maribor reveal that Jews had sold off their property in anticipation of expulsion. Jews exiled from Maribor take on the surname “Morpurgo.”
- 1501 The Maribor synagogue is converted into a church
- 1515 Under pressure from German nobility and clergy, an expulsion order is issued for Jews in Ljubljana.
- 1561–1565 Jews are banned from living in Gorizia.
- 1624 The Pincherle family of Gorizia is given the rank of “Court Jews” by the Holy Roman Emperor.
- 1718 Jews are expelled from Carinthia.
- 1773 Hungarian Jews settle in Lendava.
- 1788 The Jewish community of Gorizia totals 270 people.
- 1793 Records show 60 Jews living in Prekmurje.
- 1809 After the Napoleonic conquest of the region, Jews are allowed to settle again in Slovenia with full civil rights.
- 1817 Austrian Emperor Francis II prohibits Jews from settling and residing in Carniola; Jews relocate to Prekomurje and Maribor and establish communities in Murska Sobota and Lendava.
- 1843 A Jewish school opens in Lendava.
- 1880 Census records 96 Jews in Carniola.
- 1889 Records show 1,107 Jews living in Prekmurje.
- 1890 Records show 76 Jews in Ljubljana.
- 1910 Census records show 96 Jews in Carniola.
- 1918 Slovenia joins the newly created kingdom of Yugoslavia.
- 1919 Jewish community of Slovenia joins the Zagreb Jewish community.
- 1941 On the eve of World War II, around 3,000–4,500 Jews live in Slovenia, which is divided by Italy, Germany, and Hungary in April 1941. The Italians occupy much of the country, including Ljubljana. During the Italian occupation, many Slovenian Jews are sent to concentration camps in Italy, where they receive relatively humane treatment. A number of Jews join the Yugoslav resistance.
- 1942 The Jewish aid organization *Delegazione per l'Assistenza agli Emigranti* (Deslasem) organizes the evacuation of orphaned survivors of the massacre of Jews in German-occupied areas of Yugoslavia to hiding places in Slovenia. The rescue is coordinated by Lelio Vittorio Valobra, vice president of the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities, who travels to Slovenia in the spring and find that the children are in hiding in Lesno brdo, a town near Ljubljana that sees fighting between Slovene partisans and Italian forces. In July, Deslasem agrees to transfer the children to Italy, and, with the help of the Red Cross, 42 Jewish orphans are sent to Nonantola, near Modena, where they survive the war.
- September 1943 Italy defects to the Allies; German forces take over Slovenia.
- April 1944 A total of 328 Jews from Prekmurje are deported to Auschwitz. A total of 460 Jews from Prekmurje are deported; of these, 65 survive.

1954 The Murska Sobota synagogue is demolished.

June 1991 Slovenia gains independence and Jewish culture is revived.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Historically, Jews worked as artisans, bankers, moneylenders, innkeepers, and merchants. Today, most are urban laborers.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

In 2000, the Judovska Skupnost Slovenije (Jewish Community of Slovenia; JCS) published the first Jewish calendar in Slovenia's history. The Haggadah of Ljubljana was recently published. Alberto Michelstaedter, a philosopher and painter who lived from 1850 to 1929, is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Nova Gorica.

### Present Economic Conditions

Slovene Jewry has, to a large extent, assimilated into the general Slovene population and has benefited from the country's recent rise in the standard of the living.

### Religious Denominations

In 2003, Ljubljana opened a new synagogue. In 1999, Rabbi Ariel Haddad, of Chabad-Lubavitch, was appointed the first chief rabbi in Slovenian history. Recently, the community received its first Torah since World War II.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

After the fall of communism, a Jewish community center was rebuilt in Ljubljana. The JCS was formed in 1945 after the Shoah, but it remained dormant throughout the communist era. With the assistance of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the JCS was revived after Slovenia gained independence in 1991. In 1997, the community purchased the first Jewish community office in 50 years. The current leader of the JCS is Andrej Kožar Beck. The JCS has coordinators that oversee five different categories of activities: student affairs, education, culture, women's section, and religious affairs; classes in modern Hebrew are also taught at the JCS center. The official communal publication is *The Menora*, which has been published regularly since 1998. Membership in the JCS stands at more than 100, and the most active members are those aged 30 and younger. Slovenian Jews have participated in numerous JDC-sponsored activities throughout the Balkans. There is a Synagogue Cultural Centre in Maribor, the ancient center of Slovene Jewry, where an ancient synagogue has been preserved.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

After the Shoah and the advent of communism, most of the Slovene Jewry moved to the capital Ljubljana. This community was further reduced by emigration to Israel in the 1990s.

## Selected Bibliography

- “Europe/Slovenia.” 2005. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Web site. [www.jdc.org/p\\_ee\\_slo\\_current.html](http://www.jdc.org/p_ee_slo_current.html) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- “Excerpts from Jews in Yugoslavia—Part I.” 2006. *Centropa Quarterly*. Volume 10, summer. [www.centropa.org/reports.asp?rep=HR&ID=5960&TypeID=36658\\_Centropa](http://www.centropa.org/reports.asp?rep=HR&ID=5960&TypeID=36658_Centropa) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Gruber, Ruth Ellen, and Samuel D. Gruber. 1998. “Jewish Monuments in Slovenia.” *Jewish Heritage Report*. Vol. 2, no. 1–2. [www.isjm.org/jhr/Inos1-2/slovenia.htm](http://www.isjm.org/jhr/Inos1-2/slovenia.htm) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- “History.” Jewish Community of Slovenia Web site. <http://www.jewishcommunity.si/jss/ENG-zgodovina.asp> (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Persin, Stephanie. “The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Slovenia.” Jewish Virtual Library Web site. [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/slovenia.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/slovenia.html) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- “Slovenia to Observe Jewish Day of Culture for the First Time.” 2006. *Slovenia News*. September 1. [www.uvi.si/eng/slovenia/publications/slovenia-news/3573/3587/index.text.html](http://www.uvi.si/eng/slovenia/publications/slovenia-news/3573/3587/index.text.html) (accessed April 21, 2007).
- Zimmerman, Joshua D. 2005. *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule: 1922–1945*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Zuccotti, Susan. 1996. *Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, and Survival*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

# Jews in the Ukraine

*Samuel Barnai*

---

**General Population:** 48,457,000 (2001 census)

**Jewish Population:** 103,600

**Percent of Population:** 0.2 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Kyiv, 17,962; Odessa, 12,379; Kharkiv, 11,176; Dnipropetrovsk, 10,508; Donetsk, 5,087; Zaporizhzhya, 3,456; Mykolaiv, 2,797; Lviv, 1,932; Sevastopol, 1,016

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Most Ukrainian Jews are Ashkenazi who came to the Ukraine from Poland, Germany, and Hungary beginning in the 14th century. A large influx of Jews migrated to the industrial centers of the Ukraine from other regions of the Soviet Union in the 1920s–1930s and after World War II. There are approximately 2,000 non-Ashkenazi Jews and Karaites.

**Languages Spoken:** Most speak Russian (83 percent), and a minority speak Ukrainian (13.4 percent).

---

## Historical Overview

**4th century BCE** Archaeological evidence has been found of Jews in the Greek colonies in the Crimea.

**737 CE** The Arabs defeat the Khazars in the Caucasus, which leads to influx of Jews in the Crimea and Dnieper region.

Early 10th century Jews settle in Kyiv.

965–969 Sviatoslav, the prince of Kievan Rus', defeats the Khazars, many of whom practiced Judaism.

1097 An incident of blood libel leads to a pogrom in the Greek city of Chersonesus in Byzantine Crimea.

1113 The residents of Kyiv destroy the city's Jewish quarter after Prince Sviatopolk's death.

1156 Karaites of Kyiv are mentioned for the first time.

1173 Benjamin of Tudela visits Kyiv.

1240 Batu Khan conquers Kyiv. Jews escape to Halych-Volhynia. Jewish merchants, land tenants, and craftspeople from Germany and Hungary also come to Halych-Volhynia under the rule of Prince Daniil Romanovich.

1259 Prince Daniil Romanovich invites the Jews to return to Kyiv.

1367 King Kazimierz III of Poland expands the rights of Jews in Poland—including the freedom of worship, migration, and economic activity—to the newly incorporated territories of Eastern Galicia and part of Volhynia.

1386–1434 King Władysław II Jagiello of Poland refuses to reaffirm the rights of Jews.

1388 Grand Duke Vitautas of Lithuania extends the same rights to Jews in Lithuania, including some cities now in the Ukraine.

1447–1492 King Kazimierz IV Jagiellończyk of Poland forbids Jews from settling in the countryside, working in agriculture, selling products wholesale, or entering a craft guild.

1449 The Republic of Genoa publishes laws for its Black Sea colonies that include freedom of worship; this allows Jews to settle in the colonies.

1495 Grand Duke Aleksander Jagiellończyk of Lithuania expels Jews from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, including Kyiv and Luts'k. Some Jewish refugees settle in the Ottoman Empire and the Crimea.

1503 The Grand Duke of Lithuania and the King Aleksander Jagiellończyk of Poland reaffirm the rights of Jews and allow them to return.

1529 King Zygmunt I of Poland reaffirms the rights of Jews in the First Lithuanian Statute, but Jews are forbidden to testify at trial, possess Christian slaves (they must free such slaves with no compensation), proselytize to non-Jews, take on Christian women as nurses, and wear gold and silver sewn clothes. In addition, men must wear yellow hats.

1530s–1550s Jewish communities are founded in Vinnytsia, Bar, and Bratzlav.

1539 Zygmunt I transfers to the nobility the jurisdiction over Jews who settled in their estates.

1566 The Second Lithuanian Statute confirms anti-Semitic regulations.

1569 The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is founded.

1576 A blood libel and pogrom, provoked by Jesuits, occurs in Lviv.

1576–1586 King Stefan Batory of Poland gives equal rights to Jews and Christians in municipal taxation and the right to participate in discussions concerning taxation of city dwellers.

1598 Jews are forbidden to stay in Kamianets'-Podil's'kyi for more than three days.

- 1619 King Zygmunt III of Poland forbids Jews from staying in Kyiv for more than one day, but local authorities allow them to stay as “temporary dwellers.”
- 1620s–1630s Pogroms are carried out in the Dnieper region in 1621, 1630, 1637, and 1638.
- 1648–1654 The Cossack uprising of Bohdan Khmelnytsky occurs against the Poles. Jews are blamed as Polish collaborators and branded enemies of Christendom and exploiters of Ukrainian peasantry. As a result, 30,000 to 50,000 Jews are killed or escape to Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and other European countries, and 300 Jewish communities are destroyed.
- 1654 The Treaty of Pereiaslav reunites the Ukraine with Moscow. The combined Cossack-Muscovite forces occupy cities in the Ukraine, Belorussia, and Lithuania and almost totally exterminate the Jewish population.
- 1664 A pogrom is carried out in Lviv. About 100 Jews were killed and 200 wounded.
- 1667 The Treaty of Andrusiv results in Russia’s annexation of Dnieper and Kyiv. Jews in Poland are allowed to reestablish their communities, and those baptized by force are allowed to return to Judaism; their economic and civil rights are reaffirmed by kings until the mid-1730s.
- 1708 Peter I restricts Jews from selling by retail.
- 1721 Russian Emperor Peter I orders the expulsion of all Jews from the Ukraine. Expulsion orders are also issued by Empress Catherine I in 1727 and Empress Anna Ivanova in 1731 and 1738.
- 1722 Polish rabbis declared *kherem*, or communal excommunication, of members of the clandestine Sabbatean groups in Podolia and Galicia.
- 1734–1768 Mass extermination of the Jews takes place during several haidamaka uprisings by paramilitary bands of Cossacks and peasants on the right bank of the Ukraine and during Russian interventions in Poland.
- 1740 Medzhibizh becomes the center of Hasidism founded by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as Baal Shem Tov or Besht.
- 1742 Russian Empress Elizabeth Petrovna orders the expulsion of Jews from the Ukraine. Unlike all previous orders of Russian Emperors, the order is fulfilled and about 600 Jews are expelled to Poland.
- 1756 A rabbinical conference in Brody declares *kherem*, or excommunication, on Sabbatians and Frankists.
- 1757 Theological disputes occur between Talmudists and Frankists in Kamianets’-Podil’s’kyi. Similar theological disputes take place in Lviv in 1759.
- 1764 Russian Empress Catherine II, by petition of local nobility, allows Jews to temporarily come to the Ukraine and found Jewish agricultural settlements in Novorossia, the southern part of modern Ukraine.
- 1770s–1790s In the years 1772, 1793, and 1795, Poland is partitioned by its neighbors, and the right bank of the Ukraine, Podolia, and Volhynia are annexed by Russia; Galicia is annexed by Austria.
- 1782 Austrian Emperor Josef II’s Edict of Tolerance affords Jews the freedom of worship, abolishes the requirement to wear special clothes, and increases the property qualification for Jews who want to stay in Galicia. Jews are also allowed to open schools in German or send children to general schools.

- 1783 Russia annexes the Crimea and the Black Sea Maritime region. Catherine II allows Jews to enlist in city estates.
- 1784 Josef II orders Jewish tenants of distillers, inns, and breweries to liquidate their businesses and leave their places of residence.
- 1785 Jewish kahals are abolished in Austria.
- 1787 Two German-language Jewish schools open in Lviv.
- 1789 The Edict of Tolerance for Galician Jews grants Jews equal rights. Synagogues are allowed equal status with churches, rabbis lose juridical rights over Jewish populations, Jewish children have to study in elementary schools in German, Jews are allowed to engage in trade and craft, and Jews are forbidden to possess inns.
- 1794 Catherine II allows Jews to settle in several regions in the Ukraine. Double taxation of Jewish subjects is introduced.
- 1804 Russian Emperor Alexander I establishes the Pale of Settlement, which includes eight Ukrainian provinces. Some Jewish merchants, entrepreneurs, artists, and craftspeople are allowed to visit temporarily outside the Pale with special passports.
- 1817 Alexander I forbids anyone from blaming Jews for ritual murder without evidence. Jews are allowed to study in schools and institutions of higher education within the Pale.
- 1820 Jews are forbidden to employ Christians as workers and servants.
- 1821 A pogrom occurs in Odessa when local Greeks blame Jews for the death of the Orthodox patriarch in Istanbul.
- 1822 Maskilim open a modern Jewish school in Uman'. A second school opens in Odessa in 1826.
- 1827 Cantonist Law requires that Jews be drafted into military service, and the recruit tax is abolished.
- 1830s Jews are expelled from villages in Kyiv province. Several blood libel accusations occur in Ukrainian towns. Jews who were blamed for the use of Christian blood are declared not guilty.
- 1835 Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Sevastopol, and state-owned villages are excluded from the Pale of Settlement.
- 1844 Jewish kahals are abolished, and Jews pass under the control of local authorities.
- 1846 A Reformist synagogue opens in Lviv.
- 1849 Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph signs a new constitution that grants complete equality of rights.
- 1851 The Austrian constitution of 1849 is abolished. Several abridgments for Jews are introduced during the 1850s.
- 1856 Cantonist Law is annihilated.
- 1859–1860 Jewish merchants are allowed to stay in Mykolaiv, Sevastopol, and Yalta; at the end of the 1870s these rights are expanded to Jewish craftspeople, soldiers and their descendants, and persons with higher education degrees.
- 1860s Odessa becomes the center of the Jewish press for Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish texts. The journals *Rassvet* (Sunrise) and *Sion* (Zion), and the newspapers

*Den' (Day)*, *Ha-Melits* (Proponent), and *Kol Mevaser* (The Heralding Voice) appear in the city.

1867 Jews are emancipated in Austria.

1881–1884 Pogroms take place in more than 150 Ukrainian cities and towns.

May 3, 1882 Russian Emperor Alexander III introduces temporary May Laws, which prohibit Jews from settling in rural areas. In the next 20 years, new anti-Jewish restrictions are introduced in Russia, and quota limits are placed on the number of Jewish students.

1880s Mass Jewish emigration from the Russian Empire begins.

1897 The All-Russian Census records 1,870,000 Jews living in the Ukraine. These numbers constituted 40 percent of all Jews in the Russian Empire and more than 9 percent of the population of the Ukraine.

1890s–1900s Political activity grows among Jewry in the Ukraine and Austrian Galicia, and various Jewish political movements appear.

1905–1907 The First Russian Revolution breaks out, which unleashes about 600 pogroms, mostly in the Ukraine. Jews begin to organize politically.

1911–1913 The Beilis blood libel occurs in Kyiv.

1914 World War I begins and the Russian offensive in Galicia takes place. Hundreds of thousands of Jews escape westward. Austro-Hungarian laws are abolished in occupied territories. Pogroms occur in Lviv and various places of occupied Galicia.

1915 The Russian army is defeated in Galicia and Poland, and Jews are forced to move eastward.

1917 After the February Revolution, the Russian Provisional Government abolishes the Pale of Settlement and all anti-Jewish legislation. The government recognizes the Ukrainian Central Rada (Council) as autonomous self-rule for the Ukraine. Jewish parties, including Bund, Poalei Zion, Fareinikte, and Folkspartei, as well as Zionists, receive seats in the Ukrainian parliament and government. A Jewish vice-secretary position is established in the Ukrainian government to care for the concerns of the Jewish population.

November 7, 1917 After the Bolshevik takeover, the Ukrainian People's Republic is established in Kyiv. Complete equality of rights, including democratic and social rights, is declared. Jewish parties support the declaration.

January 7, 1918 The Ukrainian Parliament passes the Law of National-Personal Autonomy at the demand of Jewish parties.

January 9, 1918 The Ukraine declares independence. Jewish parties do not support the declaration.

1918–1920 During the Russian Civil War, approximately 1,500 pogroms take place all over the Ukraine, resulting in Jewish casualties: 75,000–200,000 dead, 200,000 wounded, and thousands raped. In November 1918, a pogrom in Lviv, Poland, results in the death of 70 Jews.

1920s–1930s Jews in Soviet Ukraine go through a process of accelerated Sovietization: dozens of Jewish national village councils and three Jewish national districts are established, including three districts in the Ukraine and two in Crimea, totaling more than 250,000 residents. Education, official and judicial

work, press, and cultural activity in the national councils and districts are in Yiddish. Jewish cultural and educational expulsions occur all over the Ukraine. Antireligious activity includes the closing of synagogues, prayer houses, and *heiderei*; antireligious propaganda among youngsters; and mock tribunals of the Judaic faith. Mass emigration from the former Settlement of the Pale leads to a decrease in the Jewish population in the Ukraine from 1,750,000 in 1926 to 1,532,000 in 1939.

- 1921 Eastern Galicia and western Volhynia become part of Poland. Approximately 530,000 Jews gain complete equal civil rights, including freedom of worship and the right to found autonomous communities and educational institutions. Various Jewish parties participate in elections. At the same time, anti-Semitism among the public and economic restrictions lead to mass Jewish emigration.
- 1923 About 128,000 Jews of Bukovyna, which had been annexed by Romania, receive Romanian citizenship and equal civil rights after the Romanian government comes under pressure from Western powers. Permanent aggressive anti-Semitism and a general economic hardship lead to mass emigration.
- 1930s About 80,000 Jews from the Czechoslovakian Karpats'ka Rus' region, which was annexed to the Ukraine after World War II, obtain complete equal civil rights and political and religious freedom.
- 1939–1940 The Soviet Union occupies eastern Poland, home to 1,270,000 Jews. Bukovyna and three ex-districts of Romania, with 278,000 Jewish inhabitants, are annexed to Soviet Ukraine. Other areas become part of the Soviet Republic of Moldava.
- June 22, 1941 Nazi Germany invades the Soviet Union. The territory of the Ukraine is divided into several administrative districts: Galicia is incorporated into the General-Government, Transnistria is occupied by Romania, Reichskommissariat Ukraine is established in the central and right bank of the Ukraine, and the eastern part is under military administration.
- July 25, 1941 Petliura Day takes place in Lviv. Ukrainian nationalists organize violent pogroms.
- September 29–30, 1941 More than 33,000 Jews are exterminated in the Kyiv suburb of Babi-Yar; more than 150,000 Jews are killed there during the war.
- 1941–1944 During the German occupation, approximately 1.4 million Ukrainian Jews are exterminated by the Germans and local collaborators, including 500,000 in Reichskommissariat Ukraine and 240,000–263,000 in Transnistria.
- 1944–1946 Jews who are former citizens of Poland and Romania receive permission to return to their homelands after liberation. Approximately 30,000 Jews return to Poland and 17,000 return to Romania. Jews with no proof of their former foreign citizenship are considered illegal residents. Several synagogues were reopened, most of them without registration, in the liberated territories. Jewish communities survived only in Romanian-occupied Transnistria.
- September 7, 1945 A pogrom takes place in Kyiv when I. Rosenstein, a Jewish officer, kills two soldiers after they assault him. The subsequent funerals escalate into violence that leads to 100 casualties, including 36 fatalities. Rosenstein is sentenced to death by military tribunal.

- 1948–1953 State-organized campaigns against Jewish cultural and religious organizations take place, and prominent Jewish scientists and artists are persecuted in a wave of anti-Semitic activity.
- 1959 The census records 840,000 Jews in the Ukraine, or 2 percent of the entire population of the republic.
- 1959–1962 During a general antireligious campaign, only 15 official Jewish communities remain. The Lviv synagogue is closed. Only 16.5 percent of Jews declared Yiddish as their native language.
- 1970 The census records 777,000 Jews, 1.6 percent of the entire population of the Ukraine. Census data show a demographic crisis among Ukrainian Jewry because of aging and assimilation through mixed marriages. Mass Jewish emigration begins from the Soviet Union.
- 1979 According to the census, 634,000 Jews live in the Ukraine, 1.3 percent of the entire population. Most Jews are urbanites, and assimilation and mixed marriages are common.
- 1989–1991 About 150,000 Jews emigrate from the Ukraine (most of them to Israel, Germany, and the United States).
- 1991 The Ukraine gains independence.
- 1992 The law of national minorities grants complete equal civil, cultural, and religious rights. The Ukrainian embassy opens in Tel Aviv.
- 1996 The Constitution of the Ukraine confirms the rights of national minorities. Some properties formerly belonging to Jewish communities are returned to the newly established Jewish communities.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Traditional Jewish occupations included shopkeepers; craftspeople, including tailors, shoemakers, watchmakers, and blacksmiths; peddlers; pharmacists; dentists; manufacturers; and bankers. In southern Ukraine, Jewish agricultural colonies were founded in the 19th century. During the Soviet period, Jews focused on professional and higher education, held positions in state and party institutions, and were highly involved in scientific and industrial spheres.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Prominent Ukrainian Jews include poet and translator M. Fishbein; television and radio journalist M. Gurvits; journalist, historian, vice president of the Jewish Confederation of the Ukraine, and vice president of the World Council of Jewish Culture, I. Levitas; scholar, chairman of the Vaad of Ukraine, and executive vice president of the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, J. Zisels; musician and member of Parliament I. Tabachnik; historian and head of the Kiev Center for the Research of the Culture and History of East European Jewry, L. Finberg; and historian Y. Honigsman.

Beginning in the 1990s, Jews held positions in the Ukrainian government, politics, and business. Notable individuals include E. Zviagils'kyi, acting prime minister

in 1993–1994 and current member of Parliament; A. Paskhaver, former economic adviser to the president; Yu. Ioffe, former vice prime minister; mayor of Odessa, E. Gurvitz; mayor of Vynnytsia, D. Dvorkis; member of Parliament, businessman, and vice president of the Ukrainian Football Federation, G. Surkis; member of Parliament and president of Jewish Foundation of the Ukraine, A. Feldman; and member of Parliament and vice president of Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, E. Chervonenko; influential businessmen V. Rabinovich, head of All-Ukrainian Jewish Congress and the United Jewish Community of Ukraine; and V. Pinchuk, influential oligarch and son-in-law of the former president of the Ukraine.

### Present Economic Conditions

Most Jews are white-collar workers, engineers, technologist, academicians, and middle-class businesspeople. However, as a result of aging and emigration, there are a large number of destitute pensioners.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

Since the end of the Soviet era, cultural, scientific, religious, and welfare organizations have flourished in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa, Lviv, and other cities of the Ukraine. Notable examples include Vaad of the Ukraine, or the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of the Ukraine; the Jewish Foundation of the Ukraine; Jewish Council of the Ukraine; Council of Rabbis of the Jewish Confederation of the Ukraine, whose chairman is Yaakov Dov Bleich, the chief rabbi of Kyiv and the



Tombstone with Hebrew inscriptions in a Ukrainian Jewish cemetery. (Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Ukraine; World Jewish Congress; European Jewish Congress; Jewish Agency; Chabad; Aish HaTorah; World Union of Progressive Judaism; and Maccabi-Ukraine.

Ukrainian Jewry, with the support of local businesspeople of Jewish origin and international Jewish organizations, maintain a wide range of structures and services. More than 250 such organizations actively work in the Ukraine. Jewish organizations have permanent well-developed contacts with various state institutions and public organizations that help to improve mutual understanding between peoples and to protect the interests of Jewish minorities. Jewish education is one of the most important fields of activity. By the mid-1990s, more than 70 secondary and Sunday schools, 10 kindergartens, 10 yeshivas, and 90 *ulpan*s functioned in the Ukraine. Center of Jewish Education, the distance-learning program of Israeli Open University, International Solomon University, opened in 1993; most of the students are non-Jews.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Independent Ukraine completely abandoned any form of state anti-Semitism. However, several right-wing political movements—Ukrainian National Assembly—Ukrainian National Self Defence, Ukrainian Conservative Party, Ukrainian National Labor Party, Organization of Ukrainian Idealists—systematically use anti-Semitic propaganda in their publications. Most of the organizations are active in western and central Ukraine, but some operate nationally. One of the most active anti-Semitic organizations is the University of the Inter-Regional Academy of Personnel Management, headed by G. Shchokin, leader of Ukrainian Conservative Party. Its newspaper, *Personal+*, systematically attacks not only Jews, but also non-Jews who do not adhere to anti-Semitism. In 2005, the president of the Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, condemned anti-Semitic invectives of the university and demanded that it stop publishing xenophobic materials. Along with anti-Semitic propaganda, the Jewish community suffers from assaults on Jews and acts of vandalism against Jewish facilities, including cemeteries, synagogues, and communal centers.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The demographic decline facing Ukrainian Jewry since World War II continues to this day and is due to an aging population, high mortality rate, emigration, and intermarriage. About 300,000 Jews emigrated from the Ukraine in 1989–2005 and only 8,500 immigrated into the Ukraine. Most children born to Jewish mothers have non-Jewish fathers. In the mid-1990s, more than half of Kyiv's Jews were at least 50 years old. The situation is even worse in small peripheral communities.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abramson, Henry. 1999. *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Aster, Howard, and Peter Potichnyj Peter, eds. 1990. *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspectives*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta.
- Berkhoff, Karel. 2004. *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

- Khanin, Vladimir, ed. 2003. *Documents on Ukrainian Jewish Identity and Emigration 1944–1990*. London-Portland: Frank Cass.
- Magocsi, Paul Robert. 1996. *A History of Ukraine*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Stampfer, Shaul. 2003. “What Actually Happened to the Jews of Ukraine in 1648?” *Jewish History* 17: 165–178.
- Subtelny, Orest. 1994. *Ukraine: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Wilson, Andrew. 2000. *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

# Baltic States

## Jews in the Baltic States

*David Straub*

---

Countries: Latvia 2,300,000; Lithuania 3,400,000; Estonia 1,300,000.

General Population: 7,000,000

Jewish Population of the Baltic States: 14,700

Jewish Population by Country: Latvia 9,500; Lithuania 3,300; Estonia 1,900

---

### Historical Overview

Jewish habitation of the Baltics dates to the 14th century when the emperor of Lithuania invited Jews to migrate to the region. Official tolerance by the government continued until the late 15th century, when a series of anti-Semitic laws were put in place. Official anti-Semitism included the confiscation of property, expulsion of Jews from particular regions or cities, and punitive taxation. Examples of this include the expulsion of Jews from Lithuania in the 1490s and anti-Semitic exclusion laws in Vilnius and Kaunas in the 1520s. Often, laws discriminating against Jews were wholly or partially revoked and Jews were allowed to return, but years or decades later, anti-Semitic hysteria would again result in forced emigration for local Jews. Even in the midst of anti-Semitic hysteria in one region of the Baltics, other regions were opened for Jewish immigration, as was the case with the Polish conquest of Livonia in 1561 and the opening of Piltene in the 1570s. The main center of Jewish habitation was Vilna, which had as many as 120,000 Jews in the 18th century; smaller communities of Jews were situated in other Lithuanian cities and Courland. In the 16th and 17th century, the Baltic region was the center of several regional wars and Jews suffered great atrocities.

From 1772 to 1795 the Polish-Lithuanian state was dismantled and erased from the map of Europe, and the Baltics fell within the Russian Empire's sphere of influence. Under Russian law Jews were enlisted in military service and much of Lithuania was placed within the borders of the Pale of Settlement, an area set aside for settlement by Russian Jewry. In the late 19th century, a wave of anti-Semitism struck Russia, and violence broke out across the country, including a series of pogroms that depopulated regions of their Jews. The assassination of the emperor in 1881, for example, resulted in pogroms and thousands of Jews left the country. The 1897 census found 755,000 Jews residing in Lithuania alone, but by the end of World War I, tens of thousands of Jews had either chosen to emigrate or were forcibly expelled from the Baltics.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia became independent. In the postwar period, the fortunes of Baltic Jewry were tied to the politics of their respective nations. During the 1920s, democracy and tolerance were the norm and Jews were permitted to openly practice their

faith and establish cultural organizations. By the 1930s, a fascist regime had taken power in Latvia and anti-Semitism was on the rise across the region. On the eve of World War II, Lithuania was home to more than 150,000 Jews, Latvia had more than 95,000 Jewish residents, and Estonia had only a few thousand Jews. In 1939, World War II broke out in Europe, and in June 1940 the Baltic states were annexed to the Soviet Union. At this time the Soviet Union was in the midst of massive purges directed from Stalin, and a year later, thousands of Jews were deported to the Soviet Far East. In late June 1941, Nazi Germany occupied the Baltic states and immediately began the systematic murder of the region's Jewish population. By the end of 1941, as many as a quarter million Baltic Jews were killed in massacres throughout the region. In the remaining years of the war, tens of thousands of Jews from outside the Baltics were sent to concentration camps in the Baltics, where all but a small number perished. By the time the Soviets drove the Germans out of the Baltics, in 1944, an estimated 70 percent of Latvian Jews and 90 percent of Lithuanian Jews had been killed, and Estonia's small Jewish population had been decimated.

Only a small number of Baltic Jewish survivors remained in the region after the war, and in the decades after the war a number of Russian-speaking Jews from elsewhere within the Soviet Union migrated to the Baltic republics. During the Soviet period, Jews excelled in academia and the sciences, but institutional anti-Semitism continued to be prevalent. Beginning in the 1970s, Soviet authorities relaxed immigration policies, and over the next two decades a large number of Baltic Jews made aliyah or migrated to the United States and Western Europe. In 1991, the Baltic states gained their independence and restrictions on Jewish immigration were completely lifted. In the post-Soviet period, only a small number of Jews remain in the Baltic states, and although the democratic governments of the region preach tolerance, there has been a disturbing rise in anti-Semitism across the Baltics.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Beare, Arlene. 2001. *Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Latvia and Estonia*. London: Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain.
- Greenbaum, Masha. 1995. *The Jews of Lithuania: A History of a Remarkable Community*. New York: Gefen.
- Hundert, Gershon David. 2004. *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Levin, D. 2000. *The Litvaks. A Short History of the Jews of Lithuania*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Steimanis, Josifs. 2002. *History of Latvian Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press.

# Jews and Anti-Semitism in the Baltic States

*Dov Levin*

---

The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia attained political independence immediately after World War I and from then on their history had many similarities. A fortiori one may speak of cultural and economic similarities and the similar fate that greeted the Jewish population of these countries. Of the 350,000 Jews in these countries at the beginning of World War II, fewer than 5 percent lived to witness the end of the war. The remainder were slaughtered during the Nazi occupation, in various and sundry ways, as a result of the occupier's policies and the enthusiastic implementation of these policies by the Jews' local neighbors, among whom they had lived for centuries.

In the 1910s and 1930s, several bloody eruptions by peasants against their Jewish neighbors were prompted by religious prejudices, such as accusations of blood libel. On the other hand, avenues of cooperation and solidarity between Jews and non-Jews came into being as in joint lists of candidates for the Russian Duma. The Jewish, Lithuanian, and Latvian delegates elected to this institution represented the interests of the population at large in their localities. In the wake of this precedent, the sides were in contact even during and after the German occupation in World War I. Consequently, Jewish public figures were appointed to the first governments of the Baltic countries when they proclaimed their independence in 1918. The Jewish citizens of these countries were promised sweeping cultural and educational rights, and local Jewish personalities and others abroad acted to strengthen these countries' political and economic status. Furthermore, thousands of Jewish volunteers took part in the wars against various forces, including the Bolsheviks, who attempted to annex these countries to Soviet Russia. Lithuanian soldiers inflicted grave abuse on the Jewish population on the pretext that the Jews were Bolshevik sympathizers. Even the Jews of Vilnius, only a few of whom were accused of pro-Soviet sympathies and most of whom had a pro-Lithuanian orientation, paid a heavy price.

By the second half of the 1920s, the Jews' autonomous rights were eroding badly. Although the Jews still had an acute need for these rights, they continued to display loyalty to the state and faithfully discharged their civic duties, including military service. As quasi-military organizations were ill inclined to admit Jewish veterans into their ranks, the Jews established the Association of Jewish Front-Line Soldiers, under the command of Jewish officers who had taken part in the wars of independence. Young Jews also volunteered for service in fire brigades in various cities and towns, including some brigades that were totally Jewish.

The only political setting that brought Jews and non-Jews together was the tiny Communist Party, which operated underground and attracted support from only a fraction of the Jewish community. In contrast, the Zionists, who accounted for a majority of the Jewish population, remained loyal to the state and its government,

but their ideological political orientation focused on events outside their countries of residence. Their practical aim was to systematically mobilize the Jewish masses to immigrate to Palestine. Therefore, Zionist organizations with a strong ideological bond to the Soviet Union, such as Ha-shomer ha-Tsa'ir and Po'aley Tsiyyon Left, were allowed to engage in overt political activity because the establishment defined them as "carriers of Communism for export" to Palestine.

Anti-Semitism increased in the 1930s, with increased economic distress and the political radicalization of right-wing militant organizations throughout the Baltics. One may infer something about the ideological nature of these organizations and the extent of their identification with the Nazi regime from the fact that their leaders held very high-ranking positions in their countries during the Nazi occupation. The German minority played a considerable role in disseminating the racial doctrine and anti-Semitic propaganda in the Baltic countries. "Our anti-Semitism is of an especially bad type," wrote the oppositionist daily newspaper *Lietuvos Zinios* on June 13, 1933, "because it is imported from outside and has a special goal. . . . Hitlerism has discovered the Lithuanians and has tailored special anti-Semitic methods to them." Indeed, proposals were expressed in Baltic establishment newspapers, such as *Lietuvos Aidas* and *Verklas* in Lithuania, *Ogunkrust* in Latvia, and *Meie voi Juudid* in Estonia, to take pronouncedly racial measures against the Jews. The recommended actions included revoking the Jews' electoral franchise, not allowing Jews to have non-Jewish servants, forbidding Jewish doctors to treat Christian patients, and banishing Jews from resort areas.

The economic rivalry between Jews and their neighbors also took on an increasingly anti-Semitic hue in the form of a boycott against Jewish merchants and craftspeople and public slogans such as "Lithuania for the Lithuanians" and "Latvia for the Latvians." Economic organizations produced a crescendo of demands to limit the Jews' domination of traditional occupations that they had practiced for generations—such as domestic and cross-border sales of farm produce, crafts, and light industry, especially in clothing, food, and printing. The anti-Jewish economic propaganda was accompanied by anti-Semitic incidents, such as desecrating cemeteries; defacing Yiddish and Hebrew signs; smashing windows of Jewish homes and public institutions, including synagogues; and violently assaulting Jews, individually and in groups. Verbal and physical attacks also took place at the University of Kaunas after Gentile students demanded that their Jewish counterparts be seated on special benches. As a result, relations between Jews and non-Jews in academia were seriously harmed. The few attempts by leftists, intellectuals, and Democrats to foster cultural and social relations between Jews and non-Jews also failed.

After Lithuania was forced to relinquish its historical capital, Vilnius, and the port city of Klaipeda (Memel) in 1938–1939, organizations on the Right found it easy to turn the masses' rage against the Jews. One organization with a pronounced National-Socialist orientation contacted the German authorities and asked them for assistance, in the form of money and weapons, for the express purpose of organizing pogroms against the Jews. As the authorities displayed indifference to these manifestations, several Jewish personalities who had been active in establishing

the Baltic countries and strengthening them politically now geared up to summon world public opinion, following the tradition from the time of the czarist persecutions. Militant organizations such as the Jewish Front-Line Soldiers and Betar, to name only two, were already planning to form a self-defense system of sorts.

### **Inclusion of the Baltic Countries in the Soviet Sphere of Influence**

In the middle of June 1940, amid concern about a Nazi German takeover of the region, the Red Army occupied the three Baltic countries and within seven weeks transformed them into Soviet republics with everything this implied. Although much has been written about this, several relevant facts deserve special note.

From the standpoint of the Jews, the Soviet takeover of the Baltic countries, in October 1939, and their annexation to the Soviet Union, from July 1940 to June 1941, was the lesser of two evils. Even so, no representative Jewish organization in these countries congratulated the Soviets for revoking the political independence of the Baltic countries.

At this stage, the majority peoples, who were mourning the loss of their independence, accused the Jews of treason. This tendency gathered strength as a result of systematic incitement by ultra-nationalist organizations such as the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) in Lithuania, which derived its inspiration and support from Nazi Germany. The Soviet regime allowed civilians to “let off steam” by grumbling and expressing counterthreats of the “just-wait” variety. Leaflets circulated by underground nationalist groups spoke of a “reckoning” that would be conducted against those who had brought Sovietization upon them, including three groups: imported functionaries from Moscow, local collaborators, and the Jews. Shortly before the Nazis invaded Lithuania in the summer of 1941, members of the LAF distributed leaflets promising their political rivals clemency if they could clearly prove that they had wiped out at least one Jew. The leaflets also contained instructions on how to treat Jews, including the following:

All Jews are excluded from Lithuania forever. Should any one of them dare to expect any refuge in new Lithuania, let him know the irrevocable sentence passed on them: “Not a single Jew shall have any citizenship rights nor any means of sustenance in Lithuania reborne.”

### **Nazi Occupation (1941–1944)**

In the first hours of the Wehrmacht invasion, many local inhabitants began to abuse almost any Jew whom they encountered. As time passed, the assaults escalated in momentum, extent, and brutality, and in every city Jews were being slaughtered en masse. Some of the perpetrators of this crime hunted down the victims, abused them, and led them to the death pits. Others participated in putting them to death and, afterward, divided up the victims’ clothing and jewelry. The physical obliteration of most Jews in the Baltic countries was perpetrated by local inhabitants, with the blessings of the German authorities. It was done not in gas chambers but with

guns, knives, axes, and metal poles; Jews were beheaded, their skulls were smashed against walls, and they were buried alive; women were murdered after being raped as their families looked on. In dozens of localities, many assaults on the Jewish neighbors took place hours or even several days before the arrival of the first German soldier.

All types of attacks were initiated and perpetrated by men, women, and teenagers from all population groups, including teachers, students, members of the clergy, army and police officers, mayors, and journalists. Masses of people cheered in town squares at the sight of wanton brutalities against women and rabbis, burning of Torah scrolls, and the like. During the months of the mass slaughter, June–October 1941, contacts between Jews and non-Jews were almost totally severed, except for official orders that the civil administration and the local militia presented to the Jews on behalf of the Nazi occupation authorities. Disclosures from recently opened archives, along with other information that has accumulated on the attitude of the Baltic peoples toward the Jews, bring the following schematic picture to light: Of approximately 6 million non-Jewish inhabitants, nearly 40,000 physically assaulted or harmed Jews and about 1,000 saved Jews in various ways; only a few thousand provided assistance of any kind to individual Jews.

Because they feared collective punishment, the victims rarely offered physical resistance to their murderers. In the last year of the Nazi occupation, Jews who had resolved to defend their lives with dignity, by taking up arms, could do so by joining up with pro-Soviet partisans. This fact reinforced the old myth about all Jews being Communists, with all the implications this implied. Diaries left behind by victims, as well as folk songs and other kinds of folklore from those horrific days, often bring grave accusations against the local murderers, mixed with profound disappointment. A song in several stanzas, written by Jewish children in the ghetto of Kaunas as a parody on the Lithuanian national anthem, was recently found and published by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. An excerpt follows: “Oh, Lithuania, blood soaked land, be cursed forever, Let your towns, villages, and fields burn. You will be murdered, as you murdered us. Forever and ever.” Even Jews who escaped from a ghetto or a labor camp were still in considerable danger of being denounced to the Germans by local inhabitants. In view of this description, the acts should not be hidden behind such terms as genocide, catastrophe, tragedy, and execution. Instead, what occurred was a barbaric mass homicide, coupled with protracted torture—physical abuse, humiliation, and rape. In a word: a cruel and continual lynching.

### **Soviet Rule in the Baltic Countries (July 1944–May 1945)**

In this last phase of World War II, Red Army soldiers gradually returned to the Baltic countries. As the Soviet forces advanced to the west and the Wehrmacht and its local allies retreated toward Germany, a few Jews came to the surface almost every day—Jews who had managed to survive in all sorts of ways, including concealment with non-Jews. These survivors were joined by several hundred Jews, including former soldiers in the Red Army, who had fled to the Soviet interior in the

summer of 1941. At the end of the war, both groups together added up to no more than 3,000 persons—only 0.05 percent of the population. Because many murderers of Jews, known as “Jew-shooters,” had fled to Germany, the fugitives from the slaughter had reason to hope they would be treated decently, at the very least. However, this did not happen.

Although the surviving Jews construed the Soviets’ arrival as a deliverance from extinction, much of the population at large considered it an act of national enslavement. Similarly, a series of contrasting interests in daily life overshadowed the few interactions that by necessity took place between the sides. By the nature of things, the Jewish survivors were filled with desire to avenge the murder of their families and considered the recovery of their looted property the minimum that should be done to correct the horrific injustice caused to them. For local inhabitants who had guilty consciences, and for those who possessed the property of murdered people, almost every surviving Jew was a source of trouble who should be removed in any way possible.

It is no wonder that encounters between the sides were often fraught with severe tension and sometimes ended in verbal clashes and physical attack. One of the serious points of friction at the time concerned the return of Jewish children who had been placed in hiding with Christian families or in convents for the duration. Only a few priests mustered the courage to encourage those who sheltered children to return them to their relatives. In most cases, the relatives had to use force or ask the authorities to intervene.

However, support from the authorities was not always guaranteed, because the official goal was to create relative calm as long as the war continued among the hostile population or only dozens of kilometers away. In terms of domestic policy, the Jews, with their complicated problems, were often a stumbling block of sorts. This policy was also associated with the Soviets’ hopes of soft-pedaling the role of the Baltic peoples in murdering the Jews. This intent was expressed in part by the use of vague and general terms: The murderers were termed “fascists,” “nationalists,” and so on, whereas the Jewish victims were called “Soviet citizens,” without further differentiation.

The local population interpreted these and other signals as an indication that the authorities took exception to the Jews. Consequently, they reverted to their previous custom of settling scores at the personal level. In several localities, especially in peripheral towns, Lithuanian or Polish inhabitants murdered their surviving Jewish neighbors, children and all, and threatened to subject all Jews who remained alive to the same fate.

Jews occasionally heard sincere expressions of commiseration and consolation, however, a crescendo of voices among the Jews argued that there was no further point in living among graves and murderers, let alone in conducting a dialogue with the latter; hundreds of survivors began to abandon their places of residence and, with or without permission, to stream out of the Baltic countries. Most joined the organized clandestine escape movement to Palestine, the *Beraha*. The nucleus of the *Beraha* movement was composed of former members of Zionist youth movements who for months had fought in partisan units in Lithuania. Eventually, the

Beriha spread to Latvia and Estonia as well. Although they lacked adequate information, appropriate documents, and financial and logistical resources, the movement leaders refused to avail themselves of local nationalist elements who, as they carried on their armed struggle against the Soviet regime, did not conceal their hostility toward the Jews but were glad to be rid of them one way or another.

### Postwar Era

There exists general and partial denial of the Holocaust in the three Baltic countries, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which includes components of disinformation and distortion. All of them frequently interrelate with the new forms of anti-Semitism. In 1944–1945, when the Soviets reoccupied the Baltic countries, a small proportion of Jewish survivors returned to live in areas that were filled with the graves of most of their relatives, recently slaughtered by the Germans and their non-Jewish neighbors. Quite a few of these murderers emigrated under false names and/or went to the forests to join the armed gangs that, for nearly 10 years, fought against the Soviet regime to make their countries independent again.

Before withdrawing, the Germans strived prodigiously to cover up their crimes by incinerating the bodies of murdered Jews. The Soviet authorities adopted a different kind of deception: although Soviet authorities punished collaborators with the Nazi occupation authorities, including murderers of Jews, from the late 1940s and in the 1950s they were careful to make the least possible mention of the Holocaust. From the mid-1960s it became increasingly the trend in Soviet-Lithuanian historiography to “prove,” by stressing the existence of several hundred Lithuanians honored as “Righteous among the Nations,” that the Jewish-Lithuanian fraternity of peoples endured even during the Nazi occupation. The only nonparticipants in this fraternity were “a minority of lowly murderers,” nearly all of whom were “fascist nationalists” and “kulaks.” Denial of the wartime murderers followed Baltic émigrés who fled to the West after the war and concealed from the immigration authorities their activity in murdering Jews in their countries of origin. Denial of the Holocaust has continued even since the Baltic states gained independence in 1991, drawing wide condemnation.

### Selected Bibliography

- Levin, Dov. 1994. “New Lithuania’s Old Policy toward the Holocaust.” *Jews in Eastern Europe* 2 (24): 67–71.
- Levin, Dov. 2001. “Jewish Autonomy in Inter-War Lithuania: An Interview with Yudl Mark,” *POLIN* 14: 196–211.
- Levin, Dov. 2001. “A Report of the NKGB on Jewish ‘Nationalist’ Activity in Lithuania 1940–1941.” *Jews in Eastern Europe* 44 (1, Spring): 60–91.
- Levin, Dov. 2002. “Jewish Resistance in the Baltic States 1941–1945,” *Latvia SIG* 6 (4, April): 6–12.
- Levin, Dov. 2002. “Mass Deportations of Latvian Jews to Remote Areas of the USSR: 1941.” *Latvia SIG* 7 (September): 10–17.

# Jews in Estonia

*David Straub*

---

**General Population:** 1,471,000

**Jewish Population:** 2,500–3,500

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Around 2,000 Jews live in Tallinn and smaller communities exist in Tartu, Narva, Pärnu, and Kohtla-Järve.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Ashkenazi arrived from Russia in the 19th century and from the Soviet Union after World War II.

**Languages Spoken:** Russian and Estonian

---

## Historical Overview

14th century Jews first migrate to the Baltic region, but strict anti-Semitic laws limit the Jewish population there.

1830 The Tallinn congregation is established by artisans and soldiers.

1858 Demobilized Russian Jewish soldiers settle in Estonia.

1865 Emperor Alexander II issues a statute recognizing Jewish rights to settle in Estonia. The first settlers known as kantonists.

1866 The Tartu congregation is established when the first 50 Jewish families settle in the city.

1883 Tallinn Synagogue is built.

1900 The Jewish community expands into the towns of Valga, Pärnu, and Viljandi, and Jewish students begin to enroll in the University of Tartu.

1901 The Tartu Synagogue is completed.

1913 Some 5,000 Jews live in Estonia, including 2,000 in Tartu and 1,100 in Tallinn.

1917 The Jewish Drama Club is founded in Tartu.

1918 Republic of Estonia declares its independence. From 1918 to 1920 a war for independence is fought. Around 200 Jews fight for Estonian independence. The new government grants Jews more freedoms and rights.

1918 The H. N. Bjalik Literature and Drama Society is founded in Tallinn.

May 1919 The first Estonian Congress of Jewish congregations is convened.

1920 The Maccabi Sports Society is founded.

1923 The Jewish Gymnasium, or school, opens in Tallinn. The gymnasium serves as an important cultural center and plays host to Maccabi Sports Society events. Samuel Gurin is the director of the center from 1925 until its liquidation by Soviet authorities in 1940.

1925 The Jewish population totals more than 3,000. The population decrease is due in part to the increased number of Jews making aliyah.

1926 Jewish cultural autonomy is granted under a government program to allow ethnic minorities greater self-determination in cultural matters.

- June 1926 The Jewish Cultural Council is created. The council's administrative organ is the Board of Jewish Culture, headed by Hirsch Aisenstadt.
- 1930s Despite their exclusion from the civil service, the Jewish community thrives. More than 350 students are enrolled in Jewish schools throughout the country, including kindergartens in Tallinn, Tartu, Narva, Viljandi, and Pärnu. Numerous student societies open, including the Tartu Academic Society, the Women's Student Society Hazfiro, the Corporation Limuvia, the Society Hasmonaea, and the Endowment for Jewish Students. Jewish political organizations in operation include Hasomer Hazair and Beitar. Cultural and social support groups include the Jewish Goodwill Society of the Tallinn Congregation and the Jewish Assistance Union in Tartu. Jewish businesspeople are prosperous members of the community and own the leather factory Uzvanski and Sons in Tartu and the Ginovkeris' Candy Factory in Tallinn; they also operate furriers and forestry companies.
- 1934 At this time, 4,381 Jews live in Estonia, including 2,203 in Tallinn, 920 in Tartu, 262 in Valga, 248 in Pärnu, 188 in Narva, and 121 in Viljandi. Most Jews work in commerce and services or as artisans, laborers, and physicians. A chair is established in the School of Philosophy for the study of Judaica.
- June 1940 Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union. Jewish cultural autonomy is liquidated. Around 400 Jews are deported to Siberia on June 14.
- June 1941 Germany occupies the Baltic states and reorganizes them into Ostland. A large number of Jews escape to the Soviet Union, including Hirsch Aisenstadt
- August 15, 1941 Jews are ordered to wear yellow badges and are banned from walking on the pavement, using public transportation, owning cars or radios, and visiting public places.
- 1941–1944 German killing units called Einsatzgruppen are ordered into the Baltics. In first months of occupation approximately 1,000 Jews are murdered in Estonia, including Rabbi Gomer of Tallinn, and the country is declared "Jew free." The synagogues of Tallinn and Tartu were destroyed during the war. Approximately 20,000 foreign Jews are sent to 22 concentration and labor camps in Estonia, the largest of which were at Kalevi-Liiva and Vaivara; most of these Jews would perish during the war.
- 1944 The battle for Estonia ensues between the Soviet Union and Germany in September. Germans massacre approximately 4,500 Jews in the cities of Klooga, Ereda, and Lagedi, just days before Soviet forces arrive. Less than a dozen Estonian Jews are known to have survived the war under German occupation.
- 1944 Estonia is annexed to the Soviet Union and does not gain independence again until 1991.
- 1946–1960s Strict anti-Jewish policies are implemented across the Soviet Union granting Jews few religious or cultural freedoms. The Jewish community is not allowed to rebuild synagogues, and Hebrew and religious education are banned.
- 1949 The Jewish leader Hirsch Aisenstadt is arrested by Soviet authorities.
- 1960 The Jewish population of Estonia is approximately 5,500.
- 1970s–1980s Estonia's moderation allows Jews more opportunities than elsewhere in the Soviet Union; numerous Jews arrive in Estonia and find positions at the

University of Tartu and the Polytechnical Institute in Tallinn. Emigration restrictions are eased and Jews make aliyah and move to the United States.

March 1988 The Jewish Cultural Society, the first Jewish organization in Estonia since 1940, opens in Tallinn.

April 1992 The Jewish Community, an umbrella organization for Jewish organizations and societies, receives a government charter.

October 1993 The Estonian government passes the Cultural Autonomy Act, based on the 1925 law, which grants minority groups a legal guarantee to preserve their cultural identities.

July 2005 The government opens a memorial site in the former concentration camp in Klooga.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Traditionally, Jews worked in trade and public service and as artisans, laborers, professionals, and owners of real estate and factories.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

During the Soviet period, numerous Jews joined the ranks of academia. Most notable was Jury Lotman, who made revolutionary developments in the field of semiotics.

### Religious Denominations

A synagogue is located in Tallinn. Rabbi Shmuel is the kot chief rabbi of Estonia. In 2006, a new synagogue opened in Tallinn.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Before World War II, Jewish cultural and educational institutions flourished but were eliminated during the Shoah and the Soviet occupation of Estonia. Since 1988, the Jewish Cultural Society has served as an umbrella group for Jewish organizations in Estonia. The current chairman of the Jewish Religious Community of Estonia is Boris Oks. In Tallinn a Jewish Community Center called Dor Vador (Every Generation) has opened. The community also publishes a newspaper, *Hashakhar* (Dawn), and broadcasts a monthly radio show, *Shalom Aleichem*.

Other Jewish organizations include the sports society Maccabi, the Society for the Gurini Goodwill Endowment, the Jewish Veterans Union, and the survivor organization Former Ghetto Prisoners' Association. Jewish cultural clubs operate under the Cultural Society in Tartu, Narva, and Kohtla-Järve.

In 1989, a Jewish Sunday school opened in the capital, and in 1990 the Tallinn Jewish School for grades 1–12 began operations. A kindergarten opened in Tallinn in 2002. Courses in Hebrew have been established, and a large library operates in the capital.

The Jewish Community of Estonia is active in several regional and international Jewish organizations, including the Baltic States Committee of the Federation of

Jewish Communities of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Baltic Jewish Forum, the World Jewish Congress, the European Jewish Congress, and the European Council of Jewish Communities. Other international organizations operating in Estonia include the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The Jewish population in Estonia was decimated by World War II, and few Estonian Jews returned. In the decades after World War II, Jews fleeing harsh anti-Semitism elsewhere in the Soviet Union flocked to Estonia. Since 1989, more than 1,000 Jews have made aliyah.

### Selected Bibliography

- Beare, Arlene. 2001. *Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Latvia and Estonia*. London: Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain.
- "Estonia Country Page." National Conference on Soviet Jewry Web site. <http://www.ncsj.org/Estonia.shtml> (accessed April 20, 2007).
- Fouse, Gary C. 2000. *Languages of the Former Soviet Republics: Their History and Development*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- "The Jewish Community in Estonia." 2007. Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Web site. [http://www.vm.ee/estonia/kat\\_172/998.html](http://www.vm.ee/estonia/kat_172/998.html) (accessed April 20, 2007).
- "Jews in Estonia." 1997. Fact Sheet. The Estonian Institute. <http://www.einst.ee/factsheets/jews/> (accessed April 20, 2007).
- Münz, Rainer, and Rainer Ohliger. 2003. *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*. Portland, OR: Frank Cass.
- Weiss-Wendt, Anton. 1998. "The Soviet Occupation of Estonia in 1940–41 and the Jews." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 12 (2): 308–325.

## Jews in Latvia

*David Straub*

**General Population:** 2,500,000

**Jewish Population:** 15,000–17,000

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** The largest population of Jews is in the capital, Riga (11,000); sizable Jewish populations are also found in other cities, most notably Daugavpils, Liepaya, Ludza, Rezekne, and Yelagva.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Sephardic Jews from Poland and Germany and Ashkenazi from Russia.

**Languages Spoken:** Russian, Latvian, Yiddish

## Historical Overview

- 12th–16th centuries The German Knightly Orders that control Livonia ban Jews.
- 1500s The lands that today constitute Latvia are divided among Russia, Poland, and Denmark.
- 1561 Poland conquers the region and opens it to Jewish settlement.
- 1571 The first Jews arrive in Piltene under the protection of Duke Magnuss after the Bishop of Courland sells the land to Denmark. Courland Jews develop a German dialect called “Courland Yiddish.”
- 1600s Yiddish-speaking and Orthodox Jewish refugees flee to Polish-controlled Latgalia after a series of pogroms in Byelorussia and Poland; Jews there form a self-governing community, or kahal.
- 1638 The first house for Jews is built in Riga.
- 1700s There is an influx of German Jewish workers and artisans into Courland.
- 1708 The first synagogue is built in Aizpute, Courland.
- 1710 Livonia, or Vidzeme, is captured by Russia.
- 1713 Jews living outside of Piltene are expelled from Courland, although the order is not completed.
- 1717 A tax of two talers is imposed on all Jews in Piltene; two years later, the tax is doubled.
- 1724 Jews are expelled from Livonia and Riga.
- 1727 An order to expel Jews from Courland fails.
- 1738 A second order to expel Jews from Courland also fails.
- 1766 Census records document 2,996 Jews, not including children, living in Latgalia.
- 1795 Piltene and Courland are taken over by Russia; at this time 4,582 male Jews live in Courland.
- 1799 After Russia takes over Courland, Jews obtain legal status as permanent citizens, but they still must pay punitive taxes.
- 1804 The Russian government creates the Pale of Settlement, but Courland is not included.
- 1840 The Jewish Kaplan school is established in Riga with German as the language of tuition.
- 1841 Jews are allowed to officially live in Riga.
- 1847 As many as 11,000 Jews are recorded as living in Latgalia in the towns of Dagdam, Daugavpils, Gostini, Kraslava, Livani, Malta, Preili, Rezekne, Varaklyani, and Vishki.
- 1850 Records show 51,072 Jews living in Courland. The first synagogue in Riga is built. At this time around 4,500 Jews live in Livonia, including Riga.
- 1852 Records show 23,743 Jews living in Courland.
- 1853 The first Jewish historian, Reuben Wunderbar publishes *History of the Jews of Lifland and Kurland*.
- 1893 Records show 21,963 Jews in Riga.
- 1897 Russian census records show that in the lands that would become Latvia, 82 percent speak Yiddish. More than 55,000 Jews are recorded in Latgalia.

- 1914 Before World War I, 190,000 Jews live in Latvia and 33,600 Jews are recorded in Riga; much of the population flees the country during the war.
- 1918–1921 As many as 1,000 Jewish soldiers fight for Latvian independence.
- November 1918 Independent Latvia is established; Jews are granted full civil rights. Eleven Jews become members of People’s Council of Latvia.
- 1919 A network of state-sponsored Jewish schools is established.
- 1920 The Jewish population declines to 79,000, of whom almost 25,000 live in Riga; 24 Jewish schools exist in Latvia.
- 1925 Records show that 95,675 Jews live in Latvia, making up 5.2 percent of the population; These numbers include 78,000 Yiddish speakers, 8,600 German speakers, 4,500 Russian speakers, and 500 Latvian speakers.
- 1925–1935 Six thousand Jews emigrate, many of whom make aliyah.
- 1930 Records show 94,588 Jews in Latvia, of whom 42,328 live in Riga.
- 1933 In Latvia, 119 Jewish schools operate.
- 1934 Latvian Democracy is abolished and a Fascist government with strong sympathies with Nazi Germany comes to power. Jewish autonomy is abolished and anti-Semitism increases, but the dictatorship does not institute harsh punitive anti-Semitic laws. The Jewish kehillah in Riga, which records births, marriages, and deaths, is permitted to remain open.
- 1935 Census records show 93,479 Jews in Latvia, 4.79 percent of the population. Of these numbers, more than 85,000 live in urban centers and less than 7,000 in rural areas; 86,427 are Latvian citizens, and the remainder are identified as “alien” or “stateless.” Jews are recorded living in Daugavpils, Liepaja, Rezekne, Jelgava, Ludza, Kraslava, Ventspils, and Krustpils; more than 43,000 Jews live in Riga. More than 75 percent of Jews are recorded as working in “trade and commerce” or “industry.” Jews own 213 corporate enterprises, or 35.6 percent of the total production value of firms in Latvia.
- 1937 The record of marriages in Latvia shows a low number of intermarriages between Jews and non-Jews; of the 857 Jewish men and 859 Jewish women who are married, only a few dozen are wed to non-Jews. Three Yiddish language newspapers are in print.
- 1940 More than 85,000 Jews inhabit Latvia, including 40,000 in Riga and 10,000 in Liepaja. Most Jews at this time speak Yiddish.
- June 1940 The Soviet Union occupies Latvia.
- June 13 and 14, 1941 Mass deportation of Jews by the Soviets begins.
- June 21, 1941 Germany invades the Soviet Union. Ghettos are established in larger cities in Latvia, and German Einsatzgruppen are used to massacre Latvian Jews; a pro-Nazi Latvian paramilitary group called Aizsargi aids Germans in the massacre.
- June 23, 1941 The first massacre of Jews by Germans takes place.
- July 4, 1941 Gogol Synagogue in Riga is burnt.
- July–October 1941 The Germans massacre around 34,000 Jews.
- November–December 1941 Liquidation of the Latvian ghettos begins: 11,000 Jews from Daugavpils are murdered and 25,000 Jews from the Riga ghetto are taken to Rumbula Forest to be massacred. The Jewish populations in Riga, Mitau,

- Liepaja, Valmiera, and Daugavpils are liquidated. By the end of the year, only 2,500 Jews are left in the Riga ghetto and 950 in Daugavpils.
- Late 1941–July 1942 As many as 15,000 Jews from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia arrive in Latvia to be murdered in and around Riga.
- 1943 The 5,000 remaining Latvian Jews are sent to concentration camps, where most perish. Kaiserwald concentration camp is set up in the summer for the remaining Latvian Jews.
- November 3, 1943 The Riga ghetto is liquidated.
- 1944 Soviets drive the Germans from Latvia. As the Germans retreat, the remaining Jews in Latvia are sent to Stutthof concentration camp near Danzig. Approximately 70,000 of the more than 95,000 prewar Jews in Latvia perish in Shoah. Roughly 15,000 escape to Russia. Several hundred Jews go into hiding and survive the war; 93 non-Jewish Latvians are recognized at Yad Vashem as “Righteous Among Nations” for saving Jewish lives. More than a thousand Latvian Jews return after the war, and thousands of Russian-speaking Jews from the Soviet Union migrate to the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic.
- 1970s Riga becomes the center of dissident Jewish activities. Jews begin to make aliyah and emigrate to America.
- 1979 Records show 28,300 Jews in Latvia.
- 1989 Emigration and aliyah reduce the Jewish population in Latvia to 22,900, of whom 18,800 lived in Riga.
- 1990 Aliyah is made by 3,388 Latvian Jews.
- 1991 Latvia gains independence and Jews are allowed to immigrate freely.
- 1997 The census records 14,600 Jews in Latvia.
- November 2001 Latvian president Vaira Vike-Freiberga attends the international conference “Jews in the Changing World,” in Riga. That same month, the Latvian prime minister attends a memorial to the 60th anniversary of the mass killings and deportations of thousands of Jews during World War II.
- 2003 The Latvian government commissions a monument to Zanis Lipke, who saved 57 Jews during the Nazi occupation.

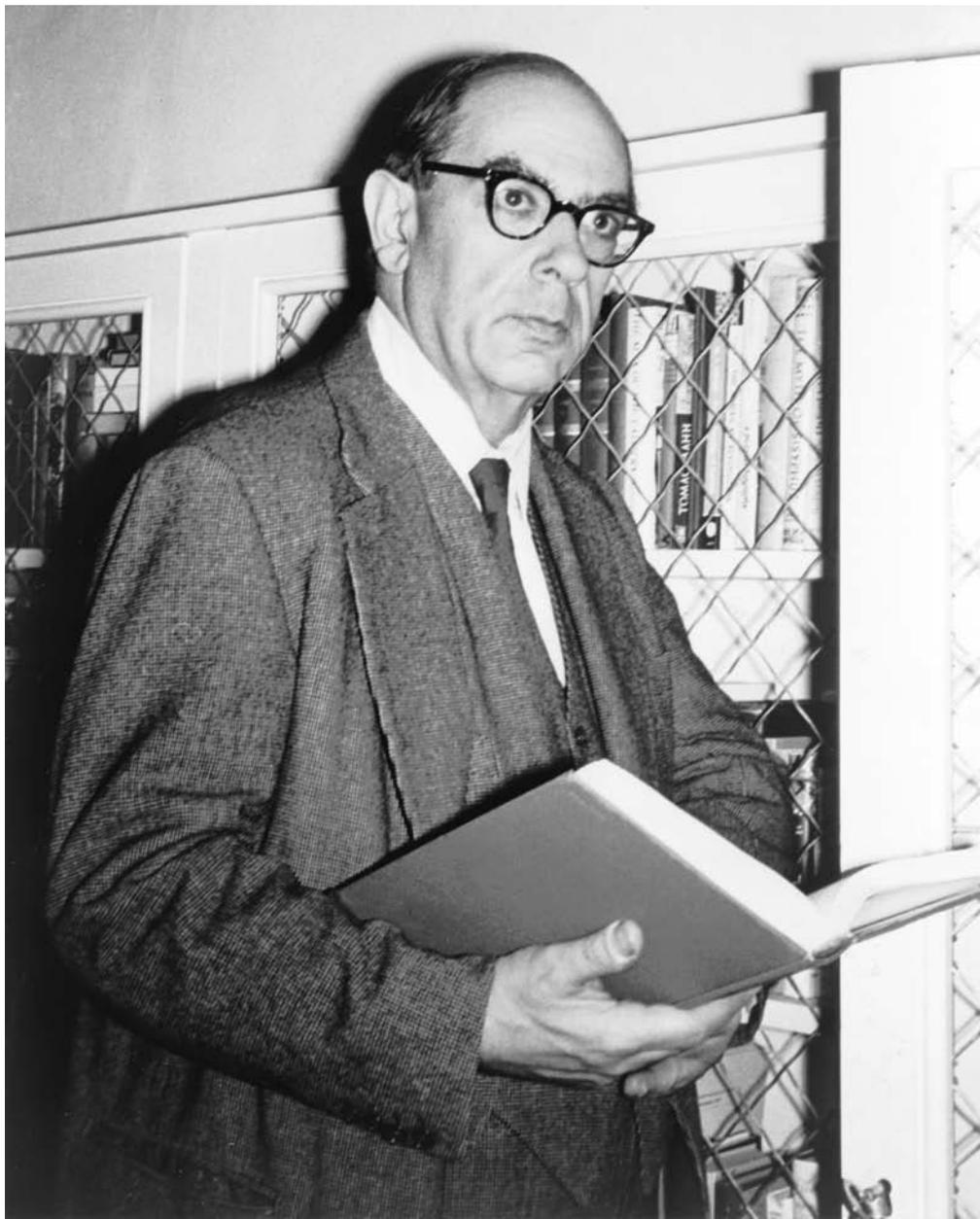
## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Traditionally Jews worked in trade, commerce, industry, medicine, art, and education and as artisans, including construction workers, roofers, inlay workers, and tailors.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Important contributors to the arts and science include Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997), who was born in Riga and, in 1921, immigrated to Britain where he became a philosopher, historian, theorist, and writer. Mark Rothko (1903–1970), born Marcus Rothkowitz in Daugavpils, settled in the United States and became an internationally renowned artist. Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994) was born in Riga and



Latvian-born Isaiah Berlin, one of the most prominent philosophers of the 20th century. (Library of Congress)

made aliyah in 1935. He taught chemistry, physiology, history, and philosophy at Hebrew University and became an outspoken critic of the Israeli government. Noted religious scholar and commentator Necham Leibowitz (1905–1997), Yeshayahu Leibowitz's sister, was born in Riga and moved to Eretz Yisrael in 1930. Other notable Latvian Jews include Jewish historian Simon Dubnow (1860–1941) and classical Latvian writer Rudolf Blaumanis.

### Present Economic Conditions

Many Latvian Jews are elderly and impoverished and receive aid from national and international communal organizations. In Riga, the Jewish Community Center and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) provide a meals-on-wheels program for the elderly and the Federation of the Jewish Communities of CIS (FJC) operates a soup kitchen and prepares food packages for homebound elderly. Much of the pre–World War II communal Jewish property was confiscated by the Soviet government and still has not been returned. Currently, laws are under consideration to return communal property to the Latvian Jewish community in hopes of improving their economic wellbeing.

### Religious Denominations

Before World War II, Latvian Jews in Kurzeme, Zemgale, and Vidzeme were Mithnagdim, and Jews of Latgale were Hasidim of the Habad school. In Riga, both sects operated. Synagogues exist in Riga, Daugavpils, Liepaja, and Rezhitsa.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

The Latvian Society for Jewish Culture is the leading communal organization. Other important groups include the Council of Jewish Organizations and the Council of Latvian Jewish Communities and Congregations. A Jewish newspaper, *Gersharim*, is published in Riga. Jewish community organizations exist in Daugavpils, Liepaya, Ludza, Rezekne, and Yelagva. The Latvian Society of Jewish Culture opened in 1989. The JDC, Chabad, and the FJC are active in Latvia.

In 1989, the first Jewish school in the Soviet Union, the Dubnov School, opened in Riga. Other youth education programs include the Union of Jewish Youth of Latvia, established in 1994; the Shalom Club, sponsored by the Israeli embassy; and FJC operated summer camps. In 1998, the Center for Judaic Studies opened at the University of Latvia.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

From the 16th to the 19th centuries, German and Polish Jews arrived in Latvia. The Latvian Jewish community was decimated during World War II, and after the war, Russian Jews from throughout the Soviet Union migrated to Latvia, settling mostly in the capital. Since 1989, thousands of Jews have made aliyah.

### Selected Bibliography

- Anders, Edward, and Juris Dubrovskis. 2001. *Jews in Liepaja, Latvia, 1941–45: A Memorial Book*. Burlingame, MA: Anders Press.
- Gordon, Frank. 1990. *Latvians and Jews between Germany and Russia*. Stockholm, Sweden: Memento.
- “History of Jewish Latvia: Overview.” Rumbula: The Holocaust in Latvia and Latvian Jewry Web site. [www.rumbula.org/history\\_of\\_latvian\\_jewry.shtml](http://www.rumbula.org/history_of_latvian_jewry.shtml) (accessed April 20, 2007).
- “History of Latvia and Courland.” Latvia SIG Web site. [www.jewishgen.org/Latvia/SIG\\_History\\_of\\_Latvia\\_and\\_Courland.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/Latvia/SIG_History_of_Latvia_and_Courland.html) (accessed April 20, 2007).

“Latvia’s History: Education, Remembrance, Research.” 2005–2006. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia Web site. [www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/Newsletters/History/2006/34/](http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/Newsletters/History/2006/34/) (accessed April 20, 2007).

Steimanism, Josifs. 2002. *History of Latvian Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press.

## Jews in Lithuania

*Saul Issroff and Aubrey Newman*

**General Population:** 3,585,000 (2006)

**Jewish Population:** Estimated at 4,000; 600 individuals live in Vilnius and Kaunas and 230 in Siauliai. Smaller communities are found in Klaipeda, Panevys, Druskininkai, Shvenchionys, and Ukmerge.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The majority are Ashkenazi, but there is evidence of some Sephardi origin.

**Languages Spoken:** Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, German, and Yiddish

### Historical Overview

1323 Grand Duke Gediminas, empire builder of Lithuania, makes Vilnius his capital and invites into his country Jews who come in part from southeast Europe, Germany, and central Europe.

1386 The marriage of Gediminas’s grandson Yagiello (Wladislawll) to Hedwig-Yadwiga of Poland results in the union of Poland and Lithuania.

1388 Prince Vytautas the Great of Lithuania grants an official charter to Jews of Troki and Brisk. Synagogues and cemeteries are exempted from taxation, and Jews are given personal and religious security. The following year the charter is extended to Grodno. It lays the foundation for a system of Jewish autonomy and the basis of the structure for Jewish life between the 14th and 18th centuries.

1392 Vytautas invites Jews and Karaites to settle in Vilnius.

1401 Vytautas proclaims the autonomy of Lithuania.

1444 Poland and Lithuania are again united under Casimir the Great.

1495 Casimir’s successor, Alexander Yagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania, expels the Jews from Lithuania and confiscates their property.

1503 Jews are readmitted into Lithuania; Abraham Boemas is appointed as senior and judge of the Jews.

1528 Jews are excluded from Vilnius and Kaunas, but many Jews move into districts near the city owned by nobles and not under the control of the burghers of Vilnius. Some Jews were appointed to important economic positions.

1551 The rule of Sigismund II brings recognition and enlargement of the powers of the kahal and the Lithuanian Jewish Community Council.

1569 The Union of Lublin harmonizes and merges the Polish and Lithuanian administrations. The Jews are now recognized as important in the economic system and become tax collectors and estate managers.

- 1573 The first official synagogue opens in Vilnius.
- 1581 Official recognition is given to the Council of the Four Lands—the Synod of the Provinces into which Jewish Poland was divided—Little Poland, Greater Poland, Belorussia, and Lithuania. This does not replace the individual kehilloth, but becomes the official channel between the community and the government, thus ensuring autonomy.
- 1587 Sigismund III is elected as King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. During his reign the Jews become much more active as partners of the nobility, sometimes even becoming part owners of land. Many engage in money lending but others are active in agriculture and estate administration or hold brewing and distilling rights. The nobility begin to create large numbers of small private townships (shtetlach) some with many Jewish inhabitants, at times a majority.
- 1648 The Cossack uprising under Bogdan Chmielnicki is directed against the Poles and Jesuits, but the Jews also become targets, as the agents and bailiffs of the hated landlords. The murder of the Jews by the Cossacks was the most ferocious onslaught upon them until modern times. Thousands of Jews flee from the Ukraine to Lithuania, and then the Russians and Swedes invaded Lithuania.
- 1734 The Great Fire of Vilna burns the “Jerusalem of Lithuania.” Although many of the wooden houses and synagogues are destroyed, they are soon rebuilt with assistance provided by Jewish communities from all over Western Europe.
- 1764 The government dissolves the Council of the Four Lands and the Council of Lithuania, which results in the loss of Jewish autonomy; however, the individual community councils (kehilloth) are retained as a method of collecting taxes from the Jews.
- 1765 The first census of Lithuanian Jews counts 76,474 individuals, but estimates suggest that the number may be as high as 120,000.
- 1768 The Gaon, Rabbi Elijah ben Judah Solomon Zalman, settles in Vilna.
- 1772–1795 Independent Poland and Lithuania disappear, partitioned and absorbed into the Russian state.
- 1781 Zalman issues herem against the Hasidim and the mitnaggedim rise in Lithuania.
- 1823 The Committee for Jewish Affairs is established and is the means by which the Russian government begins to enforce new discriminatory edicts against the Jews.
- 1827 Military service for Jewish youth (cantonists) is introduced. Service is for 25 years.
- 1835 The Pale of Settlement and the Regulations on Jewish Affairs are officially established, restricting even more severely Jewish freedom of movement and preventing settlement outside very restricted geographical areas.
- 1844 The kehilloth are dissolved.
- 1846 Sir Moses Montefiore visits Vilnius and Kaunas en route to Saint Petersburg. On leaving he declares to the leaders of the community: “I leave you but my heart will ever remain with you. When my brethren suffer, I feel it painfully: when they have reason to weep my eyes shed tears.”
- 1855 With the death of Nicholas I and accession of Alexander II the Cantonist system is abolished.

- 1858 Jews are granted limited rights to leave the Pale and live elsewhere in Russia.
- 1867 The Great Famine leads to an outbreak of cholera and the beginnings of a mass emigration.
- 1872 The first Jewish public library in Lithuania is founded in Vilnius.
- 1881 Alexander II is assassinated and Alexander III ascends the throne. Pogroms break out in southern Russia and the beginning of the flight of Jews en masse to the West.
- 1882 In May, Provisional Laws are introduced that restrict Jewish rights of settlement, ownership of land, and permission to trade on Sundays.
- 1886 The first Jewish labor societies are founded in Vilnius.
- 1891 Another Great Famine breaks out along with more pogroms in the south.
- 1893 Foundation of "Mizrachi" in Bialystock.
- 1897 The Bund is founded in Vilnius. It opposes Zionism and the use of Hebrew. The general census shows 755,000 Jews in Lithuania (212,600 in Kaunas). As many as 33,800 Jews emigrate from Kaunas.
- 1897–1914 More than 50,000 Jews emigrate from Kaunas.
- 1903 Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, comes to Vilnius. Mass demonstrations are staged in his support, which the Russian troops disperse by force. He writes "Yesterday, Vilna day, was something I shall never forget."
- 1906 After the 1905 revolution, the first Duma is established; Naftali Fridman is elected from Kaunas, specifically as a Jew. Political organizations "with foreign connections," that is, Zionists, are prohibited.
- 1915 In April and May, the Russian Government orders the expulsion of all Jews from Lithuania, on the alleged grounds that they are helping the German invaders. More than 120,000 have to leave. In September the German army occupies Lithuania.
- 1917 The Russian czar Nicholas II is overthrown and the Bolsheviks come to power, which triggers a civil war.
- 1918 Lithuania declares independence.
- 1919 Lithuania is recognized, and the Paris Declaration grants official, but short-lived, autonomy to the Jewish communities in Lithuania.
- 1920 Poland seizes Vilnius, and Kaunas becomes the new capital of Lithuania. The Yiddish Reali Gymnasium is founded in Vilkomir.
- 1923 The last National Jewish Assembly is held in Kaunas.  
The national census shows a Jewish population of 154,000.
- 1924 The Festivals Law prohibits working on Sundays and other Christian festivals.
- 1926 A military coup d'état ends democracy in Lithuania.
- January 1939 A German-Lithuanian nonaggression pact is signed.
- March 1939 The Germans occupy Memel.
- September 1939 The Soviets occupy Vilnius.
- October 1939 A Russian-Lithuanian mutual assistance agreement is signed and Vilnius is restored to Lithuania.
- 1940 Soviet forces occupy Lithuania.
- June 1941 The Soviets deport 30,000 "enemies of the state," including a large number of Jews; by this means they are saved from subsequent murder by the Nazis.

- Germany attacks the Soviet Union. On June 24, Germany occupies Kaunas and Vilnius. Lithuanian partisans massacre 4,000 Jews in Kaunas.
- June–November 1941 About 11,000 Kaunas Jews are murdered in Fort Nine.
- August 1941 The German administration incorporates Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia Ostland. Ghettos are established in Kaunas, Vilnius, and Siauliai. Dr. Elhanan Elkes is elected head of the Kaunas Ghetto.
- September 1941 Jacob Gens is appointed head of the Judenrat in Vilnius.
- 1941 The vast majority, about 200,000 out of an estimated 220,000–250,000 Lithuanian Jews are murdered.
- July 1942 Jews are deported from Kaunas to the concentration camps at Stutthof (women) and Dachau (men). The Red Army enters Lithuania on July 14. Approximately 10,000 Jews in Lithuania survive the German occupation.
- September 1943 The Vilnius Ghetto is liquidated.
- November 1943 The “Murder of the Children” (*Kinderaktion*) takes place in Siauliai.
- 1948–1953 Anti-Semitism in Lithuania consolidates; Jews are under increasing pressure and face growing antagonism. Jewish schools and institutions are closed down.
- 1979–1998 The Jewish population falls from 23,562 to 4,500. Many Jews emigrate to Israel and the United States
- 1990 Lithuanian independence from Soviet control is internationally recognized. The President of Lithuania issues a declaration condemning the role of Lithuanian anti-Semites. Since the end of communist rule, Jewish national identity has been maintained by the restoration of religious life and cultural heritage. Holocaust memorialization remains a top priority; more than 200 places of mass extermination are looked after. Annual ceremonies are held on September 23, the Day of Remembrance for the Holocaust in Lithuania, at the 9th Fort in Kaunas and in Ponary, the sites of the most terrible mass murders of Jews. Despite these actions, anti-Semitism is rife and fuelled by right-wing politicians and a populist press.
- March 7, 2004 The Lithuanian Jewish community elects Chaim Burshtein the new chief rabbi of Lithuania.

## Contemporary Overview

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Lithuanian Jews have been active contributors to science and the arts in Lithuania, even after emigration. Notable individuals include philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995); Mark Antokolsky, sculptor to Emperor Alexander (1843–1902); Bernard Berenson (1865–1959), Lithuanian-born American art critic and art historian; Jascha Heifetz (1901–1987), world-renowned violinist; Al Jolson (Asa Yoelson), born in Sereďzius (1886–1950), singer and entertainer; Jacques Lipchitz (Chaim Jacob Lipchitz; 1891–1973), cubist sculptor; Ben Shahn (1898–1969), artist; Andrew Schally (b. Vilnius, 1926), 1977 Nobel Prize in Medicine; Sir Aaron Klug (b. 1926), physicist, chemist, and winner of the 1982 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for developing the

crystallographic electron microscopy, president of the Royal Society 1995–2000; Abba Kovner (b. 1918 in Sebastopol, lived in Vilnius, d. 1987), partisan leader who later lived in Israel and a noted poet; Yacov Shmuskevich, commander of Soviet Air Force; Emma Goldman, anarchist and revolutionary leader (b. Kaunas, 1869–1940); Laurence Harvey (Lauruska Mischa Skikne; b. 1928), actor; Sidney Hillman (b. 1887 in Zagare, d. 1946), labor leader, founder and president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America; Moshe Arens, former minister of defense and former minister of foreign affairs of Israel (b. 1925); Aharon Barak, president of the Supreme Court of Israel (1995–2006) who was smuggled out of the Kovno Ghetto in a suitcase as a child and hidden by a Lithuanian farmer; and Joe Slovo (Yossel Mashel Slovo; b. Obeliai 1926, d. Johannesburg 1995), ANC activist and cabinet minister in South African government.

Notable persons who have contributed to Jewish culture and religion include Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (Eliezer Yitzhak Perelman; 1858–1922), pioneer of modern Hebrew revival; Abraham Mapu (1808–1867), known as the creator of the Hebrew novel; Nosson Tzvi Finkel (1849–1927), famous rosh yeshiva of the Slabodka yeshiva; Eyliohu ben Schloyme Zalmen (1720–1797), rabbi, Talmud scholar, sage, and Kabbalist; Uriel Weinreich (1926–1967), linguist and scholar of Yiddish studies; Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983), founder of Reconstructionist Judaism; David Wolfsohn (1856–1914), Jewish businessman, prominent Zionist, and second president of the World Zionist Organization in 1905; and Chatzkel Lemchen (1904–2001), lexicographer.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Dr. Simeonas Alperavicius is the chairman of the Lithuanian Jewish Community (JLC), an umbrella organization representing all Lithuanian Jews that was established in 1991. The Jewish community maintains good relations with the Lithuanian government. The Jewish community maintains the Ezra medical center, Ilan Children's Club, Union of Lithuanian Jewish students, Jewish cultural club, Fajelech dance and choral ensemble, and Maccabi sports club. JLC publishes *Jerusalem of Lithuania* in Lithuanian, Russian, English, and Yiddish. Notable clergy in Lithuania include Chaim Burshtein, a Russian-born Israeli Orthodox Rabbi, and Rabbi Shlomo Krinski, a Chabad rabbi who runs a Lubavitch center with a Jewish secondary school in Vilnius.

State-supported Jewish institutions include a kindergarten, a school named after Shalom Aleichem, a library, and the Jewish Gaon State Museum of Lithuania. A branch of the museum also operates at the Paneriai memorial. The Vilnius Yiddish Institute (established 2001 at Vilnius State University) and the National Library include significant Judaica sections.

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by conflicts between members of Chabad-Lubavitch and followers of traditional Judaism. In 2005, violence between those factions broke out at the Vilnius synagogue. Interest among descendants of Lithuanian Jews has spurred tourism and a renewal in research and preservation of the community's historic resources and possessions.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

A mass exodus of Jews began in 1880. Large numbers went to the United States, an estimated 15,000 families settled in South Africa, and smaller numbers dispersed among various South American states, Australia, England, France, and Canada. A number of Lithuanian Jews have immigrated to Israel or the United States since the fall of the Soviet Union.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Rose Lerer, and Saul Issroff. 2002. *The Holocaust in Lithuania 1941–1945: A Book of Remembrance*. 4 Vols. New York: Gefen.
- Goren, N., L. Garfunkel, et al., eds. 1959–1984. *Yahadut Lita* [Lithuanian Jewry]. 4 vols. Tel Aviv: Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel.
- Greenbaum, M. 1995. *The Jews of Lithuania: A History of a Remarkable Community*. New York: Gefen.
- Kagan, B. 1991. *Yidishe Shtet, Shtetlekh un Dorfishe Yishuvim in Lite biz 1918. Historish-biografishe skitses* [Jewish Cities, Towns and Villages in Lithuania Until 1918. Historical and Biographical Sketches]. New York: B. Kohen.
- Kasnett, Rabbi Y. 1996. *The World That Was: Lithuania. A Study of the Life and Torah Consciousness of the Jews of Lithuania and Northeastern Poland*. Cleveland Heights, OH: The Living Memorial, Hebrew Academy of Cleveland.
- Leikowicz, Ch., ed. 1965. *Lite* [Lithuania]. Vol. 2. Tel Aviv, Israel: I. L. Peretz.
- Levin, D. 2000. *The Litvaks: A Short History of the Jews of Lithuania*. Translated by A. Teller. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Levin, D., and J. Rosin, eds. 1996. *Pinkas Hakehillot: Lita* [Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities from their Foundation until after the Holocaust: Lithuania]. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- “Lithuania.” Am Yisrael Web site. [www.amyisrael.co.il/cis/lithuania.htm](http://www.amyisrael.co.il/cis/lithuania.htm) (accessed April 20, 2007).
- Lithuanian Holocaust Names Project Web site. <http://www.lithnames.nux.co.uk/> (accessed April 20, 2007).
- Oshry, Ephraim. 1995. *The Annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry*. Translated by Y. Leiman. New York: Judaica Press.
- Rozett, R., and S. Spector, eds. 2000. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn.
- Schoenburg, Stuart. 1991. *Lithuanian Jewish Communities*. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Spector, S., and G. Wigoder, eds. 2001. *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life. Before, During and After the Holocaust*. Vols. 1–3. New York: New York University Press.
- Sudarsky, M., U. Katzenellenbogen, and J. Kissin, eds. 1951. *Lite* [Lithuania]. Vol. 1. New York: Jewish-Lithuanian Cultural Society.
- Vilnius Yiddish Institute. <http://litvakai.mch.mii.lt/index.en.html> (accessed April 20, 2007).

## History of Lithuanian Jewish Culture

*Dovid Katz*

---

The Jewish cultural concept of “Lithuania” differs markedly from the modern state of that name. Today’s Republic of Lithuania, the southernmost of the three Baltic states, occupies the westernmost sliver of the Lithuanian Jewish area that is known as *Lító* in traditional Lithuanian Ashkenazic Hebrew, *Líte* in Yiddish, and *Líta* in modern Hebrew. The three variants are spelled distinctly in the Jewish alphabet: *Lító* with (Aramaic-origin) final alef (ליטא) in rabbinic culture; *Líte* with Yiddish final ayin (ליטע) in modern Yiddish literature; and *Líta* with final (biblical-style) hey (ליטה) in modern Hebrew. In fact, these three forms correspond symbolically to the three major Jewish cultures for which Jewish Lithuania was a critical center for many centuries and for which Lithuanian Jewry produced permanent contributions: traditional rabbinic (and Kabbalistic) learning, modern Yiddish culture and scholarship, and modern Hebrew language and literature and the cultural form of Zionism, which actually determined the contours of the State of Israel. In this essay, *Líta* is used as a neutral English term, with English word final reduced *-a*, encompassing all three Jewish senses.

The contours of the borders of Lita bear more than a passing resemblance to various 14th-century versions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and in some areas, to the demarcation line between the Lithuanian and Polish components of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth set up by the 1569 Union of Lublin. In other words, internal Jewish cultural geography often corresponds in some measure to erstwhile borders that had profound influence on incipient settlement patterns and the degree of intercommunity (and inter-Jewish community) communication. The territory of Lita is generally congruous with present-day Belarus, parts of Latvia, Lithuania, a large swath of eastern Ukraine, and the Suwalk (Suwalki) and Bialystok areas of northeastern Poland.

In all three Jewish languages of Ashkenazic Jewish civilization—Hebrew, Yiddish, and Aramaic—the traditional Lithuanian Jew has always been immediately identifiable by the sound system evident in pronouncing all of them. As in standard Ashkenazic Hebrew, the Lithuanian variety usually realizes the historic vowel games as an open *o*, and historic *u* vowels retain their *u* quality; hence, blessings start with *borukh* (“blessed is”), but for a non-Lithuanian East European Jew, it is *burikh*. In most (but not all) varieties of Lithuanian Jewish pronunciation, again in all three languages, the historic holem vowel (*oy* in standard Ashkenazic Hebrew and standard Yiddish) is rendered *ey*, hence “Torah” is *téyre* (or formal *teyro*) for standard *tóyre* (*toyro*). Finally, Lithuanian Jews were needed for their conflation (or seeming switcharounds) of *s* and *sh* sounds (hissing and hushing sibilants), and the dialect is playfully called *sábesdiker losn*—the language of those who say *sábes* for *shábes* (“Sabbath” or “Saturday”), and *losn* for *loshn* (“language”), or, in effect, those who would render the shibboleth phrase for “language of the Sabbath” with *s* instead of the required *sh* in both words.

The cultural significance of Lithuanian Jewry, disproportionate to its minority status within East European Jewry (historically in the region of a quarter of East European Jewry), is often derived ultimately, if indirectly, from the relative tolerance of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was a largely multitheist (“pagan”) East European empire. Its rulers adopted Christianity only in the late 14th century, and for a long time thereafter, the multitheist culture remained potent, keeping at bay for some time the absolutist brand of central European Christianity. The intolerance of medieval Christian Europe’s rulers—so evident in period of the Crusades (1095–1291), the Rindfleisch massacres (1298), and the Black Death (1347–1351)—was in fact the prime factor in the various migrations of medieval Ashkenazic Jewry in various directions, and particularly eastward, where Hungarian and Polish rulers issued charters of tolerance to encourage Jewish migration, primarily for economic reasons. While Lithuanian grand duke Gedymin (Gediminas) is rumored to have settled Jews in his new capital city Vilna (now Vilnius) in the early 1320s, the earliest known recorded Lithuanian charters come from his grandson Witold the Great (Vytautas), for the Jews of Brest in 1388 and Grodna in 1389. They contained formulations that were sensational for their time, including freedom of religious belief, tax-free synagogue and cemetery plots, economic rights equal to that of all citizens, the explicit right to own land, the imposition of a fine on a Gentile who fails to answer the call for help from a Jew, and the affirmation that these rights are “everlasting.” It is little wonder that Witold became known as “the Cyrus of Lithuania.”

Notwithstanding serious setbacks, such as the short-lived expulsion of 1495, it became common knowledge that Lithuania was, in the course of many centuries, the most tolerant area with respect to its Jewish population. Moreover, Lithuania represented, in terms of European Jewish history, a “further trek eastward” for Ashkenazic civilization on a trajectory that started in Germany and passed through the Polish lands, coming to maturity rather later than in the oldest centers of Polish Jewry.

### Rabbinic Scholarship

By the 16th century, Lithuanian Jewish communities were determined to achieve sophistication of rabbinic scholarship, mostly by spending scant resources on importing top scholars and sending pupils to the best academies elsewhere. Mordechai Jaffe (“the Levúsh,” ca. 1535–1612), a native of Prague, was brought to Lithuania to teach and officiate in Grodna (now Hrodna, Belarus) in the 1570s; around the same time, Solomon Luria (the “Maharshál,” ca. 1510–1674), originally from Poland, was brought to Brisk D’Lita (now Brest, Belarus). By the 17th century, Lithuania was itself producing some of Europe’s top rabbinic scholars. Among the most famous were “the Shakh” (Shabbetai ben Meir ha-Kohen, 1621–1662), the “Maharshák” (Aaron Samuel Kaidonover, ca. 1614–1676), and the “Be’éyr Ha-góylo” (Moyshé Rivkes, ca. 1595–ca. 1672). Rivkes pioneered a keen critical sense for textual criticism and reconstruction in his commentary to the *Shulkhon orukh* (Shulhan Aruch) code of law, which appeared during his years in Amsterdam in the

1670s. Textual expertise was to become the hallmark of Lithuanian Talmudic scholarship, in contrast to the propensity for complex clever explanation, sometimes called *pilpul*, that became the hallmark of the Polish rabbis. In a further symbolic establishment of the Lithuanian Jewish tradition of putting scholarship before all else, Rivkes left a will that provided funds from his estate for descendants who would be talented students.

One of those direct descendants was the Gaon of Vilna, Eylioḥu ben Shloyme-Zalmen (Elijah the son of Shelomo-Zalman), who lived from 1720 to 1797, and by virtue of his scholarship and intellectual influence, made his city, Vilna, into a celebrated world-class center that would thereafter become known as *Yerusholáyim d'Lite* (the Jerusalem of Lithuania).

The Gaon and his circle in Vilna were also founders of Misnagdism, the misnagdic (or “opposition” or “protestant”) movement against the new Hasidic movement, which had emanated from 18th-century Podolia in the Ukraine. The Vilna group’s bans against the Hasidim, from 1772, became foundational to the Lithuanian Jewish heritage. Objecting to the quasi-deification of the hasidic rebbe (or *tsádik*), the enacted changes in prayer and other laws, the introduction of a kind of pantheism, and the seeming demotion of Torah scholarship, the followers of the Gaon, and in the first instance his pupil Chaim of Valozhin (1749–1821), went on to found a network of rabbinic academies or yeshivas that were renowned for their strict standards, starting with the famed Valozhin Yeshiva that was established in 1802. Other Lithuanian towns that became famous because of their celebrated yeshivas were Mir, Kletsk, and Slutsk, on the territory of today’s Belarus, and Ponevezh, Slabodke, and Telz, in today’s Lithuania.

But much of the eastern sector of Lithuanian Jewry—in and around Vitebsk, Mohilov, Gomel, Bobruisk, and other towns—became adherents of a new “Third



Eylioḥu ben Schloyme Zalmen (1720–1797), the Gaon of Vilna, leader of Lithuanian Jewry and Talmudic protégé. (Isadore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

Way,” a distinctly Lithuanian Hasidism. Its principal founder was Shneur Zalman of Lyadi (1745–1813), who synthesized Lithuanian love of learning and adherence to Jewish law with core tenets of Hasidism, in his Chabad movement, which also came to be known later as Lubavitch, after the town to which his son moved the court (today Lubavichy in Russia near the border of Belarus). There have been other Lithuanian Hasidim, including the dynasties of Amdur, Karlin (eventually Karlin-Stolin), and Lechevitsh.

### Modern Yiddish Culture

Although much of the modern literary form of Yiddish developed in the Ukraine and other parts of the southern dialect areas, their implicit recognition of the “standard status” of most aspects of Lithuanian pronunciation is apparent starting from the early 19th century at least (based on earlier notions of correctness regarding Hebrew and Aramaic renditions in prayer and Bible reading). The grandfather of modern Yiddish literature, Mendele Moykher Sforim (Sholem-Yankev Abramovitch, ca. 1836–1917), was himself from Lithuania but relocated as a teenager to Ukraine. His later works, synthesizing Lithuanian and Ukrainian dialect features, fixed a durable interdialect balance of standard Yiddish.

In 1897, the Jewish Labor Bund was founded clandestinely in Vilna. At first led by cultural assimilationists, it turned to Yiddish culture as a prime ideological component of cultural autonomy in the early years of the 20th century, largely because of the leadership of Esther Frumkin (1880–1943), who helped develop curricula for modern Yiddish schools.

Vilna, which already had the aura of being known as the “Jerusalem of Lithuania” for its rabbinic learning, proved a fertile symbolic capital for highbrow modern Yiddish secular culture. This image was effectively launched in 1913 with the appearance in the city of *Der Pinkes*, a sophisticated anthology of academic research on Yiddish published entirely in Yiddish; in this work, the founder of modern Yiddish studies, Ber Borokhov (1881–1917), published his seminal works delineating the new field.

In Vilna, the extant infrastructure included, in addition to densely populated Yiddish-speaking districts, the Romm publishing house, which in the second half of the 19th century had added modern Yiddish fiction to its output, most famously publishing the populist tales of Isaac Meir Dik (1814–1893).

During and after World War I, a number of the most talented Yiddish scholars—linguists, literary historians, folklorists, educators—settled in Vilna (which was Wilno, Poland, from 1920 until September 1939). Among them were literary historian and philologist Zalmen Reyzen (1887–ca. 1940); philologist, translator, and editor Zelig-Hirsh Kalmanovitch (1881–1944); poet and educator Moyshe Kulbak (1896–ca. 1940); and most significantly the linguist and cultural historian Max Weinreich (1894–1969), who was instrumental in establishing the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research in Vilna in 1925. The city also became famous for its modern Yiddish educational institutions, including the modernist school founded and led in the interwar period by Sofia Gurevitsh (1880–1942).

The scholarly and educational components of modern Yiddish culture came in a great measure from Lithuanian Jewry. By creating a conceptual international center for sophisticated, higher-end Yiddish culture, particularly education and research activities, the Vilna circles helped build Yiddish studies into a viable field, a construction that would have a new significance decades after the Holocaust when the models created were playing a significant role in Western universities where Yiddish studies are taught.

### Modern Hebrew Culture

Lithuanian Jewry played a critical role in the revival of modern Hebrew. Most of the top stylists who began to fashion a modern Hebrew that would be viable as a contemporary literary language (and eventually as a revived spoken language) were *maskilim* (“enlighteners”) from the depths of the Lithuanian Jewish territory. They tended to congregate in Vilna where three big-city Hebrew salons developed in the 19th century: the homes of Tsvi-Hirsh Katzenelenbogen (“Hirshl Simkhe’s”), the Klatshko family, and Moyshe Rosenthal. Among the authors nurtured were the pioneers of modern Hebrew poetry, including Abraham Dov-Ber Lebensohn (or “Odom ha-koyhen,” 1794–1878), his son Micah Joseph (or Michal, 1828–1852), and Yehuda-Leib (or “Leon”) Gordon (1831–1892). In the arena of prose, the stylistic virtuosity of another Vilna salon member, Mordechai-Aaron Ginsburg (1795–1846), taken in tandem with the novels of Abraham Mapu (1808–1867), from another major Lithuanian city, Kovna (now Kaunas), were crucial. Mapu’s *Ahavas tsíyoyñ* (Love of Zion), which appeared in Vilna in 1853, is rightly considered the first modern Hebrew novel.

By the waning years of the 19th century, Lithuanian Hebrew literature fed into the new Eastern European–driven branch of Zionism that placed a renewed Hebrew language and culture in or near the ideological center of the movement. Peretz Smolenskin (ca. 1840–1885), who founded the journal *Ha-shákhár*, pioneered polemic and journalistic styles. Eliezer Perlman, who became Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922), is the celebrated actual reviver of a living, spoken Hebrew, who established (in Palestine) the first Hebrew-speaking family in several thousand years. He was a native of Luzhik in the province of Vilna (now Luzhki, Belarus).

### The Notions “Litvak” and “Litvish”

Many nowadays refer to Lithuanian Jews as “Litvaks” (Yiddish *lítvakes*, plural of *lítvak*). It is important to understand, however, that the word has different connotations for different groups. For most ethnographers, linguists, and cultural historians, a Litvak is a Jew who hails from the territory Jews called *Lita*, where they spoke the Lithuanian dialect of Yiddish and used the Lithuanian dialect of Hebrew and Aramaic in their prayers, readings, and recitations. But for some, especially (but not only) Chabad Hasidim, the term *Litvak* refers only to the anti-Hasidic mitnaggedim, primarily of the western portions of the Jewish ethnographic territory of *Lita*; there are some mitnaggedim who likewise reserve the term for the non-Hasidic

component of Lithuanian Jewry. And in some non-Lithuanian communities (e.g., from Ukraine), ironically, the word *Litvak* usually refers to Chabad Hasidism, primarily because of their Lithuanian pronunciation, which goes hand in hand with various religious and cultural differentiations between northern Chabad Hasidim and their southern counterparts.

Although the adjective *litvish* (literally “Lithuanian”) may refer to the noun *litvak* (and take on whichever of the meanings it has in context), it is often used to refer to the Lithuanian Yiddish, Hebrew, and Aramaic dialect or mode of pronunciation. As such, it would be universal to refer to all Lithuanian Jews, whether mitnaggedim of the west, or Chabad Hasidim of the east as “speaking *Litvish*.” Incidentally, the dialect area of *litvish*, known to linguists as Northeastern Yiddish and/or Northeastern Ashkenazic (with reference to Hebrew or Aramaic), includes a rather larger territory, extending southeastward to the Black Sea, and covering such towns as Zaporozhe and Kherson, which were only inhabited by extensive Jewish communities from the early 19th century onward.

More than 90 percent of Lithuanian Jewry was murdered during the Holocaust, one of the largest percentages of any part of Europe. On the territory of today’s Lithuania, the figure approaches (or exceeds) 94 percent. For many intents, the Holocaust per se was tested in Lithuania in the months immediately after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Following Shoah, the surviving Lithuania Jewry emigrated in mass, bringing to an end the history of a unique community that had flourished for centuries.

### Selected Bibliography

- Ben-Sasson, Haim Hillel. 1973. “Lithuania: The Structure and Trends of Its Culture.” In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Jerusalem: Year Book.
- Kasnett, Yitzchak. 1996. *The World That Was: Lithuania*. Cleveland, OH: Hebrew Academy of Cleveland.
- Katz, Dovid. 2004. *Lithuanian Jewish Culture*. Vilnius, Lithuania: Baltos Lankos.
- Kostanian, Rachel, Ruta Puisyte, et al. 2001. *Jewish Life in Lithuania*. Vilnius, Lithuania: Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum of Lithuania.
- Lempertas, Izraelis. 2005. *Litvakes*. Vilnius, Lithuania: Versus Aureus.
- Levin, Dov. 2000. *The Litvaks. A Short History of the Jews in Lithuania*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem.
- Oshry, Ephraim. 1995. *The Annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry*. Translated from the Yiddish by Y. Leiman. Brooklyn: Judaic Press.
- Rosenthal, Herman. 1904. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Lithuania.” New York: Funk & Wagnalls, viii, 118–130.
- Schochet, Elijah Judah. 1994. *The Hasidic Movement and the Gaon of Vilna*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

## Vilnius as a Jewish City

*Mordechai Zalkin*

---

Jews began to settle in Vilnius by the middle of the 15th century, but they did not receive a legal approval to do so until the end of the following century. While included in Vaad Medinat Lita in the middle of the 17th century, the Jewish community of Vilnius was one of the most important Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. At this time the community was already well organized and functioned according to regulations, set and supervised by the local community board, the kahal. The intensive activity of this body, in almost every aspect of the local Jewish life, made the Jewish community “a city within a city” or, in another words, a Jewish city. In fact, local Jews could manage their lives almost without any contact with the local authorities. The kahal, assisted by some other communal bodies, either provided directly, in many cases for free, or took care of a wide range of social and economic services, such as social welfare, basic education for children of needy and poor families, medical treatment, constant supply of Kosher food, a justice system, public bath houses, burial services, and the like.

By the end of the 18th century, the community, which at that time reached nearly 6,000 persons, suffered from internal social and religious instability. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Jewish community of Vilnius, numbering around 20,000 people, became known as “Jerusalem of Lithuania” and began to play a focal role in the history of modern East European Jewry. Synagogues and other religious institutions, such as public bath houses, elementary religious schools (hadarim) and a few academies for Torah study (yeshivas) were scattered all around the city and its suburbs.

Some of the most important contemporary rabbinic figures and scholars, such as Rabbi Elijah Kremer, known as the Genius of Vilna, lived and studied in this city. The world’s biggest and most important Jewish printing press and publishing house, Romm, which was founded by the first quarter of the century, published a new edition of the Babylonian Talmud as well as a wide range of religious and secular books.

Besides its importance as a center for Torah studies, the local Jewish community also played an important role in the local and regional economic spheres. Jewish entrepreneurs, such as Rosenthal, Kliachko, Yogiches, and Opatow, were highly involved in different types of businesses—import, export, industry, and the like. By 1861, of the 20 local merchants who belonged to the first guild, 19 were Jews. Likewise, the importance of Vilnius also became apparent among Russian governmental circles and among Jewish dignitaries from all over the world. Thus, for instance, in his visit to Russia in 1846, Moses Montefiore spent almost a week in Vilnius.

By the middle of this century, the “Jewishness” of Vilnius took another direction as a result of the wide and quick spread of the Jewish enlightenment (Haskalah). As early as 1830, modern schools for Jewish boys and girls were established. These schools were, in fact, the first step of the educational revolution that took

place in the “Jerusalem of Lithuania” throughout this century. From the beginning of the 1840s, several modern schools for Jewish boys and girls were established by the local maskilim, attracting a growing numbers of students. Simultaneously, many young Jews were enrolled in local non-Jewish educational institutions. Thus, by the end of the century, the local educational map was scattered among traditional and modern hadarim; several yeshivas for young boys and for advanced, well-trained scholars (the most famous yeshiva was known by the name Ramailles); modern elementary and high schools for boys and girls; and, last but not least, a chain of vocational schools that were very popular among the lower classes of the local Jewish society.

During the 19th century, the city also witnessed an intensive literary activity of local writers and poets, such as Adam Ha-Cohen, Aizik Meir Dik, Samuel Joseph Finn, and Kalman Shulman. Different libraries, in which one could find all sorts of Jewish and general literature, were opened and served all types of readers. In addition, modern newspapers, such as *Ha-Karmel*, were printed and published by local maskilim. Besides, many young Jews, men and women alike, frequented non-Jewish local educational institutions, such as elementary schools, gymnasia, and the local university. Simultaneously, because of the historical research of Samuel Joseph Finn and Hillel Noah Maggid-Shteinschneider, Vilnius became known as an important center of modern Jewish historiography. Book collections, such as the collection of Matityahu Strashun, as well as rich public libraries, also became an integral part of the local cultural view. From the social point of view, the maskilim formed



Scene in the Jewish quarter of Vilnius, Lithuania, about 1920. (Library of Congress)

their own social institutions, such as the first enlightened synagogue, Taharat Ha-Kodesh, founded in the city center in 1847. At the same time, different informal types of maskilic subgroups were active, mainly in private houses. By the last quarter of the century this cultural trend was intensified with the involvement of local scholars and public figures in the activities of the Society for the Dissemination of Haskalah among Russian Jewry and the Society of Mekitsei Nirdamim.

Because of its popularity as a center of Jewish life, and as a result of the increasing demand for workers, the Jewish population numbered about 76,000 by the end of the 19th century. At the same time, Vilnius became one of the major centers of the Jewish socialist movements. In 1897, the Bund (the Jewish socialist movement) was established in one of the city's suburbs.

World War I had a significant effect on the local Jews' life. On the one hand, many local inhabitants left the city, temporarily or for good, but, on the other hand, thousands of Jewish refugees found shelter in Vilnius. During the interwar period, Vilnius, now part of Poland, witnessed a renaissance of the local Jewish life. This renaissance encompassed all aspects of public life and was characterized mainly by political diversity. The "Jewish street" became an arena for all types of contemporary ideological movements—Zionists, socialists, Orthodox, and the like. This diversity was apparent, for instance, in the multifarious educational system, which included Zionist, Yiddishist, religious, and Orthodox schools, a microcosm of the political and cultural diversity of the local Jewish community. The interwar period was also marked by the fact that local figures and institutions played, again, a major role in the cultural life of East European Jewry and made Vilnius the capital of Yiddish language and culture. This activity was centered on the Yivo Institute (the Jewish Scientific Institute), founded in Vilnius in 1925, and which soon after became an important center for the research of Jewish history, philology, literature, economy, statistics, psychology, and education. Among the active members of Yivo were prominent researchers such as Simon Dubnow, Eliyahu Cherikover, Jacob Leshchinsky, Max Weinreich, Zalman Rejzen, Alexander Harkavy, and Max Erik. During the 20th century, historiographers Pinchas Kohn and Joseph and Israel Klausner continued the work of the 19th-century founding fathers of the local school of historiography. This period was also marked by intensive literary activity, led by a group of young poets and writers, such as Haim Grade and Abraham Sutskever, and known as "Yung Vilne."

From the political perspective, the interwar period was characterized by increasing tension between the city's Polish population, as well as the Polish government, and the local Jewish community. As a result of the Polish army's occupation of Vilnius at the beginning of the 1920s, the local Jewish community, which for centuries was known as the capital of the Litvaks, was cut off from the young independent Lithuanian state and from its natural Jewish environment. Thus, the Polish authorities always regarded the local Jewish community, which supported the Lithuanian side in this dispute, as disloyal to the Polish state. Even though a few local dignitaries, such as Rabbi Rubinstein and Dr. Vigodski, served as members of the Polish parliament and the city was formally part of Poland, Jewish Vilnius preserved its original "Litvishe" character until World War II when most local Jews

were murdered either in the city or in a nearby mass-murder site in Ponar forest. Jewish Vilnius ceased to exist, and as the Lithuanian poet, Tomas Venclova, wrote: “Vilnius will never be the same without its Jewish district.”

To a certain extent, the “Jerusalem of Lithuania” was the most Jewish city in the history of East European Jewry. From the cultural, religious, and welfare perspectives, the community was a self-sufficient entity that supplied its members with all types of material and spiritual needs. In addition, the unique atmosphere of the Jewish quarter’s narrow alleys, the countless small synagogues scattered around the city, and the Yiddish-dominated hustle and bustle of the small markets all made Vilnius a “Jewish city.”

### Selected Bibliography

- Cohen, Israel. 1943. *Vilna*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America
- Klausner, Israel. 1983. *Vilna, Dorot aharonim*. Jerusalem: Bet lohmei hagetot.
- Klausner, Israel. 1988. *Vilna, Yerushalayim de-Lita: dorot rishonim 1495–1881*. Tel Aviv: ha-Kibuts ha-meuhad.
- Kruk, Herman. 2002. *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939–1944*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Minczeles, Henri. 2000. *Vilna-Wilno-Vilnius, la Jerusalem de Lituanie*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Ran, Leyzer, ed. 1974. *Yerusholayim de-Lita* [Jerusalem of Lithuania]. New York: Vilner Albom Komitet.

# Scandinavia

## Jews in Scandinavia

*Mikael Tossavainen*

---

General Population: 24.4 million

Jewish Population: 28,510

Percent of the Population: 0.001 percent

Jewish Population by Country: Sweden, 17,000 (Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö); Denmark, 8,000 (Copenhagen); Norway, 2,000 (Oslo, Trondheim); Finland, 1,500 (Helsinki, Turku); Iceland, 10 (Reykjavik)

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The first Jews who arrived in Scandinavia came from German lands or were Sephardi traders. Later Jewish immigration has come mainly from Central and Eastern Europe.

**Languages Spoken:** Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Russian, Polish, and to a certain degree Yiddish in the older generation.

---

### Historical Overview

1592 The first Jew in Denmark is registered in Elsinore under the name of Jochim Jode (Jochim the Jew). This is the first documented Jewish presence in Scandinavia.

1619 The Danish king Christian IV makes use of court Jews and gives a licence to a Sephardi Jew, Albert Dionis, allowing him to direct the royal mint in the town of Glückstadt. Some 30 Sephardi families, or Portuguese as they are called in the sources, find their way to Glückstadt, but the town's growth comes to an end, and the Jews gradually leave to seek better opportunities elsewhere.

1640 The first major Jewish congregations in Scandinavia are set up under the King Christian IV of Denmark when he acquires towns north of Hamburg from the counts of Schaumburg. He awards them licences and tempts other hard-working Jews to move there. The congregation in Altona grows quickly during these years, and in the course of the following decades, Jews gain a real foothold in Danish territory.

1645 Queen Christina of Sweden consults the Jewish physician Baruch Nechemias (Benedictus de Castro). His visit to Sweden is the first documented time a Jew enters the country.

1667 Jews in Altona are given permission to travel and trade freely in Denmark, laying the foundations for a more significant Jewish presence in Denmark proper.

1681 At a grand ceremony attended by King Karl XI, his queen, and other high dignitaries, 12 Jews (4 adults and 8 children) are baptized in the German Church in Stockholm. At this time, Jews who arrive in Sweden and convert to Christianity are granted privileges. Similar ceremonies are also held in Denmark during the 17th century.

- 1684 The Danish king grants Jews permission to hold services in Copenhagen. At the same time, Jews settle in a number of provincial towns, including Ribe, Fredericia, Nakskov, and Nyborg among others.
- 1770–1772 Johann Struensee's revolutionary regime in Denmark brings the idea of freedom of speech and the concept of equality for the Jews. From the middle of the 18th century the intellectual and physical walls that had isolated the Jewish community from the Christians began break down.
- 1774 Aaron Isaac, a Jewish seal-maker and businessman from Mecklenburg, is the first Jew granted the right to settle in Sweden without renouncing his Jewish faith. The following year in Stockholm, Isaac and coreligionists, whom he had invited to establish a minyan, found the first Jewish congregation in Sweden. A free port is established at Marstrand on the west coast, and Jews are allowed to settle there as well.
- 1780s–1810s In Denmark, a series of tolerance decrees are introduced. In 1788, Jews are given access to the guilds. In 1798, Jews are given the right to enter into mixed marriages and to settle wherever they want in the kingdom. In 1809, Jews are given the right to become soldiers and to be admitted to the university. In 1810, Jews who have lived in Copenhagen for more than three years are given permission to stay. However, there is still widespread social discrimination, and complete equality has not yet been attained.
- 1782 The status of the Jews in Sweden is formalized with the establishment of the so-called Regulation of the Jews (*Judereglementet*). According to this legal document, the Jews are regarded as a colony of aliens granted the right to live in Sweden and largely autonomously conduct their own internal affairs. The regulation limits Jewish life in Sweden socially, economically, and politically. Jews are only allowed to marry other Jews, and to begin with they may only settle in Stockholm, Göteborg, and Norrköping. Most trades and crafts are off limits to Jews, and a Jew cannot hold a high-ranking political office, such as member of Parliament. As non-Christians, Jews are not allowed to testify in court either.
- March 29, 1814 A royal decree gives equal rights to Jews in Denmark.
- 1815 Ruben Henriques, a Danish Jew, is the first Jew to register in Iceland. He begins to trade at the northern port of Akureyri but never settles there.
- 1815 The status of the Jews is discussed in the Swedish Parliament, and Jews are accused of causing the economic crisis in Sweden at the time. Parliament decides to practically close the Swedish borders to Jewish immigration. Some 800 Jews are living in Sweden.
- 1819 Anti-Jewish riots suddenly appear in various Danish towns, including Copenhagen, Odense, Slagelse, and Elsinore. Especially in Copenhagen, very serious disturbances persist, with some interruptions, from September 1819 to the early part of 1820. Jews have their apartment windows smashed, and they are attacked. The serious anti-Jewish disturbances have a drastic effect on the Jews. One of the reactions among the Jews is to seek assimilation by converting to Christianity. After 1820, there is a rapid increase in the number of conversions. Behind this wave of conversions there is not only the fear of new anti-Semitic demonstrations, but also the desire to get rid of a burdensome ethnic and

- religious inheritance. Even M. L. Nathanson, the leader of the Jewish community, has his children baptized.
- 1838 In Sweden, the Regulation of the Jews is abolished by King Karl XIV Johan. With that, most discriminatory administrative limitations regarding the approximately 900 Jews in Sweden are lifted. They are no longer considered alien residents and are instead officially called "Swedes of the Mosaic faith."
- 1848 The new Danish constitution confirms the legal equality of the Jews.
- 1851 The ban is lifted on Jews entering Norway.
- 1853 The Parliament of Iceland accepts in principle that Danish Jews are permitted to settle, but not worship, on the island, which is part of Denmark.
- 1855 A large majority of the Icelandic Parliament agrees to admit non-Danish Jews to Iceland.
- 1858 In accordance with an imperial Russian decree, discharged Russian soldiers and their families, without regard to their religion (thus including Jews), are allowed to stay temporarily in Finland, which is a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire. At the end of the 19th century, Jewish veterans from the Russian army are allowed to settle permanently in Finland.
- 1870 The Jews in Sweden are granted civil rights. Only minor limitations remain in place.
- 1873 Aron Philipson and Moritz Rubenson become the first Jewish members of the Swedish Parliament.
- 1880–1930 Considerable Jewish immigration takes place from Eastern Europe to Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. The new Jewish immigrants are young people who have left Czarist Russia and are moving west in the hope of creating a better life for themselves. Relations between the immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe and the old Scandinavian Jewish community are tense. The established Jewish families do not believe they have anything in common with the new arrivals, and they fear the poor Eastern European Jews will undermine the position of the Jewish minority in Scandinavia. The local authorities do not look kindly on the East European Jews either. There is an unwillingness to risk their needing financial support and thus becoming a burden on the community, and so various attempts are made to get rid of them. Nonetheless, the history of the Eastern European Jews in Scandinavia is also a success story, as within a generation these people succeed in creating better lives for themselves and their children.
- 1889 The Finnish government issues an administrative decree expressly governing the presence of Jews in Finland. Under the decree, a number of Jews, mentioned by name, are allowed to stay in the country only until further notice and to settle only in certain towns assigned to them. They are given temporary visas with a period of validity not exceeding six months. Jewish economic life is severely restricted. Children of Jews are allowed to stay in Finland only as long as they live with their parents or are not married.
- 1906 The first Jewish settlers arrive in Iceland, when two young Jews, the merchant Fritz Nathan and the musician Paul Bernburg (Liepman), register in Reykjavik. Nathan soon becomes very influential and his co-owned company, Nathan &

Olsen, becomes one of Iceland's largest at that time. After completing the construction of one of Reykjavik's largest buildings, he returns with his family to Denmark, shortly before the outbreak of the World War I. The given reason was the absence of Jewish ritual services. Bernburg, however, takes the easy road and merges into the society, apparently through baptism.

- 1907 The first democratic parliamentary elections are held in Finland. Those in favor of Jewish emancipation win a clear majority, but constitutional conflicts between the Finnish and Russian authorities prevent a positive solution of this issue.
- 1917 Finland becomes independent, and the Jews receive civil rights. Between the two world wars, the Jewish population increases to about 2,000 as a result of immigration, mainly from Soviet Russia during the early period of the Revolution.
- 1930s German Jews fleeing increasing Nazi oppression begin to make their way to Scandinavia. Many, however, are refused entry at the border. From the start of the 1930s, the Danish authorities make it clear that they will not allow further Jewish immigration.
- 1936 Iceland closes its borders to Jewish refugees and attempts to deport Jewish residents.
- 1938 The Finnish and Swedish governments severely limit Jewish immigration, effectively closing their borders to any Jews fleeing Germany. The Norwegian government also curbs Jewish immigration.
- April 1940 Denmark is occupied by Nazi Germany, but because of strong popular sentiments, no anti-Jewish laws are enacted at the time.
- April 9, 1940 Norway is occupied by Germany, and it becomes clear from the beginning of the war that the situation is more dangerous for the Jews than for the rest of the Norwegian population. One month after the invasion, all radios belonging to Jews are confiscated. The list of anti-Jewish measures is long and continues even after the Jews are deported from the country.
- May 1940 The secretary of the Jewish aid society, David Goldberg, is the first Norwegian Jew arrested. However, he is released soon after, as are many of the Jews arrested early in the war.
- Fall 1940 Jews are deported to concentration camps like Sachsenhausen.
- December 1941 The first Norwegian Jew to be killed in a concentration camp is the communist Benjamin Bild.
- 1942 The Finnish authorities hand over eight Jewish refugees, including two children, to Nazi Germany, which is a cobelligerent against the Soviet Union. Seven of these Jews die in Auschwitz.
- November 1942 Norwegian Jews, 532 in all, are arrested and deported to Auschwitz.
- February 1943 Another 158 Jews are deported. Of all of those deported to Auschwitz, only 34 return; 766 Norwegian Jews are killed—between 35 and 40 percent of the entire Jewish population. However, almost half of the Norwegian Jews manage to escape to Sweden and thus escape the Holocaust.
- Late 1943 During a few dramatic weeks after Rosh Hashanah, practically all 7,000 Jews in Denmark manage to escape to Sweden. The Nazis capture some 500 Jews, who are sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

- 1945–1946 In the wake of World War II, some 10,000 survivors of the Holocaust arrive in Sweden. Of these, only some 3,000 stay in Sweden. Most eventually continue on to other destinations, such as the United States and the State of Israel.
- 1951 The Swedish Parliament passes a law on the freedom of religion. Swedish citizens are no longer forced to belong to a religious congregation. As a consequence, the Jewish communities become voluntary organizations. Jews are now allowed to hold any political office, including cabinet minister. Only the position of head of state is still reserved for a member of the Church of Sweden.
- 1956–1972 Political turmoil behind the Iron Curtain in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), and Poland (1969) causes waves of Jewish emigration, also to Scandinavia.
- 1987 Ahmed Rami, a Swedish Muslim, begins broadcasting anti-Semitic programming on the radio station he operates, Radio Islam.
- 1996 The Swedish supreme court rules that a person wearing Nazi symbols may be charged with incitement against an ethnic group.
- 1997 Ahmed Rami is cited for breaking anti-racism laws after posting anti-Semitic materials on his Web site. The Swedish government institutes the Living History Project, a large-scale program to educate the people of Sweden about anti-Semitism.
- 2000 In January, Sweden hosts an international gathering to promote awareness of the Holocaust.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The first Jews who settled in Scandinavia were often peddlers, minor businesspeople, or artisans active in one of the few fields that were not forbidden for Jews. Later, some Jews came to prosper as businesspeople and merchants. Jews have played a certain role in the development of industry and banking in the Scandinavian countries.

Today, Jews can be found in most professional sectors, including blue-collar professions. However, Jews in Scandinavia are primarily occupied in those professions requiring an academic education or in the arts and media.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

In spite of the relatively small number of Jews in Scandinavia, most of these countries have examples of notable Jews in the fields of culture and science.

Klezmer music has become quite popular: there are both Jewish and non-Jewish bands playing this music, and many international stars have played at the Helsinki Klezmer Festival. When the Helsinki synagogue celebrated its centenary in 2006, a theater play in Yiddish was performed for the first time in several decades.

Several Swedish Jews have been well-known artists. The most notable are painters Ernst Josephson (1851–1906), Eva Bonnier (1857–1909), Hanna Pauli (née Hirsch 1864–1940), and Isaac Grünewald (1889–1946). A number of Swedish Jews have

been notable literary historians, such as Henrik Schück (1855–1947) and Martin Lamm (1880–1950), who were also members of the Swedish Academy that selects the Nobel Prize laureate in literature. Another well-known literary historian was Oscar Levertin (1862–1906), who was also an author and poet in his own right. Other Jewish authors in Sweden include Sophie Elkan (1853–1921) and the Nobel Prize laureate Nelly Sachs (1891–1970), who fled to Sweden from her native Germany in 1940. The composer Moses Pergament (1893–1977), the historian Hugo Valentin (1888–1963), the economist Eli Hecksher (1879–1952), and the publisher Albert Bonnier (1820–1900) have also left their mark on Swedish cultural life.

In Norway, the pianist Robert Levin was a respected and well-known pianist both in Norway and internationally. He became the first professor at the College of Music. His daughter, journalist and author Mona Levin, has written a book about her father, in addition to several other books on different topics. She has also been very active in the current debate about Jews and Israel. In science, the psychiatrist Leo Eitinger, an Auschwitz survivor, invented the concept of KZ syndrome—meaning the stress reactions that come many years after release from the concentration camp.

#### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The Jewish communities in Scandinavia are small, and the Jewish population is usually quite secularized, although some traditions are still kept. A high rate of assimilation is also typical of Jewish communal life in Scandinavia. The level of participation on the part of the members of the communities is usually high, compared with their number, and most communities offer their members a wide range of social and religious services. There is also a highly developed network of connections between the Jewish communities in Scandinavia, facilitated by the fact that these countries are culturally, linguistically and historically closely linked.

Finland has two Jewish communities today; 90 percent of Finnish Jews belong to the community in Helsinki, whereas the community in Turku is very small (123 members at the end of 2005). Both synagogues follow Orthodox ritual. Although there is a rabbi in Helsinki, the community in Turku has been without a rabbi since 1965. The Jewish community has legal status and the right to levy taxes on its members. Kosher slaughtering is permitted in Finland (it was last discussed in Parliament in 1995), and there is a kosher butcher shop in Helsinki.

In Sweden, most members of the communities in Stockholm and Göteborg belong to Reform or Conservative (Masorti) congregations, although small Orthodox minyanim can be found in both these cities, as well. The Jewish community in Malmö is Orthodox only. Today, some 10 percent of the Swedish Jews are Orthodox, and they mainly descend from immigrants who came to Sweden from Eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th century.

Norway has two synagogues in Norway—one in Trondheim and one in Oslo. The congregations are Orthodox even though the members are mostly secular. In Norway, as in Sweden, kosher slaughter is forbidden.

The Jewish communities in Scandinavia are democratically structured, and officials are elected at assemblies open to all members. In some cases, the community

is divided into political parties that compete for the votes of the members at the general assemblies.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Religiously motivated anti-Judaism has a long tradition in Scandinavia but has all but disappeared in these largely secularized countries. In the 19th century, secular, racially motivated, anti-Semitism flourished in Scandinavia as in the rest of the world. Undoubtedly, anti-Semitism influenced the reluctance on the part of the Scandinavian authorities to accept Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution before and during the World War II. After the World War II, when Germany was defeated and the full horror of the Holocaust became evident, anti-Semitism lost its credibility and was banned to the political fringes.

Anti-Semitism is taboo in Scandinavian mainstream society today. However, in the past decades, growing anti-Zionism in Scandinavia has created a climate where the line between criticism of the State of Israel and anti-Semitism is not always upheld, especially among left-wing groups. At times, leftists with a Jewish background, and sometimes even those born in Israel, play a key role in this discourse. Another factor that has contributed to a rise in anti-Semitism in Scandinavian society is the immigration from Arab and Muslim countries, especially to Sweden, Denmark, and Norway—Finland and Iceland have fewer such immigrants. Some of these immigrants or their descendants harbor anti-Jewish sentiments that have on occasion led to attacks on Jews, most notably in the wake of the second Intifada. With that said, neither anti-Semitism nor anti-Zionism constitute an existential threat to the Jews in Scandinavia. If anything threatens continued Jewish life in Scandinavia, it is the negative demographic trends as a result of an aging Jewish population and low birthrates in combination with a high level of assimilation.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The Jewish communities in Scandinavia have never been particularly large, and today they seem to be disappearing. As an example, the Jewish community in Stockholm has lost 20 percent of its members in the past few years, and the trend is similar in many other communities. In Iceland, there is no community at all. The general decline in the number of Jews in Scandinavia is largely attributable to three factors. First, the rate of assimilation is high, as many nonobservant Jews see little reason for endogamy. Second, traditionally, the Jewish community was reinforced by immigration from Eastern Europe, but after the Holocaust, the Jewish communities there were wiped out. Third, religiously observant Jews tend to leave Scandinavia for places with a richer Jewish life, mainly by means of aliyah to Israel. An exception to the general trend is the Jewish community in Finland, which numerically stands its ground, partly because of immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union.

### Selected Bibliography

Bachner, Henrik. 1999. *Återkomsten. Antisemitism i Sverige efter 1945*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.

- Bergsson, Snorri G. 1998. "The Aryan Cradle: Iceland and the 'Jewish Question.'" Kulanu Web site. <http://www.kulanu.org/iceland/iceland.html> (accessed May 8, 2008).
- Blüdnikow, Bent. 1985. "Dansk-jødisk historic—en forskningsoversigt." *Fortid og Nutid* 1: 13–31.
- Broberg, Gunnar, Harald Runblom, and Mattias Tydén. 1988. *Judiskt liv i Norden*. Uppsala, Sweden: Svanberg & Tydén.
- Christensen, Karsten. 1986. "Dansk jødisk genealogi: Part 1" *Tidsskrift for Dansk Jødisk Historie* 23: 18–22.
- Fischer, David. 1996. *Judiskt liv. En undersökning bland medlemmar i Stockholms judiska församling*. Uppsala, Sweden: Megilla-Förlaget.
- Harviainen, Tapani. 2000. "The Jews in Finland and World War II." *Nordisk Judaistik-Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 21: 157–166
- Jewish Community, Stockholm. <http://www.jf-stockholm.org> (accessed May 8, 2008).
- JUS [Jewish Youth Organization in Sweden]. <http://jusungdom.org> (accessed May 8, 2008).
- Katz, Per. 1988. "De første jøder i Danmark." In *Judisk liv i Norden*, edited by Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom, and Matthias Týden, 71–98. Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, Centre for Multiethnic Research.
- Levin, Elias. 1994. *Den gamle jødiske begravelsesplads i Møllegade 1684–1994*, 1–2. Copenhagen: E. Levin.
- Lomfors, Ingrid. 1996. *Förlorad barndom—återvunnet liv. De judiska flyktningbarnen från Nazityskland*. Göteborg, Sweden: Historiska institutionen Univ.
- Margolinsky, Julius. 1978. *Jødiske dødsfald i Danmark 1693–1976*. Copenhagen: Dansk Historisk Håndbogsforlag.
- Pentikäinen, Juha, and Veikko Anttonen. 1995. "The Jews in Finland." In *Cultural Minorities in Finland. An Overview towards Cultural Policy*, edited by Juha Pentikäinen and Marja Hiltunen, 163–166. Helsinki, Finland: Publications of the Finnish National Commission for Unesco. No 66.
- Sjögren, Karin. 2001. *Judar i det svenska folkhemmet. Minne och identitet i Judisk krönika 1948–1958*. Eslöv: Ostlings bokforlag Symposion.
- Svensson, Anna. 1995. *Nöden. En shtetl i Lund*. Lund, Sweden: Gamla Lund.
- Valentin, Hugo. 2004. *Judarna i Sverige. Från 1774 till 1950-talet*. Stockholm, Sweden: Judiska museet.
- Vilhjálmsón, Vilhjálmur. 2004. "Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004." *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16 (3–4, fall): <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-vilhjalmur-f04.htm> (accessed June 3, 2008).
- Whitehead, Þór. 1980. *Ófriður í aðsigi* [Approaching War]. Reykjavík, Iceland: Almenna bókafélagið.

## Intermarriage in Scandinavia

*Lars Dencik*

---

In 2000, a questionnaire entitled "Questions about Jewish Life" was sent to the affiliated members of the Jewish communities in Sweden, Finland, and Norway. The questions related to issues such as Jewish identity, degree of observance of Jewish traditions, and practices.

A “Jewish community” in this context means an organization of which a Jew (according to Halachic rules) can become a member. Membership is voluntary and implies paying an income-related fee (“tax”) to the community. The Jewish communities in the countries surveyed organize synagogal, educational, social, and cultural services. It is estimated that between a third and a half of the Jews living in Sweden, Finland, and Norway are affiliated members of a Jewish community. An estimated 1,300 Jews currently live in Finland; only slightly more live in Norway. Sweden has by far the largest Jewish community in Scandinavia—around 17,000 could be counted as Jews.

### Marriage Patterns

There are no significant differences between the countries with respect to civil status. Approximately two-thirds of the members of the Jewish communities in the investigated Scandinavian countries are married or in marriage-like relationships. Close to 10 percent of the respondents in each of the countries are divorced, and an additional 3 percent have established a new post-divorce relationship. Around 13 percent are single, having never been married, and little more than 10 percent are widows or widowers.

Married respondents were asked whether their partner is Jewish or not, and if the partner is Jewish whether he or she is Jewish by birth or conversion. With respect to this there are considerable differences among the three countries. Of those members of the Jewish communities that are married, in Sweden 31 percent live with a non-Jewish partner, in Finland 51 percent live with a non-Jewish partner, and in Norway the corresponding figure is 43 percent.

The composition of the category “Jewish partner” also differs among the countries: 63 percent of the married members of the Jewish communities in Sweden are married to a partner that is “Jewish by birth” and an additional 5 percent are “Jewish by conversion.” In Finland the corresponding figures are 35 percent and 14 percent, respectively, and in Norway, 43 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

A major factor explaining the differences in Jewish marriage patterns as observed is the size of the Jewish communities in the respective countries. The likelihood of meeting a Jewish partner is, of course, higher in a country with a larger Jewish population. The situation in Finland and Norway demonstrates that the reverse holds as well: The lower the likelihood of meeting a suitable Jewish partner, the higher ones propensity to engage with a non-Jewish partner.

### Attitudes toward Inter-marriage

Generally, the affiliated Jews in the Nordic countries support the idea that inter-marriage should be avoided on a societal level. When asked about the same issue but with a personal nuance, the respondents answered differently. In all countries most affiliated members of the Jewish communities could, as a matter of principle, consider marrying a non-Jew (although most of them are in actual fact already

married, and most of them, except in Finland, are married to a Jewish partner). The differences in attitude among the three countries largely reflect the differences in factual conditions: Sweden, although the most religiously liberal of the three Jewish communities, has the largest group of individuals who reject the idea of marrying a non-Jew. Finland, being an Orthodox community but also the smallest community (Turku) in the investigation has, by far, the smallest percentage of people who responded No to the question "Could you, as a matter of principle, consider marriage to a non-Jew?" In this, the smallest and most remote Jewish population (both geographically and linguistically), there is scant potential in the Jewish marriage market. Making virtue out of necessity is likely the operative principle underlying the Finnish Jews' responses.

The hypothetical proposition of deciding for oneself "in principle" is quite different from approving or disapproving of one's offspring's decision to out-marry. It is noteworthy that only a minority of affiliated members of the Jewish communities in all three Nordic countries would try to prevent their children from marrying a non-Jewish partner. It is also noteworthy that the largest proportion (26 percent) of potential parental obstructers is found in liberal Sweden, which has the relatively smallest proportion of intermarriage, whereas in Norway, with its small Orthodox community but larger proportion of actual intermarriages, a considerably smaller proportion of parents (15.3 percent) could imagine themselves fighting their child's decision to out-marry. Again, these findings demonstrate the crucial role—more crucial, perhaps, than religious and ideological convictions—that the sheer size of a community plays in influencing the attitudes of actively involved Jews toward Jewish societal issues.

In Sweden, for reasons already indicated, a much larger proportion of the Jewish community than in Finland and Norway is married to a partner who is also Jewish. In Finland and Norway, as compared with Sweden, a relatively larger proportion of Jewish partners were not born Jewish but have converted to Judaism. There are also marked differences in the marital patterns of men and women: in all three countries a sizably larger proportion of female members of the Jewish communities are married to a partner who was born Jewish. Particularly striking are the differences in all three countries with respect to living with a partner who has converted to Judaism. There is a far larger (three to four times) proportion of men whose wife converted to Judaism than there are women whose husband is a convert.

It is either more attractive, important, or less of a problem for a non-Jewish woman to convert to Judaism and to share the religious orientation and lifestyle of her husband than it is for a non-Jewish man to convert to the religious orientation and lifestyle of his Jewish wife.

More than 9 of 10 men and women living in a Jewish couple have children, and it seems to be of minor or no importance whether the partner is born Jewish or has converted to Judaism. In mixed marriages, however, the propensity to have a child is lower. Close to 25 percent of these relationships were childless at the time of this investigation.

## Child Rearing

Circumcision of boys is a highly deviating practice in the Nordic (Scandinavian) countries. Nowadays in Scandinavian countries, circumcision is publicly denounced as primitive, cruel, inhumane, barbaric, and a violation of the rights of the child. To what extent do the couples consisting of at least one affiliated member of a Jewish community adhere to the Jewish commitment of male infant circumcision? Among the Jewish couples, the commandment of having one's son circumcised is highly observed, but it is considerably less so among the mixed couples. Most amazing, however, is the fact that in mixed couples, regardless of whether the male or female parent is non-Jewish, the degree of observance of the Jewish mitzvah is notably higher than the theoretically anticipated 50 percent. In relationships wherein the male party is Jewish, close to three of four non-Jewish wives accept that this basic Jewish mitzvah is carried out. The figure is slightly lower if it is the mother who is Jewish, but still close to two-thirds of the non-Jewish (i.e., uncircumcised) fathers do not prevent their sons from being circumcised. A tentative conclusion might be that in mixed marriages the Jewish identity markers tend to penetrate the relationship so deeply that even Halachically non-Jewish children become physically marked with a symbolic Jewish identity. The highest degree of observance of the mitzvah of circumcision is found in couples wherein the female party has converted to Judaism, whereas the lowest degree of observance takes place in couples where the father is a non-Jew.

The lighting of Shabbat candles is quite a widespread custom. More than 80 percent of those respondents living with a Jewish partner do so at least sometimes. Interestingly, those who share their life with a partner who has converted to Judaism are even more observant of this mitzvah than are those who live with a partner who is a Jew by birth. The tendency to be more observant if the partner is a convert holds also with respect to keeping a kosher home. The mitzvah of kashruth, however, is far less observed in the Nordic Scandinavian countries—where it takes a real effort to obtain kosher food (shehita is prohibited both in Sweden and Norway)—than is the custom of lighting Shabbat candles. Amazingly, as many as 46 percent of the men married to a non-Jewish woman at least sometimes light Shabbat candles—a habit traditionally carried out by the wife—and 17 percent of these men at least keep partly kosher at home.

## Weinuka

Jewish life in Scandinavia is, of course, embedded in the culture and customs of the surrounding dominantly Christian (albeit secular Christian) society. One of the strong and very popular traditions in these societies is the celebration of Christmas, but only 4 percent of the Jewish homes where both spouses are Jewish by birth have a Christmas tree. However, there is a Christmas tree in 11 percent of the homes in which the male partner is a Jew by conversion, whereas this is the case in only proportionally half as many homes where the converted party is female. Furthermore, 38 percent of the homes where the male partner is not Jewish have a

Christmas tree, compared with 48 percent of the homes wherein the female partner is a non-Jew.

In about 72 percent of the mixed marriages, regardless of whether the male or female spouse is Jewish, one gives Christmas gifts. This custom also holds in approximately 25 percent of the Jewish households in which one of the partners has converted (slightly more if the wife is a convert), whereas Christmas gifts are given in less than 20 percent of the homes inhabited by a couple made up of two Jewish-born spouses. Finally, there are families in which one lights both Shabbat candles and Christmas lights, or where the family both keeps kosher and has a Christmas tree.

## Conclusions

Many Scandinavian Jews celebrate Hanukkah, hold Passover Seders, circumcise their children and hang mezuzot, while not as many keep Shabbat or fast on Yom Kippur. A possible explanation for these findings is that the holidays of Hanukkah, Purim, and Passover are national celebrations wherein Jews commemorate and celebrate the persistence of Jewish peoplehood in the face of adversity and oppression. As a minority ethnic group, Scandinavian Jews can relate to these struggles. Shabbat and kashruth, on the other hand, are more private, personal devotional rituals. The case of the mezuzah is interesting, as 80 percent of Scandinavian Jewish homes hang one on their doorpost. For those who can read the symbol, a mezuzah is a clear sign of a Jewish home. Non-Jewish neighbors, however, would most likely not notice this discreet symbol. The mezuzah is a sophisticated symbol that indicates to other members of the Jewish community that one is Jewish without alarming one's non-Jewish peers. The findings support the overall observation that most Scandinavian Jews view their Jewishness as an ethnic identity rather than as a religion.

The Scandinavian Jewry presently lives in a kind of "Swedish smorgasbord" situation, where both Jewish and non-Jewish traditions and social customs are available to the population. The result is a kind of "smorgasbord Judaism" implying that Jews in these countries may feel free to pick or reject what they want among the traditions, to mix according to their will, and to define their own personal *mélange* of Judaism. In such a sociocultural context, not only customs and ideals but also marriages tend to become mixed.

## Selected Bibliography

- Dencik, Lars. 2003. "'Jewishness' in Postmodernity: The Case of Sweden." In *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond*, edited by Zvi Gitelman, Barry Kosmin, and Andras Kovacs, 75–104. Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press.
- Dencik, Lars. 2006. "'Homo Zappiens'—A European-Jewish Way of Life in the Era of Globalisation." In *Turning the Kaleidoscope: Perspectives on European Jewry*, edited by Sandra Lustig and Ian Leveson, 79–105. Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books.
- Dencik, Lars. 2006. *Judendom i Sverige—en sociologisk belysning* [Judaism in Sweden—A Sociological Elucidation]. Uppsala: Swedish Science Press.

# Jews in Denmark

*Bent Blüdnikow*

---

**General Population:** 5,237,000

**Jewish Population:** 8,000

**Percent of Population:** 0.13 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Most Jews reside in Copenhagen. There are also small communities in Odense and Aarhus. The great majority of Danish Jews are Ashkenazim with roots in Central and Eastern Europe. Although intermarriage has taken its toll, Jewish life has been bolstered by the arrival of Jewish immigrants, particularly from Israel and other European countries. Moreover, in recent years, children of some of the refugees from Poland, with tenuous Jewish links, have begun to take an active part in communal life.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Sephardi traders and court Jews from Portugal and the Netherlands, Sephardi Jews of Hamburg, Ashkenazi Jews from Germany, Austria, Poland, and Russia

**Languages Spoken:** In the 18th century, many Jews lived in close proximity to each other in central Copenhagen, and they spoke to each other in Yiddish. When they wrote, it was either in Yiddish or Hebrew before Danish became the mother language of Danish Jews.

---

## Historical Overview

1592 The first Jew in Denmark is registered in Elsinore under the name of Jochim Jode (Jochim the Jew). His Jewish identity is the subject of a careful study by Karsten Christensen, who concludes that it is probably correct to assume that he was indeed Jewish. However, presumably there are only quite small numbers of Jews in Denmark proper before the middle of the 17th century, although some have arrived in Denmark under false Christian names. Such is the case with Duarte de Lima, who assumed a Christian name while living in Denmark in the 17th century.

1592–1700 Jews actively participate in trade close to the Danish border.

1619 The Danish king, Christian IV, employs Jews in his court, giving them the license to direct the royal mint.

1620 The Christian Church begins its attempts to convert the Jews, though in general with little success. Although a Jew is successfully baptized in the Cathedral Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen as early as 1620, baptisms do not become more common until the end of the century. Both the Church and the authorities place great store in these ceremonies, and they are often performed in the presence of all the city elite.

1640 The first major Jewish congregations are set up under the King Christian IV of Denmark when he acquires towns north of Hamburg from the counts of Schaumburg.

1640s Benjamin Musaphia, a well-known Sephardi doctor, was appointed royal physician to the Danish court by Christian IV in 1646. Mussaphia is a typical representative of the many highly respected Jewish doctors in the 17th century. He

also publishes a small book in which he describes his brief meeting with the Danish king and their discussion on the existence of mermaids.

- 1651 The king issues laws and ordinances directed against illegal Jews, attempting to keep illegal Jews from permanently residing in places such as Schleswig-Holstein. The starting point for the attitude toward immigrants is the fact that the king actually preferred the Sephardi Jews but could accept Ashkenazi Jews provided they either have enough money or are enterprising merchants. In reality he mainly gets Ashkenazi Jews, not all of whom have money or are particularly enterprising. Ashkenazi Jews come to dominate the Copenhagen congregation, for the Sephardi Jews are so few in number they have difficulty gathering the 10 men required for a divine service. The fact that a large number of Jews are given residence permits in Glückstadt, Altona, and elsewhere, is often likely the result of their wanting a place of refuge when anti-Semitism gets out of control on German territory. Even at this time, the king of Denmark has acquired a reputation for being tolerant. But there is no doubt that the king's mercantilistic policy results in a new social group providing financial and commercial benefit to the country, though the importance of their activities should not be exaggerated.
- 1659 The first known Jewish service is held in Zealand during the Swedish occupation by Jews who are with the Swedish army outside Copenhagen. They are arrested in the middle of the Yom Kippur service.
- 1667 Jews in Altona are given permission to travel and trade freely in Denmark, laying the foundations for a more significant Jewish presence in Denmark proper.
- 1670–1680s A vehement religious awakening takes place among Jews, as a prophet by the name of Sabbatai Zevi announces he is the new messiah. Both during Zevi's lifetime and after his death, the religious movement has violent repercussions in Jewish communities.
- 1670–1700 A total of 56 residence permits are issued, 26 of which apply to Hamburg, Altona, and Glückstadt. However, these permits say nothing about the total number of Jews, which, as previously mentioned, is considerably greater. Altona that becomes the most important town, but Hamburg nevertheless remains home to a large number of the most important Sephardi families. These families, who often collaborate with each other, come to be of considerable importance to the Danish economy and trade, and as Court Jews, they are responsible for supplying jewels, costly textiles, and other luxury goods to the Danish Court. The Ashkenazi Jews eventually take over the role of the Sephardis, and with their smaller firms and their business activities, they come to play quite a significant part and come to numerically dominate the Copenhagen congregation. Their family connections in other European countries are instrumental in their ability to acquire the right goods for the Danish market.
- The congregations in Denmark achieve a high degree of autonomy, though they appear to accept the decisions of the Danish court. They have synagogues, burial grounds, associations of Jewish butchers (Fredericia), and much more.
- 1670s Jews move northward to Ribe and Copenhagen, starting with Hamburg Sephardi Jews and then Ashkenazi Jews.

- 1678 Private letters by Arthur Arnheim, in Yiddish, concerning the Jews of Copenhagen indicate that there are 15 from Hamburg/Altona in the capital and they play an important part in the city's trade. Most have no passport and are therefore, strictly speaking, in the city illegally; but it is not unusual for laws on safe conduct, royal licences, and the like, not to be observed. These Jews likely have relatives and possibly servants, so their numbers are greater than a mere 15. The strong links between the Jews in Denmark proper and those in Hamburg/Altona are established during these years and maintained for several centuries.
- 1684 The king grants Jews permission to hold services in Copenhagen. The Jews in the capital thereby establish a foothold they will be able to exploit. At the same time, Jews settle in a number of provincial towns, including Ribe, Fredericia, Nakskov, and Nyborg among others. Numbers are modest: Until 1700, there are 17 residence permits in Copenhagen, 15 in Fredericia, and fewer in the other provincial towns. A considerable number of Jews are in Denmark without permission, and as already noted, permits only include the applicants themselves and not their families and servants.
- 1684–1686 Gabriel Milan serves as governor of the Danish West Indies, which is today known as the U.S. Virgin Islands. However, he is accused of corruption and finally hanged in Copenhagen.
- 1693 Land for a Jewish cemetery is purchased in Møllegade.
- 1695 When extremely wealthy Sephardi Jew Samuel Teixeira is in Copenhagen, the Sephardi Jews gather for a service, although they have still not been given royal permission to hold one. They are arrested, but soon released again, and thereafter given their own license. However, the Sephardi congregation never plays any significant part in numerical terms.
- 1696–1706 Holger Paulli publishes, altogether, 32 pamphlets reflecting the Pietist ideas of the time and the expectations of the coming of a Messiah, which Sabbatai has awakened among the Jews. Paulli has plans for equipping a Danish army to liberate Palestine and reinstate the Jews. Ingratitude is the way of the world, and Paulli is thrown into prison in Amsterdam but later released. He ends his days in Copenhagen in 1714.
- 17th century German Jews throughout the country are subject to the chief rabbinate in Altona, and in several instances the chief rabbi interferes in the affairs of other congregations. Copenhagen is still not of decisive importance, and there are almost as many Jews in Fredericia as there are in Copenhagen. Also, the communities in Schleswig-Holstein grow in size and significance to Denmark. The congregations in Hamburg, Altona, and Wandsbek together make up dynamic Jewish centers. By the end of the 17th century, there is a notable influx, and Jews come to play a part in the growth of trade and business activities. Some Jews are allowed to set up as manufacturers of textiles and tobacco. Also, through the activities of court Jews acting on behalf of the Danish royal court, Jews came to play a not insignificant role for the Danish state.
- 18th century The Northern European Jewry experience some dramatic controversies. Relations between the congregations in Altona and Fredericia are strained

as the result of a debate on whether the chief rabbinate in Altona has jurisdiction over the Jews in Fredericia.

- 1700–1770 Anti-Semitism is part of life—Jews live relatively isolated from the rest of society and a section of the Jewish population finds it difficult to make ends meet. When Copenhagen suffers a great fire in 1728, a group of Jews is arrested and accused of starting it.
- 1711 In the year of the plague, the tax lists indicate that 36 Jewish adults and 48 children live in Copenhagen. Two families had left and four others are not included because they are not subject to tax. But the poor families not included in the taxation lists, and the foreign Jews merely passing through, or only in Copenhagen for a short period, must also be taken into consideration.
- 1719 Jews open a synagogue in Fredericia, which had become a town with freedom of religion in 1682.
- 1720s Jews can register in Svendborg, which is home to several Jewish families throughout the 18th century, although in 1756 the town judge issues a warning that “all Jews” would “surreptitiously introduce forbidden goods and bring harm to the public by dint of usury and dishonesty.”
- 1726 The number of Jews has increased to about 65 “families,” but in addition there are still many without passes, many poor Jews, and many Jews on visits.
- 1727 The authorities issue a police notice forbidding people to insult Jews in the open street, which confirms a general anti-Jewish sentiment in Denmark.
- 1729 The Gedeløcke Affair refers to an attorney by the name of Gedeløcke who had shown an interest in Judaism. When he dies, the rumour arises that he had converted to the Jewish faith. Accordingly, there is general reluctance to bury him in an ordinary Christian cemetery, though a reason is found to bury him in the garrison cemetery, Garnisons Kirkegård. When rumors about Gedeløcke’s conversion persisted, however, he is exhumed, and the Jews are forced to bury him in their own burial ground. The entire affair and the funeral procession to Møllegade is a humiliation to the resident Jews. The events are well described in a number of scholarly works, and they suggest that the Copenhagen population does not like the Jews.
- 1733 There are Jews in Nakskov and Maribo, and there are Jews in Zealand from the middle of the 18th century.
- 1750s–1800s The Jews in Germany increasingly become part of German society, as indeed the Danish Jews also wish to do. The German Haskalah movement, with Moses Mendelssohn at its head, makes a great impression on Danish Jews. Mendelssohn’s thoughts of a community in which Jews can be equal citizens, and his battle for education and cultural enlightenment, asserts itself in Denmark, not only because he has friends and two brothers-in-law in Copenhagen, and because there are other close family ties between German and Danish Jews, but largely because the Danish Jews are helped by the general economic prosperity and the general trend toward education and enlightenment that characterizes Europe at that time. One of Mendelssohn’s close collaborators, moreover, is Jacob Hartwig Wessely, who was born and bred in Copenhagen.

Throughout this entire period, a bitter struggle is taking place between the champions of reform who are trying to modernize the Jewish congregation and the traditionalists who are doggedly attempting to preserve the Jewish community as it had been, with religion and tradition as the essential values and the group of older leaders of the congregation unchallenged in their decision-making role.

It is more than simply an ideological and religious struggle. Mixed up in this confrontation are personal and social elements. The group of reform Jews is dominated by younger, affluent Jews who will not accept the old style of leadership, wanting to follow the fashions of the time in intellectual matters and dress and to achieve success in Danish society.

- 1757 Among the 90,000 inhabitants in Copenhagen, there are about 1,200 Jews, to whom, as always, could be added visiting or illegal Jews being given shelter in the city. The economic upswing is the result of Denmark's advantageous foreign policy during international wars and crises, which allows the country to profit from exporting and shipping. During these days of overseas trade, Denmark experiences a hitherto unknown increase in wealth, and a number of Jewish business and finance figures are also able to make use of the favorable trading conditions. About 70 of the approximately 250 Jewish families living in Copenhagen are considered to be wealthy. About 100 other Jewish families belong to the middle classes, and the remainder belong to the lower classes who have to make their way on the basis of small businesses, hawking or even begging and thieving. Among the Copenhagen Jews there are at the same time various shadowy businesspeople whose operations border on the criminal.
- 1760 Some 700 Jews are living in Denmark, according to M. L. Nathanson's book *Historisk Fremstilling af Jødernes Forhold og Stilling i Danmark, navnlig i Kjøbenhavn*.
- 1766 Jews acquire their own synagogue in Læderstræde. Before this, the Jews had held services in various private apartments.
- 1770–1772 Johann Struensee's revolutionary regime in Denmark brings the idea of freedom of speech and the concept of equality for the Jews. From the middle of the 18th century, the intellectual and physical walls that have isolated the Jewish community from the Christians begin to be broken down.
- 1770–1814 The period is characterized by an increase in financial well-being, an extensive reform of the Jewish community, and, crowning these developments, the 1814 emancipation.
- 1780s–1790s Poor Jews are found in the provinces, where they trade with the "peasantry," and not least in Copenhagen where they signify a growing problem.
- 1787 The confrontation between reformists and traditionalists comes to a head, and the opposition complains to the government about its situation. Relatively reliable figures for the number of Jews in the provinces at this time indicate that there were already Jewish homes in a large number of Danish provincial towns before 1787, and by 1787 there are 354 Jews living in 16 provincial towns: 7 in Zealand, 2 in Lolland, 3 in Funen, and 4 in Jutland.
- 1788 Jews are given access to the guilds.

- 1791 The government helps with a temporary compromise dividing power between the reformist and traditionalist groups. At the same time, a series of reforms of the congregations and of Jewish conditions is initiated.
- 1795 The government sets up a commission to examine the congregation's circumstances, which results in a series of publications and satirical prints.
- 1796 The commission's report paves the way for fundamental changes in the administration of the congregation and for equality with their Christian fellows in most areas.
- 1798 Jews are given the right to enter into mixed marriages and to settle wherever they want in the kingdom.
- 1801 There are 666 Jews residing in nine provincial towns in Zealand, two in Lolland, one in Falster, eight in Funen, one in Langeland, and seven in market towns in Jutland. The figure has risen to 27 percent from 19 percent in 1787.
- 1803 The Flour and Bread Society is set up to ensure cheap flour and bread.
- 1805 A school for poor boys is established, and a school for poor girls is established in 1810. The two schools undertake a major task in teaching the children Danish, so Yiddish is no longer the first language of the Jews.
- 1806 Crown Prince Frederik seeks fresh initiatives in a move toward equality for the Jews. He writes that he was inspired by Napoleon's policy of friendship to the Jews.
- 1809 The reformist Jews achieve power in the decision-making body in the community, and the way is thereby opened anew for reforms in collaboration with the government. Jews are also given the right to become soldiers and to be admitted to the university. However, there is still widespread social discrimination, and complete equality has not yet been attained.
- 1810 Jews who have lived in Copenhagen for more than three years are given permission to stay. This an unusual form of tolerance from a European perspective.
- 1813–1814 Two opposite Jewish movements are clearly seen during these years. The movement toward emancipation that has been under way since the 1770s culminates in the 1814 emancipation decree, but, at the same time, the anti-Semitism that has long been latent is reinforced. Evidence of this includes the protracted public debate—known as the literary Jewish controversy—on the position of Jews in society, which starts in 1813 and continues until 1819.
- August 18, 1813 A definitive royal resolution is drawn up, after which the Chancery issues a final decree and regulations for the Copenhagen Jewish community are approved.
- March 29, 1814 A royal decree gives equal rights to Jews. The reformist leader M. L. Nathanson makes a great personal contribution and, by virtue of the good relationship he has with the king and Danish decision-makers, may have had an influence on the course of events. During these years, the Danish state has taken up some enormous loans from Jewish lenders, and this collaboration might also have encouraged the king in his willingness to introduce reforms. Finally, there is a vehement public debate on the position of the Jews in society, and this debate, in which important Danish citizens take the part of the Jews and speak out on behalf of equality, might have influenced the Danish authorities.

- 1818 The census for all Denmark shows that the Jewish population has increased: there are 3,907 Jews, of whom 1,394 (36 percent) reside in the provinces. Many Jews are still making their way on the basis of small enterprises of various kinds and the sale of old textiles. Most Jews in the provinces are tradespeople, but the provinces also come into contact with many itinerant Jews visiting local markets. Loan businesses had often provided Jews with a source of income, and in Denmark, too, this is a favored occupation. Thus, the state-owned pawnbroking establishment known as *Det Kongelige Assistenthus*, which provides small loans to Copenhageners, is put in the hands of Jews.
- 1819 Anti-Jewish riots suddenly appear in various Danish towns, including Copenhagen, Odense, Slagelse, and Elsinore. Especially in Copenhagen, serious disturbances take place, with interruptions from September 1819 to the early part of 1820. This is the most serious unrest in the reign of Frederik VI, and it encompasses scuffles involving several hundred people. Jewish apartments have their windows smashed, and there are attacks on individual Jews. A state of emergency is proclaimed in Copenhagen when the police show themselves to be incapable of controlling events, and the military is given permission to use weapons against the populace. The king and his government no doubt fear that the violent disturbances could develop into a serious rebellion. The serious anti-Jewish disturbances have a drastic effect on the Jews. One reaction is to express hatred of the Christians, as a Jew living in Borgergade does, in 1820, when he empties a bucket of water over people in the street, shouting "Christian dogs." Another common reaction is to seek assimilation by converting to Christianity. After 1820 there is a rapid increase in the number of conversions. But behind this wave of conversions there is not only the fear of new anti-Semitic demonstrations, but also the desire to get rid of a burdensome ethnic and religious inheritance as well as in some cases an honest desire to become a Christian and believe in Jesus. It is thus symptomatic that M. L. Nathanson, the leader of the Jewish community, has his children baptized.
- 1830s Developments signify a golden age for the Danish Jews in terms of an increase in affluence, education, and social significance. Meanwhile, there is first another anti-Jewish phase that manifests itself precisely in 1830 as revolutionary currents are spreading through Europe.
- 1830–1890 Rabbi A. A. Wolff begins his long period in office as chief rabbi in the big new synagogue built in Krystalgade. He serves as a conservative compromise between the two wings, in which many of the traditional elements of Judaism have been preserved, meaning the reform wing's most radical proposals have not been accepted. Nevertheless, some Orthodox groups in the community refuse to accept Wolff's line, and this, combined with personal controversies, leads to a split in which a minority form their own congregation in the middle of the century.
- 1848 The constitution ensured Jews of legal equality. Danish Jews experience a high degree of stability in their own community in addition to a successful life in Danish society. This stability, however, must not be confused with internal unity.

1870 The arrival of the cultural movement that comes to be known as Modern Denmark marks a notable watershed in the history of the Jews. Many conversions and mixed marriages have already made great inroads in the formal Jewish congregation, but this has not necessarily diminished the Jewish sense of community. Many Jewish converts marry each other, and it was common—as it also was in Germany, for instance—for the Jewish way of life to be transformed under powerful influences while at the same time surviving as something different from what today would be understood as Danish.

1900–1917 Some 6,000–7,000 East European Jews come to Copenhagen, but about half continue on to London and New York. The new Jews in Denmark are young people who have left Czarist Russia and moved west hoping to create a better life. Relations between the immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe and the old Danish Jewish community are tense. The Danish Jewish families do not think they have anything in common with the new arrivals, and they fear the poor Jews, many of whom are often socialists, will undermine the position of the Jewish minority in Denmark. To avoid this, the Danish Jewish community works actively to move poor Jews further west. Neither do the Danish authorities look kindly on the East European Jews. They fear they are revolutionary socialists—as indeed some of them are—and there is an unwillingness to risk their needing financial support and thus becoming a burden on the community. And so attempts are made to get rid of them in various ways. A Yiddish-speaking environment is created in the old part of Copenhagen. In many areas, the history of the Eastern European Jews in Denmark is also a success story, as within a generation these people succeed in creating better lives for themselves and their children. Meanwhile, relations with the Danish Jewish community are constantly strained, and only after World War II did the two groups come together in a common social framework.

The emergence of Modern Denmark and modern political movements bring new potentials and new dangers for Danish Jews. For instance, there is the hope of a new, just world in which no distinction will be made between Jews and Christians. The young intellectual generation of Jews is strongly attracted to the radicalism represented by Georg Brandes and others, where current issues are discussed without any thought of faith or ethnic background. No study has yet been made of the situation, but the mere presence of so many Jewish names in the young radical movement and in the political party known as the Radical Left indicates a strong Jewish commitment to the cause. Among the leaders in this radical movement are Herman Heilbuth, Ivar Berendsen, Herman Trier, and the Brandes brothers.

1917 The Danish authorities effectively close the borders to further immigration, and it is not until the 1930s that a fresh wave of Jews attempts to come to Denmark.

1930s German Jews begin to make their way to Denmark. Denmark becomes a magnet for Jews from Germany, Austria, and Poland. Many, however, are refused entry at the border, and those who are allowed to enter are usually given only a six-month visa and no work permit. From the start of the 1930s, the Danish

authorities make it clear that they will not allow further Jewish immigration, and later that decade, the minister of justice, K. K. Steinckc provides a clear statement on Danish policy, which is that German Jews are not to be considered refugees, while maintaining that German laws on the Jews are legitimate civil legislation.

1940–1945 Danish Jews are evacuated and illegally transported to Sweden,

1943 About 500 Jews are captured and sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.

1960s A number of Polish Jews flee to Denmark.

1969 The Israelis government presents the people of Denmark with the statue *Wounded Woman* by Israeli artist Bernard Reder in appreciation for the support Danes provided Jews during World War II.

1983 Queen Margrethe attends a ceremony at the Copenhagen synagogue to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the building's opening.

2004 The Jewish Museum, the first museum for a minority in Denmark, opens in Copenhagen.

2005 Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen apologizes for Denmark sending Jews to concentration camps during World War II.

### Selected Bibliography

- Blüdnikow, Bent. 1985. "Dansk-jødisk historic—en forskningsoversigt." *Fortid og Nutid* 1: 13–31.
- Buckser, Andrew. 2003. *After the Rescue: Jewish Identity and Community in Contemporary Denmark*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Christensen, Karsten. 1986. "Dansk jødisk genealogi-1." *Tidsskrift for Dansk Jødisk Historie* 23: 18–22.
- Christensen, Karsten. 1987. "Dansk jødisk genealogi-2." *Tidsskrift for Dansk Jødisk Historie* 23: 40–44.
- Dübeck, Inger. 1987. "Fremmedrettens udvikling i Danmark ca. 1700–1914." In *Fremmede i Danmark. 400 års fremmedpolitik*, edited by Bent Blüdnikow, 13–47. Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag.
- Goldberger, Leo, ed. 1987. *The Rescue of the Danish Jews: Moral Courage Under Stress*. New York: New York University Press.
- Israel, Jonathan I. 1985. *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550–1750*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Levin, Elias. 1986. *Jødiske gravstene 1886–1900 på Mosaik Vestre*. Copenhagen: Self-published.
- Levin, Elias. 1994. *Den gamle jødiske begravelsesplads i Møllegade 1684–1994*, 1–2. Copenhagen: Self-published.
- Linvald, Axel. 1921. "Af Jødernes Frigørelshistorie." *Tidsskrift for Jødisk Historie og Literatur* 25: 340–358, 379–415.
- Margolinsky, Julius. 1978. *Jødiske dødsfald i Danmark 1693–1976*. Copenhagen: Dansk Historisk Håndbogsforlag.

# Jews in Finland

*Svante Lundgren*

---

**General Population:** 5,255,580 (end of 2005)

**Jewish Population:** 1,500–2,000

**Percent of Population:** Less than 0.5 per million

**Jewish Population by City:** 1,200 live in Helsinki, about 200 in Turku, and about 50 in Tampere

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Russian immigrants in the 19th century

**Languages Spoken:** Finnish and Swedish; there are some Yiddish speakers among the oldest Jews.

---

## Historical Overview

**Before 1809** Under Swedish law, Jews are allowed to settle only in three major towns in the kingdom, none of them in the territory of Finland. Jews sometimes visit the country, and a few Jewish converts to Christianity settle there.

**1809** As a consequence of the defeat of Sweden in the Russian-Swedish war of 1808–1809 (part of the Napoleonic Wars), Sweden loses control of Finland, and an autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland is established within the Russian Empire. The Swedish constitution and legal system are, however, maintained in the Grand Duchy, and the prohibition on Jewish settlement in Finland thus continues.

**1830s** A small Jewish prayer house is in use in Helsinki.

**1858** The decrees are announced under which discharged Russian soldiers and their families, without regard to their religion, are allowed to stay temporarily in Finland.

**1870s** The press debate on Jewish emancipation starts and continues throughout the 1880s. The status of the Jews in Finland does not yet change for the better, however.

**1870** About 400 Jews are in Finland, half of whom live in the capital Helsinki.

**1872–1906** The Finnish Diet discusses the legal status of the Jews several times, and Jewish emancipation is also the subject of animated press debates. General conservatism, national protectionism, and the fear of a mass influx of proletarian Eastern European Jews causes a majority to be negative to Jewish emancipation.

**End of 1800s** Jews who serve in the Russian Army arrive in Finland and are permitted to stay after discharge.

**1889** The government issues an administrative decree expressly governing the presence of Jews in Finland. Under the decree, a number of Jews, mentioned by name, are allowed to stay in the country only until further notice and to settle only in certain towns assigned to them. They are given temporary visit permits with a period of validity not exceeding six months. The occupations open to the

Jews are the same as under the decree of 1869, meaning they are to continue supporting themselves mainly as dealers in secondhand clothes. They are forbidden to attend fairs or perform activities outside their town of residence. The slightest violation of any of these limitations serves as grounds for expulsion from Finland. Children are allowed to stay in Finland only as long as they live with their parents or are not married. Jews conscripted to the Russian Army within Finland are not allowed to return to Finland after their discharge.

End of 1880s About 1,000 Jews live in Finland.

1906 The synagogue in Helsinki is inaugurated. A Jewish sports club is founded in Helsinki. It later changes its name to Makkabi and is Europe's oldest continuously functioning Jewish sports association

1907 The first democratic parliamentary elections are held. Those in favor of Jewish emancipation win a clear majority, but constitutional conflicts between the Finnish and Russian authorities prevent a positive solution of this issue.

1912 The synagogue in Turku is inaugurated.

1917 Finland gains its independence in December. The parliament approves an act that grants the Jews equal civil rights at the end of the year; the act is promulgated in early 1918.

December 22, 1917 Parliament approves an act concerning "Mosaic Confessors," and on January 12, 1918 the act is promulgated. Under the act, Jews can for the first time become Finnish nationals, and Jews not possessing Finnish nationality are henceforth in all respects to be treated as foreigners in general.

1918 A short but bloody civil war ends with the victory of the White (bourgeois) over the Red (socialists).

1919–1938 Between the two world wars, the Jewish population increases to about 2,000 as a result of immigration, mainly from Soviet Russia during the early period of the Revolution. Many young Jews study at university, and others enter the liberal professions as physicians, lawyers, and engineers. Still others turn to industry and forestry, but most continue in the textile and clothing business. With a few isolated exceptions, the Jews do not take part in internal party politics or join any political movement.

1930s The Jewish population rises to its highest-ever level, about 2,000. Emancipation opens up new possibilities and many young Jews study at the university and enter the professions as physicians, lawyers, and engineers.

1938 Hundreds of Jewish refugees from Central Europe come to Finland before the Finnish authorities refuse to allow more refugees into the country.

1939–1940 After having been attacked by the Soviet Army, Finland fights the Winter War (or Finnish-Russian War).

1940s–1950s After World War II, the Jewish population is completely integrated into Finnish society; having fought for their country, Jews are widely accepted even by those who had earlier been suspicious of them. The Jewish population now slowly decreases because of emigration, mainly to Israel, and assimilation.

1941–1944 Finland fights the Continuation War against the Soviet Union as a co-belligerent (although de jure not an ally) of Nazi Germany. German soldiers are

stationed in Finland giving rise to the ironic situation in which Jews and Germans are fighting side by side. Jews fight together with their non-Jewish fellow countrymen in both wars, and the Jewish losses (8 percent) are conspicuously heavy. Despite strong German pressure, the Finnish government refuses to enact any anti-Jewish legislation and protects its Jewish citizens, who thus continue to enjoy full civil rights throughout the war. There are many interesting anecdotes from this period, concerning, among others, the presence of a Jewish prayer tent on the Russian front virtually under the Nazi's noses, and the food help given to Russian-Jewish prisoners of war by the Jewish communities of Finland.

- 1942 Eight Jewish refugees, including two children, are handed over to the Germans; seven die in Auschwitz.
- 1944 The city of Vyborg (Viipuri) is lost to the Soviet Union, and the city's Jewish community now only exists in principle. (It is formally dissolved in 1958.)
- 1947 The War of Independence for the State of Israel brings to the new state Finnish-Jewish volunteers as well as weapons donations by the state of Finland. These Finnish volunteers represent the highest per-capita participation of any Diaspora Jewish community. The following years saw a fairly high rate of aliyah.
- 1948 Twenty-nine Finnish Jews fight in the Israeli independence war.
- 1979 Ben Zyskowitz becomes the first Finnish Jew to be elected to Parliament, where he continues to serve today.
- 1981 The third Jewish community, the one in Tampere, ceases to operate because of a lack of members.
- 1990s The number of Jews starts to grow again, albeit very slowly, partly because of immigration from former Soviet republics and Israel.
- 1995 Finland joins the European Union.
- 2000 A monument is erected to the memory of the eight Jewish refugees handed over to the Germans during World War II, and the Finnish Prime Minister apologizes for what had happened on behalf of the Finnish government and people.
- 2002 The Jewish center in Helsinki is evacuated after a bomb threat.
- 2004 The Chabad-Lubavitch movement starts its work in Finland.
- 2006 The synagogue in Helsinki celebrates its centenary in the presence of dignitaries such as the president of the republic and the speaker of Parliament.

### Contemporary Overview

There are organized Jewish communities in Helsinki and Turku with their own synagogues, both Ashkenazi-Orthodox, built in 1906 and 1912, respectively. The Jewish community of Tampere discontinued its activities in 1981. The communities are members of the Central Council of Jewish Communities in Finland, a consultative body dealing with matters of general interest concerning Jews in Finland. This body is, in turn, a member of the European Council of Jewish Community Services and the World Jewish Congress Connections with communities in the other Nordic (Scandinavian) countries.

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The first Jews in Finland were former soldiers, and their ways of earning a living in Finland were restricted to selling homemade handicrafts, bread, berries, cigarettes, secondhand clothes, and other inexpensive textile products. After emancipation, the Jews grabbed the opportunity, and many studied at universities. Finnish Jews are today well educated, mostly upper-middle and middle class, and they are well integrated into society; many are public administration employees or self-employed professionals. Today, most of the Finnish Jews are corporate employees or self-employed professionals. Some are civil servants. Among Jews who have occupied important positions, Max Jakobson, former Finnish ambassador to the United Nations, should be mentioned. In the music world, the late Dr. Simon Parmet definitely won his place as a composer and conductor. Worth mentioning also is the late painter Sam Vanni, a member of the Finnish Academy and the European Academy of Science, Art and Literature. Rafael Wardi, another scion of the community, is also a very well-known painter. In 1979, Ben Zyskowitz became the first Finnish Jew to be elected member of Parliament.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Although their total number is very low, several Finnish Jews have risen to national prominence in the commercial, academic, and cultural fields. Klezmer music has become quite popular: there are both Jewish and non-Jewish bands playing this music, and many international stars have played at the Helsinki Klezmer Festival. As the Helsinki synagogue celebrated its centenary in 2006, a theater play in Yiddish was performed for the first time in several decades.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

There are two Jewish communities in Finland today; 90 percent of Finnish Jews belong to the community in Helsinki, whereas the community in Turku is very small (123 members living in Finland at the end of 2005). The community in Turku has a synagogue and a community center, and despite its small size it still manages to form a minyan almost every Sabbath (except during summer months).

At the end of 2005, the community in Helsinki had 1,454 members, 315 of whom were living abroad. The community has managed to create an impressive range of communal activities including a kindergarten for about 25 children, a school for about 100 pupils in nine grades, a hospital with 14 beds, a library, a choir, and a great number of organizations, such as Makkabi Helsinki, the Women's International Zionist Organization, Keren Kayemet, Chevra Kadisha (founded in 1864), and Bikur Cholim. In Finland, Jewish organizations work under the auspices of the synagogue community. Community work in Helsinki is concentrated on a synagogue and an adjoining community center, and the activity must be seen as being very high, bearing in mind the size of the community. In such a small community, everyone has to take responsibility for keeping Judaism alive. On its home page the community states: "Although we are one of the northernmost and smallest Jewish communities in the world, we have a very active community life and a warm heart!"

The community is democratically governed with a community council as the highest authority. It has 32 members who are elected every third year. Normally, about a third of those entitled to vote participate in the election.

Both synagogues in the country follow Orthodox ritual, and there is a rabbi in Helsinki; the community in Turku has been without a rabbi since 1965. The Central Council of Jewish Communities in Finland is a consultative body dealing with general matters and is affiliated to the World Jewish Congress and the European Council of Jewish Communities. The Jewish community has many international contacts and cooperation is close, especially with the Jewish communities in the other Nordic countries. The two communities have good relations with the state and municipal authorities. The Jewish community has legal status and the right to levy taxes on its members. Kosher slaughtering is permitted in Finland (it was last time discussed in Parliament in 1995) and there is a kosher butcher shop in Helsinki.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Anti-Semitism has never been very strong in Finland—even in the 1920s and 1930s it was restricted to small ultra-right circles—and although old prejudices still appear, and biased criticism of Israel can be heard in the media and from leading politicians, violent anti-Semitism is very rare. There have been some violent incidents initiated by Muslim immigrants, but these have been very few in number. After the 9/11 attacks, the president of Finland summoned representatives of the three Abrahamic faiths, and these meetings have continued. The Jewish community has excellent relations with the Muslim Tatar community, which came to the country in the 19th century, but its relations with more recent Muslim immigrants have been more problematic. The Jewish community in Finland was early influenced by Zionism. Today most Finnish Jews have relatives or close friends in Israel, visits to the country are common, and a clear majority has a strong sense of affinity with the Jewish state. *Yom Ha-Shoa* and *Yom Ha-Atzmaut* are celebrated yearly, often in the presence of the Israeli Ambassador. The Jewish community has good relations with the dominant Lutheran church, and there is strong support for Israel among active churchgoers; Finnish evangelical Christians have helped thousands of Russian Jews immigrate to Israel via Finland. Academic Jewish studies are pursued at the University of Helsinki (in the fields of Semitic languages and rheology) and at Åbo Akademi University, Turku (in the field of theology).

A 2001 study showed that the Jews affiliated to a community were quite satisfied with the work of the community and optimistic about the future of Judaism in Finland. For them Jewishness is not primarily related to religion but rather to an awareness of being Jewish, adherence to a Jewish culture, and a willingness to pass on this living tradition. Most of the respondents viewed the Jews of Finland primarily as part of the Jewish people, not as a religious minority. In highly secularized countries, like the Nordic countries, peoplehood tends to be more important than religion. “Feeling Jewish inside,” “loyalty to the Jewish heritage,” and “a sense of belonging to the Jewish people” are the main pillars of their Jewish identities, whereas religious activities play a minor role. It is perhaps possible to say that the

Jews of Finland have an ethnocultural conception of what it means to “be Jewish.” In their behavior Finnish Jews are modern in the sense that they freely choose which customs and lifestyles they want to adopt. Although they do not follow all Jewish traditions, they do observe several practices; they live to a large extent as most Finns do, but they are proud of their Jewishness. They see neither emigration to Israel nor Orthodoxy as the only guarantees of Jewish survival; rather, they believe Judaism will survive in Finland through a clear concentration on cultural and social activities. The survival of such a small community has been questioned several times, but they are still here and determined to be here in the future as well.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

There are no big movements of Jews either emigrating from or immigrating to Finland. The community is growing, but very slowly. Finland is a quite secularized country, and the Jews are influenced by modern secularism. Most Jews do not attend synagogue regularly and do not keep kosher. There is, on the other hand, quite strong support for the official policy of the synagogue, that is, for keeping it Orthodox, and Jewish holidays are widely celebrated. Mixed marriages are extremely frequent, something that is not surprising bearing in mind the size of the community. Most converts to Judaism are persons who have married a Jew, and it is quite common for children of mixed marriages to become Jewish.

The Jews of Finland have a strong Jewish identity. In a comprehensive 2001 study, 80 percent of the respondents to a questionnaire said they were very conscious of their identity as Jews. But that does not make them less Finnish. They are, in fact, well integrated into Finnish society, and half of the respondents said they felt as Jewish as they felt Finnish. In an increasingly multicultural world, multiple identities are becoming more common, and the question of being, say, Finnish *or* Jewish is becoming increasingly obsolete; it is not a question of “either-or” or “fifty-fifty.” Jews in Finland today fully accept their “Jewishness” and, at the same time, fully accept their “Finnishness.” Instead of feeling half this and half that, they appear to oscillate between the positions depending on the situation. In doing this, they are in fact 100 percent both. The ease in being Jewish and the fact that Jews are so well integrated into society are paradoxically the biggest threats to Jewish survival. There is no pressure from outside to keep Jews together as a distinct and different group, and it is easy to assimilate.

### Selected Bibliography

- Harviainen, Tapani. 2000. “The Jews in Finland and World War II.” *Nordisk Judaistik-Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 21: 157–166.
- Pentikäinen, Juha, and Veikko Anttonen. 1995. “The Jews in Finland.” In *Cultural Minorities in Finland. An Overview towards Cultural Policy*, edited by Juha Pentikäinen and Marja Hiltunen, 163–166. Helsinki, Finland: Publications of the Finnish National Commission for UNESCO. No 66.
- Rachlin, Robert D. 1999. “How Were They Saved? Finland, the Second World War, and the Jews.” *The Bulletin of the Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont* 3 (2): 7–14.

# Jews in Iceland

*Snorri G. Bergsson*

---

General Population: 300,000

Jewish Population: 10

Percent of Population: 0.003 percent

---

## Historical Overview

Iceland has, for ages, been an isolated and homogenous country, located far north in the Atlantic. It is also the only European country where an established Jewish community has never existed. Consequently, the discussion here is focused on how the Icelanders responded to the actual, or possible, arrival of Jewish immigrants, and how individual Jews contributed to the development of Icelandic society. The author Hendrik Siemsen Ottósson, who was married to a Jewish woman and assisted Jewish refugees during World War II, stated that only a few Jews were ever simultaneously present in Iceland “and, because of their small numbers and the liberalism of the Icelanders, there was never made any distinction between them and other citizens. They intermarried and had their children baptized” (Ottósson 1951, 37). In theory, Danish Jews could reside in Iceland without restrictions other than those that applied to other Danes. Even so, most Jews would have found immigration to that country a temptation worth resisting, as there was hardly any consumer market found in Iceland until the early 20th century, and practically no employment for alien workers, traders, and craftspeople.

1815 Ruben Henriques, of a Danish Jewish family, is the first Jew to register in Iceland. He begins to trade at the northern port of Akureyri. He never settles there, and in fact might not even have sailed to Iceland himself, as his associates, Jewish and non-Jewish, execute his business during the trading season. Those men are apparently the first Jews to stay for an extended period in Iceland without being baptized, as Lutheranism is the only recognized religion in Iceland until 1874.

1850–1853 In 1850, the Althing (parliament) discusses Danish “laws on admitting foreign Jews to the Kingdom” and whether they should apply to Iceland as well. Its members of Parliament (MPs) accept in principle that Danish Jews are permitted to settle, but not to worship, in Iceland. In 1853, they refuse, however, to admit foreign Jews, as they say they are cunning traders by nature and will soon bully the existing merchants and enrich themselves at the expense of the local population.

1855 The MPs do not envisage Jews in any other way than relating to trade and banking, but the tables turn when the last restrictions on the Icelandic trade are abolished. This time, the admission of non-Danish Jews to Iceland is accepted by a large majority, and the Althing’s resolution states that, “as it is spurious for any society’s prosperity to discriminate the rights of citizenship on the basis of religion, it could also harm the Icelandic trade if Jews were not allowed to settle

in Iceland due to their religion.” It adds that “if the [Jewish] trade would not be allowed, it might harm our trade and business dealings with other nations, since it is generally believed that among the Jews are many hard-working and honest traders and [Jews] in general are good workers, useful and peaceful citizens where their immigration has been permitted” (quoted in Bergsson 2005, 29).

1874 Journalist and Zionist leader Max Nordau visits Iceland. The locals generally dislike his arrogant behavior, and he does not fancy them and their melancholy, either.

Early 20th century The first Jewish settlers in Iceland arrive no later than 1906, when two young Jews register in Reykjavik: the merchant Fritz Nathan and the musician Paul Bernburg (Liepman). Nathan soon becomes very influential and his co-owned company, Nathan & Olsen, becomes one of Iceland’s largest at this time. The Icelanders welcome him, and his beneficence to the society earns him absolute recognition. After completing the construction of one of Reykjavik’s largest buildings, he returns with his family to Denmark, shortly before the outbreak of World War I. The given reason is the absence of Jewish ritual services. Bernburg, however, takes the easy road and merges into the society, apparently through baptism. Neither of the men suffer any discrimination, as the locals welcome any foreigners, of whatever nationality or creed, who settle in Iceland, pay taxes, and are culturally integrated. However, anti-Semitism is present, but is apparently restricted to individuals who have studied abroad.

1904 Iceland’s turn from backwardness to modernity, at the dawn of the 20th century, seems to have involved a substantial Jewish capital, most notably that of the Newcastle-based Louis Zöllner, a Danish Jew by birth. His input into Icelandic society is vital for the emergence of a gigantic cooperative movement and other local enterprises. Other Jews, or suspected Jews, also take some part in Iceland’s rejuvenation through trading and financing, most notably, Danish Jews, who are the predominant investors in the Bank of Iceland (established in 1904), which is responsible for financing Iceland’s industry. As a result, the word “Jew” (*Gyðingur*) is synonymous with finance and trade, usually in a negative manner. Later, the image of the Jew is related to a Jewish–communist worldwide conspiracy, but its main propagandist is publicly ridiculed and virtually ostracized, most notably through the efforts of Hendrik Ottósson

1930 Some German Jews unsuccessfully attempt to immigrate to Iceland, as the Danish embassy in Berlin refuses to issue visas for Jews. At that time, no visa is de facto needed for immigration to Iceland.

1936 The government of Prime Minister Hermann Jónasson (the Progressive Party) issues the Alien’s Act and establishes the Bureau of Immigration a year later. Until now, aliens of any persuasion and race could, more or less, settle in Iceland if they have sufficient means for support and do not suffer from any contagious diseases. About 15 Jews are living in Iceland, “slipped in while there were no [immigration] barriers,” as governmental officials state (Bergsson 2005, 336). Some of them are socialists, protected by the Socialist Democrat Party, which is represented in government by Haraldur Guðmundsson, who happens to be a member of the only refugee-aiding organization in Iceland.

1938 In March, the socialists relinquish their governmental post and Jónasson's Progressive Party forms a minority government. Almost immediately, Prime Minister Jónasson, who also serves as the minister of justice, sets sail to relieve Iceland of its Jews, supported by some nationalistic elements, most notably the right-wing daily *Vísir*. As has been documented recently, he especially singles out Jews for deportation. His argument is that because of unemployment these people will have to depart, and his officials also admit that applications from German Jews have "as a rule been refused" (Bergsson 2005, 321). At this time, Iceland is in great needs of doctors, but Jewish doctors are turned away en masse—at the same time that manual laborers of Nordic blood are welcomed. Moreover, Jónasson states, in his conversations with foreign emissaries, that he will remove all Jews to protect the Nordic blood of the Icelanders. He also blocks the admittance of a few Jewish refugee children, in opposition to the wishes of other political leaders, even those within his own party. The right-wing newspapers are practically the only supporters of that decision, but mostly because the organization involved in the matter is not only dedicated to help those unwanted Jewish refugees but is also made up of dangerous elements such as the communist Hendrik Ottósson and the Social Democrat chairman, Stefán Stefánsson.

1939 In April, the Progressive, Socialist Democrat, and Conservative parties form a unity government, presided over by Jónasson. Almost immediately, some Jewish refugees are admitted—"the majority of min[isters] approves of that," Jónasson bitterly states (Bergsson 2005, 352). Thus, even Jews who were denied access a few months earlier are now admitted. It is not a pleasant testimony to Jónasson's immigration policies that Iceland apparently has the lowest ratio of Jewish refugees (per 1,000 inhabitants) of all European countries, and probably the highest ratio of deportees, as well. However, some refugees are saved, most notably through the efforts of Hendrik Ottósson. Thus, a small community of Jews remains in Reykjavík when the British army occupies Iceland, in May 1940.

## Contemporary Overview

Iceland never officially categorized Jews as a special entity, although the government informally accepted a distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans during the late 1930s. Any discrimination would have been illegal according to the Admission Act of 1855, and Bergsson has argued that Iceland's prime minister repeatedly supervised a breach of that in 1938–1939 when he singled out Jews for special treatment (Bergsson 2005, 320). On the other hand, Iceland has never sought Jewish immigration and did not officially take part in any rescue attempts during or after World War II. Although individual Icelanders did save some Jews from the horrors of Nazism, that practice was relatively rare.

It might be worth mentioning that Dr. Helgi Briem, Iceland's representative at the Danish Embassy in Berlin, had in late 1938 put himself in danger to save Dr. Karl Kroner, a German Jew who had assisted Icelandic nationals in Germany for more than two decades. Briem's outrageous behavior, direct threats, and fierce

attitude secured Dr. Kroner's release, much to his own surprise (Whitehead 1980, 87–90). And Prime Minister Jónasson, who had been Kroner's guest in Germany, reluctantly granted him a visa, but not without complaining that too many annoying Jews were already residing in Iceland.

Most Jews who had managed to stay in Iceland during the perilous years of 1938–1939 were protected by influential Icelanders. Dr. Kroner's case was of that nature, as Briem was an influential member of the Progressive Party. The force of friendship was the main reason any Jews were accepted to Iceland at this time. From the summer of 1939 to Iceland's occupation in May 1940, a few Jewish families and a number of individuals were accepted. None were admitted solely because they were persecuted or their life was in danger. However, some Jews who had entered Iceland illegally were temporarily tolerated; for example, the elderly Helene Mann and her adult son, Hans. They had moved to Iceland in 1936 to rejoin Helene's daughter, Olga Rottberger, who was later deported, along with her husband and their young children. The younger of those, Felix, was probably the first child to have been born in Iceland of two Jewish parents. The government repeatedly tried to deport the two remaining members of the Mann family, even as late as March 30, 1940, but to no avail. Hans Mann hid in the countryside, and later a friendly physician prevented their deportation because of Helene Mann's illness, which he partly exaggerated. The author Hendrik Ottósson also saved a number of Jews who faced deportation, one time by marrying a German Jewess and threatening to charge Prime Minister Jónasson with murder if any members of her family were deported.

The refugee community in Reykjavik was small in number. About 30 Jews were located in Reykjavík and the suburbs in the summer of 1940, and roughly a quarter of those were actual refugees. The remainder was made up of musicians and other "specialists in some field of employment," and thus considered legal immigrants according to Icelandic immigration laws. Among those were Jewish women, married to non-Jews, half-Jews, and socialists, who had left Germany because of their political beliefs and happened to be of Jewish origin as well.

In May 1940, the British Army occupied Iceland. Among the soldiers were individuals of the Jewish religion. As they sought coreligionists in Iceland, the Army contacted Hendrik Ottósson, who was at that time on its payroll. To accommodate these men, Ottósson soon organized a small congregation, along with his wife and mother-in-law, the latter being deeply religious. Some of the refugees also took part. Ottósson later arranged a place of worship, had an altar made, and borrowed the Torah from a friend. This small group celebrated Yom Kippur in 1940 and soon established a Jewish congregation in Reykjavik.

Most of the soldiers left in 1941–1942, as the United States took over the protection of Iceland. These men were replaced by American Jewish soldiers, and soon the first rabbi arrived to serve their spiritual needs. At that time, Ottósson's stepson, Pétur Goldstein, became the first Jewish boy to receive bar mitzvah, and another congregation was formed, this time by more strict observers of Jewish rituals. Until the end of the war, a number of rabbis had visited those two congregations, but in 1945 they were both dissolved. It is quite remarkable that the atheist Hendrik

Ottósson was, for three years, among the registered leaders of a congregation whose religion he did not profess. This he did, as he admitted, “out of sympathy for the most persecuted nation in history” (Ottósson 1951, 165–169). Ottósson later received a letter of recognition from American Jews, honoring his services.

In the postwar period, some Jewish refugees immigrated to the United States, including Dr. Kroner and his family. They were replaced by new arrivals, including the father of Dr. Vilhjalmsson, who has written on the history of Jews in Denmark and Iceland. Iceland soon established diplomatic relations with Israel, and was for decades among Israel’s most dedicated supporters. During the decades after World War II, the Icelandic people were at large very friendly toward world Jewry. The Jews were no longer merchants, bankers, communists, or refugees. In postwar Iceland, the Jews were Israel, which had a somewhat romantic support among the Icelanders. Because of Israel’s immigration policies, Iceland was no longer needed as a refuge. Thus, there was never a want for synagogues or rabbis, and the only Jewish services held in Iceland were conducted at the U.S. Air Force base at Keflavik, established in 1951.

The wartime refugee community was soon to disperse. Most practicing Jews emigrated, and those who remained soon merged into Icelandic society, as their predecessors had done. Iceland’s leading musicians, who had imported and protected their Jewish counterparts, were soon rewarded, as composers such as Robert Abraham and Heinz Edelstein elevated this country’s musical life to a much higher level. In the 1970s, the Russian Jewish composer and pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy immigrated with his Icelandic wife and was granted citizenship. If the Icelanders had earlier labeled Jews as bankers and merchants, their image had by then transformed to that of musicians. From the 1970s, most Jewish immigrants were either employed by the Icelandic Symphonic Orchestra or otherwise related to music. Most other immigrant Jews had married Icelanders, including the Israeli-born Aliza Kjartansson, who was for three decades the unofficial spokesperson of the local Jewry. The Jews in Iceland only gathered together on special occasions and holidays, most often in the company of friendly Icelanders.

The Icelanders’ favorable image of Jews has recently been affected by anti-Zionism, instigated by some parts of the media and individual Icelanders. The Israeli-born musician Elias Davidsson has been the main propagator of anti-Israel and anti-American opinions in Iceland, supported by various left-wing elements. Another Icelandic citizen of Jewish origin, Robert (“Bobby”) Fischer, had similar convictions. Fischer became the world chess champion in 1972, at the “match of the century” in Reykjavik. He later collided with the U.S. government on various issues and was imprisoned in Japan after his U.S. passport was canceled. The Icelandic government granted him citizenship in 2005, albeit officially condemning Fischer’s repeated remarks on Jewish-American worldwide conspiracy. Until his death in 2008, Bobby Fischer was doubtless Iceland’s most famous Jew, although he strongly disassociated himself from his origin and despised everything Jewish, including the production of Jewish-owned companies.

Iceland also has another Jewish celebrity. In May 2003, the Jewess Dorrit Mousaeff married Iceland’s president, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, at a private ceremony

at Bessastaðir, the presidential residence. Iceland's first lady is of Bukhari ancestry; she was born in Jerusalem but lived in Britain during most of her adulthood. She was warmly welcomed and is very popular in Iceland, even more so than the president himself, who had previously been the country's most controversial politician.

Iceland might not have taken a significant part in harboring the dispersed children of Israel, but having a Jewish first lady is a feature not very common among the countries of the Diaspora.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bergsson, Snorri G. 1994. "Listi Hermanns" [Hermanns's List]. *Efst á baugi* May, 28–29.
- Bergsson, Snorri G. 1995. "Útlendingar og íslenskt samfélag 1900–1940" [Aliens in Iceland 1900–1940]. Master's diss., University of Iceland.
- Bergsson, Snorri G. 1998. "The Aryan Cradle: Iceland and the 'Jewish Question.'" Kulanu Web site. <http://www.kulanu.org/iceland/iceland.html> (accessed May 8, 2008).
- Ottósson, Hendrik. 1951. *Vegamót og vopnagnýr* [Crossroads and Cannons]. Akureyri, Iceland: Bókaútgáfa Pálma H. Jónssonar.
- Vilhjálmsson, Vilhjálmur. 2004. "Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625–2004." *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16 (Fall): 3–4.
- Whitehead, Þór. 1974. "Kynþáttastefna Íslands" [Iceland's Racial Policy]. *Lesbók Morgunblaðsins* [The *Morgunblaðið* Literary supplement] January 13.
- Whitehead, Þór. 1980. *Ófriður í aðsigi* [Approaching War]. Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið.

## Jews in Norway

*Irene Levin*

General Population: 4,593,041

Jewish Population: 2,000

Percent of Population: 0.027 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** There are two Jewish communities: one in the capital of Oslo and one in Trondheim. In total, these two communities have approximately 1,000 members (around 800 in Oslo and 160 in Trondheim). In addition, there are probably around 1,000 Jews living around the country who are not members of any of the two communities. Most Jews live in the Oslo area.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The first group consists of those who came to Norway before World War II and their descendants. Most in this group arrived around 1905. A second group (around 500) came as refugees just before World War II from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Sixty percent of the Jews in Norway were refugees in Sweden during the war and most returned afterward. Between 30 and 40 percent of the Norwegian Jewish population was killed in Auschwitz—only 34 persons came back. No woman or child survived the first selection in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The third group consists of those who came to Norway after World War II, most of whom came from displaced-persons camps. Norway's policy was to "replace" the loss from World War II and reestablish the Jewish communities with a new Jewish immigration. Many of those coming from the concentration camps wanted to immigrate to America, but because the United States did not accept persons with illnesses or disabilities, Norway accepted several of these refugees. They were called "minus-refugees."

The fourth group consists of Israelis who came to Norway for different reasons. Some married a Norwegian Jewish or non-Jewish spouse and some came because of work opportunities. Usually the non-Jewish spouse converted to Judaism. Most of the Israelis (estimated at 2–300) are not members of any of the two Jewish communities.

A fifth group consists of American citizens who live in Norway because of their work. Some become members of one of the Jewish communities, even though their stay is limited in time.

Language Spoken: Norwegian

---

## Historical Overview

- 1814 The country's first constitution comes into effect. Before that Norway is under Denmark's rule. The new constitution states, in the second paragraph, that Jews are prohibited from entering the country. The Norwegian constitution differs from that of Denmark and Sweden, where Jews had lived for hundreds of years.
- 1851 The Norwegian parliament (Stortinget) changes the ban and the paragraph, allowing Jews to enter the state. The poet Henrik Wergeland leads the fight for these changes and it succeeds six years after his death.
- 1875 Only 34 Jews are in Norway. They are mainly from Germany.
- 1880 The main Jewish immigration to Norway starts, mainly as a result of the pogroms in Russia and the Pale of Settlements.
- 1905 Jewish immigration peaks at around 1,200 persons. The Jews who find their way to Norway come mainly from Lithuania (Vilna and Shtetles, close to the Latvian border) and Poland. They are poor and leave their countries because of persecution. Most live in Oslo and Trondheim, but also in smaller municipalities. Before the war, the Jews lived in 64 different municipalities around the country. Three religious communities are created (two in Oslo and one in Trondheim). Norway in this period is one of the poorest countries in Europe and a large group leaves for the United States.
- 1930s Before World War II, the immigration policy of Norway is very strict and even stricter for Jews. The main newspaper, *Aftenposten*, runs an editorial on April 4, 1933, telling readers not to judge the German people too hard because Jews were of a certain kind with special traits.
- 1940 At the beginning of the war, there are around 500 Jewish refugees in Norway, many in transit to the United States. There are never more than 2,200 Jews (1,000 households) in Norway, and this is the situation at the beginning of the German occupation.
- April 9, 1940 Norway is occupied by Germany, and it becomes clear from the beginning of the war that the situation is more dangerous for the Jews than for the rest of the Norwegian population. One month after the invasion, all radios belonging to Jews are confiscated. Arrests of Jews begin early in the occupation, but after some weeks they were released. The same is happening also with the non-Jewish population. The list of anti-Jewish measures is long and continues even after the Jews are deported from the country.
- May 1940 The secretary of the Jewish aid society, David Goldberg, is the first Norwegian Jew arrested. However, he is released soon after, as are many of the Jews

arrested early in the war. In the beginning, those arrested are communists and others who had been vocal in the media, speaking out against Nazism (like Ephraim Wulff Koritzinsky and Moritz Rabinowitz). Because many are set free, the arrests are not seen as dangerous.

June 18, 1941 The first mass arrest of Jews starts in northern Norway. Together with the arrest of the Jews around 300 non-Jews are arrested. The gentiles are released after some months. The Jews are sent to different camps, perform forced labor, and finally end up in Auschwitz. Several Jews are arrested in the southern part of the country, but they are released shortly after. However, the Jews from Tromsø and the other cities in the northern part of the country are sent to concentration camps in Norway, first to Sydspissen and later to Grini in the Oslo area. Some are also sent back to northern Norway as forced labor for work on the roads before they are deported to Auschwitz.

December 1941 The first Norwegian Jew to be killed in a concentration camp is the communist Benjamin Bild.

1942 Early in the year, Jews are registered with the government and all identification cards are stamped with a "J." By early March the Nazi collaboration regime (the Quisling regime) has a complete overview of the Jewish population in Norway.

August/September 1942 Eleven Jews are arrested in connection with summer vacation at Naersnes just outside of Oslo. Among them is the rabbi Julius Samuel. They are later deported to Auschwitz with SS Monte Rosa.

October 6, 1942 In Trondheim, all Jewish men over the age of 15 are arrested and detained in a local prison before being sent to Falstad concentration camp outside the city. The women and children are placed in three apartments in the city.

October 26, 1942 All Jewish men over the age of 15 with a "J" in their identification papers are to be arrested. The order comes from the leader of the state police, K. A. Marthinsen, who sends a telegram to all Norwegian police authorities. The arrests are based on a law signed two days earlier. The order of the arrest is a German initiative, but the Norwegian authorities do not resist.

Most men in southern Norway are sent to Berg concentration camp, 100 km south of Oslo. The women have to register daily at the local police stations. Many women try to escape. However, for several this is not an alternative when their sons, husbands, and fathers are arrested. Instead, they try to deliver parcels to Berg to get in contact with their arrested relatives. All Jewish property is liquidated from this date.

November 26, 1942 A new order of arrest that comes from the German Hauptsturmführer Wagner includes women and children. This is the biggest police action ever in Norway. The Norwegian police arrest 532 Jewish women, men, and children and send them to Stettin with SS Donau. From Stettin, they are transported by train to Auschwitz.

Four transports leave for concentration camps. SS Donau is one of four transports. SS Monte Rosa has two transports (19 and 26 of November 1942). SS Gutenland leaves on February 25 with 158 Jews. All have the same destination: Auschwitz. Of all of those deported to Auschwitz, only 34 return. 766 Norwegian Jews are killed—between 35 and 40 percent of the entire Jewish population.

The Jews who are not sent to Auschwitz manage to escape to Sweden, where they stay until the war was over. During the war, their apartments are confiscated by the Nazis and their economy is liquidated. Little by little the Jewish population manages to grow. Norway accepts an immigration of displaced persons equal to the number that was lost.

## Contemporary Overview

### Jewish Contributions to Culture, Science, and the Humanities

The Jews of Norway have a short history. However, they integrated successfully into all the country's institutions. Integration, not assimilation, is the watchword.

Jo Benkow has been a speaker of parliament and was also the leader of the conservative (Høyre) party for a period. He has written several books about such topics as his Jewish background and King Olav, who was a good friend of his.

Pianist Robert Levin was a respected and well-known pianist both in Norway and internationally. He became the first professor at the College of Music. His daughter, journalist and author Mona Levin, has written a book about her father in addition to several other books on different topics. She has also been very active in the current debate about Jews and Israel.

In the field of science, there is psychiatrist Leo Eitinger, a survivor of Auschwitz, who invented the concept of KZ syndrome, which refers to the stress reactions that come many years after a person's release from a concentration camp.

Other Jewish personalities include Kai Feinberg (Holocaust survivor and head of the Jewish community in Oslo), Julius Paltiel (Holocaust survivor and head of the Jewish community in Trondheim), Oscar Mendelsohn (author of the first book on the history of Norwegian Jews), Eva Scheer (author and journalist), Vera Kommissar (author of a book about Auschwitz survivor Julius Paltiel), Charles Philipson (supreme court judge and the first ombudsman for consumers), and Berthold Grünfeld (a professor of social medicine).

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

There are two synagogues in Norway—one in Trondheim and one in Oslo. The rabbi situated in Oslo is also the rabbi of the synagogue in Trondheim. The present rabbi, Yoav Melchior, is the son of the chief rabbi of Norway, Michael Melchior, who lives in Israel and visits Norway several times a year. The congregations are Orthodox, even though the members are secular. This means the synagogues have separate seating in a gallery for women. For many this is a contradiction in a gender-equalized society like Norway, where a Jewish woman can become prime minister of the whole country but cannot hold a Torah. Still, for the first time both the community in Oslo and the one in Trondheim have female leaders—Anne Sender in Oslo and Rita Abrahamsen in Trondheim. However, all religious rituals are performed according to Orthodox Jewish rituals. Even though these rules and rituals are definite according to the oral and written tradition, some changes have been accepted, such as women saying Kaddish over the deceased at a funeral and throwing sand on the grave, to give a few examples.

In spite of the small number of members, the communities are very vibrant. This is very much due to the chief rabbi, Michael Melchior, who lived in Norway for some decades and was an active inspirer for the community—especially in Oslo. He started many activities, among them a Jewish kindergarten in Oslo, and was very visible in the public sphere.

There is a *cheider* that leads to bar mitzvah for boys and bat chayil for girls. B'nei Akiva is the main youth organization with camps, religious and Zionist education, and scout activities. There is a Jewish Youth Organization (JUF) for older youth, which is part of Scandinavian Jewish Youth Organization (SJUF). The Women's International Zionist Organization is active, and the members work especially for a children's home in Ashdod in Israel. The clubs B'nai Brith and Menorah are active with social gatherings for men.

A new community house is situated next to the synagogue. In the community house there is also a *jatke*, a kosher butcher where one can buy frozen meat and other kosher items. Jewish ritual slaughtering has been forbidden in Norway since before World War II. The discussion that led to the decision contains arguments about human slaughtering of animals as well as classic anti-Semitic arguments.

There is also a senior citizens' home next to the synagogue and the community house. Every senior citizen has his or her own apartment with possibilities to have common meals and other services that are required in older age.

The Jewish community in Oslo owns a cottage just outside the city where youth from Norway and other Scandinavian countries come for summer camp. It is an important place where Jewish cultural and religious life is being taught and social gatherings are held. The cottage is also used for family gatherings and outdoor life.



The Oslo Synagogue. (Photo by Jono David)

*Hatikwa*, the publication of the Jewish communities, contains news from members and institutions and is issued three or four times a year. It is an important communicator between members, and shows the high level of activity in the community.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

After a decision in the Parliament in 1996, a committee was established to focus on the return of Jewish property confiscated during World War II. As a result, the government and parliament decided to settle this dark chapter in Norwegian history—morally and economically—and 400 million Norwegian kroner was given to the Jewish minority in Norway. This sum was divided among those who had suffered a loss because of anti-Jewish policy in Oslo and Trondheim. In addition, 40 million Norwegian kroner was put aside to establish the Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities. A further 60 million kroner went to a fund for education to support projects of memory and education about the lost Jewish culture in Europe. Norway was the first country that settled a restitution case, and the way it was done became the norm for other European countries afterward. There was a disagreement in the committee with the minority group, Berit Reisel and Bjarte Bruland from the Jewish Community, making their own report. The government followed the recommendations from the minority group.

In 2006, the Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities was opened, together with an exhibition of the Holocaust. The center is located at Quisling's former residence, Villa Grande in Oslo. In September 2008, a Jewish museum will open. This museum will display the history of the Jews in Norway and Jewish rituals and festivals. The Jewish museum is located in a former synagogue in Calmeyersgt in Oslo.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abrahamsen, Samuel. 1991. *Norway's Response to the Holocaust: An Historical Perspective*. New York: Holocaust Library.
- Barfold, Jorgen H. 1968. *Escape from Nazi Terror: A Short History of the Persecution of the Jews in Denmark and Norway and the Danish Underground Refugee Service*. Copenhagen: Forlaget for Faglitteratur.
- Eitinger, Leo. 1975. "Jewish Concentration Camp Survivors in Norway." *The Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines* 13 (4): 321–334.
- Elazar, Daniel Judah, Adina Weiss Liberles, and Simcha Werner. 1984. *The Jewish Communities of Scandinavia—Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland*. Jerusalem: University Press of America.

## Jews in Sweden

*Mikael Tossavainen*

---

General Population: 9,000,000

Jewish Population: About 17,000

Percent of Population: 0.2 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Approximately half of the Swedish Jews, some 5,000 people, live in the Stockholm region. Other major Jewish centers are Göteborg, 1,500 people, and Malmö, 1,000 people.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The first Jews who came to Sweden arrived from Germany in the 18th century. Later waves of immigration have largely come from Russia, Poland, and other areas in Eastern Europe.

**Languages Spoken:** Swedish and, to a certain extent, Polish and Yiddish among the older generation

---

## Historical Overview

pre-17th century There is no evidence of a Jewish presence in Sweden.

1645 Queen Christina consults the Jewish physician Baruch Nechemias (Benedictus de Castro). His visit to Sweden is the first documented time a Jew enters the country.

1681 At a grand ceremony attended by King Karl XI, his queen, and other high dignitaries, 12 Jews (4 adults and 8 children) are baptized in the German Church in Stockholm. At this time, Jews who arrive in Sweden and convert to Christianity are granted privileges.

1685 A new law stipulates that Jews who want to move to Sweden will have to become a Protestant Christian. Any Jews living in Sweden have to convert or leave.

1774 Aaron Isaac, a Jewish seal-maker and businessman from Mecklenburg, is the first Jew granted the right to settle in Sweden without renouncing his Jewish faith.

1775 In Stockholm, Aaron Isaac and coreligionists, whom he had invited to establish a minyan, found the first Jewish congregation in Sweden. A free port is established at Marstrand on the west coast, and Jews are allowed to settle there as well.

1779 Moses Salomon, Elias Magnus, and their families settle in Marstrand. In 1790, some 60 Jews live here, but when the free port is abolished, almost all of them move to Göteborg.

1780 David Abraham from Germany and his household become the first Jews who were granted the right to settle in Göteborg.

1780–1815 Jewish congregations are established in Göteborg, Norrköping, and Karlskrona.

1782 The status of the Jews in Sweden is formalized with the establishment of the so called Regulation of the Jews (*Judereglementet*). According to this legal document, the Jews are regarded as a colony of aliens granted the right to live in Sweden and largely autonomously conduct their own internal affairs. The regulation limits Jewish life in Sweden socially, economically, and politically. Jews are only allowed to marry other Jews, and to begin with they could only settle in Stockholm, Göteborg, and Norrköping. Most trades and crafts are off limits to Jews, and a Jew cannot hold a high-ranking political office, such as member of Parliament. As non-Christians, Jews are not allowed to testify in court, either.

- 1802 The first known synagogue opens in Göteborg, but it burns down the same year.
- 1808 A new synagogue with room for 150 worshippers opens in Göteborg, but it soon becomes insufficient.
- 1815 The status of the Jews is discussed in Parliament, and the Jews are accused of causing the economic crisis in Sweden at the time. Parliament decides to practically close the Swedish borders to Jewish immigration. Some 800 Jews live in Sweden.
- 1838 The Regulation of the Jews is abolished by King Karl XIV Johan. With that, most discriminatory administrative limitations regarding the approximately 900 Jews in Sweden are lifted. They are no longer considered alien residents, and are instead officially called "Swedes of the Mosaic faith."
- 1855 The present synagogue in Göteborg, which was built in accordance with plans by the German architect August Krüger, is consecrated. The synagogue has room for 300 worshippers.
- 1870 The Jews in Sweden are granted civil rights. Only minor limitations remain in place.
- 1870 The Great Synagogue in Stockholm is consecrated. The synagogue seats 900 people.
- December 2, 1871 The Jewish congregation in Malmö is founded and has 200 members.
- 1873 Aron Philipson and Moritz Rubenson become the first Jewish members of Parliament.
- 1880–1930 Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe increases, especially after bloody pogroms in Russia in 1895–1910. At the end of this period, some 7,000 Jews live in Sweden.
- 1903 The synagogue in Malmö opens.
- 1938 As a response to the increasing number of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, the Swedish government severely limits Jewish immigration to Sweden, effectively closing the borders to any Jew fleeing Germany.
- 1942 Almost half of the Norwegian Jews manage to escape to Sweden and are thus not deported to the death camps in Poland.
- 1943 During a few dramatic weeks after Rosh Hashanah, practically all 7,000 Jews in Denmark manage to escape to Sweden.
- 1945–1946 In the wake of World War II, some 10,000 survivors of the Holocaust arrive in Sweden. Of these, only about 3,000 stay in Sweden; most eventually continue on to other destinations, such as the United States and the State of Israel.
- 1951 The Swedish Parliament passes a law on the freedom of religion. Swedish citizens are no longer forced to belong to a religious congregation. As a consequence, the Jewish communities become voluntary organizations. Jews are now allowed to hold any political office, including cabinet minister. Only the position of head of state is still reserved for a member of the Church of Sweden.
- 1956–1972 Political turmoil behind the Iron Curtain in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), and Poland (1969) cause waves of Jewish emigration. Some 3,500 of these Jews arrive in Sweden.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The first Jews who settled in Sweden were often peddlers, minor businesspeople, or artisans active in one of the few fields that were not forbidden for Jews. Later, some Jews came to prosper as businesspeople and merchants. Jews such as Heyman Schück, Aron Levi, and Jacob Marcus played a role in developing the Swedish textile industry. Members of prominent merchant families, such as the Lamms, Josephsons, and the Sachses in Stockholm and the Mannheimers and Magnuses in Göteborg, have played an important part in the development of Swedish industrial and financial life. Modern banking was introduced in Sweden in cooperation with Theodor Mannheimer from Göteborg. Other important Jews in the financial sphere were Henrik Davidson, Herman Mannheimer, and Olof Aschberg.

Today, Jews can be found in most professional sectors, including blue-collar professions. However, Jews in Sweden are primarily occupied in those fields requiring an academic education or in the arts and media.

### Present Economic Conditions

Most Swedish Jews enjoy a comfortable middle-class socioeconomic position.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Several Swedish Jews have been well-known artists. The most notable are the symbolist painter Ernst Josephson (1851–1906), Eva Bonnier (1857–1909), Hanna Pauli (née Hirsch 1864–1940), and Isaac Grünewald (1889–1946).

Several Swedish Jews have been notable literary historians, including Henrik Schück (1855–1947) and Martin Lamm (1880–1950), who were members of the Swedish Academy that selects the Nobel Prize laureate in literature. Another well-known literary historian was Oscar Levertin (1862–1906), who was also an author and poet in his own right. Other Jewish authors in Sweden include Sophie Elkan (1853–1921) and Nobel Prize laureate Nelly Sachs (1891–1970), who fled to Sweden from her native Germany in 1940.

Composer Moses Pergament (1893–1977), historian Hugo Valentin (1888–1963), economist Eli Hecksher (1879–1952), and publisher Albert Bonnier (1820–1900) have also left their mark on Swedish cultural life. The Jews continue to contribute to Swedish cultural and academic life to this day, with many well-known authors, media personalities, and academics.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

In 1955, the Hillel School, a Jewish elementary school, was established in Stockholm. The junior high school Vasa Real offers special classes for Jewish pupils. Jewish education in Malmö and Göteborg takes place within the framework of evening classes, as there is no demographic basis for independent Jewish schools in these cities. Summer and winter camps are organized for the children from all three communities in Stockholm, Malmö, and Göteborg.

All three Jewish communities maintain community centers that offer a wide range of services and activities for the members, including day care, care for the elderly, and various religious services such as a mikvah, cultural activities, and sports. *Judisk krönika* is a bimonthly magazine dealing with Jewish topics, which is distributed to all members of the Jewish communities and is also available to the general public. There are two Jewish publishing houses, Megilla Förlaget and Hillel Förlaget.

Much like Swedes in general, Swedish Jews are quite secular. The older Jewish families with roots in Germany have either assimilated or belong to liberal congregations. Most members of the communities in Stockholm and Göteborg belong to Reform or Conservative (Masorti) congregations, although small Orthodox minyanim can be found in both these cities, as well. The Jewish community in Malmö is only Orthodox. Today, some 10 percent of the Swedish Jews are Orthodox, and they mainly descend from immigrants who came to Sweden from Eastern Europe at the turn of the 19th century. As opposed to the all-Orthodox community in Malmö, the Jewish communities in Göteborg and Stockholm are so-called unity communities, which means they have both Masorti and Orthodox members and minyanim. Recently, Habad has reached Sweden, and there is now a minute Habad presence in all three cities with a Jewish community in Sweden.

The Jewish communities are democratically structured, and officials are elected at assemblies open to all members. The most developed communal life can be found in Stockholm, which has the largest Jewish community in the country. Here, the community is divided into political parties that compete for the votes of the members at the general assemblies.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

Religiously motivated anti-Judaism has a long tradition in Sweden, as can be seen, for instance, in artwork in the cathedral in Uppsala from the 14th century. In the 19th century, secular, racially motivated anti-Semitism flourished in Sweden as it did in most European countries. Undoubtedly, anti-Semitism influenced the reluctance on the part of Swedish authorities to accept Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution before and during World War II.

After World War II, when Germany was defeated and the full horror of the Holocaust became evident, anti-Semitism lost its credibility and was banned to the political fringes. Still today, anti-Semitism is a taboo in Swedish mainstream society.

However, in the past decades, growing anti-Zionism in Sweden has created a climate where the line between criticism of the State of Israel and anti-Semitism is not always upheld. Another factor that has contributed to a rise in anti-Semitism in Swedish society is immigration from Arab and Muslim countries. Some of these immigrants or their descendants harbor anti-Jewish sentiments, which on occasion have led to attacks on Swedish Jews, most notably in the wake of the second Intifada.

With that said, neither anti-Semitism nor anti-Zionism constitute an existential threat to the Jews in Sweden. If anything threatens continued Jewish life in

Sweden, it is the negative demographic trends of an aging Jewish population and low birthrates, in combination with a high level of assimilation.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The Jewish community in Sweden has never been particularly large, and today it seems to be disappearing. As an example, the Jewish community in Stockholm has lost 20 percent of its members in the past few years, and the trend is similar in Göteborg and Malmö. The general decline in the number of Jews in Sweden is largely attributable to three factors. First, the rate of assimilation is high, as many nonobservant Jews see little reason for endogamy. Second, the Jewish community was traditionally reinforced by immigration from Eastern Europe, but after the Holocaust the Jewish communities there were wiped out. Third, religiously observant Jews tend to leave Sweden for places with a richer Jewish life, mainly by means of aliyah to Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bachner, Henrik. 1999. *Återkomsten. Antisemitism i Sverige efter 1945*. Stockholm: Natur och kultur.
- Broberg, Gunnar, Harald Runblom, and Mattias Tydén. 1988. *Judiskt liv i Norden*. Uppsala, Sweden: Centre for Multiethnic Research, Uppsala University.
- Fischer, David. 1996. *Judiskt liv. En undersökning bland medlemmar i Stockholms judiska församling*. Stockholm: Megilla-Förlaget.
- Jewish Community, Stockholm. <http://www.jf-stockholm.org> (accessed May 8, 2008).
- JUS [Jewish Youth Organization in Sweden]. <http://jusungdom.org> (accessed May 8, 2008).
- Lomfors, Ingrid. 1996. *Förlorad barndom—återvunnet liv. De judiska flyktingbarnen från Nazityskland*. Göteborg: Historiska institutionen, Göteborgs universitet.
- Sjögren, Karin. 1998. *Judisk åminnelse som speglad i tidskriften Judisk krönika 1948–1958*. Lund, Sweden: Historiska Media.
- Sjögren, Karin. 2001. *Judar i det svenska folkhemmet. Minne och identitet i Judisk krönika 1948–1958*. Eslöv: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion.
- Svensson, Anna. 1995. *Nöden. En shtetl i Lund*. Lund, Sweden: Gamla Lund.
- Ulvros, Eva-Helen. 2001. *Sophie Elkan. Hennes liv och vänskap med Selma Lagerlöf*. Lund, Sweden: Historiska Media.
- Valentin, Hugo. 2004. *Judarna i Sverige. Från 1774 till 1950-talet*. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.

# Caucasus and Central Asia

## Jews in the Caucasus

*Irena Vladimirsky*

---

**Countries:** Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan

**General Population:** Armenia, 3.2 million (census of 2003); Georgia, 4,661,473 (census of July 2006); Azerbaijan, 8,265,000 (census of 2004)

**Jewish Population:** 18,000–30,000

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Population of Jews by Country:** Armenia, about 1,000; Georgia, 10,000–20,000; Azerbaijan, 7,000–12,000 (among them 7,000 Mountain Jews)

**Languages spoken:** Dzhuhuri (Mountain Jews), Judeo-Georgian (Georgian Jews), Judeo-Persian (Azerbaijan Jews); nearly all speak Russian

---

### Early Jewish History of the Caucasus

The early history of the Jewish communities of the Caucasus is quite controversial and scattered among numerous historical sources and the oral traditions of the Georgian, Mountain, and Bukharian Jews. Historical sources link the arrival of Jews to the Caucasus and Central Asia with the exile of the ten tribes (720 BCE) or with the destruction of the First Temple (586 BCE). At least three different theories try to explain the arrival and spread of Jewish communities in the Caucasian mountains. According to the Scythian theory, which links the arrival of Jewry in the Caucasus with the steppe nomadic culture that came into existence in the fourth century BCE, Jews arrived in Scythia, the steppe region between the Black Sea and Altai Mountains, as prisoners of war from the Land of Israel. Jews were settled in permanent villages in the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in the years 635 to 610 BCE and became known as professional craftspeople and traders. According to the Caucasian theory, Jews arrived in the Caucasus region as a result of the defeat of the kingdom of Israel and the exile of its population. The Bosphorus theory seems to be on firmer ground. According to this theory, Jews first settled in the Greek colonies along the North shore of the Black Sea from the fourth century BCE to the first century BCE. Jews arrived and settled there from already extant Diasporas in Asia Minor.

Jewish communities lived and developed under three successive political regimes: the Greek Empire, from the fourth to first centuries BCE; the Roman Empire, first century BCE to fourth century CE; and the Byzantine Empire, fourth to seventh centuries CE. Pagan rule was quite conducive for economic consolidation of the Jewish communities, but the Christian period saw intensifying pressures on non-Christian minorities of Byzantium. Jews began to settle on the shores of the Black Sea and in the Caucasian Mountains as a result of the persecution of the Jews in Byzantium and the ensuing exodus, especially at the beginning of the fifth century.

About 60 Jewish tombstones were found in Phanagoria (Tmutarakan) on the Crimean peninsula. These showed that Jews were influenced by Hellenistic culture, spoke and read Greek, gave their children Greek names, and even prayed in Greek, but their tombstones bear Jewish symbols, such as seven-branch menorahs, shofars, and lulabs. Evidence was also found that Jewish communities enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy and had permanent contacts with the Babylonian Jewish community and the Land of Israel.

From the fifth to the seventh centuries CE, Jewish communities of the Caucasus were strengthened by the immigration of Jews from Asia via Persia. This evidence is supported by Armenian and Georgian chronicles, although the numbers are uncertain.

### Khazarian Empire

The Khazars were a Turkic people who originated in Central Asia. In the beginning, the Khazars believed in Tengri shamanism, spoke Turk languages, and were nomadic. Later they adopted Judaism, Islam, and Christianity; spoke Turk, Hebrew, and Slavic languages; and became settled in cities and towns throughout the north Caucasus and Ukraine. The Khazars had a great history of ethnic independence extending approximately from the 5th to the 13th centuries CE. At its maximum extent, the Khazarian Empire included the geographic regions of southern Russia, the northern Caucasus, eastern Ukraine, the Crimea, western Kazakhstan, and northwestern Uzbekistan.

According to most historical sources, Judaism was widespread among the Khazar inhabitants of the Khazarian Empire. The 10th-century Persian historian and geographer Ibn al-Faqih al-Hanadhani, in his book *Mukhtasar Kitab al Buldan* (Concise Book of Lands), described Khazarian Jews as faithful Jews who took upon themselves the difficult obligations enjoined by the law of the Torah, such as circumcision, the ritual ablutions, the prohibition of work on the Sabbath, and the prohibition of eating the flesh of forbidden animals during feasts. The Khazars wrote Hebrew letters. Khazaria was regarded as the country of Jews in Russian folk literature and even some Alan people, the southern neighbors of the Khazars, also adopted Judaism.

On Khazarian tombstones, Jewish and Turkic tribe symbols (*tamgas*) can be seen side by side. Many of these tombstones date from the eighth and ninth centuries. Khazarian tombstones on the Crimean peninsula depict shofar, menorah, and the staff of Aaron as well as Turkic tribe symbols. In 2002, a coin from the Viking Spilling Hoard of Gotland, Sweden, was identified as a Khazarian coin from its marks and the inscription, "Moses is the messenger of G-d." Khazarian coins in general were imitations of Arabic coin of the same period, only with inscriptions in Hebrew.

The first Khazar capital was Balanjar. During the 720s, the Khazars transferred their capital to Semender, a coastal city in the north Caucasus noted for its beautiful gardens and vineyards. In 750, the capital was moved again, this time to the city of Itil on the edge of the Volga River.

Jews came to Khazaria from modern-day Uzbekistan, Armenia, Hungary, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and numerous other places. By the 10th century, the Khazars wrote in

Hebrew letters, and major Khazar documents from that period were written in Hebrew. Omelijan Pritsak, a well-known researcher of Khazarian history, estimated that there were as many as 30,000 Jews in Khazaria by the 10th century. During the 10th and early 11th centuries, the young Russian kingdom inherited most of the former Khazar lands. Despite the loss of their nation, the Khazar people did not disappear; some of them migrated to the northern Caucasus or westward into Hungary, Romania, and Poland.

## Mountain Jews

Mountain Jews, or Tats, are one of the biggest Jewish communities of the Caucasus. According to the population census of 1992, more than 11,000 Mountain Jews live in the territory of Azerbaijan. Mountain Jews speak Dzhuhuri, a Farsi dialect with a heavy mixture of Hebrew. The community of Mountain Jews was organized as a result of constant migration from Northern Iran to the Caucasian region, as well as migration from Byzantium and the remnants of Khazarian Jews.

In 1254, Flemish Franciscan missionary and explorer William of Rubruck (1220–1299) mentioned large number of Jews in the entire eastern Caucasus region and their constant trade connections with the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean. Muslim historian Ibn Tagriberdi (1409–1470) mentioned the Jews from Cherkessia who frequently visited Cairo, traded with local merchants, and bought Jewish saint books. For example, in the Caucasian city of Kuba Jewish religious books were found that were printed in Venice at the end of 16th or beginning of the 17th centuries. Dutch geographer and traveler Nicolaas Witsen (1641–1717) visited Dagestan in 1690 and found flourishing Jewish communities, the biggest of which were in Buinak village and the Karakaitag region, where more than 15,000 Jews lived. He mentioned numerous Jewish communities north of present-day Azerbaijan and south of Dagestan between the cities of Kuba and Derbent. One of the valleys near Derbent was known as Dzuhud Kata—the Jewish valley—and was populated mostly by Jews. Ava Sava, one of the biggest villages of the valley, was known as the cultural and spiritual center for all the communities of Mountain Jews. Widely known are several piyyutim written by poet Elisha ben Shmuel in 1684.

Beginning in the second half of the 18th century, the status of Mountain Jews changed. In 1730, Persian ruler Nadir Shah sent punitive expeditions to Jewish villages; numerous villages were destroyed and their population murdered or converted to Islam, while the Jewish population of the remaining villages fled to the protection of more tolerant rulers. At the beginning of the 19th century, the eastern Caucasus came under Russian rule. Annexation of the eastern Caucasus did not lead to an immediate change in the status of the Mountain Jews. Only after 1840 did the heads of the Mountain Jewish communities write a petition in Hebrew to the Russian ruler Nicholas, the first with a request to restore and consolidate Jewish communities of the Caucasus and protect them from the constant threat of Muslim neighbors. In the 1840s, 7,649 Mountain Jews became subjects of the Russian empire; 58.3 percent (4,459 persons) were village residents and 41.7 percent (3,190 persons) were city dwellers. The Mountain Jews used to be agriculturists and grew

such crops as tobacco, grains, and marena grass. Later, Mountain Jews got involved in businesses as tanners, jewelers, rug weavers, leatherworkers, and weapon makers. The Jewish families of Chanukaev and Dadashev became the first Mountain Jewish entrepreneurs and established the wine industry and fish industry of Dagestan.

Communities of Mountain Jews consisted of two or three big families, each of which consisted of three or four generations and counted 70 or more family members. One big family lived in a separate district and every subfamily had a separate house. Polygamy was widespread among the Mountain Jews; a man was allowed to have two or three wives, and every wife had her own part in a common house and was responsible for a certain number of common family duties. The population of Jewish villages consisted of three to five large families; the head of the community was elected from among the most respectable and numerous Jewish families. In cities, Jews also lived in separate districts or suburbs.

Beginning in the 1860s, Jews began to settle in cities where they had never lived before (Baku, Temir-Shan) and new cities founded under Russian authority (Petrovsk, Nalchik, Grozny). In the same decade, Ashkenazi Jews began to settle in the Caucasus after permission was granted for Jews of the Russian Empire to settle beyond the Pale of Settlement. At the beginning of the 20th century, schools opened in Baku, Debent, and Kuba where secular and religious disciplines were taught together. Both Ashkenazi and Mountain Jews studied in these schools.

### Mountain Jews in the Soviet Era

The Jews of the Caucasus supported the rise of Bolshevik power. The National Hebrew Council of Azerbaijan was established at Baku People's Jewish University in 1919; the university was headed by socialists-Zionists and published the first Jewish Zionist periodical in the Dzhuhuri dialect, *Tobushi Sabakhi* (Sunrise). Strengthening Soviet power and its religious intolerance led Mountain Jews to start emigrating to the Land of Israel. During the 1920s, about 300 large Mountain Jewish families left for Israel. Those who remained in the Caucasus were involved in social and economic reconstruction; Jewish collective farms and state farms were organized all over the Caucasus.

In 1929–1930, the Dzhuhuri dialect was transliterated from Hebrew to Latin script, and in 1938 into Cyrillic script. In 1934, in Derbent, a literature section of the Mountain Jews was organized, and in 1936, it was transformed into the Tats section of the Union of the Soviet Writers of Dagestan. In 1935, in Derbent, the first professional theatre of the Mountain Jews was opened, and in 1934, the first professional dancing group.

During World War II, the Caucasus were occupied by Nazi troops. In cities with a mixed Jewish population (Ashkenazi and Mountain Jews), such as Kislovodsk and Pyatigorsk, all the Jews were killed; in regions with homogenous Mountain Jewish populations, Jews survived, perhaps because the Germans were ignorant of the existence of Jewish communities that differed dramatically from Jewish communities in Europe.

From the late 1940s until Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet authorities undertook a wide anti-Semitic campaign. In 1948–1953 all the schools of Mountain Jews were transformed into ordinary Russian-language schools and the teaching of the Jewish-Tats language was strictly forbidden. In the village of Krasnaya Sloboda, which was inhabited exclusively by Jews, only 1 of the 11 prewar synagogues was still active.

After 1996, it was decided to rebuild two synagogues in Krasnaya Sloboda and restore the ritual mikah. The Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan gave permission to teach Hebrew as a second language in secondary schools of the village. A yeshiva for Mountain Jews was also opened in the village.

At present, three Jewish monthly periodicals are published in Baku. In 2001, a seminar, *Mountain Jews: Customs and Daily Life in the Caucasus*, was held at the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. In the same year, the Republican Art Museum and Republican Museum of History held two exhibitions: *The Jews of Azerbaijan*, and *190 Years of the Settlement of the Ashkenazi Jews in Azerbaijan*.

### Selected Bibliography

- Christian, David. 1998. *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kolarz, Walter. 1952. *Russia and Her Colonies*. New York: F. A. Praeger.
- Mikdash-Shamailov, Liya. 2003. *Mountain Jews: Customs and Daily Life in the Caucasus*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- "The Mountain Jews." In *The Red Book of the Peoples of the Russian Empire*, edited by Andrew Humphreys and Krista Mits. Institute of the Estonian Language Web site. [http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/mountain\\_jews.shtml](http://www.eki.ee/books/redbook/mountain_jews.shtml) (accessed May 14, 2007).
- Pincus, Benjamin. 1988. *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wigoder, Geoffrey. 1994. "Events 1982–1992." In *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

## Jews in Khazaria

*Dan D. Y. Shapira*

---

The Khazars, leaders of a tribal confederation in Eastern Europe that lasted from the mid-seventh century until the late 10th century, joined the Jewish world when some of them converted to Judaism. The territories controlled by the Khazars stretched from the Dnieper River in Ukraine to the northern slopes of the Caucasus, then to the Caspian shores and northward to the Ural River in Kazakhstan and Russia. The Khazars were fierce opponents of the Muslim Arabs and resisted their advance into the Caucasus. Khazaria included different ethnic and religious groups: various Turkic tribes (with the ethnic Khazars being just one of them), Iranian, Slavic, Greek-speaking, Finnic, Ugrian, and Caucasian tribes; adherents of different traditional beliefs (i.e., pagans), Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

The original Jewish populations in Khazaria were found in two regions: (1) in the cities of the Taman Peninsula in Southern Russia (e.g., Panticapea and Samkerch al-Yahūd, where Jews had lived since Hellenistic times) and on the opposite shore of the Kerch Straits in the Crimea; and (2) on the western shore of the Caspian (nowadays Dagestan), where Jews from Iran resettled. By the eighth century, Jewish merchants who operated on the northern segment of the Silk Road became the third Jewish group in Khazaria. These merchants, known sometimes as Radhanites, worked from the Danube to Western Siberia, and it is possible that some of them arrived as far east as Western China (Khotan). Their probable role in Judaizing the Khazar royal house finds parallels in the role played by the Sogdian traders among the Eastern Turks, who were converted by these Sogdians to Nestorian Christianity, Manichaeism, and Buddhism.

The exact date of the Khazar conversion is in dispute. Some scholars, including J. Marquart, G. Vernadsky, and C. Zuckerman, used to argue for a conversion date in the 860s. Now there is an indication of an earlier spread of Judaism in Khazaria: in 2002, a coin from the Viking Spillings Hoard of Gotland, Sweden, was identified as having been minted by Jewish Khazars. The coin is an imitation of Arabic coinage and contains the fictitious mintmark "Madīnat as-Salām 779–880." Numismatists conclude that it was actually minted in 837 or 838 in Khazaria. This series of Khazar dirhams bears the Arabic inscription *la Ilāha illā-LLāh wa Mūsā rasūlu ALLāh* (There is no god but Allah, and Moses is the Messenger of Allah). Authentic Arabic dirhams had *Muhammada* instead of *Mūsā*. By substituting Moses in place of Muhammad, the coins proclaimed the Biblical identity of the Khazars. However, an analogy with 12th-century Polish coins bearing inscriptions in Hebrew may suggest that the fact that the coins bore Jewish inscriptions tells only the identity of the minters, not necessarily that of the rulers.

The Arabic-language author al-Mas'ūdī, who wrote between 943 and 947, indicated that in the Khazar capital live "Muslims, Christians, Jews, and pagans; the Jews are the king, his attendants, and the Khazars of his [the king's] kind. The king of the Khazars had already become a Jew in the Khalifate of Hārūn al-Rashīd" (*Muruj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'adin al-Jawahir*). He immediately contradicts himself about the eteo-Khazar identity of the Jews, adding that since 943–944, when he began his book, Jews fled to Khazaria from Byzantium as the result of a forced conversion to Christianity by Romanus Lecapenus; al-Mas'ūdī also adds examples of earlier waves of Jewish immigration to Khazaria from the lands of Islam. A similar picture of Jewish immigration is also found in the Jewish-Khazar correspondence of the period, where Babylonia, Byzantium, and Khorāsān are specifically mentioned.

The date of the conversion to Judaism as given in al-Mas'ūdī has been explained differently by scholars. For example, al-Dimashqī (ca. 1327) combines the information from al-Mas'ūdī about the anti-Jewish Byzantine emperor and Hārūn al-Rashīd, but ascribes his source to Ibn al-Athīr, who lived from 1160 to 1234. He says the Jews expelled from Byzantium found in Khazaria an intelligent simpleton people (*qaum 'uqalā' sādijīn*), and the Jews offered the Khazars their religion, which the latter found better than their own and accepted. Marquart demonstrated that no

such passage is found in Ibn al-Athīr and that al-Mas'ūdī was meant (Marquart 1903, 6).

According to al-Bakrī (ca. 1094), the king of the Khazar had been a pagan, then accepted Christianity; however, having doubts about this faith, he consulted his adviser, who suggested a debate between representative scholars of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The Jews beat the Christian bishop and hired someone to poison the Muslim, and so he won and the Khazar king became a Jew. This account has no parallels in other Islamic texts, and it does not mention a previous Khazar conversion to Islam in 737, but the tradition about a religious disputation and the role of a close adviser of the Khazar ruler has exact correspondences in Hebrew accounts of the event.

Istakhri, writing circa 932 and owing much to a lost account by Balkhī, said the Khazar king, called in their language *bak* and *bāk*, is a Jew, as is his court; the Khazars are Muslims, Christians, Jews, and idolaters, but the Jews are the smallest group. Ibn al-Faqīh wrote, circa 903, that “the Khazars are all Jews and have recently become so.” Though admitting that the Khazar supreme ruler and his *i[x]shā[d]* and their entourage are Jewish, the Persian authors Ibn Rusta (writing ca. 903) and Gardīzī (writing ca. 1050)—basing their information on the lost text of al-Jayhānī, who in turn owed much to al-Jarmī (ca. 846)—noted that Khazar paganism was similar to the religion of the Türks (Gardīzī even specifically mentioned the Oğuz).

Different versions of the conversion are found in the so-called Hebrew-Khazar correspondence, which took place circa 960 and consists of four documents:

1. The letter by Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, the Jewish majordomo of the Omayyad Khalifa of Cordoba 'Abd al-Rahmān III (912–961), penned by Menahem ben Sārūq, to the Khazar ruler Joseph.
2. The short recension (SR) of the reply of the Khazar ruler Joseph to Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, together with Ibn Shaprut's letter in a 16th century copy kept in Oxford, England; the text is extremely close or even identical to the Constantinople *editio princeps* by Yitzhaq Aqrish (*Qôl Mebhassêr* 1577).
3. The long recension (LR) of the reply of the Khazar king (not Qağan!) Joseph to Hasdai Ibn Shaprut; this is not an autograph, but a 13th-century copy, containing many errors in transcription, especially in non-Hebrew names.
4. The Schechter (or Cambridge) document, a copy from the 12th century, found in the Cairo Genizah, which is a letter by a Khazar Jew, probably written to the same Ibn Shaprut. The original is dated circa 954. Dunlop made a plausible suggestion that it was written in Constantinople by a Khazar Jew and handed to Yitzhaq bar Nâthân, the envoy of Ibn Shaprut, before Ibn Shaprut wrote his letter to Joseph (Dunlop 1954, 156–157).

The latter three texts are official (LR and SR) or semiofficial (Schechter document), written by Khazar Jews to a high-ranking coreligionist in Spain, with the aim to tell world Jewry the story of the Khazar conversion from the local Jewish point of view. As such, these documents are tendentious; moreover, they demonstrate that there was more than one “Jewish” version of the events. The chronologically first version, that of the Schechter document, seems to represent a rather

nonsophisticated version current among the ordinary Khazar Jews, whether “ethnic” or deeply Judaized. Another version, that of the LR (and the SR as it is based on the LR), represents a complicated royal version with the aim of distorting or putting into oblivion certain aspects of the Khazar conversion, while highlighting others.

It should be borne in mind that Rabbinite Judaism allows conversion. In the long historical perspective, it seems unwise to speak of “ethnic Jews” versus “proselytes,” but rather of “Old Jews” versus “New Jews.” The Khazars were not the only alien people or leadership to adopt Judaism—they were preceded by the Edomites, the Ituraeans, the Scytho-Kurdic people of Adiabene, the Yemeni Himyarites, and others.

The Khazar conversion to an exotic, stateless religion like Judaism was by no means unique among Eurasian peoples. Parallels may be found in the adoption of Syriac Nestorian Christianity by Mongols and Eastern Turks and of Manichaeism by Uigurs, not to mention the spread of Buddhism among Eastern Turks and later, among Mongols.

According to the popular Jewish version of the Schechter document, many Jews were scattered among the Khazars from the old days, becoming deeply assimilated and having no Torah; there was no king (*mlk* = *melekh*) in Khazaria, but occasionally chieftains successful at war were appointed to be field commanders, thus resembling the system prevalent in Israel in the time of the Judges. According to their ancient custom, a victorious, though ignorant, Jew once became just such a military leader. He returned to Judaism influenced by his Jewish wife, who bore the name of an important biblical heroine, Sarah. Afterward, “this Jewish big chieftain,” having been pressed by the Muslims and the Byzantines, organized a religious disputation, and at a moment of difficulty, the Khazar nobles sought Jewish books that were stored in a cave, certainly reflecting the memory of an old Turkic tradition (with this motif reflected even in Yehudah Halevi’s *Kuzari*). Obviously, the books they found proved the veracity of the Jewish faith.

The Schechter document presents a rumored Hebraic genealogy for the Khazars: “they say in our country that our ancestors were from the tribe of Shimon, but we are unaware of the accuracy of this matter.” Shimon was chosen by the Khazars as their ancestor for two different reasons: first, this tribe, together with Levi, was said to be dispersed in Israel (Genesis 49.7); second, in the days of King Yehizqiyahu of Judaea, some Shimonites left their country (1 Chronicles 4:42–43), going to Mt. Seir—which is mentioned in Ibn Shaprut’s letter as the place where the Khazars live.

It seems certain that the Schechter document, with its account of the cave, was seen by Ibn Shaprut, who wrote to Joseph: “there was an anti-Jewish persecution ordered and the Mesopotamian army rose angrily”—a clear reference to the wording in the corrupt opening of the Schechter document (“Armenia, and [our] fathers fled before them [. . .] for they were unable to bear the yoke of idol-worshippers”). Ibn Shaprut continues to retell to Joseph the contents of the Schechter document: “and they hid the books of the Torah and the Scripture inside a cave, and this is the reason why they pray inside the cave, and on account of the books they

taught their sons to pray inside the cave every evening and morning, and after the passage of many years they forgot the story of the cave and the reason why they pray inside it, but they kept their ancestral custom, without knowing its origin, until there arose a Jewish man who wished to learn the reason for this, and he entered the cave and found it full of books.” This tradition was also known to Judah Halevi.

Then, this heretofore unnamed Jewish military leader and promoter of Judaism had his name changed to Sabriel and was made king (*mlk*) over them. Before Sabriel was crowned, another reform took place, namely that “the men of the land appointed over them one of the sages as judge; they call him in the language of Khazar *kgn*; for this reason the name given to the judges who arose after him has been *kgn* until this day.” It is obvious that this text was written from the point of view of the descendants of Sabriel, particularly the vizier or *bek/mlk*, who claimed for himself a Jewish progeny. The *bek/mlk* was trying to convince his readers that the office of the *qağan* owes its origin to the religious disputation, organized, according to him, by the *bek*, then merely a military commander. However, the author slipped when he stated that *qağan* means “judge,” for this harkens back to the days of their “ancient custom”; the word *shôphêt* must be translated not as merely “judge,” in its modern English usage, but as a biblicism. What the author of the Schechter document meant is that the *shôphêt*, that is, *qağan*, holds an ancient—and obsolete—office overshadowed by the rulers of Sabriel’s dynasty. This is similar to what happened when the biblical judges were swept by the kings. It was the conversion itself that enabled the *bek/mlk* to boost his own office at the expense of that of the *qağan*. A political system thus emerged that is sometimes dubbed, quite adequately, *shogunate*, which perhaps represents the same model of rule as exercised by the Qipçâq Mameluks in Fatimid Egypt, with powerful sultans and weak caliphs. Remarkably, what is absent from the version of the Schechter document is the motif of the dream, in which God revealed himself to the Khazar ruler through an angel.

Another, more developed, tradition appears in the letter of the Khazar ruler Joseph. Joseph himself relates that there was one monotheistic king (*mlk*) called Bwl’n, under whose rule what was probably seen as the second giving of the Torah took place. This still non-Jewish ruler was dubbed king—thus contradicting the version of the Schechter document. An angel revealed himself in a series of dreams to Bwl’n, saying to him, “I saw your conduct and I was satisfied with your deeds,” the statement quoted—in Arabic—much later, in somewhat different wording, by Yehudah Halevi, who certainly was aware of this tradition (and, possibly, of the text under consideration).

This form of direct revelation of God to a man is common in many traditions, including the Jewish one, and there are numerous Central Asian examples of a divine being revealing itself to a ruler in a dream, but here Bwl’n asked the angel to reveal itself to “a certain chieftain of theirs,” who was probably the *qağan*. The angel did as asked, and the Khazars accepted Judaism. The Khazars hardly saw any difference between their ancient *Tengri*, invisible and unique god of Heaven, who allots kings their destinies, and the God of Israel. Three points should be noted here:

1. Bwl'n is called *mlk* (king), which is the same term used in the Schechter document to characterize Sabriel, leaving no doubt that Bwl'n and Sabriel were the same person;
2. In parallel Turkic dream-inspired conversion stories, the dream appears first to the supreme ruler, and *later* to his vizier, and a religious disputation follows, as was the case, for example, with the conversion of the Uigurs, sandwiched between Buddhist China and the caliphate, to Manichaeism;
3. Joseph did not claim Jewish ancestry and did not try to make his ancestor Bwl'n—who bore a Turkic name—an ethnic Jew, whereas the author of the Schechter document positioned his circumcised Sabriel, with his Hebrew name, as a Jewish (but heavily assimilated) Jew.

This means the author of the letter of Joseph ascribed to Joseph's ancestor the dream of the *qağan*, something the author of the Schechter document—written only a couple of years earlier—was still unable, probably being too frightened or ashamed, to do, for this reason skipping the dream story altogether.

According to some scholars, Bwl'n acquired his name from the Turkic word *bulan*, meaning “elk.” However, it may be the case that the names Bwl'n and Sabriel are actually synonymous. The unusual name Sabriel, formed from the root meaning “to think, hope, believe, find out, understand,” is unattested in other Jewish sources as a man's name, but is probably a translation of the Oğuz Turkic *bulan*, “one who finds out,” or *bilen*, “one who knows.” The name may have been selected to reference the man's desire to learn why people prayed in the cave and to discover religious truths.

Within the dream, God promised Bwl'n that his descendants will rule for 1,000 generations. This expression finds exact parallels in Turkic royal parlance. According to Joseph, his dynasty owes its royal status to the natural order of things, in accordance with traditional steppe peoples' views on sacred royalty. He also wrote that God sent Bwl'n to plunder the lands of the caliphate, and this war apparently was destined to prove the validity of the revelation and the new religion. Next, God told Bwl'n to build a house for him so he may dwell in it, and articles that had been used in the tabernacle or in the Jerusalem Temple were prepared. It was only then that the religious disputation followed. Remarkably, Joseph's letter does not mention the cave. It is clear that this report about the construction of the sacred objects is a pious legend, whose purpose is to trace the origin of the office of the *bek/mlk* to the period before the religious disputation under the *qağan*, thus establishing the leading role of the *bek/mlk* in the process of Judaization. This construction of the articles that the children of Israel had built in the wilderness runs against everything that Orthodox Judaism, whether Rabbinate or Karaite, stands for, and this activity was seen by some scholars as reflecting an early, “primitive” or “stoichaic” stage of the Khazar conversion to what some dubbed as “pure Biblical Mosaism.” The tradition about the natural, stoichaic stage of the Khazar Judaism may have been coined to present the older Turkic *Tengri*-religion as a certain form of, if not Judaism, at least monotheism, so as to describe the passage to proper Judaism as having been smoother than it actually was.

Joseph emphasized his Rabbinite affiliation. This is evident not only from the very fact of the correspondence with the Rabbinite Jew from Spain, but also from his short quotation from the *ʿAmidâh* (including *môdîm de-Rabbânân*) and Kaddish, from his posing himself as “the wise man who loves sages,” from the quote from the Rabbinite *Haggâdâh shel Pésakh*, from the explicit statement that the Khazar ruler “brought in sages of Israel from different places and they explicated for him the Torah and arranged for him [the way of fulfillment of] the commandments / . . . he gathered in the sages of Israel . . . and they explicated for him the 24 books [of the Tanakh] and Mishnah and Talmud and the prayer books of the *hazzâns*,” from the reference to the yeshivas of Jerusalem and Babylonia as the sources of religious authority for the Khazar Jews, and finally, from the mere mention of the festival of Hanukkah.

Khazaria was destroyed in the 960s by attacks of the Rus’ and the Turkic Oğuz tribes. It seems that most of the Jews of Khazaria thereafter accepted Islam. Those who did not, emigrated—some of them to Byzantium, others to Spain—with those Jews they had been in contact with previously. There are theories finding Khazar descendents among different Jewish subgroups, especially Jews of Hungary, and the Ashkenazim and Karaites of Eastern Europe, but they all lack proof.

About 1180, Rabbi Petahiah of Regensburg traveled through Europe and the Middle East. While in Baghdad, R. Petahiah mentioned that an embassy arrived, sent by the seven kings of the land of Meshech. Their envoys said that their seven kings had seen an angel in their dreams. The angel urged the kings to accept Judaism, and this was what the kings did, sending this embassy to the heads of the Babylonian yeshiva and asking for spiritual guidance. The poor Jews of Babylonia began to immigrate to the land of Meshech, seeking employment as teachers and so on. The story told by R. Petahiah is basically the same as described in Judah Halevi’s *Kuzari*, the *Jewish-Khazar Correspondence*, and other related sources. Although the *Kuzari* was published several decades before his journey, R. Petahiah and his editor, R. Yehudah Hasid of Germany, seem to be ignorant of the story of the Khazar conversion as told by Yehudah Halevi.

Petahiah’s account has elements that differ from the other sources: Petahiah has seven kings, not one; the angel speaks unequivocally about Judaism, and not about trying to find the right path by the dreamer himself; and the land of the conversion is called “Meshech.” Meshech is an old code name for a distant wild country in the north, beyond the Caucasus. The name goes back to Ezekiel, who mentions Meshech together with Rosh, Gog, and Magog. In the much later time, Jews came to associate “Rosh Meshech” with Muscovite Russia, because of euphony. However, it is obvious that Petahiah was referring to the Khazar conversion. It is significant, for instance, that both Petahiah and Joseph refer to a request for Jewish sages to come to the land of conversion.

R. Benjamin of Tudela, writing a decade before R. Petahiah, tells that among the Jewish communities under the jurisdiction of the Babylonian Exilarch are those of Babylonia; Sinear; Persia; Khorasan; Seba or Yemen; Diyar-Bakr; Kuth, which is the land of the Mountains of Ararat; Alania, encircled by mountains on all sides except the passage of the Iron Gate made by Alexander the Great; and the land of

Syrkih (Benjamin of Tudela 1987, 100–101). Syrkih can probably be reconstructed as Ksryh and would thus seem to be a reference to Khazaria.

### Selected Bibliography

- Benjamin of Tudela. 1987. *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages*. Translated from the Hebrew by Marcus N. Adler. Malibu, CA: Joseph Simon/Pangloss Press.
- Brook, Kevin A. 2006. *The Jews of Khazaria*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Dunlop, D. M. 1954. *The History of the Jewish Khazars*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Golb, Norman, and Omeljan Pritsak. 1982. *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- HaLevi, Yehuda. 1998. *The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith*. Translated from the Hebrew by N. Daniel Korobkin. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.
- Kovalev, Roman K. 2005. "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins: The Special Issue Dirhams of 837/8." In *East Central Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, edited by Florin Curta, 220–253. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Marquart, Joseph. 1903. *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge. Ethnologische und historisch-topographische Studien zur Geschichte des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts (ca. 840–940)* [East European and East Asian Wanderings. Ethnological and Historico-Topographic Studies on the History of the 9th and 10th Centuries (ca. 840–940)]. Leipzig, Germany: Dieterich.

## Jews in Armenia

*Irena Vladimirska*

---

**General Population:** 3,330,000

**Jewish Population:** Estimates range from 500 to 1,000

**Population by City:** The Jewish population is concentrated in the cities of Yerevan, Vanadzor, Echmiadzin, Sevan, and Guimri.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Background:** Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities; the Ashkenazi Jewish community of Armenia began to grow when eastern Armenia was unified with the Russian Empire in 1828. There is a small Karaite community as well.

**Language Spoken:** Nearly all speak Russian.

---

### Historical Overview

**5th century BCE** The first mention of the existence of Jews on the territory of Armenia is found in *History of Armenia* written by Movses Xorenac'i

**1st century BCE** Armenian king Tigran II (95–56 BC), also known as Tigran the Great, takes many captives from among the Jews of Judea. These Jews are forced to migrate to Armenian cities, where they turn them into flourishing economic centers.

**1st century CE** A small community of Karaims is removed to Armenia from Assyria and Babylonia. The Karaims, a Jewish minority who accept only Torah teaching and do not accept the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, are the followers of

- Rabbi Aman, who opposed the Talmudists in Syria. The greater Jewish community in the Caucasus does not recognize the Karaims as Jews; thus, the Karaims do not suffer expulsions experienced by rest of the Jews in the Caucasus.
- 4th century Armenian Jews are exiled to Syria and Iran by Sasanian invaders. Jews are expelled from the Armenian cities of Nakhichevan, Van, and Yervandashat, which have populations consisting mostly of Jews.
- 1170 Benjamin of Tudela mentions numerous Jewish communities on the territories of Armenia and Kurdistan.
- 12th–17th centuries During the Middle Ages, the territory of Armenia is divided among several rival principalities and foreign invaders. Oral Armenian history describes the history of the medieval Armenian dynasties of Bagratuni, Amatuni, and Mamikonian as being Jewish in origin. In 2000–2001, an archaeological expedition of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem discovers a Jewish cemetery, with more than 40 tombstones dating back to the 13th century, in the city of Eghegis located in the region of Vayots Dzor, south and west of Yerevan. Sixteen tombstones have Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions and provide information on community status and occupation of the deceased. The Jewish community in Eghegis exists for a period of 230 years; even the local church is built on the land bought from the community. Members of the community speak Judeo-Persian language and later move to the territory of Azerbaijan.
- 1813 After the Gulistan peace treaty is signed, the region of Karabakh, with its small communities of Mountain Jews (Tats), becomes part of the Russian Empire.
- 1828 The Turkmanchai peace treaty makes Yerevan, Nakhichevan, and the Erivan khanate an integral part of the Russian Empire. In the Erivan khanate, there are 1,032 Jews and 13 Karaims.
- 1877–1878 As a result of the Balcanian war, the Ottoman Empire gives Russia the territory of northern Armenia, which is returned to Turkey in 1921. The number of Jews in this territory reaches 1,204 persons.
- 1890s–1910s In Armenia, Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities exist side by side. Up to 1924, the Sephardic synagogue Shiek Mordechai in Yerevan is the center of communal Jewish life.
- 1941–1950s During and after World War II, hundreds of displaced Jews move to Armenia, which remains in Soviet hands throughout the war. The Jewish population of Armenia grows to approximately 5,000 persons.
- 1959 In the first postwar population census in the Soviet Union, the Jewish population of Armenia reaches its peak at 10,000 persons.
- 1965–1972 As a result of the Communist Party's call to help the industrial and agricultural development of Caucasian republics, a new wave of Jews arrives in Armenia. Most of the new Jewish migrants arrive from Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Russian Federation. They are mainly engineers, career soldiers and members of the intelligentsia. At the same time, numerous Jews leave for the United States, France, and Israel.
- 1970 The new population census in the Soviet Union shows 1,048 Jews in Yerevan alone, among them 570 women and 478 men; practically all are married to non-Jews.

- 1989 The last all Soviet Union population census shows that the number of Jews in Armenia numbers around 3,000 persons, among them 1,000 Jews in Yerevan.
- 1990 The Society of Jewish-Armenian friendship, Arev, is established in Yerevan.
- 1991 The Independent Armenian Republic is proclaimed. Jews from Karabakh, a zone of military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, move elsewhere in Armenia.
- 1991 The Armenian Jewish community is officially registered as a nongovernmental organization and is recognized and protected in the constitution of the independent Armenian Republic.
- 1991 The Jewish Sunday school Torah Or opens in Yerevan.
- 1992 The first evening yeshiva opens in Yerevan.
- 1995 The Chabad House is established in Yerevan. Rabbi Gershom Meir Berstein becomes the head of the Jewish community of Yerevan. The Chabad House provides free meals, offers classes in Hebrew and Jewish tradition, and cares for community elderly.
- 1997 The Jewish weekly *Kohélet* begins publication and is distributed in Yerevan, Sevan, Vanadzor, and Guimri.
- 1999 The People's University of the Jewish Culture of Armenia opens in Yerevan. The university has 500 students in the different cities of Armenia and every month gives two to three lectures devoted to Jewish culture and traditions.
- 1999 A synagogue opens in Yerevan.
- 2002 Rimma Varzhapetian becomes president of the Jewish community of Armenia.
- February 2002 Roman Yepiskoposian publishes an anti-Semitic book. The media and local officials initiate a boycott of the Holocaust memorial.
- 2003 In Yerevan, the state Armenian television channel translates a 20-minute weekly program on culture, tradition, politics, and the economy in Israel.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

In Armenia, representatives of the Sephardic community were traditionally involved in trade and handicrafts. Ashkenazi Jews played an important role in the development of the culture and industry of the republic during the 1930s–1960s.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Jews played an important role in establishing and developing cultural, educational, and medical services in Armenia. During the 1930s, poet and literary critic Osip Mandelshtan lived in Armenia for a short period, as well as writer and literary critic Vasily Grossman and literary critic Yurii Karabichevsky, who wrote about the historical fate of the Jewish and Armenian people. Amatoly Frimerman was a distinguished construction engineer in Armenia; the city of Spitak was his project. His son and grandson became well-known journalists in Armenia. For years, Yosif Kozliner was artistic director of the Yerevan Russian theater; his wife, Polina Shaposhnikova, was a well-known lawyer who represented Armenian victims of the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict in the city of Sumgait. Sara Gessler was one of

the founders of the Armenian national conservatory; her sister Rosa Gessler founded the Department of General Therapy at the Yerevan Medical Institute. Efim Zilman and Rafail Taube initiated the development of geology and mineralogy in Armenia; both won awards for outstanding results in investigating the natural resources of the republic.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Since 1991, a Jewish Sunday school has provided the Jewish community of Yerevan with diverse educational courses, such as Jewish music, history, culture, and language. Hebrew courses have been opened for adults and children, as well. Since 1995, the Jewish community has provided free meals and material aid for the community elderly and needy persons. In 2004, the Jewish community, with the assistance of Chabad, began producing kosher food. The Religious Society of Armenia also supports a second Sunday school and a summer camp, both located in Yerevan. The Jewish community of Yerevan has its own choir and dancing ensemble. The cultural information center provides community members with all the necessary information on Jewish life and activities in the republic.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Today, the Jewish community of Armenia has between 500 and 1,000 Jews. Half of the community left for Israel, the United States, and France because of economic hardship in the republic and the long-standing conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan. In 1990, 161 Jews left for Israel; in 1991, 108; in 1992, 135; and in 1993, 382. From 2000 to 2003, an additional 346 Jews immigrated to Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abраванал, B. Judah. "Poem to His Son (1503)." Translated from Hebrew by Raymond P. Scheindlin. Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture Web site. <http://www.sephardicstudies.org/armenia.html> (accessed May 14, 2007).
- "Armenia Country Page." National Conference on Soviet Jewry Web site. <http://www.ncsj.org/Armenia.shtml> (accessed May 14, 2007).
- Brook, Kevin Allen. 2001. "The Unexpected Discovery of Vestiges of the Medieval Armenian Jews." <http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/045/4.html> (accessed May 14, 2007).
- Graetz, Heinrich Hirsch. 2000. *History of Jews: From the Reign of Hycanus (135 B.C.E.) to the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud (500 C.E.)*. Vol 2. Boston: Adamant Media.
- Rolin-Jaequemyns, Gustave Henri Ange Hippolyte. 2002. *Armenia, the Armenians, and the Treaties*. Boston: Adamant Media.
- Scheib, Ariel. "The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Armenia." Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/vjw/armenia.html> (accessed May 14, 2007).
- Southgate, Horatio. 2002. *Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia and Mesopotamia*. Boston: Adamant Media.
- Topchyan, Aram. 2006. *The Problem of the Greek Sources of Movses Xorenasis: History of Armenia*. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters.

## Jews in Ancient Armenia: First Century BCE to Fifth Century CE

*Aram Topchyan*

---

The first ancient Armenian literary source to mention the Jewish population in Armenia is the *History of Armenia*, which is ascribed to P'awstos Buzand and was probably composed in the third quarter of the fifth century CE. The long passage (IV.55) that refers to multitudes of Jewish families living in Armenian cities concerns one of the most disastrous and fatal events in the history of Armenia, namely the invasion of the country by Persian troops circa 368–369. As a consequence of that invasion, almost all significant Armenian cities were ruined and devastated, and their inhabitants, according to P'awstos, exclusively Armenians and Jews, were captured and taken to Persia. The historiographer speaks of more than 95,000 Jewish families settled in seven Armenian cities: Artašat, Vałaršapat, Eruandašat, Zarehawan, Zarišat, Van, and Naxčawan. This campaign of the Persian king Shāpūr II (who reigned 309–379) was the completion of a series of energetic diplomatic and military actions directed toward the subjection of the disobedient country after the peace agreement concluded with the Roman emperor Flavius Jovian (363–364) in 363. Ammianus Marcellinus (ca. 330–395), the most reliable Greco-Roman source for these events, does not refer to deportation of Jewish captives but corroborates the destruction of a great part of Armenia by the Persians (XXV.vii.12; XXVII.xii.11–12). He writes that Shāpūr's army seized the royal stronghold of Artogerassa, together with other fortified castles, and that the large tract of the country destroyed by the invaders included Artaxata (Artašat, one of the seven cities in P'awstos Buzand). For the deportation, ethnicity, and numbers of the city-dwellers, additional information is provided by Movsēs Xorenac'i (III.35), another early medieval Armenian author (who claims to have lived in the fifth century, but some scholars regard him as a seventh-, eighth-, or even ninth-century author), and by the 9th–10th century historiographer T'ovma Arcruni (X).

P'awstos's information, which is very likely not based on any documentary evidence but just acquired by word of mouth, should not be accepted at face value; no doubt the numbers of Jews are highly exaggerated. Nevertheless, it is clear that if the Jewish settlement in Armenia had not been substantial at the time of the Persian expedition, Buzand would not have mentioned it at all. One may also conjecture that even after Shāpūr II removed those tens of thousands to Persia, Armenian Jewry had by no means become just a distant memory in the time of P'awstos. He was most probably led to speak of more than 95,000 Jewish families figuring in the tragic events of some hundred years before his time by the continuing existence of their descendents as a significant part of Armenia's population. This becomes more apparent in Movsēs Xorenac'i's *History of Armenia*, in which Jews are often quite conspicuous. Furthermore, one should also suppose that the Armenian word *Hreay* means both "Jew" and "Judaizer" (including proselytes or just "sympathizers" and

Tigran II the Great was king of Armenia in the first century BCE and expanded Armenia's power over the entire Syrian region, although he ultimately lost most of his power to Roman pressure.  
(Hulton Archive/Getty Images)



“God-fearers”) rather than simply the ethnos, for otherwise the large numbers of “Jewish” captives and the odd division of the city-dwellers into only two groups, “Jews” and “Armenians,” would be difficult to understand.

P’awstos Buzand says these multitudes of Jews had been brought to Armenia from Palestine by the great Armenian king Tigran (Tigran II, reigned 95–55 BCE), at the time that he also captured the Jewish high priest Hyrcanus. The historiographer has confused different events, which took place in different years. Hyrcanus was captured in the year 40 BCE, when Tigran’s son Artawazd II (reigned 54–33 BCE) was king of Armenia: Tigran died in 55 BCE.

Flavius Josephus (37/38–100 CE), the primary source for the events of 40 BCE (*Antiquities of the Jews* XIV.330–367 and XV.14; *War of the Jews* I.248–273), relates that Hyrcanus was taken captive by the Parthians and that Hyrcanus, after being brought to Parthia, was lodged in Babylon. This contradicts P’awstos, who says Hyrcanus was taken captive, together with other Jews, to Armenia. However, it should be noted that Josephus in fact does not clearly distinguish Armenia and the Armenians from Parthia and the Parthians. He writes in the *War* (I.362–363) that Antony campaigned “against the Parthians.” This is said about the Roman general’s campaign to Armenia, in consequence of which the Armenian king Artawazd II was captured. Then, as Josephus writes, returning “from Parthia,” Antony presented “the Parthian” Artawazd to Cleopatra. This means Josephus sometimes used “Parthian” as a general term to include Armenians. Considering the Iranian influences of Armenian society and that the Armenian Arsacid dynasty was a cadet branch of the Parthian, this is not surprising.

Movsēs Xorenac’i’s *History* helps to explain both the anachronisms in Buzand and the contradiction between Josephus and the Armenian tradition about where

Hyrceanus was brought by the victorious troops. He refers to two deportations of Jewish population to Armenia. The first, according to Movsēs (II.14), took place before the conquest of the Phoenician town Ptolemaïs (Acre) by Tigran II (in 70 BCE: cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* XIII.419–421 and *War of the Jews* I.116), and the second deportation, he witnessed (II.19), took place later, as a result of the “Armenian-Persian” (= Parthian) invasion of Syria and Palestine: Xorenac’i means the same events of 40 BCE described by Josephus, whose *War* was one of his main sources. However, Xorenac’i differs from Josephus in a number of points. The main difference is Movsēs’ attribution of the military campaign not exclusively to the Parthians but to the “Armenian-Persian” (= Parthian) joint army commanded by an Armenian named Barzap’ran Rštuni (= the Parthian Barzaphranes in Josephus). Xorenac’i may have taken this information from the other important source he refers to (II.10) alongside Josephus, namely Julius Africanus’ (second–third centuries CE) *Chronicle*, with the surviving fragments of which Movsēs’ account has verbatim parallels.

Thus, P’awstos has combined different events, placing them at the time of Hyrceanus’ captivity and erroneously thinking that Tigran brought the high priest to Armenia. Movsēs, too, mistakenly thinks Barzap’ran was acting on Tigran II’s order, while in reality Artawazd II was king of Armenia in 40 BCE. However, Xorenac’i clearly, and probably exactly, knows there was a first deportation at the time Tigran invaded Phoenicia (70 BCE). Josephus speaks of Tigran’s siege of Ptolemaïs, keeping silent about any expulsion of Jews. Xorenac’i has drawn data from Julius Africanus’ *Chronicle* (probably fragments of it) as well as Josephus’ *War*. The source of Movsēs’ knowledge of the first deportation might well have been Africanus. What one can conclude is that during his military campaigns Tigran II surely took captive and brought substantial numbers of Jews to Armenia. The settlement of Armenian cities by way of synoicism, through shifting multitudes of peoples from the conquered countries, was typical of Tigran’s policy. This information is also contained in Greco-Roman sources, especially in Strabo (64/63 BCE–ca. 23 CE), Plutarch (46–119 CE), Appian (second century CE), Cassius Dio (ca. 150–235 CE), and Justin (third century CE) citing Pompey Trogus (first century BCE–first century CE). According to them, in various years the inhabitants of at least 12 Hellenistic cities of Cilicia, Cappadocia, Mesopotamia, and so on were brought to Armenia. Considerable numbers of Jews lived in several countries that were part of Tigran’s vast kingdom. The Armenian authors say the Jews living in the cities demolished by the Persians had come from Palestine because P’awstos and Movsēs knew the homeland of the Jews was Palestine, and because the Armenian tradition apparently was aware only of the military campaigns of 70 and 40 BCE. Nevertheless, in view of the data available in Greco-Roman sources (although “Jews” are not mentioned in the relevant passages, because, like other non-Greeks, they are referred to as “barbarians”), one may infer that Jews could have been moved to Armenia at least from Adiabene, Mygdonia, Gordyene, Osroene, Iberia, and Syria. Part of the deported peoples were probably assimilated by the Armenians, and others, especially Greeks, returned to their countries, while most Jews, as evident from the Armenian sources, stayed in Armenia and lived separately. The policy of synoicism

was very likely continued by Tigran II's successor Artawazd II, whose armed forces, accompanying the Parthians during their incursion into Syria and Palestine, brought Jewish population and settled them in Armenia. Subsequently, since in Armenian tradition Tigran the Great's fame overshadowed all his successors, the military campaign and synoicism of the year 40 BCE, in Artawazd II's days, too, were attributed to him.

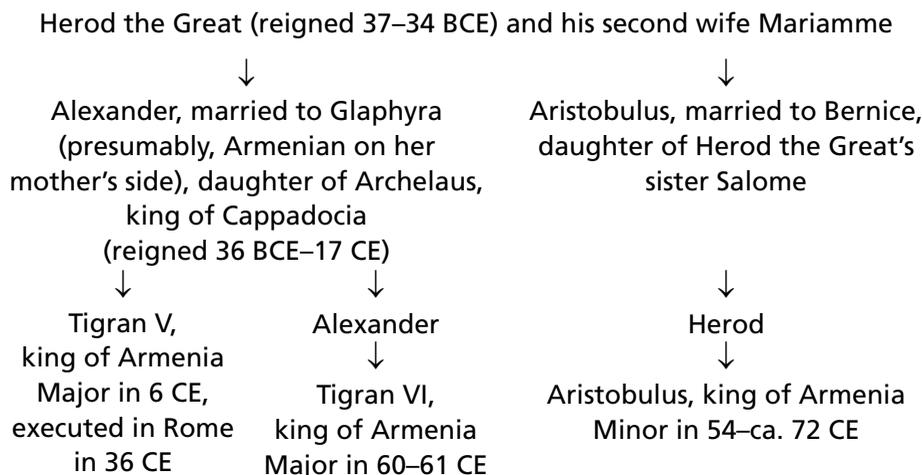
After the death of Tigran IV, the last Artašesid king of Armenia, in his battle against "barbarians" in 1 CE, and the abdication of his sister and wife, Queen Erato (Cassius Dio LV.xa.5), Rome and Parthia competed with one another for their protégés to govern the country. This situation lasted until the year 66 CE, when Trdat I, the Parthian king Vologeses I's brother, received the kingdom and the Parthian Arsacids were firmly established on the throne of Armenia. Before that, two kings of Herodian descent are reported to have ruled in Armenia Major for short periods and a third king of Herodian lineage was appointed king of Armenia Minor, where his reign was probably quite long. Those two kings bore the dynastic names Tigran V and Tigran VI, and the king of Armenia Minor was called Aristobulus. The main sources for Tigran V are the bilingual Greek-Latin *Monumentum Ancyranum*, also known as *Res gestae divi Augusti* (37), Flavius Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* XVIII.139; *War of the Jews* I.552; II.222), and Cornelius Tacitus (*Annales* VI.40). Tigran V, son of Alexander and grandson Herod the Great (reigned 37–4 BCE), was appointed king of Armenia Major in 6 CE by Augustus Caesar (Roman emperor from 31 BCE to 14 CE). His rule, apparently, was not welcomed by the Armenian elite and, having reigned for less than one year, Tigran V was dethroned. As Tacitus reports (*Annales* VI.40), in 36 CE he was executed, thus becoming one of Tiberius Caesar's (Roman emperor from 14 to 37 CE) victims.

Herod the Great's son Alexander, Tigran V's father, had a brother named Aristobulus. Fearing a plot, Herod put Alexander and Aristobulus to death (Josephus, *War of the Jews* I.551). Aristobulus had three sons, one of whom was Herod, king of the petty kingdom of Chalcis in Syria. It was this Herod's son Aristobulus who became king of Armenia Minor. Information about him is found in Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* VII.226–227; XX.158 and *War of the Jews* II.221–222; 252) and Tacitus (*Annales* XIII.7 and XIV.26). In 54 CE, Nero (Roman emperor from 54 to 68 CE) gave the kingdom of Armenia Minor to Aristobulus, where, presumably, he governed until about 72 CE.

Tigran VI, son of Tigran V's brother Alexander, figures in the last stage (late 50s to mid-60s CE) of the conflict between Rome and Parthia in the first century CE for dominion over Armenia (it ended in 66 CE, when Trdat I was crowned in Rome). Tigran VI was Nero's protégé and was strongly opposed by many Armenians (who preferred Trdat), particularly the powerful Parthians. Therefore, his reign (60–61 CE), like that of Tigran V, was short.

The genealogy of the Herodian kings of the two Armenias is shown in the chart on the next page.

Movsēs Xorenac'i's *History* contains intriguing information about the Jewish origin of one of the leading princely families of Armenia, the Bagratids (Bagra-tunis). It goes back to the distant past when King Nebuchadnezzar II (reigned



ca. 605–ca. 561 BCE) took Jerusalem and deported Jews to Babylonia. Xorenac'i tells the following (I.22): Nebuchadnezzar permitted King Hrač'eay of Armenia to settle one of the captive Jewish leaders, called Šambat, in Armenia. Hrač'eay greatly honors him, and from this Šambat, Movsēs claims, the Bagratuni family descended. Then, in various parts of his *History* (II, 8, 9, 14, 24, 33, 63), Xorenac'i develops the story of the Bagratids being Jews, for which they were at times persecuted by Armenian kings. This evidence for the Jewish origin of the Bagratids can be neither fully refuted nor accepted uncritically, because there are no reliable sources corroborating or contradicting what we are told by Movsēs (this is also true regarding his testimony on another noble family of Armenia, the Amatunis, to whom, too, he ascribes Jewish origin [II.57]). The claim that the Bagratids were Jews by birth was probably raised by the Bagratids themselves and, consequently, reflected in the work of the historiographer of their family, Movsēs Xorenac'i.

In general, Movsēs appears to be an expert in Jewish matters, and the fact that he speaks much about the Jews and their habits might suggest that in the time of Xorenac'i the "Jewish factor," that is, the presence of Jews and their influence in various spheres, was quite significant in Armenia. Hence, the conclusion would be that even after the captivity of tens of thousands of Jews by the Persians in 368–369, many of them continued living in Armenia at least until the end of the fifth century CE. Moreover, in later sources, both Armenian and foreign, there is evidence of Jewish inhabitants in Armenia in the Middle Ages, the most striking corroboration of their presence being the Jewish cemetery, mainly of the 13th century, discovered in 1996 and studied by Michael E. Stone and David Amit, in the village Ełegis of the Vayoc' Jor district of the Republic of Armenia.

### Selected Bibliography

- Artsruni, Thomas. 1985. *History of the House of Artsrunik'*. Translated and with an introduction and commentary by R. W. Thomson. Detroit: Wayne State University Press
- Khorenaats'i, Moses. 1978. *History of the Armenians*. Translated and with commentary by R. W. Thomson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Manandian, H. 1963. *Tigrane II & Rome: nouveaux éclaircissements à la lumière des sources originales*. Translated by H. Thorossian. Lisbon: Bibliothèque Arménienne de la Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian.
- Manandian, H. 1965. *The Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to Ancient World Trade*. Translated by N. G. Garsoïan. Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand.
- Patmut'iwnk, Buzandaran. 1989. *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand*. Translation and commentary by N. G. Garsoïan. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Topchyan, A. 2006. *The Problem of the Greek Sources of Movses Xorenac'i's History of Armenia*. Dudley, MA: Peeters.

## Jews in Medieval Armenia

*Kevin A. Brook*

---

A Jewish community thrived in the city of Eghegis in southeastern Armenia during the 13th through 15th centuries. They apparently arrived in Armenia from Persia.

The evidence suggests that the community of Eghegis practiced rabbinical Judaism in a traditional and devout manner. Some of their gravestone inscriptions quote Hebrew scriptures from the book of Isaiah and the book of Proverbs. The community also studied the Talmud. Some of its members had traditional Hebrew given names, including, among others, Esther and Rachel for the women and David, Eli, and Michael for the men. Some of their other given names derive from Muslim culture, including Sharaf al-Din.

The Persian word *khawaja* (meaning master or respected person) was used as an honorific in inscriptions preceding the names of important members of the Eghegis Jewish community. The use of this word among the Jews of Eghegis suggests that they spoke Persian. It is also significant that Zaki, a common Persian Jewish given name, was the name of a Jewish man in Eghegis.

Jews and Christians in medieval Armenia appear to have had good relations. Some of the Jewish gravestones from Eghegis were styled like Armenian Christian gravestones (which are called *khachkars*, meaning "cross-stone," because they feature inscribed crosses in the design). A common workshop may have designed the ornamentation and symbols on both the Jewish and Christian gravestones. They were also made of the same material, suggesting that they were quarried from the same mines. However, there were some differences: the Jewish gravestones obviously lacked crosses, and their Hebrew and Aramaic writing must have been inscribed by Jews.

Some Armenian Jews also owned land outside of Eghegis. For instance, an inscription found on the wall of Spitakavor Saint Astvatsatsin Church indicates that an Armenian Christian man donated land to the church that he had purchased from a Jew.

There is no evidence to link the Jews who lived in Eghegis with the ancient Jews of Armenia. Likewise, there is no known connection between the medieval

Armenian Jews and their contemporary coreligionists in nearby Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Daghestan.

The fate of the Jews of Eghegis is a matter of speculation. The only certainty is that they are not the ancestors of contemporary Armenian Jews, who arrived in Armenia from Poland and Persia during the 19th and 20th centuries. It is likely that some Armenian Christians are the descendants of the earlier Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

- Amit, David, and Michael E. Stone. 2002. "Report of the Survey of a Medieval Jewish Cemetery in Eghegis, Vayots Dzor Region, Armenia." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 53, no. 1 (Spring): 66–106.
- Amit, David, and Michael E. Stone. 2006. "The Second and Third Seasons of Research at the Medieval Jewish Cemetery in Eghegis, Vayots Dzor Region, Armenia." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 57, no. 1 (Spring): 99–135.
- Marr, Nikolay Y. 1912. "Yevreyskaya nadgrobnaya nadpis' 15 veka iz Yerevanskoy gub." [The Hebrew Epitaph of the 15th Century in Yerevan Province]. *Khristianskii Vostok* 1, no. 3: 353–354.

## Jews in Azerbaijan

*David Straub*

**General Population:** 7,500,000

**Jewish Population:** 16,000–25,000

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Most Jews live in the capital, Baku; Krasnaya Sloboda district in the town of Kuba is home to 3,600 Tat-speaking Jews, and several thousand additional Jews live in the surrounding area; Privolnoe village, located 20 miles from the Iranian border in the Talysh Mountains, is home to a small community of Gerim and Sabbotnik Jews; several dozen Jews reside in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Jews have lived in the Caucasus for perhaps 2,000 years. The Tat-speaking Mountain Jews claim descent from the 10 lost tribes that fled after the destruction of the First Temple. Another period of migration was in the fifth century CE, when Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Persia moved into what is now Azerbaijan. Ashkenazim settled in Azerbaijan in the 19th century after the Russian conquest of the Caucasus, and further migrations of European Jews occurred in the 20th century during the Soviet era. In Baku and other towns there are organized Jewish communities for Ashkenazim, Mountain Jews, and Georgian Jews.

The present Jewish population of Azerbaijan can be broken down into three distinct groups: 11,000 indigenous Tat-speaking Mountain Jews, the largest groups residing in Baku and Kuba; Ashkenazim Jews, who number around 4,300 persons, the majority of whom live in Baku; and around 700 Georgian Jews.

**Languages Spoken:** Most Jews speak Russian and Tat, a tongue from the Iranian language group. Azeri and Georgian are less common. Hebrew is taught in schools and yeshivas.

## Historical Overview

- 12th century Chronicler Benjamin of Tudela reports Jewish communities throughout the Caucasus.
- 1730s Nadir Shah of Iran launches an anti-Jewish campaign in the Caucasus.
- 1742 The Khan of Urmia, Fatali Khan, establishes Kuba as a refuge for Jews. Jews from the villages of Kulgat, Kusari, Chipkent, Karchag, Shuduh, and Kryz establish a community in Kuba, situated on the southern bank of the Gudialchai River, opposite a Muslim community on the northern bank.
- 1780s Jews from Gilan in Persia migrate to Kuba.
- 1813 Modern-day Azerbaijan is ceded to Russia and formed into the provinces of Yelizavetpol and Baku. The main Jewish centers are Kuba and the villages of Miudji and Miudji-Aftaran in Baku province, and Vartashen in Yelizavetpol.
- 1835 Of the 5,492 Jews reported in Kuba, 2,718 live in the city of Kuba, and the remainder are dispersed in neighboring villages. At this time the region is closed to European Jewish immigrants.
- 1866 Travelers report 952 Jewish households and 6,282 individuals in Kuba, 145 households and 957 individuals in Miudji, and 190 households and 1,396 individuals in Vartashen.
- 1897 The rapid expansion of the oil industry in the late 19th century brings a large influx of Jews to Baku. The 1897 census records 12,753 Jews in the Baku Gubernia, most of whom are Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim, including 6,662 individuals in Kuba and 2,341 in the town of Baku.
- 1900 Eleven synagogues and 20 Jewish schools service 972 families in Kuba.
- 1908 A secular Jewish-Russian school is opened in Kuba.
- 1909 The first Judeo-Tat text, a prayer book with Judeo-Tat translation, is published in Russia.
- 1910s The Jewish Communist Party Poalei Zion is active in Baku.
- 1915 The Judeo-Tat language newspaper *Ekho gor* (The Echo of the Mountains) opens in Baku and publishes three issues before closing.
- 1917 During the Bolshevik Revolution and subsequent civil war, many Jews leave their villages for urban centers, transforming the city of Baku into the region's largest Jewish population center. The village of Miudji is emptied of Jews, and about 3,500 Jews leave Kuba. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the name of the Jewish quarters in Kuba changes from *Yevreskaya Sloboda* to the Russian *Krasnaya Sloboda* (Red Village). At this time, 11 synagogues exist in Kuba.
- 1920s Jewish culture and literature enter a period of vibrancy and unprecedented productivity. Numerous literary works are published in Tat in Azerbaijan and elsewhere in the Caucasus. By the end of the decade, a Turkish-Jewish school opens in Vartashen and a school for Mountain Jews is established in Baku. Attempts are also made to convert urban Jews into farmers.
- 1926 The census records 19,000 European Jews and 7,500 Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan.
- 1927 Two hundred and fifty Jewish families are settled as farmers.
- 1928 Tat Hebrew script is replaced with Latin alphabet.

- April 1929 A Mountain Jewish Alphabet Conference is held in Baku, a year after Latin script is adopted for written Judeo-Tat.
- 1932 Judeo-Tat author Mishi Bakhshiev, from Dagestan, publishes the first Judeo-Tat novella *Towards the New Life*, set in Azerbaijan.
- 1933 The Jewish population of Kuba numbers around 18,500.
- 1934 A Mountain Jewish literary circle is established in Baku. On June 17, 1934, the Communist Party of Azerbaijan agrees to launch a Judeo-Tat newspaper named *Kommunist* and create a Mountain Jewish department in the official republic publishing house.
- 1936 The Great Terror begins, and the renaissance in Judeo-Tat that began in the 1920s comes to an end. Although much of the Jewish intelligentsia in Azerbaijan is purged by the end of the decade, some Jews continue to work and serve in the government, including Ya'acov Agronov, chairman of the Oil Committee of Baku in the late 1930s.
- 1937 Use of Hebrew is banned. Five rabbis in Kuba are executed and others sent to Siberia.
- 1938 The written script of Judeo-Tat is again replaced, this time by Cyrillic; Russian and Azeri become the language of instruction in Jewish schools.
- 1939 The census records 31,050 Jews in Baku.
- 1945 Azerbaijan is never occupied during World War II, and the Jewish population survives intact.
- 1950s Jews in Azerbaijan are able to pick up Israeli radio.
- 1955 A Baku religious congregation is allowed to organize.
- 1959 The census records 40,204 Jews in Azerbaijan, including 29,197 in Baku and the surrounding region. Of those recorded, 8,357 declared Tat and 6,255 Yiddish their mother tongues.
- 1961 Israeli pianist Pnina Salzman plays a concert in Baku during a tour of the Soviet Union, drawing the keen interest of local Jews.
- 1964 A Mountain Jewish religious congregation is allowed to organize in Kuba, but the synagogues remain closed.
- 1979 The census records 35,500 Jews in Azerbaijan.
- 1988 In February Azerbaijani-Armenian tensions erupt into violence. For the next four years Armenians and Azerbaijanis wage a bloody civil war over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The number of Jews making aliyah dramatically increases, and the tiny community of Karabakh Jews suffers extreme deprivations.
- 1989 The census records 30,800 Jews, including 22,700 in Baku. By the end of the year, 1,981 Jews emigrate.
- 1990 In January, in the wake of continuing ethnic violence and nationalist protests, more than 20,000 Soviet troops storm Baku in a crackdown on massive anti-Soviet protests. Clashes between troops and protestors last for more than a month and kill 170 civilians, including six Jews. By the end of the year, 7,673 Jews make aliyah.
- 1991 Azerbaijan gains independence. Roughly 80,000 Jews live in the country at this time. The new government is run by secular Muslims who adopt a tolerant attitude toward the country's Jews. Another 5,968 individuals make aliyah.

- 1992 Albert Agaronov, a tank driver from Kuba, is killed in battle in the town of Shusha in Nagorno-Karabakh and posthumously decorated “Hero of Azerbaijan.” By the end of the year, 2,625 Jews make aliyah.
- 1993 A further 3,133 Jews make aliyah. An estimated 17,300 live in Azerbaijan.
- 1996 The government offers to return a synagogue in Baku to the Jewish community; it is one of many Jewish properties confiscated during the Soviet period.
- 2002 A small group of members from a minor Islamic political party protest outside the Israeli embassy and burn an Israeli flag after an Israeli military incursion into the West Bank.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Traditionally, Mountain Jews worked as farmers, tanners, and silversmiths. Since the Russian incorporation of Azerbaijan in the 19th century, Jewish trades have included doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers, and musicians.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

In the 20th century, the Baku Jewish community has made numerous contributions to science and the arts. Most notable among musicians is concert pianist Bella Davidovich (b. 1928), who worked with major Russian conductors and performed as a soloist with the Leningrad Philharmonic for 28 consecutive seasons. A writer of fame and odd historical circumstance was Lev Nussimbaum (1905–1942), a Jew from Baku who in the 1930s posed as a Muslim noble and expert on the Caucasus and Central Asia. Nussimbaum’s work won great praise in Nazi Germany, until his religious origins were found out. In the world of science, theoretical physicist Lev Landau (1908–1968) won numerous accolades in the Soviet Union and the Nobel Prize in physics in 1962. In recent decades several world-class chess players have emerged from Baku, most notably World Chess champion Garry Kasparov, who was born Garri Weinstein in Baku in 1963. Kasparov dominated Azerbaijani chess as a youth and went on to international fame in the 1980s. Emil Sutovsky (b. 1977) has become a world-ranked chess player in recent years. In 1999 and 2001, the Art Museum and Museum of History in Baku held exhibitions on Jewish history in Azerbaijan.

### Present Economic Conditions

The religious community is financed by donations from individuals in Azerbaijan and abroad, including Jews in Russia and the United States. In the Krasnaya Sloboda district of Kuba, the Jewish population enjoys relative prosperity as several Jews who have immigrated to Russia and amassed fortunes in the hundreds of millions of dollars support their native community. Throughout the country, community organizations provide aid to elderly pensioners and the needy.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

Numerous Jewish communal organizations have been in active in Azerbaijan since the country gained independence in 1991. Some of the first Jewish community

organizations in Baku and elsewhere were organized by the Israeli government in the early 1990s. During this time, the Azerbaijan-Israel cultural society was founded, which published its own newspaper, *Az-Is*. Later, the Israeli embassy opened a cultural center attached to the embassy grounds. The Jewish agency Sohnut has also helped set up educational programs in Baku and other towns. Local community organizations in Baku include the women's charitable groups Havva and the Humanitarian Association of Jewish Women, the charitable organization Hesed-Gershon, and the youth club Hilel; several of these groups have branches in towns across the country. In Baku there are monthly Jewish newspapers, including *Tower*, *Hilel*, *Orshelyanu*, and *Amishav*. International organizations active in Azerbaijan include Sohnut, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and Vaad Hatzala.

Jewish secular and religious education is available throughout Azerbaijan. Kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools are open in the capital and major towns, and Jewish religious teaching is taught in yeshivas, including the Ashkenazim Jewish College in Baku. Krasnaya Sloboda has a yeshiva, educational center, and cultural program. Hebrew is taught at Baku State University.

The far majority of Jews in Azerbaijan are Ashkenazim and Mountain Jews. A small community of Gerim and Sobbotnik Jews live in Privolnoe, a village in the south of the country. Privolnoe was established early in the 19th century by Gerim, ethnic Russians who converted to Judaism about 200 years ago. The Gerim, also called Gerei Tzedek, or "righteous converts," claim that their ancestors originated from the Volga and Don river valleys and established Privolnoe ("Free") village around 1824. They adhere to Orthodox Ashkenazi tradition and practice their faith in Hebrew and Russian. The Sobbotniks are Karaite Jews who adhere to traditions distinct from Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews. The village's synagogues were closed in the 1930s, and there are no rabbis today, yet the Gerim and Sobbotnik communities continue to maintain strict religious customs. At its peak, the population of Privolnoe numbered 5,000, but in 1997, a survey recorded only 170 households in the village.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

In the 19th century, the majority of Jews were Mountain Jews who lived in Kuba and the villages of Miudji, Miudji-Aftaran, and Vartashen. In the early 1900s, Jews began to immigrate to Eretz Israel in small numbers; by the end of the century, a large number of European Jews had settled in Baku. The extreme violence of the Russian Civil War drove many rural Jews to relocate to Baku. In the 1970s, emigration restrictions were eased and Azerbaijani Jews began to make aliyah. Civil war and unrest in the late 1980s led to a flood of Jews who left for Israel and America, so that by the turn of the century, the Azerbaijani Jewish population had been reduced by nearly 70 percent.

### Selected Bibliography

- Agarunov, Mikhail. 2001. "Jewish Community of Azerbaijan: Country Report." [http://www.juhuro.com/pages/english/english\\_agarun.htm](http://www.juhuro.com/pages/english/english_agarun.htm) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Exploring the Visual Remnants of the Jewish Community in Azerbaijan." Newsletter 14 (1998). Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. <http://web.archive.org/>

- web/0060717014631/http://www.hum.huji.ac.il/CJA/NL14-Azerbaijan.htm (accessed May 20, 2008).
- “Jewish History of Azerbaijan.” <http://web.archive.org/web/20020211215419/heritagefilms.com/AZERBAIJAN.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- “A Letter from Azerbaijan.” Newsletter 13 (1997). Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem). <http://web.archive.org/web/20060717044727/www.hum.huji.ac.il/CJA/nl13-1.htm> (accessed May 20, 2008).
- Olson, James Stuart, et al. 1994. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Ro'i, Yaacov, and Avi Beker. 1991. *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union*. New York: NYU Press.
- Swerdlow, Steve. 2001. “The Forgotten Jews of Karabakh.” Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Caucasus Reporting Service. 85, 14 June. <http://www.turkishweekly.net/articles.php?id=19> (accessed May 20, 2008).

## Jews in Georgia

*Alex Mikaberidze*

---

General Population: 4,400,000

Jewish Population: 3,700 (2002 census)

Percent of Population: Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Most Jews live in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi; smaller communities exist in Kutaisi and Batumi. A large portion of the Georgian Jewish community has immigrated to Israel, where it is concentrated in Tel Aviv and Ashkelon.

**Languages Spoken:** Georgian, Hebrew, and Russian

---

### Historical Overview

8th century BCE Georgian medieval chronicles suggest that the first Jews begin to arrive in Georgia when the Assyrians expand their sphere of influence into the kingdom of Israel.

ca. 586 BCE The Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar's attack on Jerusalem leads a large number of Jews to immigrate to Iberia/Kartli (eastern Georgia), where they settle around the capital city of Mtskheta. There they are given land on the condition that they will pay a tax. Over the following centuries, there are several more migrations.

1st century CE After Romans destroy the Second Temple, another wave of Jewish refugees arrives in Georgia.

1st century CE The Jewish community of Mtskheta is well integrated into Iberian society (Georgian chronicles note that Aramaic, which Jews spoke, is one of the major languages on Georgian territory) and is prominently featured in Georgian Christian tradition, which connects the rise of the first Christian community

in Iberia (Kartli) in the first century with Jews residing in Mtskheta. According to tradition, when the word of the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth reached Mtskheta, the local Jewish community sent two of its members, Elioze (Elias) and the Karenian Longinus, to meet the preacher but they arrived late and witnessed Christ's crucifixion. Elioze was able to obtain Christ's chiton from a Roman soldier to whose lot it had fallen and brought it to Mtskheta. Tradition says that Elioze's sister Sidonia, upon seeing the chiton, grasped it and died in a passion of faith. Unable to take the robe from her grasp, she was buried with the holy relic on the bank of the Kura River. Some time later, a large cedar tree grew on her grave. When, in the fourth century, it was decided to build a church on this spot, the builders cut the cedar tree, but its trunk hovered in the air and would not fall down. Only Saint Nino was able, through her prayers, to bring it down, and the tree was used as a main support column for the church that became known as Svetitskhoveli or "Life-Giving Column."

**10th–18th centuries** Beginning in the Middle Ages, the Jewish community grew in size. In socioeconomic and legal terms, the Jews, like most of the Georgian populace, are serfs and bear the heavy yoke of feudal lords. Like Georgian serfs, the Jewish serfs are divided into royal, church-monastic, and court serfs. However, the Jewish community also includes prosperous merchants, who eventually come to dominate, together with the Armenians, trade and commerce. Georgian Jews are not subjected to ethnic or religious persecution in the Georgian principalities, and the Georgian rulers entrust them with diplomatic missions. Jewish settlements are established throughout Georgia: Tskhinvali, Surami, Ali, Mzovreti, Akhaldaba, Ateni, Tsilkani, Urbnisi, Samachablo, Gremi, Eniseli, Khovle, and elsewhere in eastern Georgia; in Oni, Sachkhere, Chikhori, Chaltatke, Kutaisi, Senaki, and elsewhere in western Georgia. A sizable community also exists in southern Georgia. Among these communities, the Mtskheta community commands particular respect and is considered the center of Georgian Judaism. Georgian Jews maintain strong ties to Jerusalem and take an active part in religious debates. Over the centuries, the Jews become well integrated in the local society, adopting Georgian language and customs, but retaining their ethnic self-awareness and adherence to the Jewish religious traditions. As a sign of the intermingling and cultural closeness of the two peoples, the Jews become known as the "Georgian Jews," as their culture and tradition differ from those of the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews.

**19th century** With the Russian annexation of the Georgian principalities, the status of the Jews changes. Ashkenazi Jews begin to arrive from other provinces of the Russian Empire. Russian Imperial laws are automatically extended to the Georgian Jews, which, in effect, limit or outright revoke their civil rights. The situation worsens in the late 19th century when, after serfdom is abolished in the Russian Empire, many Georgian Jewish serfs are freed without land. This, however, causes them to seek opportunities in trading and crafts, where they form trade unions to support each other. In the last decades of the 19th century, Georgian Jews become active in the Zionist movement.

- 1897 The first Zionist organization in Georgia is established in Tbilisi, and four years later, the First Congress of Caucasian Zionists is held. Rabbi David Baazov emerges as one of the leading Zionists and participates in the Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897. In the same period, Rabbi Abraam Khvoles establishes the first primary school for about 400 Jewish students in Tskhivali, revives the use of Hebrew and provides the youth in the community with vocational training.
- 1918 Georgia becomes independent after the 1917 collapse of the Russian Empire. The new Democratic Republic of Georgia grants full civil and political rights to Jews, which leads to their increased involvement in public events. The All-Jewish Congress is held in Tbilisi.
- 1920s After Georgia is occupied by the Bolsheviks, Zionist activities are repressed and economic restrictions are imposed on the Jewish community. The Georgian Jews endure the Sovietization process in the 1920s and the 1930s.
- 1925 The Jewish dramatic troupe Kadima is founded in Tbilisi.
- 1933 A Jewish historical-ethnographic museum is established; the museum closes in the 1950s.
- 1939–1945 During World War II, Georgian Jews serve in the Red Army and contribute to the home front war effort.
- 1948 The establishment of the State of Israel is welcomed in the Georgian Jewish community, but Soviet authorities suppress all efforts to emigrate.
- 1967 After the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War Georgian Jews challenge official restrictions.
- 1969 More than a dozen Georgian Jewish families write two letters to the United Nations demanding permission to immigrate to Israel. This is the first public demand by Soviet Jews for emigration, and the Israeli government uses it widely to campaign against the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union.
- 1970s Georgian Jews continue to petition for the right to make aliyah, and in 1971 a group of Georgian Jews go on a hunger strike in Moscow. In the end, the efforts of the Georgian Jews pay off as the Soviet authorities revise their stance on emigration. As the Soviet restrictions on Jewish emigration lessen, thousands of Georgian Jews make aliyah.
- 1980s–1990s The pace of emigration increases in the late 1980s and early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the start of civil turmoil in Georgia. Although there are 24,720 Jews in Georgia in 1989, only 14,000 remain by the late 1990s.
- 2002 Only 3,772 Jews remain in Georgia, and 513 Jews make aliyah to Israel.
- 2006 The Georgian government issues a new postage stamp honoring Rabbi Abraam Khvoles' work.

## Contemporary Overview

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

Historically, Georgians have exhibited little anti-Semitic sentiment and the Jewish community is well integrated in the Georgian society. Although the community has significantly diminished, it still remains vibrant. The Georgian Jews who immigrated

to Israel maintain close contacts with Georgia, visiting and conducting business. In September 1998, the Georgian government sponsored a major celebration commemorating 2,600 years of Jewish life in Georgia. The event was attended by tens of thousands people, including the former president of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, Israeli president Moshe Katsav, and Israel's Ashkenazi and Sephardi chief rabbis. The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI/Sochnut) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) have permanent representatives in Georgia. Several Jewish institutions, including the Rahamim (the Jewish Community of Ashkenazi Jews of Georgia), the Shalom Club, Derekh Yehudi (The Association of Georgian Jews), and various schools continue to operate in Tbilisi, and several Jewish newspapers, including *Menora*, *Shalom*, and *26 Centuries*, are published.

### Selected Bibliography

- Arbel, Rachel, and Lili Magal. 1992. *In the Land of the Golden Fleece: The Jews of Georgia—History and Culture*. Tel Aviv, Israel: Beth Hatefutsoth.
- Chichinadze, Zakaria, and Vakhtang Chikovani. 1990. *Kartveli ebraelebi Sakartveloshi*. Tbilisi, Georgia: Metsniereba.
- Foundation for International Arts and Education. 2004. *Beyond the Golden Fleece: A Cultural History of the Jews of Georgia*. Bethesda, MD: Foundation for International Arts and Education.
- Plisetskii, M. 1931. *Religiya i byt gruzinskikh evreyev*. Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii.
- Vadachkoria, Shota. 2005. *Ebraelta sakitkhi da kartuli sinamd vile, 1921–1940*. Tbilisi, Georgia: Mematiane.

## Jews in Central Asia

*David Straub*

---

Countries: Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

General Population: 90 million

Jewish Population of Central Asia: 35,000–40,000

Percent of Population: Less than 0.1 percent

Population of Jews by Country: Afghanistan, one person; Kazakhstan, 15,000–20,000; Kyrgyzstan, 1,000; Tajikistan, 250–300; Turkmenistan, 600–1,000; Uzbekistan, 17,453

Languages spoken: Most speak Russian, but a small minority speak Judeo-Tajik or Yiddish.

---

### Early Jewish History

The early history of Judaism in Central Asia is clouded in mystery and is scantily recorded in ancient historical texts. Local tradition among Bukharan Jews holds that their ancestors were one of the 10 lost tribes of the Assyrian exile and that the city of Bukhara is Habor, one of the destinations of the exiles recorded in 2 Kings 17:6. Central Asia is mentioned in the writing of Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who

wrote in the first century CE that Gather, the grandson of Noah, was the founder of Bactria. What is of historic certainty is that by the sixth century BCE the ancient Central Asian states of Khwarezm and Bactria had been incorporated into the Persian Empire, which had a large and widespread Jewish population in ancient times. In the early common era, historical texts include references to a Jewish presence in Central Asia, including a reference in the Babylonian Talmud to a fourth-century story about the refusal of an Amora called Samuel bar Bisna to drink wine and beer in Margiana, a historical region that extends into modern Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Another likely period of Jewish migration to Central Asia was in the fifth century CE, when the Sassanid rulers of Persia harshly persecuted Jews, causing an outward flow of refugees into neighboring regions.

After the Arabs conquered Central Asia in the seventh and eighth centuries, Jews were one of the few religious groups that successfully resisted conversion to Islam. Flourishing Jewish communities in Samarkand, Khwarezm, Balkh, Merv, Dzhand, Osh, and Yahudlyk are mentioned in numerous contemporary Islamic sources, though details are scarce and population estimates are dubious. Jewish communities in Central Asia shared strong cultural and religious ties with the Jews of Afghanistan and Iran and all three groups spoke the same Judeo-Persian dialect. An example of references to Jews at this time includes a Jew called Akiva, described as a tax collector in Merv. It is likely that Central Asian Jews also had contact with co-religionists in Khazaria, a Jewish state in the Caucasus that was at its height in the 10th century. Notable individuals from this time included Hiwi al-Balkhi, a ninth-century Jewish heretic and philosopher from Balkh in modern day Afghanistan, who was one of the first rational critics of the Torah. Twelfth-century Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela reported a thriving community of 50,000 Jews in Samarkand led by a prince rabbi, Obadiah, and a population of 8,000 Jews in Giva (modern Khiva); clear evidence of a Jewish presence in Central Asia, though the population estimates are fantastically high.

The Jewish communities in Central Asia were dealt a mortal blow in 1220–1221 when the Mongols invaded the region and sacked Samarkand, Khiva, and Bukhara, slaughtering or enslaving much of the population. The advent of the Mongols brought about the cultural and economic collapse of Central Asia, which was followed by centuries of strife. A particularly dark period was the reign of Timur in the 14th century, when Jews were targeted for forced conversion and execution, causing survivors to flee the region and decimating the Jewish population. In 1598, the city of Samarkand was destroyed by war and Jews again had to flee, this time to neighboring Bukhara.

### **The Bukharan Jews**

Soon after the death of Timur, the Jewish population of Central Asia began to recover. In the early 15th century, Turkic Uzbek tribes invaded Central Asia and established their capital at Bukhara, a city of great wealth and a center of trade along the Silk Road. It was during the period of Bukharan rule that the Jewish population of Central Asia was united under a single state. Bukharan hegemony was firmly

established in what is today Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, and at times it included northeastern Iran. Jews are first mentioned as inhabitants of the city of Bukhara in the 13th century, and by the 17th century a Jewish quarters was established. Bukharan Jews spoke a dialect of Tajik referred to as Bokhori or Judeo-Tajik, which is still used by Bukharan Jews today. The term "Bukharan Jew" is a European appellation first used in the 19th century; Bukharan Jews describe themselves as *Isro'il* and *Yahudi*.

The Bukharan khans officially discriminated against the local Jewish population and pressured Jews to convert to Islam, a fact preserved in a 19th-century Bukharan Jewish poem that celebrates the martyrdom of Nathaniel Hodeidad, who was put to death by Emir Ma'asum of Bukharan because he refused to convert to Islam. Jews were ordered to tie a rope around their waist, forbidden to ride a horse within city limits, and forced to pay the *jizya* poll tax for all non-Muslims. Despite official anti-Semitism, Bukharan Jewish culture thrived, most notably in the realm of literature. Judeo-Tajik literature, which uses an adapted Hebrew script, can be traced back as early as the 14th century, when Solomon Ben Samuel, a Jew living in Bukharan-controlled territory, wrote a Judeo-Persian dictionary. Beginning in the 15th century, the Bukharan Jewish community produced a great number of writers and poets who wrote in Judeo-Tajik, Persian, and Hebrew. Notable individuals include Moshe Ben David, a poet who wrote in both Hebrew and Persian; Yusuf Yahudi al-Buhori (d. 1755), author of *Haft Barodaron* (Seven Brothers); and Elisha Raghbi, author of *The Prince* and *The Monk*. Bukharan Jewish authors also translated numerous works between Persian and Hebrew. Physically, the Jewish population differed little from their Muslim neighbors. Jews of both sexes wore the colorful traditional ikat robes, which were accompanied by the rope all Jews were forced to wear. Men shaved their heads bare, except for short earlocks and wore traditional Central Asian skullcaps, while women frequently wore a veil in public. The influence of Islam was also felt in the synagogue, where the floor was covered in traditional Central Asian rugs, religiously learned men were referred to as *mullos*, shoes were removed before entering the synagogue, and prayers were done in a kneeling position. Despite the striking similarities to their Muslim neighbors, Bukharan Jews were a distinct group among the people of Bukhara and filled a niche in the economy as shop merchants, traders, and artisans.

By the 18th century, official persecution, forced conversions, and isolation from Western Jewry had caused Bukharan Jews' observance of religious traditions to lapse. In 1793, Yosef Maman Magrebi of Tetuan, Morocco, arrived in Bukhara and found that the local Jews had fallen into spiritual degeneration. Among the conditions he reported were that local Jews had no rabbis or teachers of religious instruction and that Jews were eating meat slaughtered by Muslims. Maman established himself in Bukhara where he became spiritual leader of the community, replaced local religious customs with Sephardic traditions, and established a yeshiva for study of the Torah. Later, Jews from Baghdad and Aleppo followed in the footsteps of Maman and migrated to Bukhara to study at the yeshiva and eventually become the spiritual leaders of the community. By the mid-19th century, Bukharan Jews had established a sophisticated political and religious structure. The chief

administrator of the community was called a *kalontar*, who was elected by all of the adult men to a lifetime appointment that was ratified by officials of the Bukharan emirate. The *kalontar* served as the Jewish representative to the government, as well as mediator for legal disputes within the community. In Bukhara the *kalontar* was aided by a pair of *ossagol*, who served as heads of the two Jewish quarters in the city. The religious head was the *mulloyi kalon*, or chief rabbi, and judge in all disputes based on religious law. These institutions would remain intact until the Soviet period.

## Russian Rule

In the early 19th century, contacts between Bukharan and Russian Jews were established, causing a great deal of excitement among the latter that one of the ten tribes had been found. The czar was equally pleased to do business with Bukharan Jews and in 1833 granted them the same rights as Muslims to trade in Russian markets. In 1865–1866 the czar's army conquered Central Asia, directly annexed Tashkent and Samarkand, and placed other Russian-controlled territory into the newly created Turkestan Oblast; the Bukhara emirate became a self-governing Russian protectorate. Population estimates of Central Asian Jews in the 19th century vary widely. British missionary Joseph Wolff, a Jewish convert to Christianity, traveled to Bukhara in 1832, reported a population of 13,600 Jews; Michael Zand has estimated that the total number of Jews was around 6,000–6,500; and a contemporary Bukharan traveler reported that at the time of Russian conquest the number of Jews in the city of Bukhara was 7,000.

One significant impact of Russian rule was that Central Asia was opened to immigration and thousands of Russians migrated to the region, including Ashkenazi Jews. By the end of the century many major cities in Russian Turkestan had sizable populations of European Jews, and in some cities Ashkenazim even outnumbered indigenous Bukharan Jews. Relations between the two communities were strained, as the Ashkenazim viewed the indigenous Bukharan Jews as little different from their Muslim neighbors, and intermarriage remained rare, even through the Soviet period. Jewish migration within Central Asia also increased after the Bukharan government placed heavy taxes on Jews and banned the sale of land to Jews; Bukharan Jews in Russian Turkestan, however, were granted Russian citizenship and the right to relocate to Russian territory. The influx of Ashkenazim and Bukharan Jews caused the Jewish population in the cities of Samarkand, Tashkent, and Kokand to increase from only a few hundred to several thousand. Jewish communities were also founded in what would become the urban centers of modern Central Asia: Osh and Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, Vernyi (modern Almaty) in Kazakhstan, Dushanbe in Tajikistan, and Merv in Turkmenistan. Most Bukharan Jews arrived in Russian Turkestan penniless and had few useful skills, as the traditional trade of cotton dyeing was made obsolete by the introduction of factory-made textiles. Most Bukharan Jews in Russian Turkestan worked as small peddlers, shoe repairers, and hairdressers, but some Jewish merchants became wealthy. Jews were pioneers in converting Central Asian farms for cotton cultivation and a few Jewish families, such as the

Va'adiyaevs, Patilahovs, and Davidovs, held monopolies over the cotton and silk trade and achieved great affluence.

In the last two decades of the 19th century, Moscow's anti-Semitic domestic policy reached Russian Turkestan. Jews were designated as "indigenous Jew" and granted full rights equal to local Muslims, or non-resident alien Jews, and given few rights. In 1910–1913, the governor-general of Russian-controlled territories ordered the expulsion of nonnative Jews from the cities of Samarkand, Tashkent, and much of the Fergana Valley, which resulted in mixed success, as many Jews managed to avoid the order. Jews also faced attacks in Bukhara from the Jadid, a secular Muslim reformist movement that in its literature demonized Jews because of their economic good fortunes. During this period, Bukharan Jews migrated to Palestine in increasing numbers. Bukharan Jews first made aliyah in 1827 and from that point on small groups of Jews settled in Palestine. In the 1880s, Zionist emissaries arrived from Palestine to encourage emigration, and from 1889 until World War I more than 1,500 Bukharan Jews, who at this time numbered more than 15,000, moved to Palestine, where they established a Bukharan quarters in Jerusalem. Among these was Yosef Maman's highly educated grandson, Shimon Haham. In 1870, he opened a religious school in Bukhara. A dearth of Jewish texts in Bukhara prompted Haham to translate numerous religious books in Judeo-Tajik, but he had to travel to Palestine to print and purchase the books. In the 1890s, Haham permanently relocated to Jerusalem, where he translated more than 50 books into Bukharan, including the entire Torah. In fact, Palestine, rather than Bukhara, became the center for Judeo-Tajik publications, and 120 books were published in the Holy Land in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One notable exception was the Judeo-Tajik newspaper *Rahamin* (Mercy) published from 1910 to 1914 in the city of Skobelev (modern Fergana in Uzbekistan).

### Jews in the Soviet Era

When the Bolsheviks first arrived in Central Asia after the revolution of 1917 they took a moderate tone toward religion in an attempt not to anger the region's Muslim majority. Jews held elected positions in many of the various governments that formed across the region, including the Tashkent Soviet. Many Ashkenazim embraced a radical secular stance, and Jews held a dominant position in the Turkestan Communist Party; local Ashkenazim even organized a Turkestan branch of the Yevseksia, the Jewish Communist Party. The Jewish communists at first adopted a tolerant stance toward the use of Hebrew, as it was the only language Ashkenazim and Bukharan Jews had in common, but soon a drive from within the Yevseksia sought to ban the use of Hebrew in Jewish schools and replace it with Yiddish or Judeo-Tajik. In the summer of 1919, the Turkestan Commissariat of Education passed a decree introducing Judeo-Tajik as the language of education for Jews. This act elicited a great debate among Jews within the Communist Party and the decree was publicly denounced at several meetings. In 1920, Z. L. Amitin-Shapiro, a Lithuanian Jew who had been a Hebrew teacher in Turkestan during the time of the czar and later became a leading Jewish Marxist, even published, with permission of

the Council for Culture and Education, a geography textbook in Hebrew; Amitin-Shapiro would later condemn the use of Hebrew. It was not until 1921 that the ban on Hebrew was fully enforced and Judeo-Tajik became the language of instruction in schools.

In 1920, communist forces overthrew the emirate of Bukhara, which had a Jewish population of around 15,000, and created the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic. Four years later, the Bukharan and Turkestan soviet republics were abolished and Central Asia was divided into republics based on nationality. The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was created in 1924, and republics were later created for the Turkmen (1925), Tajiks (1929), Kyrgyz (1936), and Kazakhs (1936). The advent of Soviet rule brought an end to the traditional system of Jewish autonomy and replaced it with Jewish committees loyal to the government. Jews who resisted were frequently killed, including the last *kalontar* of Bukhara, Pinehas Rabbin, who was murdered in 1920 and replaced with a seven-man commission that included a rabbi. In the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks granted leniency to merchants and Jews continued to work in their traditional trades, but by the end of the decade Jews were fully engaged in the collectivized economy. Beginning in 1926, an experiment began in converting Jews into agriculturalists, and by 1929 as many as 30 Jewish collective farms had been created. The Jewish collective farms would fail—all were abandoned by the 1950s—but the government found greater success employing Jews as factory workers and organizing cooperatives of Jewish craftspeople. In Uzbekistan, Jews worked in a silk mill, a soap factory, and a cotton gin, and by 1933 there were 2,500 Jewish factory workers in the republic; that same year, 3,000 Jewish craftspeople were registered members of cooperatives.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Jewish culture in Central Asia underwent an officially sanctioned renaissance. Jews were employed as actors, directors, musicians, and composers throughout Central Asia, and Judeo-Tajik performances appeared in local theaters. Publications in Hebrew were banned, but Judeo-Tajik literature increased in number. In the late 1920s, only a handful of Judeo-Tajik publications were issued, but by 1933 that number had climbed to 177, albeit most of these were textbooks and government propaganda pieces. Jewish schools were opened, and in 1930 there were 30 schools with 3,000 pupils in Uzbekistan; four years later, the number of students enrolled increased to 4,000. Although cultural experimentation was encouraged, Jewish religious and political autonomy began to be dismantled in 1928 as part of a nationwide antireligious campaign that resulted in the closure of nearly all synagogues in Central Asia by the mid-1930s. Jewish political committees were also closed, and the Yevsektsia was disbanded in 1930. That same year the expropriation of Jewish property began and in 1932 Jewish valuables were confiscated. The government crackdown elicited a new wave of Jewish emigrants, and between 1924 and 1935, when the border was sealed, around 4,000 Jews illegally emigrated from Soviet Central Asia, mostly over the border with Iran and Afghanistan; some settled there and others continued on to Palestine. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Jewish schools, theaters, and publications were closed, and 1,000 Central Asian Jews, including political leaders and cultural figures, were purged in Stalin's Great Terror of 1937–1938.

During World War II, antireligious campaigns were relaxed and anti-Semitism dropped off. As many as 4,000 Central Asian Jews fought in the war, many of whom perished, and Jewish actors and musicians participated in wartime tours of the Soviet Union. A new wave of thousands of Ashkenazim arrived as deportees and refugees from Europe. In the late 1930s, Jews were deported from the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Poland, and the Baltic States to Central Asia, and thousands more arrived as refugees by the end of the war, further increasing a Jewish population that numbered around 60,000 before the war. After the war a harsh anti-Semitic campaign was launched in 1948 and lasted until Stalin's death in 1953, after which time some synagogues were allowed to reopen and Jews enjoyed limited freedoms. One forbidden topic for Jews was Zionism. The Soviet press embraced anti-Israeli polemics and any praise of the Jewish state met with severe punishment. During the wars between Israel and the Arab states in 1956, 1967, and 1973, Jews were forced to openly condemn Israel in the press, march in the streets in support of the Arab states, and even make financial donations to Israel's enemies. The ban on Jewish cultural, political, or religious organizations continued until the late 1980s. The lack of Jewish education led to a decline in religious observance among youth, and many young Bukharan Jews preferred to speak Russian rather than Judeo-Tajik. In 1971, restrictions on emigration were eased in the Soviet Union and an exodus of Jews left for Israel and the West. By the late 1980s, 17,000 Bukharan Jews, as well as many Ashkenazim, had left Central Asia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the republics of Central Asia gained independence. The continuous stream of Jews leaving Central Asia that began in the 1970s now became a torrent of emigrants. In no country was the exodus greater than in Uzbekistan, where the number of Jews fell from 95,000 to less than a fifth of that number by the end of the decade. In Tajikistan, civil war drove nearly the entire Jewish population, which numbered 14,800 in 1989, to leave the country, including thousands who left in an Israeli emergency airlift in the fall of 1992. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan similar declines occurred. Across the Amu Darya River in Afghanistan, more than two decades of war reduced the Jewish population to only a handful of people. Today, the population of Bukharan Jews in Israel (60,000) and the United States (25,000) dwarfs that of all Bukharan Jews in Central Asia (3,000), which in the late 1980s numbered 45,000. Despite their decline in numbers, the remaining 35,000–40,000 Ashkenazim and Bukharan Jews in Central Asia have, in the last two decades, reestablished spiritual and cultural traditions with the assistance of foreign organizations.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- Ben-Zvi, Itzhak. 1963. *The Exiled and the Redeemed*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Facing West: Oriental Jews of Central Asia and the Caucasus*. 1999. Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers Zwolle.
- Fischel, Walter J. 1964. "The Leaders of the Jews of Bokhara." In *Jewish Leaders 1750–1940*, edited by Leo Jung, 535–547. Jerusalem: Boys Town.
- Fuzailoff, Giora. "Rabbanic Succession in Bukhara, 1790–1930." Bukharan Jewish Global Portal Web site. <http://www.bjews.com/> (accessed May 19, 2008).

- Gilboa, Jehoshua A. 1982. *A Language Silenced: Hebrew Culture in the Soviet Union*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University.
- Karmysheva, B. Kh. "The Arabs and Jews of Central Asia." *Central Asian Review* 12: 271–274
- "Literature of Bukharan Jewry." Bukharian Jews USA Web site. [http://www.bjewsusa.com/HI\\_literature\\_of\\_bukharan\\_jewry.htm](http://www.bjewsusa.com/HI_literature_of_bukharan_jewry.htm) (accessed May 19, 2008).
- Lowental, R. 1958. *The Judeo-Muslim Marranos of Bukhara*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University.
- Pinkhasov, Peter. "Bukharian Jews in WWII." Bukharan Jewish Global Portal Web site. <http://www.bjews.com/> (accessed May 19, 2008).
- Pinkhasov, Peter. "The History of Bukharian Jews." Bukharan Jewish Global Portal Web site. <http://www.bjews.com/> (accessed May 19, 2008).
- Poujol, Catherine. 1993. "Approaches to the History of Bukharan Jews' Settlement in the Fergana Valley, 1867–1917." *Central Asian Survey* 12: 549–556.
- Vishnevetsky, Alexander. 2004. "The Exodus of the Jews from Central Asia." *Jews of Euro-Asia* 3, no. 7 (Sept.–Dec.). [http://www.eajc.org/publish\\_print\\_e.php?rowid=89](http://www.eajc.org/publish_print_e.php?rowid=89) (accessed May 19, 2008).
- Zand, Michael. 1979. Bukharan Jewish Culture under Soviet Rule. *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 9 (2): 15–23.
- Zand, Michael. 1991. "Notes on Culture of the Non-Ashkenazi Jewish Communities under Soviet Rule." In *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union*, edited by Yaacov Roi, 379–443. New York: New York University Press.
- Zand, Michael. 1991. "Patterns of Sovietization of Oriental Jewish Culture: Bukharan Jewish Culture, 1918–1940—A Case Study." *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 21 (1): 47–52.
- Zand, Michael. *Encyclopædia Iranica*, s.v. "Bukharan Jews." [www.iranica.com](http://www.iranica.com) (accessed May 19, 2008).

## Jews in Afghanistan

*Irena Vladimirska*

---

**General Population:** 30,000,000.

**Jewish Population:** A single known person lives in Kabul.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Jews arrived in Afghanistan during the time of the biblical exodus. Jewish immigrants from Persia and Bukhara would periodically arrive in the country up until the mid-20th century.

**Languages Spoken:** Afghan Jews are descendants of Persian Jews and speak Judeo-Persian.

---

### Historical Overview

8th–6th centuries BCE Traditionally, the Jewish communities of modern Afghanistan trace their beginnings to the Assyrian exile (720 BCE) and the Babylonian Exile (560 BCE), although there is little archaeological evidence to support this traditional belief. The names of some of the local Afghani tribes are said to retain traces of Hebrew origins such as the *Durrani* (tribe of Dan), the *Yussafzai* (tribe of Joseph), and the *Afridi* (tribe of Ephraim).

- 9th century CE The biblical commentaries of Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon (882–942), Karaite Daniel al-Qumisi (ca. 850), and Yaphet ben Eli Hallewi (ca. 900) identified Khorasan as the region to which Jews were exiled. These commentators testify to a thriving Jewish community in the region. The discovery of a Jewish cemetery in the city of Ghur in 1946 testifies to the existence of a large and flourishing Jewish community from the 8th to the 13th centuries BCE.
- 10th century The Jewish community of Balkh is mentioned in *Kitab al-Maslik ul-Mamalik* (A Book of Routes and Countries), written by the Arab geographer and chronicler Mohammed Abul-Kassem ibn Hawqal in 951 CE. In this book, he refers to those “who called themselves Jews,” probably Khazars or Karaites, and to Jews who can be identified as the Radaniya Jews, a unique group of Jewish international merchants in the late eighth to early ninth century, who maintained close economic ties with the Jewish kingdom of Khazaria.
- 12th century Mohammed El-Idrisi, a Muslim historian and geographer (ca. 1099–ca. 1166), mentions Jewish communities in the cities of Ghazni and Kabul and chronicler Benjamin of Tudela (d. 1173) reports that “Ghaznah is the great city on the river Gozen, where there are about 80,000 Israelites.” It was a city of commercial importance for Central and South Asia. After the Mongolian invasion of the region at the beginning of the 13th century, these community members either scatter or are forced to convert to Islam.
- 18th century The Durrani dynasty comes to power in the Afghan kingdom. At this time, the local Jewish community is isolated from neighboring Diaspora communities.
- 1839–1840 After Jews are forced to convert to Islam, some 200 Jewish families of Mashad, in Iran, flee to Herat, the main Jewish community in Afghanistan. These new immigrants help strengthen the existing Jewish institutions and contribute to Jewish life in general in Afghanistan. For much of the 19th century, and for the first half of the 20th century, Herat is the main Jewish community in Afghanistan.
- Early 20th century There are various estimates regarding the extent of the Jewish population in the territory of Afghanistan at this time. Older sources tend to put the number at close to 40,000 persons living in about 60 communities, but modern researchers consider this number to be greatly exaggerated and generally agree on a much smaller figure of only 4,000 and around 15 communities, with some only hosting a temporary Jewish presence of merchants. Until the middle of the 20th century, the Jews of Afghanistan have little contact with modernity and their links are limited to the neighboring Jewish communities in Iran, Central Asia, and India.
- 1917 The Jewish community receives an upsurge in numbers as Jews flee the neighboring Bukharan emirate after the Bolshevik Revolution. Most of these refugees settled in Kabul and merge with the local community.
- 1930 The two main Jewish communities of Afghanistan are located in the cities of Kabul and Herat, each numbering about 2,000 Jews. Balkh has the third-largest Jewish community, made up of many immigrants from Central Asia: smaller Jewish communities are found in the towns of Ghazni and Kandahar.

- 1933 Jews are allowed to live only in Herat, Balkh, and Kandahar, and are forbidden to leave the city without special permission from the authorities. Jews are forced to live in separate districts; in Balkh, the gates of the Jewish district are closed during the night.
- 1948–1950 Until the 1940s, Zionist activities are banned in Afghanistan, though several thousand Jews manage to emigrate to Eretz Israel and other foreign destinations. The founding of the State of Israel prompts a surge in Jews making aliyah, and from June 1948 until June 1950, 459 Jewish families leave Afghanistan for the Holy Land.
- 1951 Jews are officially allowed to leave Afghanistan.
- 1979 The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, unleashing a decade of bloody occupation. At this time, as many as 5,000 Jews remain in Afghanistan.
- 1992 The communist government in Kabul falls and Afghanistan collapses into civil war. The Jewish community is decimated by emigration.
- 2007 Western press reports that 44-year-old Zablun Simintov is the last Jew known to live in Afghanistan.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Afghan Jews were active in the cotton and silk trade and specialized in the dyeing process. Making the dye, which is produced from the bodies of the female cochineal insect and indigo, renders the worker's hands blue, causing many to falsely believe this is a characteristic of the Jews of Afghanistan.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

The traditional Afghan Jewish costume was similar to that of the Muslim population with the exception of the black turban worn by all Jewish men. According to one tradition, the black turban was considered a sign of mourning for the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. Others believe the Jews were forced to wear black turbans as a mark to distinguish them from the Muslim population.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

For a long time, Herat was home to the largest Jewish community in the territory of modern Afghanistan. Located in the western parts of the country, the local Jews were culturally connected to the Jews of Iran. The Jewish community of Herat was strictly hierarchical. The first group, the communal elite, was made up of Jewish immigrants from Mashhad. They spoke Gilkhi—the original dialect of Judeo-Persian language spoken only by rabbis of Mashhad and their descendents. The second group consisted of wealthy local merchants and rabbis who spoke the main dialect of Judeo-Persian language, and the third and the poorest group included immigrants from the Iranian city of Yezd who continued to use their own dialect. There were four synagogues in Herat, all of them built at the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries: Samuel, Yoav, Gul, and Gardji. Yoav synagogue was named in memory of Rabbi Yoav Siman Tov, one of the main spiritual leaders of the Herat

Jewish community. It was built in the 1880s and was the most beautiful and the biggest of Herat synagogues. Gul synagogue was completed in the 1870s and was the last synagogue to be closed in 1972. Gardji synagogue was built in 1840 with donations from the rich merchant family Gardji; in 1940, it was the first to be destroyed. Samuel synagogue was built in 1902 and named in memory of its first rabbi. All the synagogues served as educational centers for rabbinical studies. The Jews of Afghanistan used Hebrew for liturgy and religious studies, while Judeo-Persian was the main language for day-to-day usage. In addition, there were distinct differences between the dialect of Kabul and those spoken in other communities. War has forced many Jews to leave the country, and in the last decades there has been almost no organized Jewish life in Afghanistan.

### Selected Bibliography

- Adler, Markus Nathan, ed. 1907. *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. London: Frowde, 58–59.
- Baram ben Yosef, Noam, ed. 1997. *Boi Kala: Manhigei Irosin ve Hatuna shel' Yehudei Afganistan* [Bride Bringing In: Engagement and Wedding Customs of the Jews of Afghanistan]. Jerusalem: Israeli Museum.
- Bezalel, Izhak. 1999. *Eda bifnei atzma: Yahadut Afganistan ve Hituba bein Edot Paras u Bukhara* [A Community of Its Own: The Jews of Afghanistan and Their Classification between the Hews of Iran and Bukhara]. *Pe'a'mim* 79: 15–40.
- Chaffets, David. 1984. *A Journey through Afghanistan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ewans, Martin. 2002. *Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics*. Repr. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Ferrier, J. P., William Jesse, and Henry Donby Seymour, 1856. *Caravan Journeys and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and Beloochistan; with Historical Notices of the Countries Lying between Russia and India*. Translated by William Jesse. London: J. Murray.
- Shterenshis, Michael. 2002. *Tamerlane and the Jews*. London: Routledge.

## Jews in Kazakhstan

*Irena Vladimirsky*

**General Population:** 14,800,000

**Jewish Population:** Estimates range from 15,000–20,000 (National Conference on Soviet Jewry)

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 0.9 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Alma Ata is the main Jewish center of the country with approximately 10,000 individuals. Smaller Jewish communities are spread out across the country in such places as Karaganda, Chimkent, Astana, Semipalatinsk, Kokchetav, Dzhabambul, Uralsk, Aktyubinsk, and Petropavlovsk.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Ashkenazi Jews arrived from the Pale of Settlement and later from Russia during the Soviet period. Small communities of Bukharan and Caucasian Jews also reside in the country.

**Languages Spoken:** Nearly all speak Russian. Yiddish and Judeo-Tajik are rarely spoken.

## Historical Overview

- 1825 The first mention of 12 Ashkenazi Jews who work as petty traders in the Semipalatinsk region of the Steppe region.
- 1865–1867 The territory of Kazakhstan becomes part of the Russian Empire. Jews from the Pale of Settlement and retired soldiers and officers receive permission to settle here.
- 1870 Jews with academic degrees are encouraged to settle on recently conquered territories of the Russian Empire. The first three Jews settle in Vernyi (now Alma Ata); they are a veterinarian, a dentist, and a gynecologist.
- 1879 Eighty-one Jews live permanently in Vernyi.
- 1884 The first synagogue opens in Vernyi in a small old wooden building.
- 1897 Ninety-nine Ashkenazi Jews live in Vernyi; in the whole Vernenskii region, the Jewish population is 177 persons.
- 1908 The first Jewish community is officially registered in Vernyi; 101 signatures are added to a request to Nicolas II to register the community with words of blessing to the ruling Romanov's family.
- 1910 The first census on national minorities of Siberia and the Turkestan general-governorship is held. According to the census, 206 Jews live in Vernyi, 35 in Aktyuibinsk, and 154 in Akmolinsk (now Astana).
- 1920s–1930s The Jewish population of Kazakhstan grows steadily. There are two main sources for the growth: the Bolshevik Party encourages Jewish youths were encouraged to help the industrialization and collectivization processes in the backward Central Asian republics, and Kazakhstan becomes the main place of political exile for former Zionists, undesirable party members, and religious leaders.
- 1926 The First All-Union population census is held. The Jewish population of the entire republic is 3,600 persons, 230–240 of whom live in Vernyi (the total population of the city is 45,000).
- 1939 The Second All-Union population census is held. The Jewish population of Alma Ata is 2,216 (population of the entire city is 230,000). In all of Kazakhstan, the Jewish population is 19,200.
- October 1939 Rabbi Levi Yitzhak Schneerson of Lubavitch is exiled, first to a work camp near Kzyl Orda, and later to Alma Ata. His house immediately becomes the center of Jewish life in the city.
- 1941–1945 During World War II, numerous Jews from western regions of the Soviet Union are evacuated to Kazakhstan. The Jewish population of the region doubles.
- 1950 The Alma Ata synagogue is torn down under the pretext of general reconstruction in the city; an alternative building is promised but never provided.
- 1952–1955 The “doctor’s plot,” in which false accusations are made that Jewish doctors plan to eliminate the Soviet leadership, prompts Anti-Jewish activity. The number of Jewish students at the institutions of higher education and the number of officials of Jewish origin in different governmental structures of the republic are strictly limited.

- 1979 The First All-Union population census after World War II shows 8,592 Jews in Alma Ata (0.9 percent of the city's entire population).
- 1985 The politics of openness and glasnost begin in the Soviet Union. All informal voluntary organizations are allowed by Soviet officials.
- 1989 The first Jewish cultural society, *Shalom*, is organized in Alma Ata
- 1990 The first Jewish newspaper, the Russian-language publication *Shalom*, is published in Alma Ata.
- 1990–1993 Numerous Jewish cultural and social organizations are founded: Vaad, of the Jewish communities of Kazakhstan; the Association of the Jewish Youth of Kazakhstan; the republican center Dror, for studying and developing Jewish culture; and Maccabi, a sports organization.
- 1992 The Alma Ata synagogue reopens, the republican branch of Bnei Akiva is organized, and the first Jewish kindergarten and first Jewish school open.
- 1994 Rabbi Joshua Cohen of Chabad is appointed the chief rabbi of Kazakhstan.
- 2000 The Jewish Congress of Kazakhstan and the Mitzvah Jewish association begin operations. Three Russian-language Jewish community newspapers are published in Kazakhstan: *Davar*, *Shalom*, *Mabat*.
- November 2002 The first international conference devoted to the history of Jews in Kazakhstan is held in Alma Ata.
- September 2004 The biggest synagogue, Beth Rachel, and Jewish community center in Central Asia open in Astana.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

The first Jewish settlers in Kazakhstan established a system of medical care and assisted the local nomad population. A. Ryazanovskii organized the first public hospital in Vernyi. M. Rosenblum built the first pharmaceutical factory in the region during the 1930s. G. Hamburg built the first factory for refreshment drinks, which was later nationalized by the Bolsheviks.

Jews aided in the realization of the “Virgin Land” policy, the resettlement in Kazakhstan of millions of migrants from Western regions of the Soviet Union, from 1954 to 1960. Jews headed the first agricultural laboratories and developed the study of grain cultures in geographically restricted regions such as the Akmolinskii region.

The modern Jewish community has focused on culture and higher education and economics. Several Jews have taken ministerial and advisory posts in the government of Kazakhstan, including Alexander Mashkevich, a well-known businessman and president of the Eurasian Industrial Association.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Cultural and religious organizations are flourishing and growing in number. Seventeen cities have Jewish social clubs. There are 12 charity Hesed organizations

Jews are active in cultural and educational sectors in Kazakhstan. Evhenii Brusilovsky (1905–1981) settled in Kazakhstan in 1933 and began collecting Kazakh

folk music as a member of the local Music Research Institute. Bryssilovsky's first opera, *Kyz Zhibek* (1934), initiated the development of a Kazakh national opera; it was followed by *Zhalbyr* (1935), *Zolotoe Zerno* (1940), *Dudaray* (1953), and other operas and ballets. He was artistic director of the Kazakh Music Theater (1934–1938) and taught at the Alma Ata conservatory. Natalya Sats (1900–1993), who was arrested during the Stalinist purges in 1937, founded the first theater for children in Kazakhstan.

### Jewish Educational and Communal Institutions

The Association of Jewish national republics of Kazakhstan, Mitzva, has been in operation since 1992. In May 1999, the organization received the status of a voluntary public association of the Jewish organizations of Kazakhstan. Mitzvah coordinated the activities of 15 cultural Jewish associations, 12 Hesed charity organizations, and 12 Jewish community centers. The Jewish Congress of Kazakhstan was established in 1999 and its council was elected; among its members are prominent community leaders, for example, the chief rabbi of Kazakhstan, Joshua Cohen. The main purpose of the congress is the popularization and preservation of Jewish culture and traditions, charity work, social programs, and wide support for Jewish education.

There are five synagogues in Kazakhstan; the two in Alma Ata and Pavlodar were sponsored by the congress. The congress supported the program Family Summer Camps, which helped to strengthen ties between different family generations



Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen greets guests inside the newly opened Menachem House Jewish Community Center and Levy Yitzhok Synagogue in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 1997. (Reuters/Corbis)

and preserve Jewish traditions. The 14 Jewish day schools that are active in Kazakhstan have more than 700 pupils. The main cities of Kazakhstan have organized community centers for studying Hebrew and Yiddish.

Major organizations include the following:

- *The JCK (Jewish Congress of Kazakhstan)*: founded in 1999.
- *HESED*: a charity organization that provides financial and food support to needy Jewish families.
- *Bnei Akiva*: a religious youth organization that has branches in Alma Ata, Astana, Kzyl Orda, and Semipalatinsk.
- *Chabad-Lubavitch*: an international religious movement with local membership that offers religious and social services in 17 cities, including the main synagogue and educational and community centers in Astana, the new capital of Kazakhstan.
- *The Mitzvah Association*: it has created educational, cultural, and community programs.
- *The Maccabi*: a voluntary sports organization for Jewish youth.
- *The Moadon*: a collection of youth centers that are popular hangouts for Jewish teens; they also teach Jewish culture and history and Hebrew.
- *OFEK (Community Festival of Jewish Books)*: an organization that coordinates annual Jewish book festivals in Alma Ata, Astana, and other cities and distributes the Jewish periodicals *Davar*, *Shalom*, and *Dror*.

### Selected Bibliography

- Grinberg, Isaak. 2005. *Evrei v Alma Ate: Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk*. Alma Ata, Kazakhstan: Iskander.
- "Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic." 1980. In *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 10. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 407–411.
- "Kazakhstan." In *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 43.
- "Kazakhstan Country Page." National Conference on Soviet Jewry Web site. [www.ncsj.org/Kazakhstan.shtml](http://www.ncsj.org/Kazakhstan.shtml) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Krichevsky, Lev. 2002. "Kazakhstan, Jewish Families Carry on a Tradition Born in Persia." National Conference on Soviet Jewry.
- Medding, Peter Y. 1995. *Values, Interests and Identities in a Changing World*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Olcott, Martha Brill. 2002. *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment.

## Jews in Kyrgyzstan

*Irena Vladimirska*

General Population: 5 million

Jewish Population: 1,000

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Jewish populations exist in Osh, Karakol, and Dzhahal-Abad.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Most Jews are Ashkenazim who arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and a smaller number of Bukharan Jews.

**Languages Spoken:** Most speak Russian. Yiddish and Judeo-Tajik are also spoken.

## Historical Overview

**6th century** Jewish traders from Khazaria start visiting Kyrgyz territory. Other evidence of early Jewish history is found in Kyrgyz folklore sources.

**8th century** Kyrgyz tribes in their homeland in China begin to use the Star of David in their architecture and crafts.

**10th century** The term *dzeet* (Jew) is found for the first time in the Kyrgyz national epic poem *Manas*, which probably incorporates earlier traditions. An entire section of the poem is dedicated to “King Solomon’s times.” Several popular Kyrgyz legends refer to a 130-meter high mountain near the city of Osh as King Solomon’s throne (Takht-i-Sulaiman). The famous Arab geographer Al-Maqdisi (946–1000), who traveled extensively in the lands of Islam, mentions the cities of Osh, Balasagun, Uzgen, Taraz, and others as having communities of *akhl-az-zimma*, or non-Muslim medieval Jewish traders. Archaeological evidence of Jewish habitation of Kyrgyzstan dating from the 10th century includes bronze and porcelain objects with the Star of David.

**13th century** The traditional urban centers of Central Asia are destroyed in the Mongol invasions, and Jewish communities are decimated. Kyrgyz tribes migrate from their homelands in China to what is today Central Asia. The Jewish community enters a period of decline.

**18th century** At the end of the 18th century, a special Imperial law gives affluent Central Asian merchants permission to become members of trade corporations in the Russian Empire. As a rule, in addition to their commercial activity, these traders carry out special diplomatic and espionage missions. Moses Raphailov, a merchant from the Kashghar region (at the time Kyrgyzstan was a part of Kashgharia), collects important strategic information for the Russian government and in 1811 is awarded an important gold medal for his special contribution to the prosperity of the Russian government.

**1880s** The first Ashkenazi Jews begin to arrive in the region after the Russian conquest of Central Asia in the 1880s. Some of them arrive with the Russian army as *kantonists* (Jewish youths conscripted by force to the Russian Imperial army and then forced to convert to Christianity).

**1900** A population census mentions 800 Jews in Osh and 250 Jews in Bishkek.

**1914–1917** During World War I, thousands of Ashkenazi Jewish war refugees and prisoners of war from the German and Austro-Hungarian armies are sent to Kyrgyzstan where they are compelled to work in coal mines, on irrigation projects and railway routes, and as technical personnel in the local factories. In contrast, local Bukharan Jews are conscripted into the Russian military and sent to the front.

- 1917–1920s After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, new political activists arrive in Kyrgyzstan, many of whom are communists of Jewish background, including G. Broido, chairman of the Bishkek City Soviet, and members of local city Soviets in Osh, Dzhahal-Abad, and Tokmak. They are subsequently persecuted during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s.
- 1920s At the initiative of the local Ministry of Education, a Jewish institute, with the aim of ending illiteracy, is set up in Kyrgyzstan under the leadership of Simon Dimanshtein, who is later instrumental in organizing a Jewish settlement in Biribidjan. The institute organizes circles and clubs for the conversion of Sephardic Jewish literature to the Cyrillic script and establishes a network of primary schools intended to preserve their unique culture and language—mainly dialects of Persian and Uzbek languages that are spoken by Sephardic Jews. A network of technical colleges is supposed to create a new type of Soviet Sephardic Jews: factory workers and schoolteachers, instead of shop owners and money dealers. From 1920 to 1940, some 750 Judeo-Tajik language books and one newspaper are published by the Soviet authorities in Osh, Bishkek, and Dzalal-Abad, especially by UchPedGiz (The Educational Study Publishing House), which encourages the printing of books, particularly textbooks, in the languages of national minorities.
- 1929 Soviet authorities establish a branch of the Militant Atheist-Marxist Association in Kyrgyzstan. More than 1,880 clerics—priests, rabbis, and mullahs—are denied their electoral rights. Nevertheless, Jews attempt to observe Jewish religious traditions in secret. For the Passover holiday, each family bakes matzoth at home: several families meet together and celebrate the Sabbath and holidays. Circumcision, too, is practiced clandestinely: a number of families organize a ceremony and pay for a mohel to be specially brought to Kyrgyzstan from Tashkent, in neighboring Uzbekistan. Alexander Volodarsky, a former yeshiva student in Vitebsk, who is exiled from Byelorussia because of his religious beliefs, becomes a well-known unofficial leader of the Jewish community in the city of Osh. Volodarsky acts as shohet and is regarded as an authority on kashruth. He repeatedly assails the city authorities with requests for setting up a separate section for Jewish burial in the cemetery of Osh. Thanks to his endeavors, members of the Jewish community of Osh are allowed to be buried in a separate Jewish section until the beginning of World War II. Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews collect money jointly to maintain the Jewish tombs.
- 1941–1945 During World War II, 20,000 Jews, mostly Ashkenazim, migrate to Kyrgyzstan as war refugees. Authorities lessen religious persecution and synagogues are allowed to open in Bishkek, Osh, and Kant.
- 1945 The Jewish religious community of Bishkek gains official recognition. Jews are allowed to visit synagogue daily, and thousands of Jews attend temple during official Jewish holidays.
- 1950s A nationwide anti-Semitic campaign results in severe restrictions on the religious life of Jews in Kyrgyzstan. Jews continue to secretly collect funds for synagogues and to support the needy and elderly.

1959 The census records 5,800 Jews in Kyrgyzstan.

1989 The census records 5,200 Jews in Kyrgyzstan.

1991 Kyrgyzstan gains independence. Regional political instability and economic impoverishment cause a large number of Jews to emigrate.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Numerous Jews were among the owners of different enterprises and companies in the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Yuri Davidov owned cotton factories in the Fergana Valley; Boris Kagan established a network of bookshops; and the Polyakov brothers founded a branch of the Azov-Don Commercial Bank. In the late years of the 19th century, I. M. Singer & Company, the famous American sewing machine manufacturer founded by Isaac Merritt Singer, opened shops in the territory of Kyrgyzstan as a result of the gradual development of the Fergana Valley into a center of the cotton textile industry based on the local agricultural production. According to the 1905 decree on religious tolerance, members of non-Christian religions were permitted to settle in various parts of the Russian Empire. Kyrgyzstan, a remote region of the Russian Empire that was in great demand for doctors, engineers, teachers, and qualified artisans, attracted Jewish immigrants from Poland, Lithuania, Iran, and Iraq.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Notable Jews of Kyrgyzstan include the following: Amnepodist Varaskin (1820–1878), a famous geographer, cartographer, and former kantonist, investigated the region and drew maps of the northern Tien Shan Mountains, the Balkhash region, and the Chu Valley. Pinkas Lipshits, a former book trader who settled in Bishkek after the Russian occupation of Central Asia. He published not only religious literature—mainly in Hebrew with commentaries in Yiddish or Russian—but also works by Tolstoy, Goethe, and Shakespeare in Yiddish translations from Russian. Historian and revolutionary Zalman Amitin-Shapiro (1894–1944), the son of a rabbi, earned degrees in law and Oriental studies simultaneously from Turkestan University. He was the author of a number of studies on the history of the Jews of Bukhara in Kyrgyzstan: *Women at a Wedding Ceremony of the Bukharan Jews of Turkestan* (1924), *Common Law of the Bukharan Jewish Communities* (1926), and *On the Practice of Socialization among the Bukharan Jews of Turkestan* (1933). In 1937, he was named professor of ancient history at the State Education Institute of Kyrgyzstan, but, a year later, he was arrested, accused of being an enemy of the people, and exiled to Siberia, where he died in 1944.

The first gramophone recordings of Sephardi Jews were made in 1910. The Sephardi Jews published *Rahamim*, a newspaper that appeared in Fergana and Kokand, while Ashkenazi Jews in Kokand established a Tarbut cultural-educational association with branches all over the territory of Central Asia. A Yiddish theater company was one of the activities promoted by this association. During World War II the Jewish Theatre Company of Warsaw, with the renowned actress Ida Kaminska

(1899–1980), was evacuated to Kyrgyzstan. The Jewish theater performed in Yiddish, Polish, Ukrainian, and Byelorussian before returning to Poland after the war.

### Religious Denominations

Not much is known about the religious life of the Jews of Kyrgyzstan before the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. The Jewish community of Osh brought their phylacteries and Torah scrolls from Bukhara. Some religious books, mostly editions of Torah and the Babylonian Talmud, with commentaries in the Jewish dialects of Persian or Uzbek languages, were published in Kyrgyzstan in the early 20th century. Until 1915, there were no synagogues in Kyrgyzstan. The nearest synagogues were in Vernyi (now Almaty in Kazakhstan), Tashkent, Samarkand, and Fergana (now in Uzbekistan). Local Jews used to gather for prayer in the houses of local rabbis. The officials of the *chevra kadisha* (funeral association) were sent to Kyrgyzstan from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. A separate Jewish cemetery existed only in Osh. In Bishkek there was a distinct Jewish burial section in the local Muslim cemetery, while in other cities Jews preferred to use separate Jewish sections in Christian cemeteries.

During World War II, the hardships of war brought about a change in the official policy concerning the relationship between state and religion. The Soviet policy during those years assumed that every religion had an important duty in consolidating the Soviet society facing the German enemy. In 1941, for the first time a public synagogue in Kyrgyzstan was allowed to be opened in Bishkek (then known as Frunze). Jews bought a building in the city center and Y. Levin, the first rabbi, donated a Torah scroll. The synagogue provided services of mohel, shohet, and *chevra kadisha*. A beth midrash and a mikvah functioned on the premises. Special shops selling kosher meat, haloth for Sabbath, and matzoth for Passover opened near the synagogue. Additional synagogues were established in the cities of Osh and Kant.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Since the times of Russian occupation, there has been no primary Jewish education for the Jews of Kyrgyzstan. Some Sephardi Jews sent their children to heder in Samarkand, but Ashkenazi Jews kept Jewish traditions only within the family circle and sent their children to Russian educational institutions.

In the post-Soviet period, Jewish culture and religious life underwent a revival that saw the opening of a Ashkenazi synagogue in Bishkek and several Bukharan synagogues in towns in the Ferghana Valley. In Bishkek, the Menorah Center runs a Sunday school, distributes charity food for the elderly, and publishes the *Ma'ayan* newspaper. In addition, there is an Aish Hatorah education center, several Maccabi sports organizations, a Jewish theater, and a dance group.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Ashkenazi Jews settled mostly in the provincial cities of Kyrgyzstan and became an inseparable part of the urban culture of the region. In the city of Karakol (formerly Przhhevsk), in eastern Kyrgyzstan, just one Jew was recorded in 1885, and in 1900

there were seven Jews. Their numbers grew to 15 in 1903, and in 1910 the city had 31 Jewish inhabitants. In 1885, eight Jews lived in Bishkek, but in 1913, the Jewish residents of the city numbered 42. In the city of Osh, Jews of Ashkenazi and Sephardi origin lived separately. Ashkenazi Jews dwelled in the new, European part of the city along with Russians and Tatars, but Sephardi Jews—some considered subjects of the Russian Empire and others regarded as subjects of foreign states—inhabited the old district of Osh. Everyday life of Sephardi Jews was very much like that of their Muslim neighbors: They built their houses in the Uzbek style, consumed similar food, and dressed in similar clothes, but they lived in separate communities from the local Uzbek or Persian inhabitants. According to the report of the local authorities, compiled by the governor-general of Turkestan at the request of the central Tsarist authorities, in 1898, the largest Jewish community was in the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan. Practically all Jews were city residents, as the national policy of the Russian Empire forbade Jews from settling in villages. There was a separate Jewish cemetery near Osh. The grounds for the cemetery were purchased from the local population in the 1880s, as it was difficult to bury Jews in Bukhara.

During World War II, more than 20,000 Jews who fled from the Nazi-occupied western territories of the Soviet Union were resettled in the cities and villages of Kyrgyzstan. The life of Jews resettled in the countryside was particularly difficult as they lacked any previous experience of agricultural labor. In Soviet villages, wages were paid according to the number of working days. As a working day was measured by the quantity of the harvested agricultural products, only people familiar with agricultural work were able to fulfill the norm. Consequently, many Jews received salaries that barely enabled them to survive. The local population's attitude toward Jewish refugees was rather suspicious, and they generally regarded the newly arrived Jews as following the Western capitalist way of life. Several Jews were arrested for their alleged counterrevolutionary activity and spreading of lies about the bourgeois way of life.

In 1990, as many as 1,000 Jews emigrated. Over the next decade, the population continued to decline from more than 5,000 individuals to 1,000 today.

### Selected Bibliography

- Allworth, Ed. ed. 1967. *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bartol'd, V. V. 1961. *Istoriya Kul'turnoi Zhizni Turkestana*. Vol. 3, 122–123. Moscow: Akademii Nauk SSSR.
- “Kyrgyz Republic Country Page.” National Conference on Soviet Jewry Web site. <http://www.ncsj.org/Kyrgyzstan.shtml> (accessed April 20, 2007).
- Margolis, Alexander. “Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in Kyrgyzstan (2002–2004).” Euro-Asian Jewish Congress Web site. [http://www.eajc.org/program\\_art\\_e.php?id=20](http://www.eajc.org/program_art_e.php?id=20) (accessed April 20, 2007).
- Riss, E. 1993. “The Jews of Bishkek (Frunze): A Socio-Demographic Profile of a Small Jewish Community.” *Jews in Eastern Europe* 21 (2): 37.
- The Jewish Encyclopedia*. 1904. s.v. “Turkestan.” New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 585–586.
- Yarkov, A. P. 2002 *Evrei v Kirgizstane*. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Menora.
- Yarkov, A. P. 2002. *Ocherk Istorii Religii v Kyrgyzstane*. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Ilim.

# Jews in Tajikistan

*David Straub*

---

**General Population:** 6,864,000

**Jewish Population:** 250–300 (National Conference on Soviet Jewry)

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Dushanbe, the nation's capital, is the main area of Jewish concentration.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Bukharan Jews first arrived in the mid-1800s, and a large influx of Jews migrated from Uzbekistan in the 1920s and 1930s. Ashkenazim Jews were deported en masse to Central Asia during World War II.

**Languages Spoken:** Nearly all Jews speak Judeo-Tajik and Russian.

---

## Historical Overview

**1860s** Russia conquers and colonizes Central Asia. Jews first migrate to the Gissar Valley in the mid-19th century and establish quarters in the village of Dushanbe.

**Early 1900s** The first synagogue is opened in Dushanbe. The first rabbi in Dushanbe is mullo Yuhanon and the first *kalontar*, or elected head of the community, is David Davydov.

**1917–1921** During the Bolshevik Revolution Central Asian Jews rise up in support of the Red Army.

**1920s** The Soviets begin a repressive secularization campaign that targets Jews, including closing the Dushanbe synagogue. At this time there are only around 600 Jews in Tajikistan.

**1924** The emirate of Bukhara is abolished and the Republic of Tajikistan is formed.

**Late 1920s** The initiation of collectivization brings social upheaval. An attempt is made to convert some urban Central Asian Jewish into farmers. Kolkhozes, or collective farms, are created for Jews in Tajikistan, but they fail and are later discontinued.

**1930s** Thousands of Bukharan Jews from Uzbekistan settle in Dushanbe, forming the core Jewish settlement in the country. This coincides with a resurgence of Jewish culture and literature. Jewish schools are opened, and Judeo-Tajik and Hebrew literature are published in the new Latin script.

**Late 1930s** Anti-Jewish activities are stepped up and a ban is placed on Jewish theaters and literature. In spite of persecution many Jews hold academic or bureaucratic positions in the government and Jewish artists excel. The first Ashkenazim arrive in Tajikistan as deportees from European areas of the Soviet Union.

**1941–1945** During World War II, anti-Jewish propaganda is curtailed as the nation mobilizes for war. Jews join the Soviet armed forces in mass and many fight valiantly and die in battle. At the same time, thousands of Ashkenazim Jews arrive as refugees fleeing Nazi atrocities in Europe.

- 1948 After World War II, a draconian anti-Semitic campaign is directed at Soviet Jewry. Jewish schools are closed, which leads to a decline in Hebrew and Judeo-Tajik, and anti-Semitic propaganda frequents the official press.
- 1956 During the Sinai campaign, Jewish declarations renouncing Israel appear in newspapers throughout Tajikistan.
- 1958 The Dushanbe synagogue is allowed to reopen, but the building remains state property.
- 1960s At this time, Jews represent 5–7 percent of the 300,000 inhabitants in Dushanbe. Bukharan and Ashkenazim Jews each have their own synagogue in Dushanbe; petitions to the government to open additional synagogues are rejected. Tajikistan's Jewish community enters a period of decline. Regular attendance at synagogue is low and young Jews are increasingly secularized; this is coupled with a decline in Hebrew and Judeo-Tajik among youths, who increasingly choose to speak Russian.
- 1967 After the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, Dushanbe's Jewish community is forced to donate 300 rubles to the Arab states and publicly condemn Israel.
- 1969 Bukharan rabbi Abo Matatov (b. 1878) dies and the community is faced with a dearth of qualified clergy.
- 1970s In 1970, the Jewish community numbers between 10,000 and 20,000, most of whom live in Dushanbe. Smaller pockets of Jews live in towns throughout the republic, including Leninabad (Khujand), where Jews have their own synagogue. Emigration restrictions are eased, and by the end of the decade a large number of Jews, especially the young, leave for Israel and the United States. Soviet authorities strongly discourage emigration and the press showcases examples of Jews who return to Tajikistan.
- 1989 Tajik is made the official language of Tajikistan; Russian-speaking Jews, in particular Ashkenazim, face a jobless future.
- February 1990 Deadly ethnic riots rock Dushanbe. For several days, youths target ethnic Russians and Jews for attacks, and armed Islamic protestors take to the streets. Calm is restored, but Jews remain a target for harassment and thousands emigrate.
- 1991 Tajikistan gains independence, which is followed by civil strife.
- 1992 Civil war breaks out in Tajikistan, and the Jewish Agency evacuates most Jews from the country.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Traditionally, Jews worked in the weaving and silk dyeing trades. These industry collapsed by the early 20th century as factory-produced textiles took over the market. As a result, much of the Jewish community became impoverished. Jewish artists fared better and developed a niche in music and the arts; numerous Jewish composers, singers, and actors found prominence in Tajikistan. During the Soviet period, many Jews held academic or bureaucratic positions in the government.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

A number of Bukharan Jews in Tajikistan rose to the heights of prominence in the arts. In 1944, Suleiman Yudakov (1916–1990) composed the music for the national anthem of Tajikistan. Actress and singer Rena Galibova (1915–1995) performed throughout the Soviet Union during World War II, and was awarded the titles of Merited Artist of Tajikistan (1939) and People’s Artist of Tajikistan (1941). Singer and composer Avner Mullokandov (b. 1911) graduated from the Leninabad School of Music in Tajikistan, and in 1940 relocated to the Aini State Theater for Opera and Ballet, where he worked for the next two decades. In 1941, Mullokandov was decorated as a People’s Artist of Tajikistan. Other notable individuals include composer Yahiel Sabzanov (b. 1929), who wrote more than 300 compositions; novelist Vladimir Voinovich, born in Dushanbe; Lev Knipper (b. 1898), who wrote *Vankh* and *Vakhio Bolo*, some of the first Tajik symphonies; Bukharan writer and poet Mordakhay “Muhib” H. Bachayev (1911–2007); and filmmaker Boris Kimiagarov (1920–1979), noted for his series of films on “Firdawsī’s Shohnoma.” Many of these artists would emigrate to the United States and Israel. Meirkhaim Gavriellov was an accomplished writer, journalist, member of the Union of Journalists in both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and chairman of the Bukharan Jewish Cultural Society, Khoverim. In 1998, Gavriellov was murdered under suspicious circumstances.

### Present Economic Conditions

Historically, Dushanbe has housed a thriving enclave of Bukharan and Ashkenazim Jews, but today the community is mostly elderly and poor. Poverty has driven many young Jews to leave the country in search of better job opportunities.

### Religious Denominations

Today, the Jews of Tajikistan lack even basic cultural and religious infrastructure. The vast majority of Jews who remain in Tajikistan are Bukharan, the native Jews of Central Asia. Isolated from Western Jewry for centuries, Bukharans developed their own religious and cultural traditions. The community is currently without a rabbi or kosher butcher, and the only synagogue in Dushanbe is under threat of destruction. First built more than 100 years ago, the synagogue was one of several buildings scheduled for destruction to make way for the construction of a new presidential palace. In early 2006, the mikvah and classrooms were demolished, but the destruction of the main hall was halted after international outcry.

During World War II, thousands of Ashkenazim arrived in Tajikistan. The Ashkenazim and Bukharans were separated by a wide cultural divide and relations between the two groups would remain strained; intermarriage was uncommon. The Russian-speaking Ashkenazim perceived the Bukharan Jews as primitive Asians, and the religious practices of the two groups were dissimilar. There was even resentment among some in the Bukharan community that the Ashkenazi arrived in Tajikistan as refugees while young Bukharan men were fighting at the front.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Jewish religious and cultural customs were strongly repressed from the 1940s until the 1980s. With the advent of perestroika in the late 1980s, Jews gained new freedoms, including the right to study and publish in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Bukharan. A Jewish Cultural Center was opened with the aid of Chabad-Lubavitch in Dushanbe in 1988. The center integrated both the Bukharan and Ashkenazim synagogues and housed a school. The following year, a society for the friends of Jewish culture, *Khoverim*, opened, and Israeli filmmakers were permitted to travel to Dushanbe to make a documentary on Bukharan Jewish culture. Unfortunately, these community institutions went into decline after most Jews fled the country in 1992.

Historically, the Bukharan community has appointed a *kalontar*, or elected communal chairman, and this tradition continues to this day. In recent years, the chairmen of the Jewish Community of Dushanbe have been Mikhail Abdurakhmanov, Amnon Iyaev, and, as of 2006, Valery Davydov. Goib Goibov has served as chairman of the Committee on Religious Affairs. From 1992–2000, the president of synagogue and Jewish cemetery was Amnun Fuzaylov, and from 2000–2003, the position was held by Boris Boruhov. The leadership of Dushanbe's Jewish community has been instrumental in drawing international attention to the plight of Jews in Tajikistan. Support from international Jewish organizations has been vital to the survival of the Jewish community in Tajikistan.

Institutions active in Tajikistan include the following:

- JDC (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)
- Chabad-Lubavitch
- FJC (Federation of Jewish Communities of the Commonwealth of Independent States)
- Ohr Avner Foundation
- World Congress of Bukharan Jews

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Tajikistan's Jewish community has experienced a precipitous and dramatic decline over the past three decades. Since the early 1990s, civil war, poverty, and growing regional anti-Semitism have driven most Jews to emigrate. In 1989, the Jewish Agency began evacuating olim. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in August 1991, Tajikistan gained independence and a large percentage of non-Muslims, including Jews, left the country. In early 1992, Tajik domestic politics turned to violence and by summer the country was in a state of civil war. Despite pledges by the Islamic opposition to respect Jewish rights and religion, the Jewish Agency evacuated thousands of Jews in the fall of 1992. Over the next decade, most of the remaining thousand Jews emigrated, and today only a few hundred live in Dushanbe.

### Selected Bibliography

Pinkhasov, Peter. "Bukharian Jews in WWII." Bukharan Jewish Global Portal Web site. <http://www.bjews.com/> (accessed May 19, 2008).

- Pinkhasov, Peter. "The History of Bukharian Jews." Bukharan Jewish Global Portal Web site. <http://www.bjews.com/> (accessed May 19, 2008).
- "Tajikistan." Federation of Jewish Communities of the CIS Web site. [www.fjc.ru/Communities/default.asp?aid=80071&tab=home](http://www.fjc.ru/Communities/default.asp?aid=80071&tab=home) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Tajikistan Country Page." National Conference on Soviet Jewry Web site. [www.ncsj.org/Tajikistan.shtml](http://www.ncsj.org/Tajikistan.shtml) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "UCSJ Position Paper: Tajikistan." 1998. Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union. [www.fsmonitor.com/stories/aseml1taj.shtml](http://www.fsmonitor.com/stories/aseml1taj.shtml) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Waanders Uitgevers Zwolle. 1999. *Facing West: Oriental Jews of Central Asia and the Caucasus*. Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders Uitgevers Zwolle.
- Zand, Michael. 1991. "Patterns of Sovietization of Oriental Jewish Culture: Bukharan Jewish Culture, 1918–1940—A Case Study." *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 22 (1): 47–52.

## Jews in Turkmenistan

*Irena Vladimirsky*

---

**General Population:** 5,042,920

**Jewish Population:** Estimates range from 600–1,000

**Jewish Population by City:** The Jewish population of Turkmenistan is concentrated in five cities: Ashgabat, Turkmenbashi, Mary, Turkmenabat, and Dash Oguz.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Bukharan Jews, Iranian Jews, and Ashkenazi Jews arrived at the end of the 19th century and during Soviet rule. Most are Ashkenazi Jews, but about 30 percent are Bukharan Jews.

**Languages Spoken:** Nearly all speak Russian. Bukharan Jews speak the Judeo-Tajik dialect.

---

### Historical Overview

**400s–450s** Amora Samuel Bar Bisna from Pumpedita Talmudic Academy visits Marguana (region on the southwest of Turkmenistan) and mentions the existence of Jewish traders there.

**5th–12th centuries** During the Middle Ages Jewish traders live permanently in the city of Merv, which is one of the main trade centers on the Silk Road. During archaeological excavations in the old city of Merv, numerous oil lamps are found with Jewish symbols that date as far back as the fifth to seventh centuries.

**1835** Hebrew-Christian missionary Joseph Wolff (1795–1862), while searching for the 10 lost tribes, visits the city of Merv and mentions a small but stable community of Bukharan Jews living there.

**1840** About 40 Jewish families from the Iranian city of Mashhad who were forcedly converted to Islam in 1839, thus becoming Jadid-al-Islam, or new converts to Islam. After they settle in Merv the community returns to the Jewish way of life.

**1880s–1890s** The Russian Empire completes the conquest of Central Asia and all citizens become Russian subjects. The Russian conquest leads to massive migration of Jews from the Bukharan emirate to Russian-controlled territories.

The city of Merv becomes the main center of the Jewish life. In 1895, the Jewish population of the city is 7.5 percent of the city's total population.

- 1890s–1900s With the strengthening of Russian rule over the region, Ashkenazi Jews begin to settle in Central Asia. Some arrive from the Pale of Settlement and some are retired Russian army soldiers and officers who decide to settle in newly established cities. In 1897, the Jewish population of Ashgabat includes 330 Jews (about 10 percent of the total city population); 80 Jews (17 families) settle in Krasnovodsk (8 percent of the total city population); and 500 Jews (121 families) live in Chardzhou, making up about 15 percent of city dwellers. Ashkenazi Jews quickly become part of the local administration, provide medical services, and establish publishing houses and even the first art gallery.
- 1900 Sixteen subbotniki families (120 persons) from central Russia settle in the Ashkhabad region, proclaim themselves Jews, and establish a community with an active synagogue in the village of Yablonovskii.
- 1910 The Russian administration changes the settlement regulations in the territory of the Turkestan general-governorship. Most Bukharan Jews who do not receive legal residency status according to the new regulations are forced to return to the territory of the Bukharan khanate.
- 1917–1918 After the Bolshevik Revolution, Bukharan Jews receive permission from the new authorities to return to their place of former residence, and 750 Bukharan Jews resettle in Merv, about 1,000 Jews in Kerki, and 500 Jews in Chardzhou.
- 1920s–1930s Turkmenistan becomes the preferable place of exile for participants of officially forbidden Zionist organizations and supporters of the Trotsky-Zinoviev wing of the Bolshevik Party. According to the 1926 population census, 2,042 Jews (0.25 percent of the entire republic population) live temporarily in Turkmenistan.
- January 1938 As many as 6,000 Iranian Jews living on the Iran-Afghanistan border in the south are resettled in northern (desert) regions of Turkmenistan.
- 1941–1945 The Jewish population of Turkmenistan increases considerably; estimates range from 7,000 to 12,000.
- 1991 After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Saparmurat Niyazov, former first secretary of the Communist Party of Turkmenistan, became the first president of the independent republic of Turkmenistan. New regulations covering the religious and cultural life of ethnic minorities ban the establishment of an organized Jewish community; a request to build a synagogue is also rejected. According to the regulation on religious and cultural life of national minorities, 50,000 signatures of community members are required to be registered officially as an ethnic or religious community.
- 1993–1994 The government of independent Turkmenistan strengthens friendly ties with Iran and other Muslim countries. Because of domestic and foreign policy concerns, numerous Jews decide to emigrate—to Israel, the United States, Canada, Germany, and the Russian Federation.
- 2001 Only small Jewish communities are left in Ashgabat, Chardzhou, and Nabit Dag.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

In Turkmenistan, traditional divisions existed between the Ashkenazi and Bukharan Jewish communities. Bukharan Jews were traditionally involved in trade, and even nowadays they provide a colorful landscape of the local open markets. Ashkenazi Jews played an important part in establishing modern industry and agriculture, as part of collectivization and industrialization plans. Today, several Jews who have family relations with Niyazov's family clan hold high posts in the gas industry.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Jews played an important part in establishing medical services and an educational system in Turkmenistan. In 1928, in response to a request from the government of Turkmenistan, six prominent composers from Moscow wrote songs for Turkmen schoolchildren; four of them, Z. Levin, Z. Kompaneets, B. Shekhter, and V. Bely, were Jewish. This trend was greatly developed. Many Jewish composers visited Turkmenistan for some time to write their works, and even settled there for longer periods. Boris Shekhter (1900–1961), a highly talented musician, wrote the first Turkmen symphony works, *The Turkmenian Suite* (1932), and the first Turkmen opera, *Yusup and Akhmet* (1941). In 1944, he was awarded the title of People's Artist of Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic.

### Jewish Education and Communal Institutions

Before 1991, there were three active synagogues in Ashkhabad, Mary (former Merv), and Kerki. Under the totalitarian rule of Saparmurat Niyazov, all Jewish religious life was against the active regulations on minority activities. The government of Turkmenistan allowed opening ulpan for studying Hebrew in Ashgabat and Chardzhou. Leaders of the Jewish community of Turkmenistan were forbidden to meet their colleagues from other former Soviet republics, or to participate in Jewish activity outside the borders of Turkmenistan.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Today, the Jewish community of Turkmenistan is in decline. By 2003, most Jews had left for Israel, the United States, the Russian Federation, and Germany. From 1989 to 2003, 1,375 Jews arrived in Israel from Ashkhabad, the same number of Jews left to reside in the United States and Canada, and about 1,000 Jews received Russian Federation citizenship.

## Selected Bibliography

- "The Jewish Population of the World (2006)." Jewish Virtual Library Web site. [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/jewpop.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/jewpop.html) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Sloane, Joanna. "The Virtual Jewish History Tour: Turkmenistan." Jewish Virtual Library Web site. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Turkmenistan.html> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- "Turkmenistan Country Page." National Conference on Soviet Jewry Web site. [www.ncsj.org/Turkmenistan.shtml](http://www.ncsj.org/Turkmenistan.shtml) (accessed April 22, 2007).

"UCSJ Position Paper: Turkmenistan." Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union Web site. <http://www.fsmonitor.com/stories/asemltuk.shtml> (accessed April 22, 2007).  
 Wolff, Joseph. 1846. *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara*. Repr. London: John W. Parker.

## Jews in Uzbekistan

*David Straub and Irena Vladimirska*

**General Population:** 22 million

**Jewish Population:** 17,453 Former Soviet Union Jewish Council

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Jews are mainly concentrated in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara. Jews also live in some of the smaller cities in the Fergana Valley.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Jews arrived in Uzbekistan perhaps as far back as the sixth century BCE. Historical texts record Jewish occupation of major cities after the Arab conquest of Central Asia in the seventh and eighth centuries. In the 19th century, Iranian Jewish refugees arrived in Bukhara. Ashkenazim arrived in the mid-19th century and during World War II.

**Languages Spoken:** Bukharan or Judeo-Tajik, Russian, and Hebrew

### Historical Overview

**10th century** Historical texts first mention the settlement Yahudlyk, which literally means "place inhabited by Jews," in the Fergana Valley. The settlement is home to 100 Jewish families.

**12th century** Benjamin from Tudela mentions a Jewish community in Samarkand with a nasi as the head of the community. Jews are allowed to settle in Bukhara and Urgench provided that their numbers do not exceed 100.

**1339** In Urgench Samuel Ben Samuel composes *Sefer Ha Melitz*, a Talmudic dictionary with commentaries on the Judeo-Persian language.

**1598** Jews are expelled from Samarkand.

**1843** Joseph Wolff, a Jewish convert to Roman Catholicism, travels to Bukhara. Two years later, he publishes *Narrative of a Mission to Bukhara*, which includes extensive details of the daily life of Jews in Bukhara.

**1865–1878** Central Asia is conquered by Russia. The Jewish population of the region welcomes Moscow. Soon after Russian Turkestan is established, the Jewish population is granted rights equal to that of the Muslim population and *Jadid Al Islam*, whereupon Jews forced to convert to Islam are able to return to Judaism. The Jewish population increases from 100 to 1,300 individuals in Tashkent, from 168 to 3,792 in Samarkand, and from 6 to 1,000 in Kokand.

**1887** Changes in the settlement regulations in Russian Turkestan require all Jewish traders to register as permanent residents or leave the region. Around 5,000 Bukharan Jews are affected and threatened with expulsion.

- 1894 The First Jewish communities of Bukharan Jews are registered in the Fergana Valley. According to the Turkestan general-governorship, 3,113 Jews reside in different cities of the Fergana Valley. In addition, 1,891 Jews are registered in Samarkand, which is under separate administration from the rest of Russian Turkestan.
- 1896 The Russian Turkestan government issues regulations that forbid Jews to purchase land or other real estate on the territory of Turkestan, with the exception of property in the Fergana Valley.
- 1897 The first population census of Russian Turkestan records 1,029 permanent Jewish residents in Kokand, 721 in Andizhan, 652 in Old Margelan, 188 in New Margelan, 121 in Namangan, and 46 in Osh.
- 1900 The administrators of Russian Turkestan declare a Central Asian Pale of Settlement for Jews. Jews are allowed to settle in the towns of Katta Kurgan, on the border of the Bukharan emirate; Petro Aleksandrovsk, bordering the Khivan khanate; and Osh. Later, Russian trading companies intervene in order to retain commercial relations with Jewish-owned businesses, and the cities of Samarkand, Kokand, and Old Margelan are reopened to Jewish settlement.
- 1908 Yosef Davydov (1855–1914), a fabric merchant and one of the wealthiest people in Bukhara, is elected kalontar of the Bukharan Jewish community of Tashkent.
- January 1910 As part of a nationwide pogrom in Russian territories, 300 Bukharan Jews are expelled from Tashkent.
- 1910–1914 The Judeo-Tajik language newspaper *Rakhamim* is published in Skobelev, now named Fergana.
- 1917 Yakov-Hai Pinkhasov (1890–1968), great-grandson of Yosef Maman, is elected kalontar of the Jews of Bukhara; and Rafael Potelyahov (1865–1936), a wealthy Jewish merchant, serves as a minister in the short-lived Kokand government, which is crushed by the Soviets. Trade Unions of Local Working Jews are set up by the Bolsheviks in cities throughout the Ferghana Valley, including Samarkand and Tashkent; members of the Unions may number in the hundreds and include artisans and merchants. The Samarkand Union establishes a school that includes the study of Hebrew. Records show 30 synagogues in Samarkand.
- 1918 The Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Republic is created, excluding the protectorates of Bukhara and Khiva. An anti-Semitic fervor among the Muslim population of Bukhara causes the Jewish population to barricade themselves in their quarters, and the Emir sends troops to protect them.
- November 1919 The Commissariat of Education in Tashkent approves the publication of Z. L. Amitin-Shapiro's Hebrew-language geography textbook.
- 1920 A convention of Turkestani Jews passes a resolution supporting the Red Army and the Bolsheviks. In Tashkent, editor Rahmin Badalov (1897–1991) opens the Bukharan Jewish newspaper *Rost*, only to end publication in 1922.
- 1921 Hebrew is banned from the classroom.
- 1922 The Yevseksia begin publishing the newspaper *Bayraki Hurriyat*.
- 1923 The Yevseksia begin publishing the Bukharan-language newspaper *Roshinoi*.

- July 1923 The periodical *Emes* publishes an article that chastises Bukharan Jewish women for religious piety and calls for Bukharan Jews to not study “Hebrew but the language in which they converse,” that is, Judeo-Tajik.
- 1925 Rahmin Badalov becomes head of the Bukharan-Jewish Institute of Education in Tashkent.
- 1926 The first population census is held in Uzbekistan, including the Tajik Autonomous Republic, recording a total of 18,172 Jews in the republic.
- 1928 The rabbinical court is discontinued and replaced by a Jewish People’s Court. The first separate Jewish cemetery is organized.
- 1930 There are 30 active Jewish schools, and lessons are taught in Judeo-Tajik.
- 1933 The chief rabbi of Poland issues an appeal to Soviet authorities for 16 pious Jews sentenced in Tashkent to three years’ hard labor for illegally crossing the border. At this time there are 15 community centers and 28 “red tea houses” for Bukharan Jews.
- 1934 The number of pupils in Jewish schools is around 4,000, and the number of teachers reaches 170.
- 1935 A single synagogue remains open in Samarkand.
- 1937 The census records 25,437 Jews living in Uzbekistan.
- 1938 Rahmin Badalov is arrested but spared execution.
- 1939 A Yiddish and a Bukharan theater operate in Tashkent
- 1941–1945 During World War II, about 30,000 Jewish refugees from Ukraine, Poland, Byelorussia, and Lithuania arrived in Uzbekistan; some refugees return home after the war, and others settled in Central Asia.
- February 1955 In Tashkent, the first Yiddish language theatrical production is performed since before World War II.
- 1955 Records show 20,000 Bukharan Jews and several thousand Ashkenazim Jews in Tashkent.
- 1956 Jewish Community of Tashkent is forced to publicly renounce Israel and support Egypt during the Suez Crisis.
- 1959 Ashkenazim synagogues are closed in Samarkand and Tashkent, although Bukharan synagogues in those cities are allowed to remain open.
- 1967 The American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry reports that Jews are beaten in Tashkent in the wake of the Arab-Israeli war.
- 1977 The All Union population census records 250,000 Jews in Tashkent and more than 100,000 Jews in the territories of Samarkand, Bukhara, and the Fergana Valley.
- 1989 The first Jewish cultural center opens in Tashkent. Of the 100,000 Jews that remain in Uzbekistan, 15,000 are in Samarkand.
- 1990 Bukharan Jewish cultural centers open in Tashkent and Bukhara.
- 1993 Jewish organizations established in Uzbekistan include the Central Asia regional center of Judaic and Jewish research; an association of Jewish scientists, engineers and businesspeople; and the trade organization “Israel-Uzbekistan.”
- July 30, 2004 An Islamic suicide bomber detonates an explosion near the entrance to the Israeli Embassy in Tashkent. Five civilians are killed, but no Israeli Embassy staff or members of the Jewish community are wounded.

February 2006 Rabbi Abraham Yagodeev (1970–2006) is killed on his way to morning synagogue prayer.

June 2006 Karina-Rivka Loifer (1986–2006), secretary of the chief rabbi of Uzbekistan, is brutally murdered in her home, together with her mother.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

In the first decades of Russian rule, local Jewish entrepreneurs played an important role in developing economic ties between Central Asia and Russia. By 1898, in the Fergana Valley alone, Jews owned a total of 693 trade and industrial enterprises, or 91 percent of all such businesses in the region. Jewish merchants were even able to borrow money from major Russian banks. Common Jewish laborers provides services to Jews and Gentiles alike, including butchers, tailors, bakers, shoemakers, goldsmiths, hairdressers, and chefs. Poor Jewish women with talents in singing and dancing (*sazonda*) performed at wedding ceremonies and holiday parties for Jews and non-Jews. Jews in the Fergana Valley found employment in the textile industry and developed new methods of coloring cotton threads with indigo paint.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Jewish actors have reached the height of prominence in Uzbek theater and opera, and Jewish musicians are renowned for their mastery of Uzbek folk music and classical Central Asian *shash makom*. From the 1920s until the late 1930s, Yiddish- and Bukharan-language theater was performed in large cities throughout the republic. In the late 1930s, Jewish theaters and publications were closed and Jewish leaders,



Arks containing Torah scrolls in Uzbekistan; their shape and style indicate the Oriental/ Sephardi influence on the community. (Center for Jewish Art, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

actors, and writers were purged. In the 1950s, the restrictions on Jewish productions were lifted and Jews flourished in Uzbek theaters. During World War II, Uzbek Jews joined theater groups that traveled the country to perform for soldiers. Notable Uzbek Jewish artists include Georgy Mushel (1909–1989), one of the creators of the Uzbek opera; Boris Tseydman (b. 1908), who taught Uzbek composers at Tashkent Conservatories; Gavriel Mullokandov (1900–1972), a prolific Bukharan Jewish singer and musician who was decorated People's Artist of Uzbekistan; Ilyas Malayev (b. 1936), a famous classical Bukharan musician from Tashkent; Suleyman Takhalov (b. 1935), notable musical performer, conductor, and professor of music history; Aulov Semen Borisovich (b. 1924), art director and producer of Bukharan Jewish Theater; and opera tenor Misha Raitzin (1930–1990).

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

In 2003, there were six active synagogues in Uzbekistan: three in Tashkent and one each in Andijan, Bukhara, and Samarkand. Major sponsors of charitable organizations in Uzbekistan include Or Avner and Yad Chana, the latter funded by Israeli businessman Lev Levayev. With the help of these organizations, numerous facilities have opened, including Beit Chana, a girl's school; Chaya Mushka, a women's college; Ohel Menahem, a kindergarten; and Tomhei Tmimim, a yeshiva college in Tashkent. In addition, there was the Gan Torah kindergarten in Samarkand, a yeshiva and Sunday school in Fergana, and a secondary school in Bukhara Or Avner. In 1990, Aba David Gurevitch of Chabad was elected chief rabbi of Uzbekistan. The Russian-language magazine *Shofar* is published monthly.

In Samarkand and Bukhara, mahallas (traditional communities of Bukharan Jews), are still home to large Jewish populations. Samarkand is also home to a museum located in what was once a Jewish-owned mansion that still contains a synagogue.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

Soon after the Bolshevik takeover of Central Asia Zionist operations continued illicitly under the guise of Tarbut, a youth league, and the leadership of Zevi Hefetz. Tarbut members were harassed by the Yevseksia, the Jewish communists, and in 1922 the last Tarbut public event was shut down and all present were arrested. That same year the Zionist Bukharan-language newspaper *Rahamim* discontinued publication. Tarbut continued clandestine Zionist activities into the 1930s. Aliyah was again permitted in the 1970s, and since 1989 more than 60,000 Jews have migrated to Israel.

Most of the Jewish population in Tashkent is Ashkenazim, with a smaller Bukharan population. Jewish populations in Samarkand and Bukhara are nearly all Bukharan Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

Ben-Zvi, Itzhak. 1963. *The Exiled and the Redeemed*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

- Facing West: Oriental Jews of Central Asia and the Caucasus*. 1999. Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders Uitgevers Zwolle.
- Fuzailoff, Giora. "Rabbanic Succession in Bukhara, 1790–1930." Bukharan Jewish Global Portal Web site. <http://www.bjews.com/> (accessed May 19, 2008).
- Gilboa, Jehoshua A. 1982. *A Language Silenced: Hebrew Culture in the Soviet Union*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University.
- Gitelman, Zvi Y., Musya Glants, and Marchall L. Goldman, eds. 2003. *Jewish Life after the USSR*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pinkhasov, Peter. "Bukharian Jews in WWII." Bukharan Jewish Global Portal Web site. <http://www.bjews.com/> (accessed May 19, 2008).
- Pinkhasov, Peter. "The History of Bukharian Jews." Bukharan Jewish Global Portal Web site. <http://www.bjews.com/> (accessed May 19, 2008).
- Roi, Yaacov, ed. 1997. *Russian Jews on Three Continents: Migration and Resettlement*. London: Routledge.
- "Uzbekistan." Am Yisrael Web site. <http://www.amyisrael.co.il/cis/uzbekistan.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).

# East Asia

## Jews in China

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

**General Population:** 1.3 billion

**Jewish Population:** 6,000–7,000

**Percent of Population:** 0.0005 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Shanghai, approximately 4,000 (250 includes those registered in the Jewish community and other irregular attendees, but the larger group has no affiliation with the formal community); Hong Kong, 3,000; Beijing, 2,500; Guangdong, 500; Taiwan, 200; and Shandong, 50. In addition, Kaifeng has several hundred identified Jewish descendants and as many as several thousand may have memories of Jewish roots.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The various waves of immigration include, first, the Persian Jewish traders over the Silk Road, the Baghdadi traders of the 1800s, the Russians of the 1920s, and the German and Europeans of the 1930s and 1940s. Then most Jews left for the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Israel, creating a diverse Diaspora of Chinese Jews. Many of these migrants succeeded in building business empires or successful careers and putting down networks and connections based on their Jewish heritage and their Chinese experiences. Most recently, Jews have begun to immigrate back to China because of China's growing economy.

**Languages Spoken:** English, Russian, Kavkavi, Hebrew, French, Chinese

---

### Historical Overview

2nd century BCE Unverified myths and assumptions regarding Jewish merchants entering China at different times and various routes begin to circulate.

960–1127 (Northern Song Dynasty) Jewish merchants—presumably of Persian origin—pass over the Silk Road into China and begin a settlement in Kaifeng, which is, at the time, the Chinese capital. This is the earliest clear documentation of Jews in China. Some come by sea, and they gradually penetrate from Zhejiang and Jiangsu Provinces to the mainland. Some come by land along Persia and India on the Silk Road. The emperor himself gives the earliest Jewish immigrants Chinese names such as Gao, Li, An, Mu, Zhao, Jin, Zhou, Bai, and so on. Ancient Chinese history books called them *shushu*, *deya*, and *youtai*, and their religion is called *you tai jiao*. They and the Han people live together and use their Chinese family names. Some Jews likely convert or live as Muslims, becoming part of the Hui nationality of minority Chinese Muslims. Jews are also known by the Han majority as “blue capped Muslims” indicating that the Han are not able to easily tell the two groups apart. It is possible that an unknown number of Chinese Jews continue to exist in the shadow of a larger Muslim minority, eating ritually slaughtered meat, avoiding pork, and celebrating festivals and the Sabbath, as Muslims. The Jews of Kaifeng have an 800-year intact history until around 1840 when religious activity stops as a result of a

series of fires and floods. The community is reestablishing itself, as described in the next essay.

- 1163 A synagogue is established in Kaifeng.
- 1489 A stone tablet is erected at the Kaifeng synagogue; it is the earliest existing self-document of the Chinese Jews.
- 1605 Ai Tian, a Kaifeng Jew and middle-level government official, meets Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci in Beijing. This encounter brings news of the existence of Chinese Jews to European Jews and Christians.
- 1800s New waves of Jewish immigrants come to China. The first group is mainly Baghdadi Jewish businessmen representing their families or seeking new trade horizons through the European trading companies in Asia. Baghdadi Jews begin to settle in Shanghai, one of the treaty ports established as a result of the first Opium War, which had ended six years earlier. Jewish immigrants go to Shanghai, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan. Many become very wealthy and successful, buying huge tracts of land in what are now the centers of Shanghai and Hong Kong. Others contribute in different ways, leaving a unique mark of distinction wherever they are. Shanghai business is mainly in trade. The Hong Kong Jews are engaged in finance and banking.
- 1850s After years of decline and repeated floods, disasters, and reconstructions, the Kaifeng synagogue is completely destroyed. This also marks the disintegration of the community as such. Yet Jewish identity persists in various forms.
- 1899 The first Russian Jews settle in Harbin, in northeastern China, creating a fast-growing community and reaching its peak with 13,000 people in 1931.
- 1900 Shanghai Jews found the Shanghai Society for the Rescue of Chinese Jews, with little results.
- 1900 The Ohel Leah synagogue is consecrated in Hong Kong.
- 1905 During the Russo-Japanese War many Jews opt to remain in Japanese and ultimately Chinese territory. Jewish businesses and corporations are very successful in Harbin.
- 1910 Canadian Anglican bishop William Charles White establishes the Henan Diocese in Kaifeng. During his 25-year mission he acquires the land of the former synagogue and the stone steles. He is also involved in a Christian attempt “to re-organize the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng,” which is a euphemism for converting them to Christianity.
- 1920 A surge in the number of Russian Jews relocating to the northern Chinese city of Harbin—which is at the time occupied by Russia—burgeons its population to 13,000 Jews. Gradually some move on to places like Dalian, Tianjin, Qufu, and Qingdao in Shandong province; many also move to Shanghai. The Ohel Rachel synagogue is established in Shanghai, marking the peak of the Baghdadi community in Shanghai. Russian Jewish immigrants establish the Shanghai Ashkenazi community. The Zionist program is publicly supported by Sun Yat-sen whose eagerness to support what he terms “the civilization of the world” helps lay the foundation for a fruitful relationship with China, through which numerous political milestones are later achieved.

- 1929 Harbin reaches the peak of Jewish immigration, and Jews begin to seek other places to immigrate to from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Israel.
- 1938–1940 Some 20,000 Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe find safe haven in Shanghai, including the entire Mir Yeshiva. This miraculous story evolves to serve as a symbol of friendship between Jews and China that is much quoted by diplomats and politicians, especially regarding Sino–Israeli relations. Ultimately, there are about 40,000 to 50,000 Jews living in China. The number of Jews living in Shanghai was about 30,000.
- 1945–1949 The Jews begin to leave China, especially after 1949, and the numbers dwindle to a few who remain: those married to Chinese, those who work with the Chinese Communist Party, and those who do business or continue their often interesting lives.
- 1949 The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is established. Israel is one of the first governments to recognize the Chinese state. David Ben-Gurion is eager to develop ties with China and its socialist credentials are appealing to the socialist-oriented new Israelis.
- 1949 Within the next several years most of the Jews in Shanghai, Harbin, and the smaller contemporary communities leave for Israel, Australia, the United States, and Canada.
- 1950 While Stalin’s anti-Semitic horror campaign is in full swing throughout the Soviet Union, lack of opposition to Jews and Zionists and welcoming words from Mao Zedong lead to increasing numbers of Jews entering China, a trend that would continue through 1955. Although many might be tempted to suggest that very little occurs during the so-called Cold War period (1950–1991), this time seems to mark the beginning of what is now becoming mutual cooperation and development between Israel and China.
- 1952 Two delegates from Kaifeng represent the Jewish community in the National Day celebrations in Beijing. They meet President Zhou Enlai and ask that the Jews be recognized as a national minority. The request is politely denied, yet on a local level, some descendants continue to be recognized as *Youtai ren* (Jews) in their residential documents.
- 1955–1956 The PRC seems more interested in pursuing diplomatic relations with other Arab and third-world nations at the price of relations with Israel. It is argued that China chooses to focus on its struggles with the Soviet Union, whose attempts to infiltrate the Middle East it strategically opposes. Anti-Israel propaganda from China, which lasts until 1976, paints a picture of the PRC as anti-Israel.
- 1978 China begins to purchase military equipment and technology from Israel, through the efforts of Menachem Begin, Israel’s prime minister, and Shoul Eisenberg, a former Jewish refugee in China and successful Israeli businessman. This process marks genuine political commitment to establishing a clear agenda of mutual defense strategy.
- 1980 Israel ships more significant amounts of military technology and equipment to China, allowing trade to flourish; it is the first of many such exchanges that take place throughout the 1980s.

- 1992 China and Israel establish full diplomatic relations. For China, diplomatic relations with Israel possibly means greater ability to penetrate into American political economy through Jewish connections. China–Israel relations develop on the basis of four important criteria: Sino–Israeli defense relations; civilian trade relations; agriculture and agricultural technology; and science, technology, and education exchanges.
- 1992 The Kaifeng municipal government allows the founding of the Society for the Research of Jewish History and Culture of Kaifeng, headed by Jewish descendant and scholar Zhao Xiangru. Local scholar Wang Yisha publishes his detailed study of the Jewish descendants, *Spring and Autumn of the Chinese Jews*.
- 1992 The first Jewish studies conference is held in China. Many more will continue to be held at the universities in Shanghai, Harbin, and Shandong.
- 1993 The Kaifeng municipal government officially authorizes the construction of the synagogue according to its old structure. Officially, it is designated to serve only as a museum rather than as an active synagogue.
- 1993 Ministries of agriculture in Israel and China sign a memorandum of understanding, and throughout the 1990s the two nations launch several highly successful agriculture experiments, greatly benefiting trade and improving the standards of their cooperation. This year also sees deeper levels of cooperation in the fields of water resource management and purification technologies.
- 1995 China and Israel sign a document endorsing deeper cooperation in education, and foreign students are more openly permitted to travel abroad to participate in scholarly exchanges.
- 1996 The local government closes down the construction office for the Kaifeng Jewish center/museum, whereby the reconstruction plan is abolished.
- 1996 A decision is implemented to erase the designation as “Jews” from all residential documents. Jewish descendants are given the option to choose Hui (Muslim Chinese) or Han (ethnic Chinese) as their nationality. This represents the government’s vigilance toward any sort of revival of Jewish identity in Kaifeng.
- 1998 Rabbi Shalom Greenberg settles in Shanghai and reestablishes Orthodox Jewish communal activities, including synagogue prayers and kosher dining.
- 1998 The municipal government of Shanghai conducts an extensive renovation of the Ohel Rachel synagogue. Used for many years as a storage facility, the venerable ivy-covered building had stood virtually empty within the grounds of the Ministry of Education. With some 700 seats in its main sanctuary, it is the largest remaining synagogue in the Far East. Ohel Rachel has been visited by a succession of the world’s dignitaries, among them German chancellor Gerhard Schroder and former U.S. president Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton. Shanghai also boasts a center of Jewish Studies, which conducts classes in Hebrew, produces films and television programs, and conducts tours of Jewish sights in Shanghai.
- 1999 The Shanghai Jewish community is allowed to convene for New Year’s prayer in the Ohel Rachel synagogue, recently renovated by the local government. Trade between Israel and China reaches \$550 million.

- 2001 Rabbi Shimon and Dini Freundlich move to Beijing from Hong Kong and set up a Chabad center and educational facilities.
- 2004 The national government's Ministry of Higher Education sponsors a key research institute in the social studies in the area of Jewish religion and funds the Centre for Judaic Studies at Shandong University in Jinan, capital of Shandong Province, under the leadership of Professor Fu Youde. This center begins translating Jewish classics into Chinese and training a generation of scholars in Judaism, classical texts, and religious, philosophical, and cultural studies.
- 2004 China-Israel trade reaches \$2.2 billion, but when trade with Hong Kong is added, the actual numbers are as high as \$5.7 billion.
- 2005 Professor M. Avrum Ehrlich is appointed a professor of Jewish studies in the Department of Philosophy and at the Centre for Judaic and Inter-Religious Studies at Shandong University.
- 2005 Various Jewish bodies and individuals attempt to preserve the old Jewish ghetto area of Hongkiao district, where Jews found refuge against the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. The efforts have sympathetic interest from the Shanghai municipal government, which has signaled its willingness to save some of the buildings in this historic neighborhood.
- 2005 After living six years in Jerusalem without official status, Kaifeng Jewish descendant Jin Guangyuan (Shlomo) and his family complete conversion to Judaism, thereby obtaining Israeli citizenship. This raises hope in Kaifeng that more descendants will be able to make aliyah, the facilitation of which the Jerusalem-based institute Shavei Yisrael has taken up as one of its primary goals.
- 2006 Israel's chief Sephardi rabbi, Shlomo Amar, visits Shanghai and hopes to convince the Chinese government to recognize Judaism as an official religion.
- 2006 A new Jewish Center containing a synagogue, school, kosher restaurant, and women's ritual baths opens in Shanghai.
- 2007 A new Jewish center, ritual baths, and school open in Beijing under the leadership of Rabbi Freundlich.

## Bibliography

- Ehrlich, Avrum, ed. 2008. *The Chinese-Jewish Nexus*. London: Routledge.
- Goldstein, Jonathan, ed. 1999. *China and Israel, 1948–1998, A Fifty Year Retrospective*. London: Praeger Publishers.
- Kublin, Hyman, ed. 1971. *Jews in Old China: Some Western Views*. New York: Paragon Book Reprint.
- Leslie, Donald Daniel. 1984. *The Chinese-Hebrew Memorial Book of the Jewish Community of K'aifeng*. Belconnen, Australia: Canberra College of Advance Education.
- Shapiro, Sidney. 1984. *Jews in Old China: Studies by Chinese Scholars*. New York: Hippocrene Books.
- Weisz, Tiberiu. 2006. *The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions: The Legacy of the Jewish Community in Ancient China*. New York: Iuniverse.

# Jews of Kaifeng, China

*Noam Urbach*

---

**General Population:** 780,000 in the city, 4,510,000 including its rural jurisdiction

**Jewish Population:** Estimates range from several hundred up to 5,000

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The Jewish community was established by traders around the 11–12th century, presumed to be Jews of Sephardic origin arriving either through the Silk Road via Persia or by sea via India.

**Languages Spoken:** Local Kaifeng dialect of Mandarin. The younger and more educated also speak standard Mandarin and different levels of English.

---

## Historical Overview

The Kaifeng Jewish community is the only documented Jewish community in pre-modern China; thus, its mere existence throughout most of the past millennium has significance that far transcends its numerical size, which at its peak numbered no more than a few thousand. Jews are assumed to have settled in Kaifeng in several waves beginning as early as the Tang Dynasty (618–907), yet their synagogue—a one-of-its-kind fusion between a synagogue and a Chinese temple—was first built in 1163, while Kaifeng was under the rule of the foreign invading Jin Dynasty (1115–1234). The synagogue, or Hall of Pure Truth (*Qingzhensi*—also the Chinese term for “mosque”), was repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt until its final destruction in mid-19th century, an event that marks the end of Kaifeng Jewry as a viable community.

Termed by one foreign visitor as the orphan colony, there is extremely scant hard evidence or historical sources to help researchers learn about what Chinese Judaism was like. Nonetheless, the few existing relics were analyzed thoroughly by a wave of Chinese and Western (Christian and Jewish) scholars. And justifiably so, as the Jewish syncretism with Chinese religion and culture (primarily Confucianism) is a case worthy of deep observation because of its intrinsic value and its correspondence to the larger-scale Christian and Muslim experiences in China.

The primary source about the community, which express the way its members saw themselves, or how they wanted the Chinese to view them, are three stone tablets with writings dating from 1489, 1512, 1663, and 1679. Although the 1663 stone has disappeared (survived only by rubbings), the other two are still held in a deteriorating state at the Kaifeng Municipal Museum. These tablets present the Kaifeng Jews' own narrative—such as when their ancestors entered China (Northern Song [960–1127] according to one tablet and Han dynasty [206 BCE–220 CE] according to another). Much of the writings are aimed at Chinese readers, as they attempt to justify the Jews' existence in Kaifeng and the legitimacy of their religion, which is demonstrated as being highly compatible with both Confucianism and traditional Chinese history. The Bible story of creation is shown as being compatible with

Chinese myth and unifying Hebrew and Chinese mythological ancestors. For example, Noah is identified with the mythological Chinese forefather Nu-wa, and Adam with the Chinese mythological figure of Pan Gu. The 1489 stone tells how the Jewish merchants entering China were accepted by the Song emperor himself and presented him with worthy gifts from the land of the West.

The stones are also interesting for their theological consolidation of Jewish and Confucian tenets. For instance, the Torah is presented using the Chinese term of Dao (known as Tao in the West) and reverence to parents and deceased ancestors is stressed. These aspects are valuable for comparing the experiences of Christianity and Islam in China, beyond mere academic curiosity. The Kaifeng Jewish experience aided the Jesuits during the famous Chinese rites controversy that took place between different Catholic orders, in which the Jesuits argued that just as the Jews accommodated Chinese ancestral worship rites, Catholics should likewise do.

Another valuable and rare original text is the *Memorial Book of the Dead*, which was studied exhaustively by Professor Daniel D. Leslie (1984). It is the only source from Kaifeng known to be written by the community itself (whereas the tablets may have been written by non-Jews). It lists names of the deceased, most of whom have both Hebrew and Chinese names. Leslie claims that the many appearances of “bat Adam” (“daughter of Adam”) shows that intermarriage with Chinese women was prevalent, but also that they had probably gone through some sort of conversion to Judaism.

The West discovered the existence of Chinese Jews (which also prompts Chinese interest in the Jews) by way of the Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci, the pioneer missionary to China. In a much retold story, in 1605 a Jew from Kaifeng named Ai Tian was in Beijing and came to visit Ricci. At first Ricci thought his Chinese visitor was a remnant of ancient Chinese Christianity, whereas Ai Tian thought the foreigner was a Jewish rabbi. After the mistake was clarified, Ai Tian invited Ricci to denounce Christianity and take up office as rabbi of Kaifeng, while Ricci informed the Vatican of his discovery, which in turn spurred up interest in this community of Chinese Jews, first in Jesuit-Christian circles, and in turn in Europe in general. The central factor in this early Christian interest in Kaifeng Jews was related to the age-old Christian suspicion that rabbinical Judaism had introduced changes in the Bible, supposedly cutting out the phrases that envisaged the coming of Jesus. Later, Jesuit missions to Kaifeng managed to read through these Torah scrolls and, to their disappointment, found them to be identical in essence to the Torah known to the world.

Another interesting result of the effects the news of Chinese Jews had in Europe was that the mid-17th-century Dutch Jewish rabbi-activist Manasseh ben Israel used this knowledge in his attempt to persuade English ruler Oliver Cromwell to readmit Jews to England, where they had been barred since 1290. His line of reason was based on the Christian belief that Jesus the Messiah would reappear only after Jews are truly scattered to all ends of the world. Seeing that Jews had already reached China in the Far East, settlement in England—being the far north—would be the last requirement for the world’s redemption. Whether or not Jewish readmission to England, which soon began progressing, was due to this line of reasoning is unclear.

Modern scholars have been so enchanted by the case of Kaifeng Jewry that they have attempted to answer two seemingly contradictory questions: Why was this offshoot of the Diaspora lost to assimilation, whereas other no less far-off communities—such as that of India—survived? On the other hand, how is it that against all odds, such a tiny community, detached from any other Jewish community, has nevertheless maintained a basic Jewish identity even after losing many other traits of Judaism (e.g., rituals)?

An extremely interesting attempt to answer the latter question, made by Irene Eber (1993), speculates that it was in fact the Jews' "Sinification," namely their adoption of the Chinese lineage system (a famous local phrase terms them as "Seven surnames, eight clans"), and their definition as a Chinese religious sect (*jiao*) that has secured some degree of Jewish identity even up to the 20th century, when practically no religious trait or community organization has prevailed.

Since the final destruction of the synagogue in the mid-19th century, a Jewish community in Kaifeng does not exist as such, yet various families have sustained some degrees of Jewish identity. Anglican bishop Charles W. White, stationed in Kaifeng during 1910–1934, made contact with many of the descendants and researched their history. He also managed to purchase control of the site of the former synagogue, the stone tablets, and shipped to his home base in Canada the few physical relics of the community he could collect; these are now housed at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. In 1919, he arranged on behalf of a separate fundamentalist Protestant mission an "attempt to reorganize the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng." One of the goals of this attempt was to "teach them that Jesus Christ is the savior of the Jews." At approximately the same time, Jews from the Sephardi community in Shanghai made two failed attempts of reviving the Kaifeng Jews through the Society for the Rescue of Chinese Jews of Kaifeng.



Jews of Kaifeng, China, about 1900.  
(Isadore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

The surprising outcome of this is that in 1952, soon after the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established, the living remnants of the Kaifeng Jews were able to send a representative to Beijing requesting recognition as a national minority. Though this was politely turned down, some Jewish identity survived the notorious Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) to reach its latest quest for revival at the end of the last century.

### Contemporary Overview

Soon after the founding of the PRC in October 1949, two issues central to the Communist Party's hold on power became clear. One was the status and classification of the various national minorities (*minzu*), and the other was consolidation of religion. The status of the disassociated collection of individual families in Kaifeng, who were descendants of the once intact community of local Jews, was a question touching both politically sensitive core issues. The following chronological outline may help explain how the sensitivity surrounding this numerically insignificant group involves not only China but also Israel and even the United States. It also serves as a curious example of how an ethnic and religious identity thought to have been completely extinct, may, under the right circumstances, rise up again (the primary source of this entry is Urbach 2007).

Scholars agree that at least since the final destruction of the synagogue in the mid-19th century, Kaifeng Jewry ceased to exist as a viable community, although some basic form of identity as Jews has persisted. During the Republican era (1927–1949), China recognized only five major nationalities. Soon after the reunification of China and the establishment of the PRC, the Communist Party set out on a political-anthropological campaign to recognize and classify all the national minorities. In 1952, two Jewish descendants (or *Youtai houyi*, as they have become to be known in Kaifeng) came to Beijing to participate in a National Day celebration held by premier Zhou Enlai, who hosted representatives of the various ethnic groups. The delegation officially asked to be recognized as a national minority. Though the request was declined, the central government instructed Kaifeng local authorities that the Youtai “be cared for and not discriminated against” (Xu 2003, Appendix A). In fact, locally some of the descendants maintained a classification as “Jewish” (*Youtai*) under the nationality rubric of their household registration cards.

During the Cultural Revolution, any diversion from the norm—whether ethnic or religious—was not merely discouraged, but downright dangerous. Therefore, the period that followed, known as the reform and opening up period, saw an upsurge of religious revival on the one hand, and some degree of renegotiation of ethnic definitions on the other. In the case of the Kaifeng Jews, this was the most turbulent period since their disintegration as a community 150 years earlier.

The reform era marked a turning point for the heretofore “extinct” Jewish community. Though Kaifeng is a historic former capital of Northern Song dynasty, it is not a major attraction for foreign tourists. So when foreign visitors—Jews as well as Christians primarily interested in “discovering” the “lost” Jews of China—began arriving in Kaifeng, this could not be overlooked by local officials. The local government

monopoly tourism company, together with other relevant political organs, devised a system to accommodate these visits: a group of elderly Jewish descendants were carefully picked for meetings with foreigners. They were briefed regarding what to say and what not to say. Not having any interest in Jewish religious and customs and no affinity to Israel was part of the line they were required to keep to.

The growing wave of visitors had a dual effect—on the one hand, it convinced local authorities that the Jewish theme is, in fact, a gold mine for the local economy in terms of the potential for foreign tourism. On the other hand, as far as the descendants were concerned, it raised their awareness of belonging to a greater outside “mother group,” and served to strengthen the *Youtai* identity. Local tourist authorities contemplated that the lack of any Jewish-related physical structure was preventing the development of Kaifeng into a true attraction for big numbers of foreign tourists (by way of comparison, the neighboring provincial capital of Xi’an draws millions of tourists a year, and aside from the famous Terra Cotta Warriors, the local Great Eastern mosque is a major tourist magnet). Yet during the 1980s, the idea of erecting a physical structure was not seriously considered. The main reason was the lack of formal relations with Israel, which intensified the religious and ethnic sensitivities already surrounding the *Youtai* case.

In 1989, Israel and China began a publicized process of thawing their relationship, and full diplomatic missions were set up in 1992. This radically changed the political atmosphere in Kaifeng regarding the Jewish theme. Authorities began discussing how the potential of “Jewish tourist resources” could be exploited. First, in late 1992, the municipal government authorized the establishment of the Society for the Research of the History and Culture of Chinese Jews in Kaifeng. The society was made up of officials, scholars, and Jewish descendants. Soon after, in January 1993, the municipal government made a major decision—to reconstruct the former synagogue, though not as an active synagogue, but merely as a museum. Assurances were made that this future structure would not actually serve for religious rituals.

Nevertheless, it was becoming clear in Kaifeng that the project to rebuild the synagogue was bringing along with it a “Jewish revival” of some sort. Descendants were growing more secure in their contacts with foreigners. They were active in the construction office in charge of establishing the Jewish museum. It had become expected that once the structure would be up, *Youtai* descendants would naturally make up its personnel, and they would indeed use the structure for religious and social gatherings. Other “Jewish” projects were initiated, such as a community cemetery, a Jewish hotel, a Jewish school, and even an Overseas Jewish Economic Development District. Kaifeng Jews also attracted another wave of Christian missionary attention (as had accrued periodically in the past). In October 1995, an entire international arts and music troupe participating in a local flower festival turned out to be a mission led by American Jewish-Messianic televangelist Sid Roth to introduce Jesus primarily to Kaifeng Jews. With their unconcealed missionary activity, the havoc they created caused much embarrassment to local officials.

These developments, which clearly affected a rise in *Youtai* identity, resulted in a 1996 reversal of the official authorization of the plan to construct the Jewish

museum. Local descendants felt a growing pressure from authorities, especially regarding their contacts with foreigners. This caused three descendants to attempt to make contact with the Israeli embassy in Beijing, in the hope of obtaining some sort of confirmation of their status and perhaps immigrating to Israel as Jews. However, since its establishment in 1992, the embassy had made it a policy to take no stance on the issue of Kaifeng Jews. There is a strong, though unconfirmed, rumor that, at the time, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin gave the Chinese government a personal commitment regarding the total separation between Israel as a state and any sort of Judaism as a religion or ethnic group in China. The first Israeli ambassador, Ze'ev Sufott, refused to authorize a Jewish Agency delegation to China because it was interested in visiting the Jews of Kaifeng, and he feared any such Israeli involvement in what China defines as its interior affairs might endanger the two countries' tender relations. Noting that Kaifeng Jews were "as Jewish as I am Chinese," Sufott also believed such a delegation was intrinsically pointless. Since then, descendants report being refused entry to the embassy.

This time, the three *Youtai* descendants who traveled to Beijing succeeded in obtaining an Israeli stamp of authentication on a Chinese document that confirmed their Jewish status. Though a mere technicality on the part of the Israeli Consulate, once news of this reached the Kaifeng authorities in late 1996, a radical campaign was implemented—to cross out *Youtai* as "nationality" from all the Household registration cards of all those who were defined as such, forcing the Kaifeng descendants to choose classification as either Han (ethnic Chinese) or Hui (Muslim Chinese). In a country where ethnic identity is so closely attached to state definitions, this sort of campaign is tantamount to an attempt to obliterate an identity. Though reports of this arrived at the Israeli embassy, it made no action and voiced no response.

It would nevertheless be wrong to attach Israel's indifference toward the plight of Kaifeng descendants for recognition solely to its consideration of China's apprehension from any external involvement. Israel, in fact, had its own interior reasons. After generations of marriage with non-Jewish women who did not go through any conversion (*giyur*), Kaifeng Jews, who are identified as such according to the Chinese standard of patrilineal descent, could not be regarded Halachically (that is, by Jewish law) as Jews. Therefore, they are not legally entitled to immigrate to Israel according to the Law of Return. Yet Israel's short history has shown that these definitions are far from rigid. The definition of various communities remote from the core of world Jewry as entitled or not for aliyah is based not only on Jewish law, but maybe even more so on political and social pressures coming both from within Israel and from world Jewry and even Christian pressure groups. Such are the cases of Ethiopian Jewry and the Bnei Menashe from India.

Given these circumstances, the Israeli public, media, and political and bureaucratic establishments have developed a sort of inherent suspicion toward emerging groups of "lost Jews." When these come from Third World countries, the tendency in Israel is to dismiss such cases as utter inventions aimed exclusively at poor people's hope for immigration to a developed country such as Israel. The fear then arises of an uncontrollable wave of immigrants all claiming to be Jews. As a former

director-general of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated to this author when discussing Israeli regard (or disregard) to Kaifeng Jewish descendants, "Any Jewish group needs to have a lobby in Israel to support their cause. Those in Kaifeng had no such lobby."

There is an American connection as well. In recent years, religious freedom has become a major point of both dialogue and confrontation between the United States and China. In February 1998, President Clinton sent a delegation of three religious leaders to investigate this issue in China, including Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation in New York. When Schneier met with President Jiang Zemin, he made an appeal that China would consider recognizing Judaism—being one of the world's major religions—as an official religion in China, together with the five already recognized religions (Taoism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam). Jiang, of course, did not oblige. Once again this exemplifies how this minor issue in an off-route city has relevance that stretches far beyond.

In late 1999, Jewish descendant Jin Guangyuan, along with wife and daughter, managed to move to Israel with the aid of a Finnish Christian-Zionist movement. For several years they lived in Jerusalem with no official status, insisting on being recognized as Jews. Turned "Shlomo" Jin, he first shunned the idea of going through conversion to Judaism, insisting they were Jews already. Seeing himself as the "door opener" for the rest of Kaifeng Jews, conversion would not mark an achievement that would affect his community in large. When the Jins later decided to go through conversion, it still took much time, effort, and active assistance by their dedicated sympathizers in Israel, including a minister and a Supreme Court judge. In 2005, they finally became the first Kaifeng Jewish descendants to complete conversion and obtain Israeli citizenship.

In Kaifeng, the erasure of the *Youtai* designation from household documents did not mark a complete end to the quest for Jewish revival. In 2003, a young American-Israeli settled in Kaifeng and has devoted much of his time and effort to educating willing descendants in Hebrew and Judaism. His understandably secretive mission was aimed primarily at enabling Jewish descendants to immigrate to Israel. To that end he opened a makeshift Hebrew school where he taught adults and children; it also served as a place for the Shabbat community gatherings he initiated. In 2005, a team of two Israeli rabbis led by Michael Freund and his Shavei Israel Institute came to visit the school, trying to assess the feasibility of converting more descendants and arranging their aliyah. One of the results of the visit was that soon after, the young teacher was expelled from China. Yet what is surprising is that authorities turned a blind eye toward his activities during the years he lived in China.

China is very apprehensive about the emergence of any new religion or ethnic minority. Any recognition of a heretofore unrecognized national minority may unleash demands from many other unrecognized ethnic groups. "Building a harmonious society" is China's current slogan, and new sprouting religions are not viewed as a constructive contribution to this goal. Particular factors may explain why the Jewish case in Kaifeng is especially sensitive: a strong Muslim population

in Kaifeng raises the fearful possibility that the Arab-Israeli conflict will be imported to the heart of China. In addition, the power of world Jewry, exemplified by President Clinton's official envoy expressing care for Jews in China, suggests that there is such an international dimension to the issue that it is best for the government to deny its existence altogether. As a result, the official dictum is clear—Chinese Jews have completely and irreversibly assimilated into the Han, Hui (Muslim), and other recognized nationalities.

China's decisive approach brought Shalom Salomon Wald, writer of the Jewish People's Policy Planning Institute strategy paper entitled *China and the Jewish People: Old Civilizations in a New Era*, to criticize various Jews' efforts on behalf of Kaifeng Jewish descendants. In the chapter "The Trouble with Kaifeng," he concludes: "[S]upporting a group of impoverished Jewish descendants is certainly a noble gesture, but will do nothing to improve the standing of the Jewish people in China, and could even damage it if it triggers new demands from other small minorities and raises serious problems for the authorities. The sympathy and help that the group certainly deserves must not come at the expense of broader Jewish policy objectives" (Wald 2004, 77). This seems to be the prevailing stance in other major Jewish institutions as well. Yet Shavei Israel is continuing its efforts to bring more Kaifeng youngsters to Israel for education toward conversion and citizenship. With China in a constant mode of change, there is no telling what the future holds for the Kaifeng *Youtai*, in terms of revival in Kaifeng itself or in terms of aliyah to Israel.

## Bibliography

- Leslie, Donald Daniel. 1972. *The Survival of the Chinese Jews: The Jewish Community of Kaifeng*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Malek, Roman, ed. 2000. *From Kaifeng . . . To Shanghai: Jews in China*. Sankt Augustin, Germany: Monumenta Serica Institute.
- Needle, M. Patricia, ed. 1992. *East Gate of Kaifeng: A Jewish World inside China*. Minneapolis: China Centre, University of Minnesota.
- Wald, Shalom Salomon. 2004. *China and the Jewish People: Old Civilizations in a New Era*. Jerusalem: Jewish People Policy Planning Institute.
- Weisz, Tiberiu. 2006. *The Kaifeng Stone Inscriptions: The Legacy of the Jewish Community in Ancient China*. New York: Iuniverse.
- Xu, Xin. 2003. *The Jews of Kaifeng, China: History, Culture, and Religion*. Jersey City, NJ: KTAV.

# Survey of Historical Jewish Personalities in China

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

There was speculation that a number of the Kaifeng Jews were prominent members of the emperor's court, but the most outstanding and curious role of Jews in China comes in the early 20th century. Few foreigners had the opportunity to observe

from close and even participate in the tumultuous rise of the new republic of China. Of those few an exceptionally high number were Jews. Through separate and unrelated series of events Jews were involved in different roles in the history of modern China. Their stories are fascinating and sometimes touching and not popularly known, but these stories lay the foundations for the future relationship and sense of collegiality between the Jewish and Chinese nations.

### **Morris "Two Gun" Cohen**

Morris Abraham Cohen (1887–1970) was born into an impoverished Polish-Jewish family in Radzanów, Poland, that eventually fled to London's East End, where Cohen was essentially a delinquent. His love of the theater and the boxing arena may have indicated potential in his character, but Cohen's first arrest when he was very young seems to have laid the foundation for a life of delinquency and chaos. He was eventually sent to the Hayes Industrial Home for Wayward Jewish Lads, and in 1905, he was sent to Western Canada. Although he spent some time living a farmer's life in western Canada, Cohen was destined for an exciting life as an adventure seeker. On more than one occasion, his flare for colorful and exciting antics, gambling, and playing with trouble as a real estate broker landed him in jail. Oddly enough Cohen established a connection with a number of exiled Chinese and wound up joining Sun Yat-sen's anti-Manchu organization. His business activities with Sun Yat-sen and other dubious activities, mainly in Shanghai and Canton, led him to develop a reputation, but his nickname was the result of a shooting incident that led Morris to carry two guns. He is said to have been the personal bodyguard for Sun Yat-sen and to have helped the Nationalists establish their intelligence operations. Some even credit him with getting China to abstain from voting against the establishment of the State of Israel in 1947.

### **Jacob Rosenfeld**

Dr. Jacob Rosenfeld (1902–1952) was born in Lemburg, now Mvov, which is part of western Ukraine. Rosenfeld was fortunate enough to escape the fate of so many captured Jews in Austro-Hungarian territory and Nazi Germany. When Rosenfeld was conditionally released in 1939, he made haste to enter one of the only territories that did not require a visa. He soon found himself in what many called "little Vienna" in Shanghai, China, along with some 25,000 other European Jews, but the political turmoil and horrors of war influenced Rosenfeld to join the New Fourth Army in 1941. He lived in Jinan in the Shandong province. Rosenfeld quickly rose up the ranks in the army and in active duty as a medical officer, improved and organized hygienic conditions and trained medical staff. Eventually his position was elevated to the rank of general in the Mao's Red Army. He became a hero for many during the war with the Japanese, and there is a statue of him at one of Jinan's oldest hospitals. After returning home to Vienna to a devastating loss of family and friends, Rosenfeld tried to return to China but was denied a visa. He eventually went to Israel, where he died in 1952. His grave was a pilgrimage spot for the first

official Chinese delegations that arrived after diplomatic relations were restored in 1992.

### **Robert Pollitzer**

Dr. Robert Pollitzer (1885–1968) graduated from Vienna University with a degree in medicine, before moving to Harbin, China, in 1919. There Harbin's plague prevention unit hired him permanently. During that time, Pollitzer became one of the world's leading authorities on the plague and cholera, through his research and numerous publications and practice of medicine throughout China, mainly in plague prevention. Many Chinese considered him a hero as he moved around the provinces trying to cure disease. He went on to become an internationally known epidemiologist and former member of the League of Nations Anti-Epidemic Commission. Eventually, Pollitzer relocated to Geneva, Switzerland, with his family, where he worked at the World Health Organization headquarters, before moving to the United States. There has recently been talk among some Chinese artists and filmmakers of making a movie about his life.

### **Ruth Weiss**

Ruth Weiss (1908–2006) was a Jewish-born Austrian-Chinese educator, journalist, and lecturer, and a witness to the Chinese Revolution and the early stages of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Weiss was born in Vienna, Austria, and graduated with a degree in German and English studies from the University of Vienna. In 1933, she traveled to Shanghai, at a time when many European Jewish refugees were escaping the Nazis. There, Weiss worked as a freelance journalist, while employed at a Jewish school, at the School of the Chinese Committee of Intellectual Cooperation, and at the West China Union University. Eventually, she took a post at a radio station in New York, although she returned to China from 1952 to 1965, where she was a lecturer for the Publishing House for Foreign Literature.

In 1955, Weiss was one of about 100 foreign-born residents to receive Chinese citizenship, and in 1983, she was named 1 of 11 foreign experts by the Communist Party of China, part of membership of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. She died in Beijing, aged 97.

### **Aaron Avshalomov**

Aaron Avshalomov (1894–1956) was born in Nikolayevsk in eastern Siberia. As a child growing up on the Amur River, Avshalomov came to love the Beijing opera pieces and Chinese folk songs sung by the local Chinese population. In 1916, after study in the Zurich Conservatory, Avshalomov went directly to Beijing, Tianjin, and Qingdao, where he collected folk songs that would be incorporated into later compositions. He lived in China from 1916 to 1946, with a brief stint in the United States. He was a key figure in the evolution of modern Chinese music and the introduction of Chinese themes into musical performances in the West. He returned to

Shanghai from the United States in 1929 where he worked as a librarian and conductor of the Shanghai City Symphony. He also composed works for the piano and violin, such as *The Twilight Hour of Yan Kuei Fei* (1933) and *The Great Wall* (1933–1941), which was premiered at the site in 1945. His first opera drawing from Chinese sources was *Guan Yin*, produced in Beijing in 1925. Today his work is described as a particular fusion of traditional elements of Chinese music, in the “colorful Russian style” of Rimsky-Korsakov. He premiered his first work in Beijing in 1925, an opera entitled *Kuan Yin*.

In 1932, Avshalomov arrived in Shanghai and met Nie Er, the composer of *The March of the Volunteers*. Avshalomov produced the first orchestration of this song, which later became the national anthem of the People’s Republic of China.

Avshalomov went on to write the ballet *Soul of Qin* and the pantomime *Intense Shadows*. His masterpiece, *The Great Wall*, was a musical drama based on the tragic story of a woman named Meng Jiangnu, who lived in the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE). It was performed in Shanghai in November 1945. During World War II he was placed under house arrest by the occupying Japanese forces. At the encouragement of U.S. general Albert C. Wedemeyer, Avshalomov traveled to the United States with the hope of staging *The Great Wall* there. He was stranded in the United States by the Chinese Civil War, and remained there until his death. Before his death in 1956 he completed another musical drama based on Chinese themes, *The Twilight of Royal Lady Young*. In 1985, Jacob Avshalomov, Aaron’s Chinese-born son and conductor of the Portland (Oregon) Junior Symphony Orchestra, came to China to attend commemorations of what would have been his father’s 90th birthday. In Beijing and Shanghai Jacob had the honor of conducting all of his father’s China-related works.

## Sydney Shapiro

Sydney Shapiro (b. 1915) lived in Beijing for nearly 40 years and became a Chinese citizen in 1963. Throughout his 58-year career as a magazine copy editor, translator, and writer he has been critically acclaimed in China and around the world as an important Jewish thinker on contemporary China.

Shapiro was important throughout the earliest stages of China’s path toward modern development, raising awareness of China’s past, present, and future. This is especially clear through his numerous translations of Chinese works into coherent and accurate English. Shapiro has guided the West into developing an understanding of Jews in old China, contemporary China, and even Chinese literature. Perhaps his most recognized work, Shapiro’s autobiography is entitled *I Chose China*.

## Israel Epstein

Israel Epstein (1915–2005) was born in Warsaw, Poland, but with the increasing anti-Semitism and the approach of the German army, his family moved to China. When Israel Epstein was just 15 years old he began to work for the *Peking Times* and the *Tientsin Times* as a journalist. Epstein was privileged to have covered a

variety of exciting news stories as a journalist in the early stages of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. His exploits, including the time he was forced to fake his own death to escape the Japanese, were even covered in the *New York Times*.

In 1944, Epstein left China to travel to Britain and the United States with his first wife. Eventually, he returned to China in 1951 and worked for *China Today* until his retirement at the age of 70. He was given the title of editor emeritus for the remainder of his days. In 1957, Epstein was granted Chinese citizenship; he became a member of the Communist Party of China in 1964 and the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 1983. Epstein was also given the honor of meeting most of the leaders of China from Zhou Enlai to the present leader Hu Jintao, who also attended Epstein's funeral service, held at Babaoshan Cemetery for Revolutionaries.

### Sam Ginsbourg

Sam Ginsbourg (1914–1980) was the son of a Russian Jew from a small town in southeastern Byelorussia, who eventually became an enterprising lumber trader. His Jewish Russian mother graduated from the Omsk Medical Institute, with honors, as a dentist.

His first experiences in China were in Harbin in 1919–1922. He experienced anti-Semitism for the first time, as a child in a small community in Imianpo (about 100 kilometers from Harbin), when he was attacked by some children. Ginsbourg's family finally moved to Shanghai on October 24, 1926. There, over a period of years, Ginsbourg frequently experienced the political unrest and war as a result of Japanese invasion of China. Eventually, after 1932, he moved to Nanking where he was employed as a stenographer, eventually gaining experience and education throughout China in a number of fields. Finally, in October 1948, Ginsbourg moved to Jinan, where he began to teach Russian, while supervising translation of Russian works into Chinese, including *The Ideological and Political Education of Middle School Pupils in the Soviet Union*.

Ginsbourg stayed in Jinan, Shandong, for the next three and half decades, where he was employed as a professor in Shandong University. In his autobiography, entitled *My First Sixty Years in China*, at least politically, Ginsbourg seems to have been a modest and quiet man, but throughout the early years of political uncertainty and great turmoil, until his death in 1980, he witnessed some of the most important political changes in Chinese contemporary history. He became well known at Shandong University and his role at the university and his friendship with the university president may have influenced Jewish studies at the university and the establishment of a center for Jewish studies, which is presently the most important academic center for research in Jewish philosophy, culture, and texts.

# Jews in Shanghai

*Carl Hoffman and M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

**General Population:** 19 million

**Jewish Population:** Estimated at approximately 4,000

**Percent of Population:** 0.0026 percent

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Israel, the United States, Australia, France, Tunisia, and other Western countries (and additional tourists, businesspeople, and temporary residents)

**Languages Spoken:** English, Hebrew, French, Chinese

---

## Historical Overview

Shanghai was an ancient coastal settlement at the mouth of the Yangtze River that gradually grew in size and importance. Already a rising business center by the start of Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), Shanghai became a major seaport and trade entrepôt during the succeeding Ch'ing or Manchu period (1644–1898). After the Opium Wars and a series of treaties and agreements between the aggressive colonial powers of the West and a weak China, Shanghai became a colonized city, carved up into foreign “concessions” and open for business to one and all. The city thus became a magnet for a colorful influx of businesspeople, traders, missionaries, and adventurers from all over the world. Not surprisingly, many of these—especially businesspeople and traders, along with a few of the adventurers—were Jews.

Soon after the Hong Kong British trading house of Jardine Matheson arrived in Shanghai and began to do business, several Jewish families from the Indian city of Bombay came hard on their heels. These Jewish families, who traced their descent from the Sephardi community of Baghdad, had names—Sassoon, Kadoorie, and Hardoon—that were to resonate loudly through the next several decades of Shanghai's history. As soon as the Sassoons, Kadoories, and Hardoons settled into Shanghai and established their businesses, they began to attract large numbers of Jews from Bombay, Baghdad, and Cairo. These new arrivals also began to do business—some as employees of the three prominent Jewish business families, others as independent entrepreneurs. A number of the new arrivals purchased large tracts of real estate throughout the booming city. The Kadoories alone were said to own upward of 1,900 buildings. All of these Sephardi Jewish families contributed more than their share to building Shanghai and establishing its commerce during the early decades of the 20th century.

In addition to building the city, these Sephardi families set out to develop a thriving Jewish community in this Chinese coastal city at the mouth of the Yangtze. Shortly after the turn of the century, Nissim Ezra and Silas Hardoon established the first Jewish day school, followed a few years later by the construction of a magnificent synagogue, Ohel Rachel, built by Victor Sassoon in memory of his wife Rachel. The Jewish community proclaimed itself an organizational entity in 1910 under the

leadership of David Abraham, who remained its head for the next 30 years. A particularly colorful figure during this period was Silas Hardoon, who was a favorite among the Chinese for his philanthropic support of Chinese causes and institutions. Married to a Chinese woman and an admirer of the Buddhist religion, Hardoon contributed heavily to Buddhist schools and charities. When Hardoon and his wife realized they were unable to have children, they adopted more than a dozen children of various nationalities and gave each \$1 million as a start in life.

The Sephardi Jews were soon joined, in much larger numbers, by Russian Jews fleeing czarist pogroms throughout the Jewish Pale of Settlement. Settling mostly in Harbin and Shanghai, by 1908, the Russian Jews numbered upward of 8,000 in Harbin, and in Shanghai they soon outnumbered the Sephardic Jews. Their numbers virtually doubled after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Unlike the Sephardim, most of the Jews from Russia arrived largely destitute, with little more than the clothes on their backs. Most became shopkeepers of one sort or another; a few became bakers and milliners.

As in Harbin, the Jews found a home in Shanghai. In a 1920 letter to one of the leaders of the Jewish community, no less a personage than Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder and first president of the Republic of China, wrote, "All lovers of democracy cannot help but support the movement to restore your wonderful and historic nation, which has contributed so much to the civilization of the world and which rightly deserves an honorable place in the family of nations."

During the 1930s, Shanghai became one of the few ports of refuge for Jews fleeing Nazi Germany. An open city that required no passports, visas, or other documentation, Shanghai provided a home and haven to some 30,000 Jews before the Nazis and the war stopped the flow of Jewish refugees. Madame Sun Yat-sen led a delegation from China that met with the German consul in Shanghai to lodge a strong protest against the Nazi's treatment of Jews in Germany, and numerous protest rallies were staged in the city, protesting Germany's war against the Jews.

After Japan's invasion of China and occupation of Shanghai in 1937, the Japanese imposed no special restrictions on the city's Jewish population. Although nominally allied with Nazi Germany, the Japanese were at best mystified by the Germans' anti-Semitism, which they neither understood nor paid much attention to. Jews could move about the city freely and live wherever they wished. Many chose to live in the Hongkew district, a crowded Chinese neighborhood where the Jewish residents soon established a thriving community, with newspapers, theatrical groups, orchestras, and cafes. Shelters and soup kitchens were established for those in need.

In 1940, these Jews were joined by the thousands of Polish Jews saved by Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Kovno, Lithuania. Against clear and strict orders from Japan's Foreign Ministry, Sugihara—often called the "Japanese Schindler"—issued some 10,000 transit visas to Jews desperately trying to escape the Nazi Holocaust. Many of these refugees, including the entire Mir Yeshiva, spent the war years in Shanghai's Hongkew district.

Throughout the war, the Japanese continued to resist the relentless pressure from their German allies to impose the "Final Solution" on Shanghai's Jews. The

Japanese “compromised” by declaring the city’s Hongkew district the “Hongkew Ghetto.” Shanghai’s Jewish residents were troubled no further, however, and lived through the war unharmed.

After the war, reports of the Holocaust in Europe horrified the Jews of Shanghai, many of whom had fled Europe and left family members behind. This, along with increasing political turmoil in China—as fighting between the communists and the Nationalist government spread throughout the country—induced most of Shanghai’s foreign community to leave. The new State of Israel became a powerful magnet for many of Shanghai’s Jews. The last Jewish wedding in Shanghai took place in 1948; virtually all Jews had left by the following year.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

Today, most of the Jews in Shanghai come to set up their own trade companies or source goods, to work in international corporations, to teach English, or to study Chinese or Chinese history, culture, or business.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

As far as Shanghai is an international city and shares in international culture, many Chinese artists, performers, writers, directors, and an array of other professions, collaborate with Jews around the world, and there is an active exchange of Jewish–Chinese relations in these disciplines.

Jewish tourism to Shanghai is active, and there are a number of interesting sites of Jewish cultural value. A good deal of Shanghai’s most expensive properties, including its most prestigious downtown shopping streets and the site of the municipal government quarters, was owned by Jews in the first half of the century. Many books and accounts of life in Shanghai and photo albums and studies of Jewish architecture and music in Shanghai have been produced. Parts of the Jewish ghetto are intact, and a museum is housed in one of its synagogues. Discussions with local authorities have taken place as to the extent that this area should be preserved and reconstructed to reflect its Jewish component. The local authorities, while keen to bring Jewish tourism into the city, only allow access to the beautiful Ohel Rachel synagogue in Shanghai and other select synagogues. The grave stones from the dismantled Jewish cemetery of Shanghai were found in villages and rivers where the rubble was dumped, and many have been restored due to the efforts of Dvir Bar Gal, an Israeli artist and journalist residing in Shanghai.

### Jewish Education, Religious Denominations, and Communal and Political Institutions

The original Jewish communities and their buildings and properties were nationalized in the early 1950s. The first modern community was a Sephardi minyan, which has been taken over with the arrival of the Chabad rabbi Shalom Greenberg and his wife in 1998. The new Jewish community is a distance from the historic centers of Jewish life, rupturing the sense of continuity between the two. While tourists and



Jewish ghetto in Shanghai. (Photo by Jono David)

travelers may prefer to spend time on the Bund or the Honqiao ghetto area or Nanjing road, the long-term residents of Shanghai may prefer to live in the Honkao area of villas and more Gentile living, next to the domestic airport.

A large number of Jews, mainly Israelis, do not identify with the organized Jewish community, but they maintain groupings in different areas of Shanghai. A new Chabad center has been opened in Pudong, the banking and development area of Shanghai, where many corporations, banks and multinationals are based and Jews live.

### Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and Existential Problems of the Community

The Shanghai municipality is proud of Shanghai's role in saving tens of thousands of Jews from the Nazi Holocaust and enjoys a unique sense of friendship and respect for the old Jews of Shanghai. In one major Shanghai municipal museum there is a permanent exhibition about Shanghai's Jews with a large wall prominently displaying the sentiments "while the enlightened nations of the earth closed their doors to the fate of the Jews running for their life to escape the death camps of Europe, the only city on earth that welcomed them with equality and respect was Shanghai."

The Chinese are generally enthusiastic about meeting Jews and have general and widespread ideas that the Jews are "very clever," "rich," "influential," "upright,"

“tough negotiators,” and so on. There is a renewed interest in Jewish issues, and Shanghai publishers have produced several books, albeit superficial in nature, on Jewish subjects; for example, *How to be a Jewish Millionaire* and *The Secrets to Jewish Life*. There is a small center for Israel and Jewish studies at the Shanghai Academy of the Social Sciences led by Professor Pan Guang. He is also the editor of a history and pictorial book commemorating the Jews of Shanghai. The center especially focuses on the study of political issues relating to China and Israel and the Jews, so, for example, there are papers and studies on Israel–China relations and on the Jewish lobby in the United States.

Many Jews have arrived in Shanghai and have found it convenient to associate with the Jewish community. Some have even become more identified with religious observance while in Shanghai, and a curiously high number of people have become Orthodox while in Shanghai. This may be attributed to the largesse of the city, to the eclectic mix of people coming to Shabbat dinners at the Chabad center, and to the perceived diversity and richness of Jewish life. It also may be attributed to the strong positive affirmation of the Chinese toward Jews, making Jewish identity more attractive. Many Jewish and Israeli men have met Chinese girlfriends, and many have begun to convert to Judaism or have married and are slowly negotiating their mixed Chinese–Jewish identity.

### Bibliography

- Heppner, Ernest G. 1993. *Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir of the World War II Jewish Ghetto*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Kranzler, David. 1976. *Japanese, Nazis and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938–1945*. New York: Yeshiva University Press.
- Liberman, Yaacov. 1998. *My China: Jewish Life in the Orient: 1900–1950*. Jerusalem: Geffen.
- Pan, Guang. 1996. *The Jews in Shanghai*. Shanghai: Shanghai Pictorial Publishing House.
- Tobias, Sigmund. 1999. *Strange Haven: A Jewish Childhood in Wartime Shanghai*. Urbana: University of Illinois.
- Tokayer, Marvin, and Mary Swartz. 1979. *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews during World War II*. New York: Paddington Press.

## Jews in Major Chinese Cities; Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Macau, Jinan, Qingdao

*M. Avrum Ehrlich*

---

### Contemporary Overview

The 21st-century Jewish migration to China has many different features. China is becoming a political, economic, and cultural hub of Asia and the world and is thus a magnet to many individuals and peoples, Jews among them. It is a curiosity that

individual Jews have played supportive roles regarding China over the past few hundred years. Some of the great sinologists of Hungary, Germany, and Britain have been Jews. Many of the recent advisers on Asian affairs to U.S. presidents have been Jewish and have been identified as having helped bridge the American–Chinese divide. Prominent among them was Henry Kissinger. Some of the only Westerners to remain in China through its period of isolation were Jews. Some of the first people to enter into business and cultural relations in the late 1970s and 1980s were Jews. Of the 10 foreign-born members of the Central Government's People's Consultative Conference, 6 are Jewish.

In response to the growing expatriate communities in China's major cities, the Chinese government came to a not so formalized understanding that these groups may convene for their ritual practice without government interference, providing they strictly adhere to the rule that no Chinese nationals may attend these activities. Unlike other religious groups, this limitation is not a problem for Jews because of the nonproselytizing nature of the religion; however, this is not always understood by Chinese authorities concerned with fears of the spread of foreign religion in China.

Even though the Chinese government does not formally recognize Judaism as a legal religion in China, it has opened relations with the State of Israel and has made accommodations with the Jewish community, accepting the rights of Jews to congregate, for example. The inevitable process of full recognition as a religious group seems to be waiting for the right time. Meanwhile, local governments in Harbin, Tianjin, and Shanghai are commemorating their Jewish populations and funding the renovations of cemeteries, synagogues, and important historical places. Chinese officials are generally proud of their liberal and humane relations toward the Jews during the Nazi persecutions.

The issue of the Jewish descendants of Kaifeng is still a delicate subject for the Chinese government, and only a few of the descendants have been formerly recognized on their identity card as being of Jewish nationality. The sensitivity emerges from fears that the Muslim population in the same region may react to this and provoke unrest. The government was also concerned that recognizing a small group of 600 Jewish descendants as an ethnic minority could legitimize the claims and requests of many other small minorities for formal recognition and rights. Nevertheless, the small Jewish community in Kaifeng draws a lot of international interest. Many journalists, senators, diplomats, and distinguished Jews from all walks of life have visited the Jewish community of Kaifeng, and it must confound the government how such a small group of very poor and nondescript Chinese workers, in an old and forgotten Chinese city, can attract the attention and imagination of so many influential foreigners.

Today, China attracts different types of Jews from different countries and with different backgrounds, cultures, and languages. The attraction for many people, no less to Jews, is the prospect of meaningful employment opportunities and a cheap alternative to competitive Western cities. Some Jews have come to China in their golden age to work, teach, and live cheaply with their pensions or savings intact. Some are married to Chinese women and work in China, and some intermarriage

results in conversion to Judaism. Most Jews come as skilled professionals or for their own businesses. Many come for trade fairs and live in China for short periods. Some Jewish individuals moved to China to establish businesses and have since settled, and others are here for long periods of time, from 5 to 10 years. A large number of people remain in China for 2–3 years before moving on or returning to their homes. Many have decided to remain, developing deep business or employment relations, mastering Chinese, and building lives in China. Gradually, the community of permanent residents is growing.

The Chabad movement is the most dominant Jewish presence in China with rabbis in Shanghai, Beijing, and Guanzhou and with new communities and satellite community centers opening up with kindergartens and schools, mikvah, and kosher food, becoming a hub for community life. A cross section of Jewish existence in China is poetically illustrated at Shabbat or festival meals in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou telling more about the diversity and individuality of the Jews living in China.

Shanghai and Beijing are the major sites of the contemporary evolution of new Jewish communities in China. In both cases, liberal congregations were established first, and Chabad-Lubavitch moving in later—to Shanghai in 1998 and Beijing in 2001. Guangzhou and Shenzhen in the south draw many Jewish traders and business people to its trade shows, and Chabad has set up a center accommodating Shabbat and holiday provisions for the Jews who live there permanently. Qingdao and Jinan in Shandong province are developing communities, the former mainly Israelis and trade oriented, and the latter attracting academics to Shandong University and tourist groups as well as those fostering Chinese–Jewish relations.

At a Shabbat dinner at a Chabad center, there can easily be a group of Jewish businesspeople from Iran, a French Moroccan Jewish family living and trading in the city, or students of political science or Chinese culture and language from all over the Jewish world sitting with Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn who work in the garment trade or supervise kosher product manufacturing.

Many diplomatic, advisory, and government positions in the American, Australian, Argentinean, European Union, and Israeli embassies and consulates are Jews. Israeli travelers, investors, traders, and foreign experts may constitute up to 40 percent of the Jewish population of China.

American, Australian, South African, and European businesspeople have come to China to work and stay for periods of time. Foreign experts, including teachers, heads of companies, and senior executives from large multinational corporations now live in major Chinese cities.

With expatriate communities continuously strengthening their presence in many parts of China, and with many people settling down for longer periods of time, it seems that Jewish communities in China are on a road to greater strength and expansion, both in numbers as well as in terms of influence and stature. These communities are far from transient.

A large number of Jews revisit China on pilgrimages to the graves of their family members or to revisit places they lived. Jewish heritage tours to Kaifeng, Shanghai, and Harbin attract a few thousand Jews every year. The influx of so many well-to-do

Jewish people to these areas is noted by the local Chinese authorities, and they have made efforts to ensure the preservation of cemeteries and cultural sites of interest to Jewish tourism. However, there is still no agreement regarding the property rights over the old Shanghai synagogues and the tracts of land confiscated from Jews and nationalized during modern China's establishment.

The kosher industry in China is a fast-growing business, and many of the well-known kosher supervisors work in China. In addition, tens if not hundreds of ultra-Orthodox supervisors come to China every year to ensure the production of kosher products. The sight of ultra-Orthodox Jews entering second-tier industrialized Chinese cities to check the production of a food line at a factory is unusual, but the trend looks as if it will grow.

A number of Chinese artists, singers, directors, and cultural leaders have collaborated with Jews in their respective fields and developed Chinese–Jewish cultural relations. The field of Jewish studies is being taught in many cities around China. A number of Beijing universities teach Hebrew language. Nanjing University has courses in Jewish history, Henan University in Kaifeng teaches Holocaust studies, and the Shanghai Academy of the Social Sciences teaches Israel and political studies. Shandong University in Jinan was appointed to set up a key research institute in Jewish studies and given a mandate to train a generation of Chinese scholars in Jewish studies and undertake large translation projects that would make Jewish culture and wisdom available in the Chinese language.

The way Chinese scholars happened upon areas relating to Judaism was incidental and usually occurred because research in another discipline unearthed a Jewish component of interest. Because Jewish studies intersects many major fields, such as philosophy, theology, literature, sociology, history, music, and politics, every so often a Chinese scholar would stumble on the Jewish component or experience and take a deeper interest.

The Chinese attitude toward Jews is very positive. There seems to be a general sentiment that Jews are clever and successful and should be admired. Many also see Israel as brave and innovative, and Israeli corporations with various agricultural industries in China have succeeded in winning the esteem of many Chinese.

## **Jews in Beijing**

The Jewish population in Beijing is estimated at approximately 2,500 people, and there is a particularly large presence of students scattered in Beijing's numerous universities. Many have little to no contact with the Jewish community because of Beijing's large size and because the universities are far from the foreign business and diplomatic areas. Being the country's capital, the diplomatic corps is large, and it is estimated that some 30 percent of the American embassy staff members are Jewish, and in the past even the ambassador was Jewish. There are also large numbers of businesspeople and traders and administrators and consultants working for large companies.

Migration routes and ethnic backgrounds of the Jews in Beijing can be traced to Israel, the United States, Russia, and other Western countries. Many become

experts in Asia and remain for many years. The Jews in Beijing typically speak English, Hebrew, Russian, and Chinese.

Jews in Beijing are primarily businesspeople, executives of global organizations, students, executives in the clothing trade or multinational companies, lawyers, computer consultants, English teachers, and academics. The kosher (and hallal) industry is also growing in China.

People who come to China to work are usually living a middle-class existence and remain for financial benefit. Many of Russian and Azerbaijani Jews are involved in the textile industry and trade. Western Jews serve as professionals.

There is not yet a chief rabbi of China, but it may be a model for organizing and representing the growing Chinese Jewish communities to the Beijing authorities. There is also talk about establishing a Jewish museum and a major center for Jewish studies in Beijing, but various diplomatic hurdles have to be overcome first. It is felt in many quarters that a Jewish–Chinese cultural relationship is important, but the State of Israel is mainly concerned with diplomatic and economic relations.

The first Jews to live and work in Beijing were Roberta Lipson and Alisa Silverstein. They built a series of medical services in Beijing and helped found the first Reform Jewish community in 1988. Jewish expatriates began to gather for Shabbat evening services. These services grew so that on the High Holidays a rabbi is brought over from abroad. The Passover seder is held at Lipson's home and the entire community and other Jews visiting Beijing are invited to attend. Shabbat services are attended by a few dozen people.

In 2002, Rabbi Shimon and Dini Freundlich moved to Beijing from Hong Kong and established the second Chabad synagogue in mainland China, after Shanghai. Congregating in the rabbi's family home, dozens of people, sometimes a hundred, gather for weekly shabbat prayers and meals. The people who congregate are highly mixed—students, professionals, diplomats, businesspeople, travelers, tourists, and adventurers from all over the world. Some are Orthodox, some traditional, and others nonobservant. As it is in many international hubs, the mix is eclectic.

In 2003, a Jewish kindergarten *ganeinu* was set up as part of an international school. The schools have continually grown and a new education facility was opened up with the support of the Rohr family fund, which included a mikvah and a small museum of Chinese Jewry. The rabbi has continually found ways to develop the community and the services for Jews living or visiting Beijing. The kosher industry supports many of these initiatives; kosher food is prepared for Beijing–Tel Aviv flights, Jewish tourist groups, religious businesspeople, and the local community's needs.

It should be noted that Chabad discourages the attendance of Chinese nationals at any of its activities. Chinese interested in observing or participating in Jewish meals, even accompanying Jewish friends or intimates, have often been very politely told that this would be in breach of an agreement with the Chinese authorities.

### **The Russian and Azerbaijan (Azeri) Jews in Beijing**

In the 1990s, an influx of Jews, mainly from the Azerbaijani city of Kuba, with some from Tajikistan and Georgia and others from Moscow, arrived in Beijing for trade

and business purposes. Today they number about 300, mostly male Jews. Their wives and families are mainly in Azerbaijan, Moscow, Israel (in Tirat ha Karmel), and New York. Many arrived in Beijing as young as 17 years old and remained for trade. The average age is about 40 to 50, but some people in their 60s also live in Beijing. They own their own businesses and gather together in their own restaurants. They have a strong hold on certain industries, including the garment industry and the over-land freight cargo trade with Moscow and elsewhere.

Some wives and children have moved to Beijing, and their children have begun to attend the Chabad kindergarten and education system. They identify very proudly, if simply, with their Jewish heritage. They often know the prayers by heart, are demonstrative about their associations, treat the national Jewish days with sincerity, and generally only seek Jewish wives from their home community. Marriage to Chinese, even if they convert, is rare. They like to consider themselves Russian Jews, though they still have proud associations with their region and respect their Rabbi Adam, who is still in Kuba.

Few from this community speak English, so their participation in the Western-style Chabad center was not as active, and they decided to open a center catering to this community and people living in the more central areas of Beijing. The Chabad rabbi speaks Russian and knows the community and its needs, well.

### **Jews in Guangzhou and Shenzhen**

Chabad houses have been established in these trade and manufacturing cities in the south of China. As a mainland extension of Hong Kong and the gateway to Chinese exports, many Jewish-owned businesses and traders come to the trade shows here, such as the famous Canton Fair, to see and buy goods. Many have permanent offices and apartments and visit regularly. Since 2006 there has been a permanent Chabad presence, and festivals are celebrated together and kosher food is available for Orthodox Jews attending the fairs. These gatherings of Jewish businesspeople have brought together American, Moroccan, Iranian, Syrian, and Russian Jews, not to mention, Israelis, Europeans, South Africans, and Australians.

### **Jews in Macao**

Because Macao was a Portuguese colony, many Portuguese Jews were there, and although they had to disguise their faith for the benefit of the Inquisition, there are nevertheless signs and indications of a Jewish presence. A handful of American-Jewish China traders resided in Macao from approximately 1790 to 1846, when Canton was closed to Western traders. Apart from the fact that these Jews did not attend church or support Christian missionaries, they were indistinguishable from their Christian colleagues in South China. Nevertheless, they were victims of the anti-Semitism of their Christian compatriots. John Heard wrote that Joseph Moses “sports now a ferocious whisker, dirty moustache, and a coat which a Christian would not be seen in.” Nathan Kinsman wrote that “it is astonishing to me that Miss King permits that dissipated Jew Moses to gallant her about, [sic] there is no accounting for tastes, however, as the old woman said when she kissed the cow.”

Today, Macau is a gambling haven, an extension of Las Vegas in the Orient, extending its services to hotel and hospitality and the growing international conference island. As such, a number of American Jewish property and casino interests have invested in Macao. There is no organized Jewish community.

## Jews in Jinan and Qingdao

Jinan, the capital of Shandong province, has had an interesting role in Jewish–Chinese relations. Dr. Jacob Rosenfeld, who was to become a hero in Chinese history for serving as a doctor in the front lines in the war against the Japanese, and who eventually became the doctor for Mao Zedong, lived and worked in Jinan's well-known Qilu hospital. He was buried in Israel and his gravesite has become a quasi-shrine for Chinese government delegations to Israel.

Sam Ginsbourg, who was born in Harbin, later moved to Jinan and served as a professor of Russian literature at Shandong University, one of China's oldest and most respected academic centers. He penned an autobiography entitled *My First Sixty Years in China*, which tells the fascinating story of Chinese history from the eyes of a Chinese-born person of Jewish persuasion, who actively participated in modern Chinese history.

In a somewhat causal relationship, through a related series of events, a center for Jewish studies was set up at Shandong University in the 1990s headed by a well-known Chinese professor of philosophy, Fu Youde. Over a decade he developed this center to become the foremost institute of Jewish studies, endorsed and funded by the Chinese Central Government's Higher Education Department to train a generation of scholars in Jewish thought, language, and history and to undertake large translation programs. Related to this, the author of this article was invited to take up a position at Shandong University.

A number of Jews live in Jinan, and many academics, tourists, conference attendees, kosher supervisors, and Jewish traders come through Jinan, which combines a large industrial city with China's most productive agricultural lands. Several Israeli businesses have collaborated with Chinese agricultural farms to develop irrigation and green house techniques. The Shandong people are generally aware of Jews and grateful for Israeli contributions. Sister city relationships have been set up between Jinan and Israeli cities. Finally, a larger number of Israelis and some American Jews have settled in Shandong's coastal city of Qingdao where they participate in trade and freight delivery and manufacturing.

## Jews in Harbin

*Jonathan Goldstein*

---

General Population: Estimated at 1,163,000 in 1953, 2,000,000 in 1970, and 2,928,000 in 2000

**Jewish Population:** Estimated at one in 1899, 13,000 in 1931, 5,000 in 1935, 3,000 in 1937, one in 1980, and one in 2007

**Percent of Population:** Never more than 2 percent even at the community's high point in 1931

**Languages Spoken:** Russian, Yiddish

---

## Historical Overview

- 1898 Czarist Russia builds Harbin as a railroad hub on land leased from Imperial China.
- 1899 The first Jewish settler arrives in Harbin.
- 1931 The Harbin Jewish population reaches a high point of 13,000.
- 1933 White Russian thugs kidnap and murder the Jewish musician Simeon Kaspe, son of the owner of Harbin's Hotel Moderne.
- 1936 The Soviet Union sells the railroad zone to Japan.
- 1945 The Soviet Red Army liberates Harbin and imprisons Dr. Abram Kaufman and other communal leaders.
- 1950 Most Harbin Jews leave for Israel, the United States, Australia, Canada, Japan, and the Soviet Union.
- 1982 The Jewish community consists of one elderly resident, Anna Agre, who keeps many of the communal archives under her bed.
- 2004 The Israel vice-premier, Ehud Olmert, visits to China with a delegation of Israeli businesspeople. He and his brother Amram inspect their grandfather's grave in the Harbin Jewish Cemetery and set in motion the process of restoring the entire 700-grave Jewish cemetery.
- 2005 One hundred Israelis of Harbin origin hold a gala reunion and historical conference in their ancestral city and pay their respects at Rabbi Kisilev's grave.
- 2007 One Israeli teaches English at the provincial university, and the synagogue re-opens as a museum with special exhibits on Albert Einstein, Jacob Rosenfeld, and Israel Epstein.

## Historical Migration Patterns

Harbin, China, is located 1,500 miles inland in Heilongjiang Province, a region also referred to as Manchuria. The city is a railroad hub, constructed in 1898 by Czarist Russia on land leased from China. Here Jews enjoyed residential permission plus an array of other economic and political rights unavailable in Czarist Russia. These fundamental rights remained when the Soviet Union acquired the railroad zone and when the Soviets, in turn, sold the zone to Japan in 1936.

The fundamental factor that explains Jewish settlement in Harbin is the city's status as a railroad hub. It is located at a point on the Sungari (Songhua) River where the railroad intersects with extensive river traffic. Jews developed businesses ranging from fur export to maritime insurance to the management of hotels. They exchanged goods and services with their kinspeople in European Russia, China, Japan, Korea, and the United States as well as with ethnic Russians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and native Siberian peoples.

In addition to enjoying a “boom town” experience from an economic point of view, Jews helped turn Harbin from a cultural backwater into a sophisticated metropolis. In the early 20th century, Moshe Levitin established a Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian publishing company. It brought out the Hebrew and Russian-language tractates of Harbin’s long-serving rabbi, Aharon Moshe Kisilev (1866–1949), who had embraced the pre-Herzlian religious Zionism of Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever while a student at the Volozhin Yeshiva. Kisilev was author of the religious treatise *Mishbere Yam: Sheelot U-Teshuvot Be-Arbaah Helke Shulkan Arukh* (The Waves of the Sea: Responsa on the Four Parts of ‘The Set Table’). He also wrote Zionist and secular tracts, notably *Natsionalizm i Evreistvo: Stat’i, Lecktsii, i Doklady* (Nationalism and the Jewish People: Articles, Lectures and Reports), published in Harbin in 1941.

Kisilev’s secular counterpart was Dr. Abram Yosifovich Kaufman (1886–1971). Unable to study medicine in Russia because of the quota system, both Kaufman and his wife matriculated in medicine in Switzerland. Kaufman then became a physician in Admiral Kolchak’s Siberian army. Kaufman then became director of Harbin’s Jewish hospital. It was under the communal leadership of Kisilev and Kaufman that Harbin Jews became overwhelmingly Zionist.

Twelve Russian-language Jewish periodicals were published in Harbin, including *Evreiskaya Zhizn’* (Jewish Life) and *Gadegel* (the Cyrillic rendition of the Hebrew “*ha-degel*,” literally meaning “the flag” and having specific reference to the blue-and-white Zionist flag). The very freedoms that allowed those publications to flourish also enabled the left-leaning Yiddish-language newspaper *Der Vayter Mizrekh* (The Far East), edited by Meir Mendelevich Birman, to appear. The city hosted a variety of political movements ranging from the anti-Zionist Jewish Workers’ Bund of Lazar Epstein to the general Herzlian Zionism of Kaufman to the ultra-religiosity of the non-Zionist Agudat Israel. Harbin also had a tiny community of Karaites, who were not formally recognized as Jews in Israel until the mid-20th century. Among the best known Karaites were the tobacco merchants Eli Aaronovitch (1874–1936) and Abraham Aaronovitch Lopato (1877–1953), originally from Trakai (Troki), Lithuania. There were 41 Karaite graves in Harbin’s Foreign Catholic Union Cemetery before its demolition in the 1950s. Research on this subject has been undertaken by Professor Wang Zhijun of Heilongjiang University in Harbin.

There was also a largely clandestine Communist Party in which some Jews were active, notably Lazar Epstein’s son Israel Epstein, who later became a member of the People’s Republic of China’s National People’s Consultative Congress, a largely advisory and ceremonial body. Approximately 50 Jewish communists from Harbin repatriated to the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and in the period 1945–1950.

Because Harbin was a Russian-speaking community, it also became the East Asian entry point for Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky’s Zionist Revisionist movement. Most Revisionist literature in the late 1920s was in Russian. Among the better-known Revisionists from Harbin were Israeli Herut Party leaders Eliahu Lankin and Yaacov Liberman and the firebrand activist Judith Ben Eliezer (née Hasser). Even Harbin’s two major Jewish sports organizations reflected the community’s ideological richness and diversity: Maccabi for the General Zionists and *Betar* for the Revisionists. These two groups would occasionally cooperate to combat the virulent

anti-Semitism of the openly fascist White Russian organizations that also thrived in Harbin's relatively unrestricted political climate. There were shouting matches and occasional scuffles between these groups. Perhaps the most recent expression of Harbin's Jewish diversity and vitality is the well-publicized, ongoing saga of the Harbin connections of the family of Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert. Ehud's parents and grandparents reached Harbin from Samara, which was part of European Russia at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. His grandfather died in Harbin and is buried in the city's vast Jewish cemetery, the largest in East Asia. His parents were among the first Harbin Jews to embrace Revisionism and immigrated to Palestine "to till the land." In the summer of 2004, Ehud "returned" to China with a delegation of Israeli businesspeople. He and his brother, an agricultural attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Beijing, were much photographed reciting the Jewish prayer for the dead at their grandfather's tomb. They set in motion the process of restoring the entire Jewish cemetery. Their visit inspired a subsequent visit of about 100 Israelis of Harbin origin in 2005. This time the former residents held a gala reunion and historical conference their ancestral city.

As of 2007, the city's main synagogue has been refurbished. It contains exhibits on three Jewish personalities: Albert Einstein, Harbin's Israel Epstein, and Jacob Rosenfeld, a Jewish physician with Mao Zedong's Eight Route Army who subsequently went to Israel and is buried in Tel Aviv. In an expression of the ties that bind former Harbin Jews to their ancestral home, Abram Kaufman's son Theodor, who is president of both the Tel Aviv-based Association of Former Jewish Residents of China and the Israel-China Friendship Society, and Qu Wei, a professor at Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences, collaborated on a volume appropriately entitled *The Homesick Feeling of the Harbin Jews*. In a modern Jewish history replete with instances of butchery, pogroms, and the Holocaust, the positive ties that bind Harbin Jews to their mother city are distinct and ongoing.

## Bibliography

- Bresler, Boris. 1999. "Harbin's Jewish Community, 1898–1958: Politics, Prosperity, and Adversity." In *The Jews of China*. Vol. 1, *Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Jonathan Goldstein, 200–215. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Epstein, Israel. 2000. "On Being a Jew in China: A Personal Memoir." In *The Jews of China*. Vol. 2, *A Sourcebook and Research Guide*, edited by Jonathan Goldstein, 85–97. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Fogel, Joshua A. 2000. "The Japanese and the Jews in Harbin, 1898–1930." In *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia*, edited by Robert Bickers et al, 88–108. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.
- Lieberman, Yaakov. 1998. *My China*. Hewlett, NY: Gefen.
- Menquez, Alexander. 2000. "Growing Up Jewish in Manchuria in the 1930s: Personal Vignettes." *The Jews of China*. Vol. 2, *A Sourcebook and Research Guide*, edited by Jonathan Goldstein, 70–84. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

# Jews in Hong Kong

*Judy Green and Judy Diestal*

---

**General Population:** More than 7 million

**Jewish Population:** Estimated at more than 3,000

**Percent of Population:** Approximately 0.05 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Most Jews live on Hong Kong Island and a few in Kowloon.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The first Jews to settle in the mid-1800s were mainly Sephardim from Iraq via Bombay. Ashkenazim refugees from Eastern Europe began arriving in 1880s and 1890s. The next major influx was from China in 1948. This included both Sephardim who had established themselves in Shanghai and Ashkenazim from Germany and Eastern Europe who had sought refuge in China during World War II. In recent years the community has become more cosmopolitan with Jews from all over the world.

**Languages Spoken:** English mainly, as well as Hebrew, French, and a little Cantonese and Mandarin.

---

## Historical Overview

1832 During a prolonged period of Jewish persecution in Persia, David Sassoon, son of the wealthy Sheikh Sason, court banker to the pashas of Baghdad, flee to Bombay. His son Elias (E.D.) is the first Jewish merchant to settle in Canton in 1844, and by the time David Sassoon & Sons is established in Hong Kong, the family-controlled business is immensely successful and profitable, chiefly trading in opium. Later, they branch out into shipping, banking, real estate, and cotton. The Sassoons are deeply observant and staff their offices and warehouses, both in Bombay and in Southeast Asia, almost exclusively with ex-Baghdadi Jews, many of them family members and relatives. Among them the Nissims, Hayeems, Eliases, Ezras, Gubbays, Kadoories, Solomons, and Raymonds form the nucleus of the Hong Kong Jewish community. The Sephardic ranks are later swelled by the Belilioses, Judahs, Benjamins, and others, mostly Iraqi Jews from Bombay and Calcutta.

1841 Hong Kong Island, ceded to the British by the Chinese emperor Daoguang after the Opium Wars is dismissively described by Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary, as “a barren island with hardly a house upon it.” However, it does not take long for British free-trade policy and assurances of security and protection to attract both Chinese and foreign merchants from all over the globe. With its deep harbor and sheltered anchorage, the newest British Crown Colony is an ideal base for trade with China and soon businesses are being registered and land sold for offices and warehouses. The history of the Jewish communities in the Far East in the 19th century closely mirrors the rising tide of British imperialism in Asia, and the Hong Kong Jewish community is no exception.

- 1843–1844 The first Jews to arrive in Hong Kong are believed to be Samuel Cohen and Jacob Phillips. Of the former little is known, but British-born Phillips builds up a profitable China trade business and returns to England in 1851.
- 1855 The land for a Jewish cemetery is purchased behind the Chinese village of Wong Nei Chong.
- 1857 The first burial in the Jewish cemetery is Leon Ben Buruel, although there is no further record of his identity
- 1870s The Bombay-based trading companies David Sassoon & Sons and E.D. Sassoon & Co are established in Hong Kong and sufficient Jews live in Hong Kong to consider renting temporary premises for a synagogue.
- 1880 Baghdadi-born Elly (Eleazar Silas) Kadoorie joins the Sassoons as an employee in Bombay and is soon transferred to China. Shortly thereafter he resigns, goes into business on his own in Hong Kong, and prospers in trade, property, and hotels. The Kadoorie brothers, Elly and Ellis, both of whom received knight-hoods for their philanthropic contributions to the Hong Kong community, are the main benefactors of Hong Kong's Jewish community once the focus of the Sassoon family shifts to Shanghai and to Britain.
- 1880s and 1890s Ashkenazim begin to arrive from Russia and the Balkans escaping pogroms. These newcomers are not merchants; for the most part they are poor and shabby and find employment as barkeepers, bouncers, and employees in second-class hotels. It is even reported that some of the women have to resort to prostitution. The Iraqi Jews, by contrast, are now well established and respected and hold themselves aloof from these coreligionists. They do not pray together but lend a Sepher Torah to the Ashkenazim to celebrate the High Holidays in rented premises.
- 1901 The foundation stone for the first permanent synagogue is laid, financed by the grandsons of David Sassoon. The synagogue named Ohel Leah in memory of their mother, Leah Gubbay. At this time, the Hong Kong census report estimates a total of 165 Jews in Hong Kong: 99 males and 66 females.
- 1905 During the tenure of Hong Kong's sole Jewish governor, Sir Matthew Nathan, an adjoining piece of land is acquired to extend the Jewish cemetery.
- 1905 Brothers Elly and Ellis Kadoorie build the Jewish Club adjacent to the synagogue where Jewish social life is centered.
- Early 1900s The fortunes of Hong Kong as a trading port fluctuate, and the importance of the colony is gradually eclipsed by the burgeoning success of Shanghai. Many Jewish merchants, including the Sassoons, relocate north to Shanghai. The Jewish population in Hong Kong reaches a peak of about 231 by 1911.
- 1921 Hong Kong's Jewish population dwindles to approximately 50. The community is often without a rabbi, and services are led by a cantor or one of the more learned members. At this time, with a second influx of Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe, the balance of the community begins to shift from its traditional Sephardic majority to an Ashkenazic one.
- Late 1930s Jewish numbers again rise to more than 100.
- 1937 The Japanese bombing of Shanghai marks the start of the World War II for China. Canton falls to the Japanese in 1938, and as the Japanese Army pushes south, Hong Kong prepares for the worst. Ironically, this is a period of strong

economic growth for Hong Kong, as trade is diverted from Shanghai, but it does not last.

As the threat of invasion becomes ever more real, the expatriate population of Hong Kong rallies to the cause. Dr. Solomon Bard, then a medical student at the University of Hong Kong, recalls that “most of the young men and women of the Jewish community joined voluntary organizations, and many of us joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corp. Older able-bodied members of the Jewish community also volunteered for duty in the Nursing Service, Fire Service or in the Air Raid Precaution service.”

December 7, 1941 The Japanese army invades Hong Kong. Notwithstanding Sir Winston Churchill's foreboding that there is “not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it,” British and Commonwealth troops fight fiercely, ably assisted by the Hong Kong Volunteers.

December 25, 1941 Despite holding off the Japanese with determined and often heroic resistance, Hong Kong surrenders and endures three and a half miserable years of Japanese occupation. Allied nationals, including many of the Hong Kong Jewish community, are herded into the civilian prisoner-of-war camp on the Stanley Peninsula, while those who had fought with the volunteers are imprisoned in the military camp at Sham Shui Po. Conditions in the camps are dire, with starvation rations, no medicines, and sporadic sadistic, senselessly brutal treatment. Bard recalls that there is no discrimination in the camps against Jews and that “Jewish prayer books were allowed into the camp and a group of us were able to form a Saturday minyan, ably conducted by Nathan Rakusen.” Lawrence Kadoorie (son of Sir Elly and later to be elevated to the peerage) remembers that on a good day, the ration was “one cigarette, a small tin of watery rice, some boiled lettuce and a little soup.”

The Japanese armed forces requisition the Ohel Leah synagogue, and all community records are lost. The once thriving Jewish Club is reduced to rubble and the Hong Kong Jewish community ceases to operate. Happily, the Sifrei Torah, many brought from Bombay by the Sassoons, are spirited out of the synagogue and kept hidden until the Japanese surrender.

August 1945 With the unconditional surrender of the Japanese, prisoners of war stumble out of the camps in poor health to find a deforested city with no food, no electricity, little housing, and an administration struggling to reestablish itself and to inspire faith in the future of Hong Kong. The priorities, according to Admiral Sir Cecil Harcourt, who accepts the Japanese surrender of Hong Kong, are “freedom, food, law and order, and a stable currency.”

June 13, 1948 A memorial tablet is unveiled at a special service at the Ohel Leah synagogue to commemorate the 13 members of the Jewish community who lost their lives defending Hong Kong during the war.

1949 Hong Kong is well on the road to recovery, only to be brought to its knees once again with the founding of the People's Republic of China. This momentous event precipitates a massive influx of refugees from across the border, and the population of Hong Kong swells from 1 million in 1949 to 2.4 million by the end of 1950. The Jewish community also grows from an estimated 100 before

The Ohel Leah Synagogue in Hong Kong, beautifully preserved in a city of skyscrapers and rapid development, sits adjacent to a six-floor Jewish community complex.  
(Photo by Jono David)



the war to 250 by 1954. Many members of the Shanghai Jewish community choose to settle in Hong Kong.

At about the same time, hundreds of German and Eastern European Jews arrive in Hong Kong from Shanghai to pick up visas for resettlement in the West. These are some of the 20,000 refugees who had fled the Nazis at the beginning of the war to seek safe haven in the visa-free port of Shanghai. The Hong Kong Jewish community is tasked with looking after the refugees, who are hastily housed in the synagogue, in small hotels, and at the Peninsula Hotel, where the Kadoorie family sets up makeshift dormitories. Joan Saphiere (Zirinsky), herself a recent arrival from Shanghai, recalls going with Lawrence Kadoorie once a week with lists of names to petition the Hong Kong immigration authorities to allow the refugees to stop in Hong Kong.

December 1949 Rosie Weill lays a stone to commemorate the reopening of the Jewish Club, newly built and financed in part by contributions but mostly by Lawrence Kadoorie and his brother Horace. The postwar Jewish community swells to include both Sephardim and Ashkenazim from Shanghai. The Abrahams, Hayims, Ezras, Eliases Silases, and Gattons, together with the Diestels, Blochs, Godkins, Fleischmanns, Freimans, Dorfmanns, Morgulevs, Greens, and many other families breathe new life into the synagogue and the Jewish Club.

1960s With China closed to the West, Hong Kong regained its importance as a commercial and financial centre, as well as a listening post for China watchers.

1961 The Jewish community appoints a rabbi for the Ohel Leah synagogue

1969 Community members start a Hebrew school, which would later become the Carmel School.

- 1970s Hong Kong's strong economic position attracts an influx of Jewish business-people and professionals, including bankers, lawyers, and academics.
- 1974 Israel appoints its first career consul-general to Hong Kong
- 1984 The Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong, and agreement for the eventual handover of the island to mainland China, is signed by both parties.
- 1985 The Jewish community is estimated at approximately 230 families, or more than 600 people, and they represent 25 different nationalities.
- 1989 For the first time, the High Holy Days see four sets of services. The Ashkenazi Orthodox, the Sephardi Orthodox, the Reform-Liberal, and the Lubavitch. This watershed marks the break up of the Jewish community into separate congregations. On June 4, the Tiananmen Square incident in Beijing exacerbates unease in Hong Kong about the eventual reunification of the island with the mainland.
- 1990 The Jewish Club site is redeveloped. The synagogue is preserved and a new mikvah is built.
- 1991 The Jewish community founds the Carmel School, an independent Jewish day school, which is open to children from all congregations. Classes include pre-primary and primary.
- 1995-1996 Major restoration work is undertaken on the Ohel Leah synagogue.
- October 1995 The new Jewish community center officially opens for members of all congregations.
- June 30, 1997 The British hand Hong Kong back to the People's Republic of China with much pomp and ceremony. The spectre of the handover instills feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and insecurity in the citizens of Hong Kong. Many of those who can afford it leave with their families to settle in the West, the economy slumps, and it seems Hong Kong will not survive this final hurdle. The Jewish community loses many families who believe their futures are at risk, and although Jewish life continues much as before, it is with severely depleted numbers.

The worst fears prove unfounded. It is agreed that Hong Kong will operate as a Special Administrative Region under the concept of "one country-two systems" and will maintain its freedoms and way of life for 50 years. Once these assurances are seen to be working and the Chinese government is judged to be sincere in its pledge to leave Hong Kong to prosper in its own unique way, the tide of emigration begins to turn.

- 1997 Major restoration work is undertaken on the much-loved Ohel Leah Synagogue, financed by the Ohel Leah Synagogue Trust. At the rededication ceremony in October 1998, the chairman of the trust, Michael Green, declares that the project demonstrates the Jewish community's commitment to the future of Hong Kong.

The ranks of the Jewish community swell to include an influx of young, energetic professionals, many with families, who seek to be part of Hong Kong's future and are content in the knowledge that Hong Kong also offers established Jewish institutions.

The Jewish population of Hong Kong is estimated to be about 3,000. The community worships at four main congregations and several lesser ones, which

cater to its divergent religious needs. The Carmel School, which celebrates its first decade in 2001 continues to grow in size and excellence, and the Jewish community center with its kosher restaurants, library, swimming pool, and inclusive, welcoming atmosphere provides a meeting place for all of Hong Kong's Jewish community and the many Jewish visitors who come to Hong Kong for business or pleasure.

2004–Present Hong Kong's economy gradually recovers, encouraged by the strong economic growth in China. This brings an increase in the number of Jews in Hong Kong, which is estimated to be about 3,000 at the time of writing.

## Contemporary Overview

### Types of Industries, Trades, and Professions

A high proportion of the expatriate community as well as permanent residents are employed in financial services, legal profession, hi-tech businesses, manufacturing, and commerce, especially trade with China and Asia. Jews are also prominent in utility and hotel businesses, academia, and other professions.

### Culture, Science, and the Humanities

Concerts, arts festivals, and all cultural events in the greater community are well attended. For special occasions the community sponsors musicians, and visiting scholars in residence. The Jewish Film Festival is an annual, well-supported event in November, and films are screened in a local theater.

### Present Economic Conditions

The business environment is thriving because of free trade, low taxation, and excellent market conditions. The 79 Israeli companies registered with the Economic and Trade Department of the Consulate include 37 diamond dealers, 13 telecommunications companies, 9 high-tech companies, 4 information technology companies, and 4 transportation companies, including El Al and Zim. In addition, 12 companies specialize in banking, security, medical equipment, business development, and import/export. The multicultural, multiethnic Jewish community is diverse, very successful, and boasts a supreme court judge, a high court judge, a university professor, doctors, dentists, teachers, barristers, lawyers, businesspeople, entrepreneurs, and many in the financial service industry. The community is growing. Young people are often educated overseas and return to find great opportunity in the growing, dynamic business center. with opportunities here and in rest of Asia.

### Religious Denominations

Hong Kong has five organized congregations. Ohel Leah, housed in a beautiful 100-year-old synagogue, is Modern Orthodox. Three other orthodox communities are Chabad, Shuva Israel, and Kehillat Zion. The United Jewish Congregation represents Conservative/Reform levels of observance.

## Jewish Education

Carmel School is a full-time independent Jewish Day school that educates children from nursery to middle school. It is Modern Orthodox and has a strong Zionist commitment. Fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the day school has 220 students. In addition, the individual congregations all run education programs focused on enrichment of Jewish life. Conversions are dealt with by individual rabbis, and a Sunday school is run by the United Jewish Congregation.

## Communal Institutions

The community is well organized, and the main funding body is the Ohel Leah Synagogue Charity, which supports the Ohel Leah Synagogue, Jewish community center, mikvah, *chevra kadisha* (burial society), Jewish Benevolent Society, and cemetery. It gives partial funding to other institutions and congregations.

Major organizations include the following:

- *Jewish community center*: The center houses a library, which includes the Sino-Judaic Collection and archives of material found about the Jews in China and Southeast Asia. The center's facilities include two kosher restaurants, a mini-supermarket (Koshermart), function rooms, and a swimming pool. Restaurants are under full-time supervision to ensure a high level of kashrut, and the center imports a wide range of product from Israel, Australia, South Africa, and the United States.
- *Jewish Historical Society*: Created to promote interest in the Sino-Judaic experience, the Jewish Historical Society has established a center for the collection and preservation of historical material relating to the history of the Jews in Hong Kong and China. Current projects include researching Jewish cemeteries in Southeast Asia, recording gravestones from the Hong Kong cemetery, recording interviews with long-time residents to preserve the oral history of the community, and conducting walking tours of historical areas.
- *Mikvah (ritual bath)*: The mikvah is located next to the Ohel Leah synagogue and is for the use of members of the community.
- *Chevra Kadisha (burial society)*: This organization takes care of all matters according to Jewish Law and tradition for burial in the Jewish cemetery in Happy Valley or for repatriation of remains.
- *Jewish Benevolent Society*: The society supports members who require temporary help or emergency assistance. It provides crisis management and repatriation when needed.
- *Jewish Women's Association*: This fund-raising body has strong ties to Israel. Managed by a committee of volunteers, the association was established in 1947 to assist refugees arriving from Shanghai. Now it raises funds for local charities as well as Israel. The main events are the Annual Bazaar and Independence Day Ball. The group also hosts lectures and social events.
- *United Israel Appeal*: The local branch of Keren Hayesod is managed by a board of directors and achieved charitable status in Hong Kong for educational contributions to Israel. An annual dinner is the main fund-raising

event, and face-to-face canvassing raises 80 percent of funds. In 2003, a permanent shaliach was appointed to oversee fund-raising, raise level of awareness, and expand operation within Asia.

- *Jewish National Fund*: The local branch of Keren Kayemet has had a presence since the 1950s. Volunteers enthusiastically collect funds for trees for various occasions.
- *Israel Chamber of Commerce*: The 80 members of this independent, volunteer business organization promote business between Hong Kong, China, and Israel, increasing the level of awareness of Israel as a business partner. The chamber organizes business seminars, promotes active participation internationally, and encourages inter-chamber events. The group also develops successful trade and investment links and provides a dialogue with government and policy makers.
- *Consulate General of Israel*: A full range of consular services is managed by the capable staff of the consul general. Relationships with local government, business leadership, and the Jewish community are encouraged. Growing trade is developed by the Economic and Trade Department of Israel's Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labour.
- *Jewish Times Asia*: This newly established regional newspaper carries local news and advertisements.

### Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism

Anti-Semitism does not exist in any organized form. A communal security officer has recently been appointed to advise on all matters pertaining to security.

### Demographic Movement and Emigration

The Hong Kong community is growing as new families choose to relocate to Hong Kong for various reasons, including economic and religious reasons. As pressures arise in other parts of the world, people find their religious needs fulfilled and an economic advantage here. There is some intermarriage with the Asian community, and conversions are carried out where possible.

## Jews in Taiwan

*Don Shapiro*

---

General Population: 23,036,087

Jewish Population: 200–300

Jewish Population by City: Mainly in Taipei

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Business-related migration from the United States, Europe, and Israel as well as students of Chinese and Asian studies.

**Languages Spoken:** English, Mandarin, and Hebrew

---

## Historical Overview

The Taiwan Jewish Community, despite its small size, has remained vibrant for some four decades, ensuring the continuation of Jewish life in this important corner of East Asia.

A key figure in history is Dr. Fengshan Hoa, the Taiwanese diplomat to Vienna and Germany between 1937 and 1938, who issued 1,200 visas to desperate Jews. Hoa helped rescue thousands of Jews, many of whom managed to flee to Shanghai. He was known as the “Chinese Schindler.” He was honored by Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial with the title “Righteous Among the Nations.”

The history of the Jewish community dates back to the 1950s when Jewish servicemen in the American military began to be stationed in Taiwan. They were later joined by businesspeople from the United States, Israel, and Europe as the island’s industrial and trading capacity underwent rapid growth. During that period Shabbat and holiday services were held regularly in the U.S. military chapel (open to civilians as well as military personnel), ordinarily officiated over by lay leaders. The nearest rabbi was the U.S. military chaplain based in the Philippines, who would visit Taiwan a few times a year.

During the 1960s, an informal Orthodox congregation began to meet at the President Hotel, then the leading business hotel in Taipei. Taiwan was then emerging as a major export center, and Jewish buyers of garments, shoes, and other products were constantly visiting the island. A minyan was ensured for virtually every service, consisting both of visitors and residents, and the hotel kitchen was taught how to bake hallah and other delicacies.

In the mid-1970s, a Taiwan Jewish Community Center was established in a rented house in the suburban area of Tienmu, where many of the expatriate families resided. In 1975, the community received formal recognition from the government when it was allowed to register as a nonprofit organization. Among the founders was Yaacov Liberman, who became the community president for the first decade. Liberman, who had grown up in China as part of the Russian-Jewish community that had sought refuge there, was the Taiwan representative of the Eisenberg trading group from Israel. At its peak in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the community membership consisted of more than 50 families, and functions were held at the center several times a week.

Regular community events are still held, and religious services for Shabbat and holidays are held at the Ritz Landis Taipei Hotel, which took over from the President Hotel as the venue in the 1980s. The present-day synagogue is located in a small room with a Torah and a Holy Ark. The average weekly turnout is about eight or nine people. On High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), a congregation numbering 60 to 100 may be counted on.

Services are officiated by the only Rabbi in Taiwan, Austrian-born Dr. Ephraim F. Einhorn, who has lived in Taipei for more than 20 years. In addition, the rabbi also keeps a private library of Jewish works at the hotel, which he asserts is the largest in Asia. In addition to his work as a rabbi, Einhorn has helped the Taiwanese government achieve ground-breaking work in seeking diplomatic relations with Eastern Europe. He also runs a successful trading company of his own, is an honorary

member of the Rotary Club, and is chairman of Republicans Abroad Taiwan for the U.S. Republican Party.

Many Jewish visitors to Taipei who observe Shabbat according to Jewish law choose to stay at the Landis because of the convenience in attending services. The hotel has also been trained to provide kosher meals of fish cooked in aluminum foil. The numerous Buddhist vegetarian restaurants, many of which offer buffets (some of them quite elaborate), are also a solution for those keeping kosher.

The Jewish community consists of unusual and diverse groups: People who have lived in Taiwan for many years, people who have lived in Taiwan for a few years on assignments, and businesspeople who visit regularly. These may include Jewish Americans, Canadians, English, Israeli, Brazilian, Costa Ricans, Panamanians, Puerto Ricans, Moroccans, and Germans. Diplomatic representatives and expatriates working for multinational corporations may also be found in the congregation. The makeup of congregants has significantly shifted over the course of time. There were the American military, followed by long-term foreign businesspeople in manufacturing industries such as textiles, shoes, and toys. These businesspeople have now been replaced by high-tech professionals.

During the past decade the Israeli presence in Taiwan has expanded. High-tech companies and individuals with technical skills have found many opportunities in Taiwan, often in cooperation with Taiwanese enterprises. The match of Israeli technology and Taiwanese manufacturing capabilities made for a strong partnership. An example of the Israeli companies active in Taiwan is Orbotech, which provides testing equipment and services to the semiconductor industry.

The growing business potential prompted the Israeli government to establish the Israel Economic & Cultural Office (ISECO) in 1993. ISECO maintains a staff of about 15 Israeli nationals and local employees. Like the Taiwanese trade offices of most other nations, ISECO is similar in function to an embassy. But because Israel has formal diplomatic relations with Beijing, the ties with Taiwan must be carried out unofficially.

The numbers of Jews has dwindled significantly over the years, because of changes in Taiwan's economic structure. Some of the industries in which the members were most active, especially garments and footwear, became less competitive in Taiwan as labor costs increased. Many of those individuals relocated to other countries in Asia. Many foreign Jewish tradespeople have moved to China to seek business opportunities there.

## Bibliography

- Gross, David C. 1981. *The Jewish People's Almanac*. New York: Doubleday.
- Lieberman, Yaacov. 1998. *My China; Jewish Life in the Orient 1900–1950*. Jerusalem: Gefen.
- Steinberg, Neil. "A Down-Home Davening ... in Taiwan." August 9, 2002. *Jewish World Review*. [http://www.jewishworldreview.com/0802/steinberg\\_down\\_home.asp](http://www.jewishworldreview.com/0802/steinberg_down_home.asp) (accessed June 22, 2008).
- Yiu, Cody. "Taipei's Jewish Community has Deep Roots." February 14, 2005. *Taipei Times*. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2005/02/14/2003223007> (accessed June 4, 2008).

# Jews in Japan

*Marvin Tokayer and Steve Hall*

---

**General Population:** 40 million

**Jewish Population:** 600–1,000

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** In the late 19th–early 20th centuries a small number of European and North American Jews settled in Japan; the post–World War II period saw an influx of foreign Jewish populations from North America, Europe, and Israel who arrived for business and study.

**Languages Spoken:** English and Japanese

---

## Historical Overview

Scholars and historians have paid little attention to the Jewish experience in Japan. To date, a comprehensive history of the Jewish communities of Japan, and the role of Jews in Japan, has yet to be written.

The myth and unsubstantiated theory that some of the ancient lost tribes of Israel reached Japan has been the focus of much interest, primarily from Japanese Christians. Much literature and a Web site are available on this subject, and ritual and cultural comparisons have been noted, including that the fringes on the corners of the Shinto priestly robe are similar to the biblical tzitzit (fringes) and that the round phylactery worn by the Yamabushi sect are similar to biblical phylacteries (tefillin). A Japanese Christian minister studied the rural folk songs of Japan, and in two volumes posited that the songs have biblical themes and Hebrew words. Surprisingly, the prestigious *Jewish Encyclopedia* of 1904, in its article on the ten lost tribes, prominently includes this evidence that the lost tribes reached Japan.

The subject of secret Jews or Marranos reaching Japan has also been ignored. That Marranos reached Portuguese India is now well documented, and records have been found of Inquisition trials of secret Jews in the Philippines, but the subject of Marranos in Japan has not yet garnered academic interest.

**1537–1558** Evidence suggests that Mendes Pinto, a Portuguese merchant who wrote the earliest and best eyewitness reports about Japan, which became popular reading in Europe, was a secret Jew. Another probable Marrano was Dr. Luis Almeida, who arrived in Japan in 1552, introducing European medicine and building the first hospital. Almeida writes reports of his experiences in Japan, describing Japanese castles, the rickshaw, and, for the first time, the tea ceremony.

**19th century** When Japan reopens to the outside world during the Meiji restoration, numerous Jews from Europe and America, who have been denied opportunities to advance in society because of prevalent anti-Semitism, seek opportunities in Japan, which has no inherent discrimination or prejudice against Jews.

- 1858 Alexander Marks, who was born in Albany, New York, and raised in England, comes to Japan at the age of 21 and surprisingly masters the Japanese language. He is one of the organizers of the Jewish community of Yokohama, writes articles on Japan for the London *Jewish Chronicle*, and engages in commerce as the pioneer importer of wool from Australia and the machinery and equipment to start the wool clothing industry of Japan. Marks serves as Japan's consul to Australia for 18 years and sparks the development of diplomatic relations between Japan and Australia. He is honored with two prominent imperial awards.
- 1861 Raphael Schoyer, an American Jew from Baltimore, arrives in Japan and is credited with producing the first newspaper in Japan, the *Japan Express*, a copy of which is presented to the emperor. Schoyer is the first auctioneer in Yokohama, which demonstrates Japan's trust and confidence in the foreign community. Schoyer's printing presses are used to print the first Christian tracts in Japan, which are actually illegal. He is elected president of the municipal council where he attempts to demonstrate the concept of local government. His wife Anna is instrumental in introducing photography to Japan. Schoyer's tombstone is very prominent in the Yokohama foreign cemetery, adjacent to the present Jewish section.
- 1886 Albert Mosse, an expert on administrative law, comes to Japan, where he serves as the legal consultant to the Japanese cabinet for four years. He helps develop the legal system of modern Japan and is one of the prominent authors of the Meiji constitution, in which he emphasizes the importance of a constitutional government. Mosse writes many beautiful poems about Japan and the Japanese people, and the Japanese respect him for his common sense and sensitivity. During the Nazi period, the Japanese government requests special and humane treatment for the Mosse family in appreciation for his contributions to Japan.
- 1887 Many talented Jewish professors in Europe have little opportunity for advancement because of the common and accepted discrimination against Jews. One such academic, Ludwig Riess, a brilliant historian from Germany, comes to Japan to serve as the pioneering professor of history at the University of Tokyo (Todai) from 1887 to 1902. Riess is the first to teach the methodology of history, including the collection of documents and their critical evaluation. The *Japan Biographical Encyclopedia* states that the study of history began with his arrival in Japan, and he is considered as the "father of Japanese historiography."
- 20th century In contrast to the West, where Jews are excluded from opportunities of success and advancement until the middle of the 20th century, Jews see Japan as a haven of opportunity, because one's Jewish origins are of no concern. Many Jews come to Japan despite the distance, problems of language and strange customs, and even the danger of angry samurai. Few are aware that one of the pioneering personalities of the Zionist movement was deeply influenced by Japan.
- 1900–1920s The general migration route of immigrants from Europe to America was across the Atlantic. However, if the transatlantic route was dangerous or

closed, an alternative was to leave via Russia through Siberia and then go to the United States from Japan, via the Pacific. In 1917–1918, in addition to the danger of transportation during World War I, the communist revolution in Russia leaves tens of thousands of refugees, including Jews, stranded in Europe and Asia. Suddenly the ruble is worthless and there is a universal fear of the spread of communism. There are thousands of refugees in Manchuria, Japan, and along the Trans-Siberian Railroad, when this disaster strikes. Their money is worthless, and entry and transit visas are cancelled. Japan, on the Russian border, is very unhappy about these stranded and suspicious refugees. Benjamin Fleisher informs Jacob Schiff of the serious situation of the stranded Jewish refugees, and Schiff intercedes with the U.S. government. Japan reciprocates the favor owed to Schiff and waves the entry visa fee for the destitute refugees. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society provides medical care, and the Royal Hotel of Yokohama is made available to the Jewish refugees. While waiting for the United States to reactivate the visas, a kosher restaurant opens on the main street of Yokohama, a synagogue is erected, a Jewish weekly paper is published, and classes in civics (and American customs such as baseball) are taught. All in all, 1,706 Jewish refugees are stranded in Japan, including 624 women and 910 children.

July–August 1940 Perhaps the crown jewel of the Jewish experience in Japan is the dramatic epic of the 4,664 refugees who are saved from the Holocaust by Japan. Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania, at the start of World War II, issues transit visas to Japan to enable trapped Jews to escape certain death by the Nazis. The transit visas are issued for 10–14 days, a long enough time to enable the refugees to find a country willing to accept them. For those who can find no welcoming nation, the Japanese foreign minister extends the transit visas for 9 months.

Included among the refugees that find asylum in Japan are 79 rabbis, 341 yeshiva students, and 60 children as well as the future chief rabbis of Argentina, Mexico, and Montreal, the founder of the largest yeshiva in the United States, a cabinet minister of Israel who signs their declaration of independence, and the signer of rabbinic ordination at Yeshiva University. The only yeshiva to survive the Holocaust (Mir Yeshiva) receives visas to Japan from Sugihara. Sugihara was honored as a “righteous Gentile” by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and many articles, books, plays, and television programs have depicted his heroism. The foreign ministry of Japan has a plaque to note his courage and exemplary achievements, and a commemorative stamp has been issued in his honor. Because of his actions, 50,000 Jews survived the Holocaust.

1946 General Douglas MacArthur leads the occupation and rebuilding of Japan. Jews play a significant role in the postwar reforms of Japan. The goal of the occupation is to transform Japan into a democratic and peace-loving nation. MacArthur assembles a team of gifted and dedicated military officers and civilians, committed to the idea of social and political change. The most influential Jewish member of the occupation is Colonel Charles Kades, an attorney who graduated from Cornell University and Harvard Law School. Kades is the moving

spirit behind the political reforms of the occupation. Another prominent Jewish figure is Wolf Ladejidsky, the father of Japan's land reform. Born in the Ukraine, he immigrates to the United States, graduates from Columbia University, and is the U.S. expert on agriculture in Asian countries. MacArthur believes the land reform of Ladejinsky is the most significant achievement of the occupation. Theodore Cohen is chief of the labor division and has a background in Japanese studies from City College in New York and Columbia University. Alfred C. Oppler, born in Germany, and had come to America in Nazi times. As he is well versed in the European legal system, he is the principal architect of the legal and judicial reforms. He also establishes the family courts and the civil liberties bureau. Beate Sirota, who was raised in Japan, the daughter of Leo Sirota, a professor at the Tokyo Music Academy, is fluent in Japanese and writes the civil liberties clauses of the new constitution, including the section that gives Japanese women social, political, and economic equality.

1945–Present Jewish communities are reestablished in Tokyo and Kobe with a full range of activities, including synagogue services, kosher meals, classes, Hebrew school, mikvah, cultural programs, and all necessary activities to enhance Jewish life.

### Prominent Historical Figures

Marcus Samuel (1853–1927) was born in London and educated in Jewish schools. At the age of 19 he sailed to the Far East and, together with his brother, established the Samuel and Samuel trading company in Yokohama and Kobe. They traded in tea, rice, feathers, and pepper but specialized in seashells, which are used for ornamental boxes. In searching for a product that was not locally available but vitally needed, Marcus Samuel concluded that the most singular product needed was oil, which he discovered in the Dutch East Indies in 1898, in the Dutch East Indies. With a new supply of oil, Marcus built refineries, depots, storage tanks, and docks; designed the first oil tanker; and became the primary supplier of oil products from India to Japan. His new oil company, named the Rising Sun Petroleum Company, had a shell logo and eventually became Shell Oil Company. Samuel received the imperial award, *Kiokujitsu*—commander of the rising sun. In his native London he became lord mayor and was knighted as Lord Bearstead.

Jacob A. Schiff (1847–1920) was the Jew who probably made the most significant contribution to Japan. As a penniless 18-year-old, he arrived in the United States from Germany started to work in a bank. Ultimately, he became head of Kuhn Loeb and made it a major investment bank. Schiff was involved with every major Jewish charity and became a leader of the American Jewish community. At the beginning of the 20th century in Asia, Russia and Japan were on a collision course over Manchuria and Korea, which would lead to the Russo-Japanese War. An Asian nation had never defeated a European nation, and Europeans believed in the superiority of the Caucasian race. This confrontation was perceived as a “color war,” and the czar called the Japanese “yellow monkeys.” The war started in February 1904, but Japan had insufficient funds for the war. Baron Korekiyo Takahashi

was sent to the United States and London to borrow vital funds. His mission failed as no bank was anxious to lend money to the potential loser, for how would that country repay the loan? By chance, Schiff was in London and was introduced to Takahashi at a cocktail party with prominent bankers. From this accidental meeting, Schiff saved Japan from defeat and humiliation by providing a war loan to Japan of \$196,250,000. Schiff chose to support Japan because of its “national will” and because of anger over Russia’s continued pogroms against the Jews. Japan’s victory shocked the world. Schiff was invited to Japan as a state guest, and on March 28, 1906, he shared lunch and toasts with Emperor Meiji, at the Imperial Palace. Schiff helped negotiate the settlement between Japan and Russia and became a national hero in Japan. His name was entered in Japanese textbooks as “the one man who believed in Japan, a Jewish banker.” Schiff became a major influence in Japanese attitudes toward Jews.

Yosef Trumpeldor (1880–1920) served in the Czarist Russian army during the Russo-Japanese War. In the battle of Port Arthur, he lost an arm, spent 100 days in a field hospital, returned to the front line, was cited for his bravery, and became a prisoner of war (POW) when Port Arthur fell to the Japanese. At the Hamadera POW camp near Osaka he became the leader of 500 Jewish prisoners and 10,000 Russian prisoners. Trumpeldor used his leadership skills to establish a school to teach 2,500 prisoners how to read and write, even writing his own textbooks. He created a Zionist society and published a weekly Jewish newsletter, *Yeureiskaya-Zhizhn* (Jewish Life). He created a Yiddish theater in the POW camp, built a library for the prisoners, produced Jewish New Year cards, and enhanced general prison life. Trumpeldor was very influenced by the Japanese love of land, loyalty, discipline, organizational skills, and especially their national spirit. He believed Jews could learn many significant ideas from the Japanese and dreamed of creating a “Jewish Japan in Israel.” He was one of the early pioneers in Palestine but was killed by the Arabs.

Benjamin Wilfred Fleisher (b. 1870), owner-editor of the *Japan Advertiser-Japan Times*, was another influential journalist in Japan. Fleisher was born in 1870 into the Philadelphia family of the Fleisher Yarn company, which was very prominent in the Jewish community as philanthropists and patrons of the arts. Fleisher traveled to Japan in 1908 and soon purchased the *Japan Advertiser*. He founded the *China Press*, an American-oriented newspaper in Shanghai, became the Far East correspondent for the *New York Times* and United Press, and built the *Japan Advertiser* into the leading English-language newspaper of Asia. Fleisher imported the first linotype machine in Japan, and promising young journalists and future foreign correspondents served as apprentices with Fleisher. Under his dynamic and imaginative leadership, the *Advertiser* won a special Pulitzer Prize and became the model for Japanese newspapers. Fleisher was considered the “unofficial American ambassador in Japan.”

## Jewish Communities in Japan

Since World War II, the Jewish community has been reestablished across Japan, with core communities in Tokyo and Yokohama. Jewish organizations provide a

full range of activities including synagogue services, kosher meals, classes, Hebrew school, mikvah, cultural programs, and all necessary activities to enhance Jewish life.

### **Jews in Nagasaki**

In the mid-19th century, Jews arrive in the port city of Nagasaki, on the southern island of Kyushu, when Nagasaki was a center of foreign trade. Jews were primarily involved in providing local supplies for incoming ships, owning bars and inns, and importing goods such as jellies, chocolates, and spirits for foreign residents.

In 1900, the small Jewish community of 100 established a synagogue, Hebrew school, cemetery, and mikvah. A local artist, Ken Tagawa, made a wood block print of the synagogue. The British tradition of social discrimination prohibited Jews from joining the private social clubs, and Jewish children could not attend the private foreign schools that taught in English. Surprisingly, Jews were not allowed to live on the picturesque bluff overlooking the majestic harbor but were forced to live in slums, which were permeated with the odors of sewage and garbage. This importation of discrimination among foreigners surprised the Japanese.

In 1904, with the Russian-Japanese War in full swing, many Jews from Eastern Europe were considered enemy nationals. Many departed for Shanghai, and even the Torah scrolls were sent to Shanghai. Sigmund David Lessner was the capable and talented leader of the Jewish community at the time,

### **Jews in Yokohama**

With the opening of Japan to the outside world in the mid-19th century, Jews from America and Europe settled in Yokohama, which became the center of the foreign community. Some were diplomats from Belgium and Turkey, and some were seeking a haven and opportunities free of anti-Semitism. Alexander Marks, who later settled in Australia, was the first leader of the Jewish community, and Raphael Schoyer, the “mayor” of the foreign community, was also highly respected. The community gathered for religious services on the holidays, created a model Jewish Benevolent Society, and developed a Jewish cemetery with an entrance adjacent to Motomachi, the fashionable shopping street of Yokohama.

In the 1930s, after the devastating earthquake of Tokyo and Yokohama and great loss of life, writings on tombstones indicate that the Jewish survivors re-established themselves in Kobe. During that time, there was a revival of the Jewish community which was very fortuitous, as the community helped many refugees escaping the Holocaust.

### **Jews in Kobe**

Jews came to Kobe in small numbers from Holland, Russia, the United States, and the Middle East. Jews were traders and provided supplies to incoming ships at this busy port in central Japan. Sam Evans was the first Jew to become a Japanese

citizen, taking the name Subaru Ebansu. He was very philanthropic and devoted himself to the needs of the Jewish community; he was also very generous to the Japanese.

With the sudden arrival of thousands of refugees, with transit visas, who were escaping the Holocaust, this Ashkenazi community mustered all its resources to help the penniless refugees find housing, arrange kosher food, house an entire yeshiva, provide medical care, and secure visas to their final destination. Anatole Ponve deserves special recognition for his extraordinary efforts on behalf of the refugees. After the war, a small Sephardic community remained, and currently the Ohel Shelomah synagogue has a Sephardic Chabad rabbi from Israel.

### Jews in Tokyo

After World War II, Russian Jews from Harbin and Shanghai, a few Sephardic Jews from Shanghai, and American Jews created a Jewish community in Tokyo. A home was purchased under the direction of Anatole Ponve, which became the Jewish community of Japan. It consists of a synagogue, school, restaurant, library, mikvah, pool, and recreational facilities, and it has had a rabbi since the 1960s. Walter J. Citrin was a very capable leader of the community, always striving to keep the community of several hundred families united. The community was very charitable, and the Japan Israel Women's Welfare Organization's bazaar was generally patronized by the imperial family. Shoul N. Eisenberg, a noted entrepreneur, was a refugee in Japan during World War II, and later became most successful in a variety of activities in the Far East. The Tokyo synagogue is dedicated to his father. Currently, the Jewish population consists of diplomats, investment bankers, attorneys, journalists, and students of oriental medicine and the martial arts.

### Contemporary Overview

Although there seem to be no Jewish publications in Japan, any talk of the Jews in the publishing field is likely to incite fairly immediate reaction. In this case, when the *Weekly Post* published a fairly stereotypical story pertaining to Jewish acquisition of a Japanese bank, the reaction was so strong that the story was immediately retracted, followed by an official apology.

On the other hand, it seems that the Japanese maintain a close connection with some Jewish ideologies, such as kibbutz. Tezuka Nobuyoshi established Japan's Kibbutz association, which boasts more than 30,000 members, in 1963. A pro-Israel group—Japanese Christian Friends of Israel—has more than 10,000 members. In addition, Makuya, a pro-Israel Christian group, has more than 60,000 members. The group is politically active and even staged a rally in front of the United Nations in 1971. After a 1972 Japanese terrorist attack in Tel Aviv's airport, one of their spokespeople traveled to Israel to issue a formal apology to victims of the attack. A Japanese-Jewish Friendship and Study Society was also established in 1995.

The very first concert of the Tokyo symphony in 1923 was conducted by the Jewish musician Jacques Gershowitz. Jews had a great impact on Japan in the field of

music. The Japanese are great admirers of classical music and in the 1930s Japan was the world's largest market for classical records. Many prominent Jewish musicians who suffered discrimination in Europe settled in Japan and served as teachers at the prestigious Tokyo Ongaku Gakko, including Klaus Pringshein (brother-in-law of Thomas Mann), violinist Aleaner Mogilevski, pianist Leo Sirota, and pianist Leonid Kreutzer, who was the chief piano instructor at the Berlin Music University until he was dismissed by the Nazis in 1933. The major musicians of Japan became students of refugee Jewish professors. Joseph Rosenstock, who conducted opera in Germany until his dismissal by the Nazis in 1933, was invited to Japan and appointed conductor of the Tokyo symphony orchestra. He remained in this position throughout the World War II, despite Nazi protest. The official Japanese government response to the German protest was, ". . . our government does not support racial discrimination or take any position against the Jews."

There is a Holocaust Education Center in Hiroshima. In Kobe, where Jews have been present for more than a century, the Ohel Shelmoh Synagogue, an Orthodox synagogue with an attached community center, was established to serve Kobe's 15 Jewish families.

In Nagasaki, although there is not a Jewish community, there remains an old Jewish cemetery at Sakamoto Gaijin Bochi. In Okinawa an average of 200–300 Jews serves in the U.S military. Additionally, there are services held regularly in a chapel in the area. In Tokyo at least 160 Jewish families are active in the community. There is a library, a Hebrew school, and regular Sabbath services. A Jewish Club, complete with recreational facilities, is being developed. The Jewish community of Tokyo maintains a solid affiliation with the World Jewish Congress.

In addition, several thousand Israelis regularly travel and remain in Japan for varying periods of time, working and developing their own businesses, especially manufacturing and selling jewelry. There is an extensive Israeli network of street vendors and traders.

### Selected Bibliography

- Goodman, David G. and Masanori Miyazawa. 1995. *Jews in the Japanese Mind*. New York: Free Press.
- "The Jewish Communities of Japan." Am Yisrael Web site. <http://www.amyisrael.co.il/asia/japan/> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Kapner, Daniel Ari, and Stephen Levine. 2000. "The Jews of Japan." *Jerusalem Letter*, March 1. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Web site. <http://www.jcpa.org/jl/jl425.htm> (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Kranzler, David. 1976. *Japanese, Nazis and Jews*. New York: Yeshiva University Press.
- Shillony, Ben-Ami. 1991. *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle.
- Sofer, D. 2004. "Seek and Save." *Jewish World Review*, October 21. [http://www.jewishworldreview.com/1004/japanese\\_convert.php3](http://www.jewishworldreview.com/1004/japanese_convert.php3) (accessed April 22, 2007).
- Tokayer, Marvin, and Mary Swartz. 1979. *The Fugu Plan, the Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews during World War II*. New York: Paddington Press.

# India and Pakistan

## Jews in India

*Shalva Weil*

---

**General Population:** 1.11 billion

**Jewish Population:** 4,500

**Percent of Population:** 0.0004 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** Greater Mumbai, including Konkan, 3,600; Ahmedabad, 350; Pune, 300; Calcutta, 150; Cochin, 50; New Delhi, 50

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Linguistic and biblical evidence of Jewish migrations in the first millennium BCE; in the 11th–13th centuries, Arab-speaking Jewish traders arrive at subcontinent; in the 17th century, Jews settle in Madras, Calicut, and other cities.

There are three major Jewish Indian communities today: the Bene Israel, the Cochin Jews, and the Baghdadis. In recent years, other groups, notably the Shinlung or Bnei Menashe of the Indo-Burmese borderlands, are claiming Israelite status and identifying as Jews (their numbers are not counted in the Jewish population listed at the beginning of this entry). The Bene Israel arrived on the Konkan coast in a shipwreck ca. 175 BCE; Cochin Jews may have arrived on the Malabar coast with Saint Thomas in the first century CE; and the Baghdadis settled in Calcutta and Bombay during the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Languages Spoken:** Marathi, Hindi, Malayalam, Gujarati, and English

---

### Historical Overview

**1000 BCE** Linguistic evidence confirms the possibility of ancient Jewish communities and early commercial connections between India and the Holy Land. The biblical book of Kings mentions that King Solomon's ships carry kofim (apes), tukim (peacocks), and almag (sandalwood = valgum) of Indian origin.

**500 BCE** In the book of Esther, King Ahasuerus's kingdom stretches from Hoddu (generally accepted to be India) to Kush (generally accepted to be Ethiopia).

**175 BCE** Legend tells of the arrival of the Bene Israel community on the shores of India.

**1st century CE** South Indian Christian writings date the arrival of Cochin Jewry in India to the first century. Thomas the Apostle and Abbanes, an Indian merchant, arrive at Cranganore, the ancient capital of Cochin, on the wedding day of the king's daughter. Thomas recites poetry in Hebrew and only a Jewish flautist understands him and falls in love with him. He subsequently converts her to Christianity. However, the legend proves the existence of Jews on the Malabar coast before the first century CE.

**200 BCE–200 CE** Travelers' tales in the Talmud mention trade with India, including such specific commodities as Indian ginger and iron.

**9th century CE** Jewish merchants known as Raadanites traded between east and west, from the Middle East to South Asia and back.

- 962–1020 CE During the reign of Bhaskara Ravi Varman, the Kochin Jews of Kerala are granted 72 privileges, attested and encribed on copper plates preserved until the present.
- 11th–13th century Jewish texts discovered in the Cairo Genizah include documents describing the trade carried out between Arab-speaking Jews and Hindu partners in spices, pharmaceuticals, textiles, metals, gold, silver, and silks.
- 1568 After Vasco da Gama's expedition to India, some European Jews from Spain, the Netherlands, Aleppo, and Germany settle in Cochin and join their Jewish Malabari brethren. They are called Paradesi (white) and establish a synagogue.
- 1694–1771 Ezekiel Rahabi of the Paradesi community rises to prominence under Dutch rule; he acts as the principal merchant for the Dutch in Cochin and signs his memoranda in Hebrew.
- 17th century Jewish merchant centers are established in Madras, Calicut, and other places.
- 1730 Joseph Semah arrives in India from Baghdad and founds the Surat Synagogue.
- 1798–18th century Baghdadhi and Syrian Jews continue to arrive in India, including Shalom Cohen, a merchant who settles in Calcutta in 1798.
- 19th century Jewish emissaries travel to Asia to make contact with the Jews in far-flung places, often in the belief that they are members of the 10 lost tribes of Israelites who were exiled from the Kingdom of Israel by Assyrian kings in the eighth century BCE.
- 20th century Most of the Bene Israel have set up synagogues and communities in urban centers, such as Pune, Ahmedabad, New Delhi, Karachi, and even Aden.
- 1950 After the State of Israel is established, most of Bene Israel gradually immigrates to Israel.
- 1964 Bene Israel's Jewish status is recognized by the chief rabbinate and the Israeli Knesset.

### **Jewish Communities in India**

The largest of India's Jewish communities is the Bene Israel (Children of Israel). They claim to have come from the north, perhaps as early as 175 BCE. According to legend, their ancestors were shipwrecked off the Konkan coast and lost all their holy books; they only remembered the Shema prayer, which declared their faith in monotheism. The seven men and seven women who survived took refuge in the village of Navgaon, where they buried the bodies of their relatives and friends. The local Hindus offered hospitality to the survivors, and the Bene Israel took up the occupation of oil pressing becoming known as Shanwar Telis (Saturday Oilmen), because they refrained from work on the Jewish Sabbath.

When discovered by David Rahabi (possibly in the 18th century), the Bene Israel observed the Sabbath, dietary laws, circumcision, and many of the Jewish festivals. To ascertain whether the Bene Israel were indeed Jews, Rahabi asked the women to prepare him a fish meal. When they singled out the fish with fins and scales—that is, separated the kosher fish from the nonkosher fish—Rahabi was convinced of the Bene Israel's Jewish identity and agreed to instruct them in the

tenets of Judaism. From the 18th century on, under the influence of the British, the Bene Israel began to move out of the Konkan villages south of Bombay (today Mumbai) to the metropolis and set up synagogues and communities.

The religious customs of the Bene Israel were unique. On Yom Kippur, known as the Festival of the Closing of the Doors, the Bene Israel arrived in synagogue before dawn so as to avoid contact with other people. They also observed particular folk customs, such as hair-shaving ceremonies for babies, pilgrimages, and special ways of celebrating festivals. An unusual feature of Bene Israel religious worship is the intensive belief in Eliyahu Hannabi (Elijah). Whereas most Jews believe Elijah ascended to heaven from a site somewhere near present-day Haifa in Israel, the Bene Israel fervently believe he departed on his chariot from a village called Khandalla in the Konkan. Bene Israel go on pilgrimage to the site, which is also revered by local Hindus, where they claim that they can see the footprints of Elijah's horses. There, they make wishes for the redemption of vows or offer prayers of thanksgiving.

The Bene Israel community boasts a relatively large number of educated members, among them lawyers, professors, doctors, mayors, and authors, who have contributed to the cultural life of India. After Indian independence in 1947 and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, most of the Bene Israel gradually immigrated to Israel. At first, some rabbis did not fully recognize them as Jews for marriage purposes. In 1962, the Bene Israel staged a strike in Jerusalem claiming that they were full Jews in every respect, and in 1964, they were acknowledged as such, both by Israel's chief Rabbinate and by Israel's Knesset.

Today, some 5,000 Bene Israel remain in India, largely in the Maharashtra region, and more than 60,000 live in Israel. In Israel they are settled in development towns, or new settlement communities, from Kiryat Shmone in the north to Eilat in the south, with the largest concentration in the town of Dimona.

The miniscule community of Cochin Jews numbered 2,400 people in 1947, but only about 20 Jews remain on the Malabar coast today. The settlement of the Cochin Jews on the Malabar coast is ancient. Documentary evidence of Jewish settlement in Kerala can be found in the famous Cochin Jewish copperplates inscribed in an ancient Tamil script (dated 1000 CE). In that year, during the reign of Bhas-kara Ravi Varman (962–1020 CE), the Jews were granted 72 privileges, which included the right to use a day lamp, to erect a palanquin, to blow a trumpet, and to be exempt from certain taxes.

One legend holds that they arrived with King Solomon's merchants. The most popular local legend in South Indian Christian writings attributes the arrival of Cochin Jewry in India to the first century. Thomas the Apostle and Abbanes, an Indian merchant, arrived at Cranganore, the ancient capital of Cochin, on the wedding day of the king's daughter. Thomas recited poetry in Hebrew and only a Jewish flautist understood him and fell in love with him. He subsequently converted her to Christianity. However, the legend seems to prove that Jews were already residing on the Malabar coast before the first century CE.

The Cochin Jews were dispersed in five major settlements in eight communities in Kerala—Cochin, Ernakulam, Chendamanglam, Mala, and Parur. After Vasco da

Gama's expedition to India, some European Jews (the "Paradesi," sometimes referred to as "foreigners'" or "whites") from Spain, the Netherlands, Aleppo, and Germany, settled in Cochin and joined their Jewish Malabari brethren. The Paradesi synagogue was established in 1568. One member of that community who rose to prominence under Dutch rule, was Ezekiel Rahabi (1694–1771); he acted as the principal merchant for the Dutch in Cochin and signed his memoranda in Hebrew.

In wedding ceremonies among all the communities of Kerala's Jews, the groom recites the benedictions. Under the chuppah (bridal canopy), he holds a gold chalice containing wine in which the wedding ring, tied to a loop made with seven strings, is immersed. He announces that he is betrothed to his bride according to the Laws of Moses and Israel. He drinks from the cup, gives it his bride, and then places the ring on the index finger of her right hand, with the words "Behold, thou art consecrated to me." A young boy then reads the ketuba (marriage contract), according to Shingli (Cochin) custom.

The Cochin Jews were acclaimed in 1968 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi celebrated the quatercentenary of the Paradesi synagogue, and the Indian government honored the community by issuing a commemorative stamp on the occasion. After the State of Israel was established, most of the Jews from Cochin, motivated by Zionism, decided to emigrate. The Malabar Jews live largely in moshavim (agricultural settlements), the largest concentration being found in moshav Nevatim, south of Beersheba; some have also moved to the cities.

In 2005, the Kerala government completed the restoration of the synagogue in the village of Chennamangalam in Kerala. In February 2006, an exhibition on the Jews of Chennamangalam before and after their immigration to Israel was held on the premises.

The grandest Jewish community in India is that of the Jews from Iraq and Syria, often known as the "Baghdadis," who migrated to two major urban centers, Calcutta and Bombay, beginning in the 18th century. One of the founders of the Bombay community was Joseph Semah, who arrived in India in 1730 from Surat; another was Shalom Cohen, a merchant who settled in Calcutta in 1798. These Jewish merchants, who escaped deteriorating conditions in Iraq and the pogroms of Daud Pasha in the mid-19th century, were followed by other Jews, who established thriving businesses in the East, as far afield as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. The Sassoon dynasty built prayer houses and synagogues as well as hospitals, libraries, and schools in India for the benefit of Jews and non-Jews alike. In Calcutta, as many as eight Baghdadi synagogues operated regularly, as well as several Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic printing presses, which translated holy texts into local vernacular and published original works.

Among the Baghdadi Jews, a number of complex rituals were devised to protect the mother and child around birth, including wearing charms and amulets or hanging them at their bedside. Often nutmeg, garlic, a small blue bead, and the God's name were pinned on the baby to safeguard him or her against a premature death and avert the evil eye. Sometimes when an elderly person died, a piece of the shroud was used to make a garment for a newborn child, to ensure its long life.

After the British withdrew from India, many of the Baghdadi Jews, with whom they had associated as nonnative Indians, decided to immigrate to England and other English-speaking countries, and a couple of thousand went to Israel. Today, there are less than 200 Jews of Iraqi origin left in India.

India's Jews have never suffered from anti-Semitism at the hands of their fellow Indians. The histories of the different Indian Jewish communities in India, which tend to remain relatively unknown, are therefore unusual compared with any other Jewish Diaspora. Influenced by their Hindu or Muslim neighbors, all three recognized groups of Jews developed special customs in their religious worship.

### Contemporary Overview

There are three major Indian Jewish communities in the world today: the Baghdadis, the Bene Israel, and the Cochin Jews. In addition, a recently and emerging group claiming Israelite ancestry is known as the Shinlung. This group has adopted Judaic practices since the 1960s; they have set up Jewish prayer halls in India and observe certain Jewish customs. Groups claiming to descend from the 10 lost tribes have also emerged in Andhra Pradesh and other regions of India.

Indian Jews today can be divided into two subgroups: those who remain in India because of their overriding attachment to India, and those who immigrated to Israel and reunited with their families and the majority of their community. The former smaller group of no more than 5,000 Jews includes Indian nationalists, non-Zionists, and those who are too old, or cannot envisage, emigration. The latter group of some 70,000 worldwide includes Zionists who see the eventual future of the Indian Jewish community in Israel (while not negating their Indian homeland) and members of Diasporic communities in English-speaking countries, such as Canada, the United States, England, and Australia. There are transnational visits between kin and friends in India and other countries.

The Baghdadi community, which at its peak numbered 5,000 during World War II, had accumulated tremendous wealth and power in India, and its business empire stretched far and wide. Yet it has dwindled to a mere 100 or 200, mostly the infirm and the ailing. The vast majority of the Indian Baghdadi Jews who had left for Israel, England, and the United States visit India occasionally with their offspring and pay respects to remaining kin or their lost community in Calcutta or Mumbai. In Calcutta, the two magnificent synagogues, Maghen David and Beth-El, take turns holding a minyan (quorum). Mumbai still has two functioning synagogues, Magen David and Knesset Eliahu, but sometimes they do not have regular services if there are not enough tourists. In Pune, the Ohel David synagogue, named after David Sassoon and erected in 1867, with its famous churchlike spire and clock tower, is a landmark in the city. The Baghdadis, as they were known, were extremely adaptable, and many in England and the United States married local Jews and merged with the local Jewish communities. Today, several Baghdadi Jews in England and the United States have written books, memoirs, and even a West End musical about their comfortable lives under the Raj.

The Bene Israel represent the largest group of Indian Jews. In 1947, the British departed from India and in the following year, the State of Israel was declared. Today, due to natural increase, some 60,000 Bene Israel reside in Israel; more than 4,500 remain in India, making them the largest Indian Jewish group and the majority Indian Jewish group in India. Owing to large-scale immigration to Israel, communal activity has declined in India and Bene Israel newspapers and periodicals, once prolific, are now published infrequently. The Jacob Sassoon Free School, founded at the end of the 19th century as an English medium school for Baghdadi children in Bombay, at first imposed a quota for Bene Israel pupils. However, by the 1970s nearly all of the Jewish pupils (125 out of 400) were Bene Israel. Today, there is scarcely a Jewish pupil at the school.

Through force of circumstances, consolidation has taken place between the different Indian Jewish communities in India. In 1979, the Council of Indian Jewry was established to represent the interests of all Indian Jews. Because of lack of numbers, members of the Bene Israel and Baghdadi communities, and Jews of other origins, cooperate to maintain communal institutions. The Stree Mandel, which was established in 1913 as a women's organization, is still active today. A variety of other sports clubs, Zionist organizations, and charitable and credit associations organize community events in this cosmopolitan city. In 2005, at Pesach (Passover), members of the Mumbai Jewish community together baked matzoth (unleavened bread) on the premises of the Magen David synagogue, which once was the exclusive synagogue of the Baghdadi Jews, and distributed them to all Jews in Mumbai.

In many ways, a mini religious revival has been taking place in Mumbai in the past couple of years. The Bombay ORT school for boys was established in 1962 and the school for girls in 1970. In 2001, a small number of Jewish pupils was still receiving technical and vocational training; many of them later immigrated to Israel with knowledge of Hebrew. Today, ORT has been reorganized and runs a successful ORT preprimary school and other educational activities. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is providing a varied educational and cultural program to many Mumbai citizens and reaching out to many more through the Internet: they publish a monthly newsletter, *Kesher*, which provides information on communal activities, gatherings, and lectures, as well as news about different Jewish communities and religious matters. In addition, a weekly newsletter on the *Parashat Hashavua* (Portion of the Week) is distributed regularly. Recently, a Bene Israel Genealogy Centre was established at Tiphereth Israel synagogue. More Bene Israel are concentrating in Thane, a suburb of Mumbai, around Shaar Rahamim (the Gate of Heaven) Synagogue, which today has the largest Jewish population in India. Kosher fowl is available in some places.

Today, with the liberalization and globalization in India, intermarriage with non-Jews (Hindus, Christians, Muslims, and Parsees) is occurring more frequently in urban centers such as Mumbai, although it is not the norm. More than 20 synagogues and prayer halls have been built in India, all of which follow the Orthodox tradition, except the Reformist Jewish Religious Union (founded in Bombay in 1925

by Dr. Jerusha Jhirad, a Bene Israel gynecologist, who in 1966 received the distinguished Padma Shri award for outstanding services in the field of social welfare). In 2006, only a handful of these are able to maintain a regular service on Saturdays, and in the villages outside Mumbai several beautiful synagogues remain shut. The Bene Israel themselves never had a rabbi of their own, although individuals versed in both Sephardi and exclusive Bene Israel liturgy acted as hazanim (cantors). In recent years, several visiting rabbis have been sent to Mumbai and have served for short spells, as well as representatives of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, who are increasingly active in the city. This movement is very busy in the north of India, where thousands of Israeli backpackers visit each year, and they have opened hostels and prayer halls in Dharmasala, Manali, and other centers. In 2007, hundreds of Israelis attended services in Pushkar, in the middle of the Rajasthan Desert. Outside Mumbai, there is an active Bene Israel community in Ahmedabad, a prayer hall often filled with visitors from abroad in New Delhi, and a minyan (quorum) on a regular Saturday in Pune.

The Bene Israel adhere to their own traditions and rites. In the marriage ceremony, the bride is dressed in a white sari and goes to meet the groom as he sings the special Bene Israel "groom song" from the bimah (podium) of the synagogue. Elijah the prophet is invoked on all auspicious occasions, including circumcisions and purification after childbirth.

The most important Jewish festivals for the Bene Israel are Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Simchat Torah (Day of Rejoicing of the Law), and Pesach (Passover). On Rosh Hashanah the whole community appears in its finery in synagogue, and between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur it is customary to visit friends and family. On Yom Kippur the community dresses exclusively in white and arrives at the synagogue before dawn, On Simchat Torah they celebrate by dancing merrily in the synagogue with the Torah scrolls. On Pesach, Bene Israel make matzoth from rice not wheat, whitewash their houses, and tin their copper pots.

In Israel, the Bene Israel organize as a community, spinning family and ethnic ties tighter and tighter. Although there is increasing marriage with other Jews in Israel, for the vast majority, marriages are still contracted within the ethnic community. Marriage is sometimes negotiated across national borders; social relationships and political orientations are conducted irrespective of territorial blocks. Indian cultural life is active and Indian films and clips are viewed in every Indian home. Each year 4,000 persons of Indian origin congregate in Eilat for three to four days to celebrate the Hoduyada (Gathering of Indian Jews) festival, which incorporates a rich Indian cultural program. Some Bene Israel adults in Israel read and write in Marathi newspapers, like *Mai Bolli*, and participate in Marathi plays and programs.

Along with regular young Israeli backpackers, hundreds of Bene Israel from Israel travel to India in organized groups to visit the synagogues and buy the latest Indian fashion and jewelry. These Indian tourists to India return with suitcases stuffed with spices, gold, silks, and scarves, as well as letters and gifts for friends and relatives who could not make the journey. They then return to the Israeli homeland with tangible pieces of their previous homeland, India. In addition, they keep

up ties between Israel and other smaller Bene Israel Diasporas in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and Australia.

The process of emigration and the adaptation of the Bene Israel in their new homeland in Israel entailed many changes in social and religious life. At first, the Bene Israel were not accepted as full Jews in Israel, and they were only recognized as such after a two-year struggle with demonstrations and strikes in 1962–1964. Their nonacceptance by other Jews is still a bitter memory today. In Israel, the Bene Israel adapted some of their traditions and took on others. For example, in India, the Bene Israel used to visit Elijah the prophet's holy site in the Konkan; in Israel, they frequent Elijah's site on Mount Carmel. They have also adopted many items from the Oral Law, which they did not know years back. However, a surprising number of Indian traditions live on, such as the pre-wedding *mehendi* (henna). The evening before the wedding, the *mehendi* ceremony takes place simultaneously in the houses of the bride and groom, who wear flowers tied round their heads and have henna daubed ritually on their forefingers. A dish called *melida* is prepared, composed of rice flour and sugar covered with fruit and decorated with a rose in the center, while frankincense is burned by the side. The *melida* is blessed and distributed, and Elijah the prophet is invoked. The younger generation of Indians define themselves as Israelis, and most claim that they are traditional in their religious way of life.

Almost the entire community of Cochin Jews lives in Israel, where they number some 8,000 (including spouses who married into the community). In 2006, some 10 Paradesi (once known as "White") Cochin Jews and 40 Malabar (once known as "Black") Cochin Jews remained in Kerala. The Cochin Jews in Israel live primarily in moshavim (agricultural settlements), and although there is no wider Cochin Jewish Diaspora, Cochin Jews have also begun to move between Israel and India, particularly in the past few years, when some Cochin Jews visited Kerala on trips to explore their roots. In February 24, 2006, the 1614 synagogue in the village of Chennamangalam was restored by the Kerala Archaeological Survey in conjunction with the Kerala Department of Tourism, and this author and others inaugurated an exhibition inside the restored synagogue that was attended by scores of Cochin Jews, many from Israel.

In Israel, there is a synagogue in nearly every moshav with a concentration of Cochin Jews, the largest being Nevatim. Cochin Jews pray according to Shingli rites and enact their religious ceremonies according to Cochin custom, but they are also influenced by general Israeli trends. At Nevatim, there is a Cochin Jewish heritage museum, and at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the Kadavumbagham Synagogue, imported from Cochin, has been reconstructed. Cochin Jewish Malayalam folk songs, traditionally sung by Jewish women in Kerala, are currently being revived and a CD has been produced in an international collaborative project. These Malayalam Jewish folk songs cover biblical, wedding, historical, and other themes.

The Indian Jews in India today represent a small, struggling yet vital community, surviving through the efforts of Jewish organizations like the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Owing to large-scale emigration, many synagogues and prayer halls have shut down, and communal activity has declined. Notwithstanding,

a mini religious revival and consolidation between the different Indian Jewish communities have been taking place quite recently, and connections have been forged with different Jewish groups in Israel and elsewhere.

### Selected Bibliography

- Abrahams, Margaret. 1995. "Marginality and Community Identity Disintegration among the Jews of India." In *Studies of Indian Jewish Identity*, edited by Nathan Katz, 175–199. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Ezra, Esmond David. 1986. *Turning Back the Pages: A Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry*. London: Brookside Press.
- Isenberg, Shirley Berry. 1988. *India's Bene Israel: A Comprehensive Inquiry and Sourcebook*. Bombay: Popular Parakashan.
- Israel, B. J. 1998. *The Jews of India*. New Delhi: Mosaic Books.
- Katz, Nathan. 2000. *Who Are the Jews of India?* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Katz, Nathan, and Ellen S. Goldberg. 1993. *The Last Jews of Cochin*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Lentin, S. S. 2004. "The Jewish Presence in Bombay." In *India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and Life-Cycle*, 2nd ed., edited by Shalva Weil, 22–35. Mumbai: Marg.
- "The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel." The Database of Jewish Communities Web site. <http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Archive/TenLostTribes.asp> (accessed May 25, 2008).
- Parfitt, T. 2002. *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Roland, Joan. 1998. *The Jewish Communities of India*, 2nd ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Transactions.
- Samuel, Shellim. 1963. *Treatise on the Origin and Early History of the Beni-Israel of Maharashtra*. Bombay.
- Silliman, J. 2001. *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames: Women's Narratives from a Diaspora of Hope*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, Brandeis University Press, Seagull Books.
- Weil, Shalva. 1974. "Bene Israel in Britain." *New Community* 3 (1–2): 87–91.
- Weil, Shalva. 1996. "The Preservation and Transformation of Indian Culture and Identity among Bene Israel in Israel." In *Israel in the Nineties: Development and Conflict*, edited by F. Lazin and G. Mahler, 169–193. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Weil, Shalva. 2004. "Bene Israel Rites and Routines." In *Indian Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and Life-Cycle*, edited by Shalva Weil, 78–89. Mumbai: Marg.
- Weil, Shalva. 2004. "The Contributions of the Jews of India." In *India's Jewish Heritage: Art, Ritual and Life-Cycle*, 2nd ed., edited by Shalva Weil, 110–121. Mumbai: Marg.
- Weil, Shalva. 2004. "The Heritage and Legacy of Indian Jews." In *Indian Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and Life-Cycle*, edited by Shalva Weil, 9–21. Mumbai: Marg.
- Weil, Shalva. 2004. "The Heritage and Legacy of the Jews of India." In *India's Jewish Heritage: Ritual, Art and Life-Cycle*, 2nd ed., edited by Shalva Weil, 9–21. Mumbai: Marg.
- Weil, Shalva. "The Bene Israel of India." The Database of Jewish Communities Web site. <http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Archive/BeneIsrael.asp> (accessed May 25, 2008).

## Jewish-Indian Contacts over the Ages

*Nathan Katz*

---

Relations between Hindus and Jews have always been characterized by mutual respect and affection. Jewish-Hindu dialogue may go back nearly 3,000 years when luxury goods from India were exported to ancient Israel, which was then ruled by King Solomon. Sanskrit and Tamil words for such items of commerce as peacocks, ivory, ginger, and linen are found in the Hebrew Bible, and legends about King Solomon and the Buddha using their wisdom to mediate a quarrel between two women about who was the mother of a child are found in the Mahoṣṣidha Jfitaka and the Hebrew Bible (1 Kings 3:16–28). In postbiblical sacred literature, there are four references to India in the Talmud, the definitive commentary on the Jewish Bible. Josephus, the famous Jewish historian of the Second Temple era (first century BCE) recorded that the leader of the Jewish resistance to Roman rule, Eleazar, admonished his followers to heroism by citing the example of Hindus (Katz 1991).

During medieval times, Jewish merchants and scholars regularly plied sea and land routes between India and Israel. For example, it was an eighth-century Jewish scholar who brought Indian mathematics to the West, where written numbers are wrongly called “Arabic” numerals (Isenberg 1988, 20). Many letters by medieval merchants have been preserved, and they provide a unique perspective on life in India between the 11th and 13th centuries (Goitein 1973).

India has been home for six distinct Jewish communities, each with its own history, customs, and language. Each has enjoyed not only complete freedom of religion but also respect, affection, and in some cases high social position. The oldest Jewish community in India is in Kerala. According to their traditions, they arrived at Cranganore (known in the Jewish world as Shingli and to the Romans as Muziris) just after the destruction of Jerusalem in 72 CE, and were warmly received by the local mahfirfija. In 379 CE (scholars say during the 11th century), the local Chera king granted Joseph Rabban, the Jews’ leader, aristocratic privileges, which were engraved on copper plates (Katz and Goldberg 1993, 42–45). To this day, these copper plates are reverently stored in the Holy Ark of the Cochin Synagogue. The Cochin Jews were loyal subjects of their Nfiyar rulers; they were among the finest soldiers of the region, and Ezekiel Rahabi (1694–1771), the mahfirfija’s prime minister, has been called “the Malabar’s Kissinger” (Parasuram 1982, 45).

Cochin Jews wrote poetry in Malayalam as well as in Hebrew, and their greatest kabbalist (mystic), Nehemia Mota (d. 1615), is revered by Jews, Hindus, Christians, and Muslims alike. His tomb near Cochin’s Jew Town is a striking example of how such saints helped extrinsic religions become integrated into local religious culture in India. The Cochin Jews’ integration into the fabric of Cochin culture and society is evidenced in the rich local flavor of their literature and in the many borrowings from Hinduism in their unique system of observance of Jewish calendric and life-cycle rituals (Katz and Goldberg 1993, 163–249). Once numbering around 2,500, emigration to Israel since 1950 has reduced this community to a few dozen souls.

The Bene Israel community of Bombay and the Konkan coast is by far the largest of India's Jewish communities. Their arrival in India is legendary: local traditions hold that seven Jewish couples were shipwrecked and landed at Navgoan in the Konkan District. As their Torah scrolls were lost at sea, in time they forgot their Hebrew and most Jewish practices—save for the Jewish system of dietary laws known as *kashruth*, the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest, and the central affirmation of Judaism known as the *Shema* (“Hear O Israel, the Lord Is Thy God, the Lord Is One”), which they would recite on any occasion when prayer seemed appropriate (Isenberg 1988, 3–18). In the rural Konkan, they were oil pressers known as the *shanwar teli* caste (Saturday oil pressers) because they abjured work on Saturdays.

Unlike the mercantile Cochin Jews, the Bene Israel were cut off from world Jewry. Therefore, they became the most Indianized of India's Jews. They had no sense of being part of an extrinsic religion known as Judaism until an 18th-century Cochin Jew, David Rahabi, “discovered” them. (Bene Israel tradition is that David Rahabi came from Egypt, not Cochin.) Rahabi began “the first Bene Israel religious revival” (Isenberg 1988, 10) by teaching them the rudiments of normative Jewish practice and installing three of his disciples as *kajis*, who functioned as priests to the community.

Economic opportunities arose with the development of Bombay, and many Bene Israel were attracted there. They then encountered learned Cochin Jews, who became their teachers and ritual officiants, as well as Christian missionaries, who attempted to convert them but unwittingly increased their commitment to Judaism by teaching them the Bible and English, which gave them a link language with world Jewry. This era is known as “the second Bene Israel revival.” In cosmopolitan Bombay, the Bene Israel were exposed to such world-shaking forces as modernization and nationalism—both the Indian nationalism of the *swaraj* movement and Jewish nationalism, known as Zionism. As a result, their very identity was transformed from members of an obscure, oil-pressing caste of the Konkan, into modern, urbanized Indians and members of the world Jewish community (Roland 1989). There were once as many as 25,000 Bene Israel in India; today they number around 5,000 or 6,000, mostly in Bombay, but also in small communities in Konkan towns, Ahmedabad, Pune, and New Delhi.

An obscure Jewish community comprised merchants and courtiers during the Mughal period. Persian speakers, these Jews were scattered throughout the empire; their only known synagogue was in Agra. Perhaps the most lasting Jewish influence on Mughal-era India was made by an eccentric Jewish-Sufi-Yogi known as Sa'id Sarmad. Best known for haunting quatrains written in Persian, Sarmad was a fervent mystic who cared little for the niceties of exoteric religion. He adopted the persona of a naked *faqir* and ultimately became tutor and guru to Dara Shukoh, son and heir apparent of Shahjehan (ruled 1627–1666). Intrigues within the Red Fort led to an alliance between the mystically inclined Dara and his guru Sarmad, the Maratha leader Shivaji, and Guru Hargobind of the Sikhs (ruled 1606–1645). Theirs was a liberal alliance against the stern-minded Shahjehan and his fanatical son, Aurangzeb (ruled 1666–1707). The alliance collapsed when Aurangzeb beheaded

both his brother and Sarmad in a palace coup that resulted in draconian anti-Hindu policies and contributed to the downfall of the Mughals. Today, Sarmad's mazar (saint's tomb) guards the main entrance to Delhi's Juma Masjid, and most assumed he was a Muslim (Katz 1992).

Jews from the Middle East, chiefly Basra in Iraq, migrated to India's port cities, especially Bombay, Calcutta, and Rangoon, during the British raj. Known as "Baghdadis," they played major roles in the development of their cities. Bombay, for example, has had three Jewish mayors. They were led by the House of Sassoon of Bombay and the Elias family of Calcutta and played major roles in the textile and film industry. The Baghdadis were never really integrated into Indian culture—their home language went directly from Arabic to English—and most left India soon after independence. Several hundred Baghdadis remain in India, mostly in Calcutta, Bombay, and Pune.

There have always been a few European Jews, known as Ashkenazim, who made their way to India, but they never formed a distinct community. During World War II, a significant number reached India seeking refuge from Hitler. Many were physicians who made lasting contributions to public health—most notably, Walter M. Hafkine developed the cholera vaccine and an institute named for him flourishes in Bombay. But British and Indian physicians did not welcome the competition, and India's doors of asylum were soon closed.

Finally, recent years have seen a curious phenomenon in far eastern India, in Mizoram, Manipur, and Tripura. There, thousands of Chin-kuki tribals began experiencing dreams and revelations that convinced them of their lost identity as one of the scattered tribes of ancient Israel. Many have studied Judaism seriously, and several thousand have undergone formal conversion.

Jewish-Hindu dialogue has begun in America, where the two communities resemble each other very closely in demographics, education, and professions. Both are concerned about the quality of public education, fundamentalist extremism (whether Muslim or Christian), and promoting public appreciation of religious and cultural pluralism.

### Selected Bibliography

- Goitein, Solomon D. 1973. *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Isenberg, Shirley Berry. 1988. *India's Bene Israel: A Comprehensive Inquiry and Sourcebook*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- Katz, Nathan. 1991. "Contacts between Jewish and Indo-Tibetan Civilizations through the Ages: Some Explorations." *The Tibet Journal* 16 (4): 90–109.
- Katz, Nathan. 1992. "Sarmad 'the Everlasting': An Eccentric Jewish Sufi of Mughal India." *Journal of the Society of Rabbis in Academia* 2 (1): 13–17.
- Katz, Nathan, and Ellen S. Goldberg. 1988. "The Last Jews of India and Burma." *Jerusalem Letter* 101: 1–8.
- Katz, Nathan, and Ellen S. Goldberg. 1993. *The Last Jews of Cochin: Jewish Identity in Hindu India*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Parasuram, T. V. 1982. *India's Jewish Heritage*. New Delhi: Sagar.
- Roland, Joan G. 1989. *Jewish in British India: Identity in a Colonial Era*. Hanover, NH: University Presses of New England.

## Bene-Israel and Baghdadi Jews in India: Early 20th Century

*Yulia Egorova*

---

At the end of the 18th century, the Bene-Israel began moving from the villages to the towns of Pen, Panvel, Thana, and Bombay, and they became artisans of all kinds. Many Bene-Israel served in the Bombay army and reached the highest ranks open to native officers. The Bene-Israel graduates who began to emerge from universities at the turn of the century took jobs as clerks in the British administration. Although the majority of the Bene-Israel worked in the lower echelons of the departments of ports, railways, telegraphs, and the post office, some of them rose to the very top ranks in these services, and individual Bene-Israel became eminent specialists in the fields of medicine, engineering, and law.

As late as the first half of the 20th century, it appears that the Bene-Israel were still called Telis (oil pressers) by their neighbors, though oil pressing was no longer their distinctive occupation, and by that time some had moved considerably up the socioeconomic ladder. In other words, the rules regulating the relations between the members of different castes affected the relations between the Bene-Israel and their Hindu neighbors. Interestingly, some members of the community attempted to raise their status in the local hierarchy by trying to become associated with higher castes. The legend of the origin of the Bene-Israel, which states that they are the descendents of the seven men and seven women who survived a shipwreck, resembles that of the Chitpavans, a group of Maharashtra Brahmins. The legend told on the Konkan states that the Chitpavans are descended from 14 foreigners who perished in a shipwreck but were then restored to life by Parashurama, one of Vishnu's incarnations, who taught them Brahmin rites. The Bene-Israel had their own version of this legend, according to which both groups had a common origin.

Some Bene-Israel did not attempt to change their position in the caste hierarchy but preferred to support the movements that challenged the dominance of higher castes and struggled for equal educational opportunities for everybody irrespective of caste affiliation. Some Bene-Israel preferred to dissociate themselves from the caste system completely, arguing that as they were Jewish, they did not belong to it at all.

As far as their place in the colonial hierarchy was concerned the Bene-Israel never desired to be included in the European constituency. However, some were ready to demand a special representation for the Jews, although this initiative was not supported by all of its members. In 1926, Solomon Moses, one of the leaders of the community, argued at a Bene-Israel Conference session that his community should not take part in the competition for special reservations started by other minority groups. At the same time, other Bene-Israel put forward the idea of a special representation for the Jews, but they never submitted this request to the colonial authorities.

## The Baghdadi Jews

The position of the Baghdadi Jews of India differed greatly from that of their other Indian coreligionists. Socially and economically they were much closer to other small communities of non-Indian origin, which is not surprising given that their group was formed in the subcontinent far more recently than those of the Bene-Israel. At the same time, it should be noted that Baghdadi periodicals often praised the religious tolerance of the Indians and stated that in India Jews were absolutely free from any form of discrimination.

The history of the Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta in the first half of the 20th century was marked by their struggle for the status of the Europeans. They identified their interests with those of the British and never ceased displaying their loyalty to Great Britain. They were eager to enter the colonial elite of the subcontinent, and by the end of the 19th century the community was becoming more and more anglicized. Up until 1885, the Baghdadi Jews were classified as Europeans on the subcontinent, while the Jews of Cochin and the Bene-Israel were assigned to the Indian section of the population. It is not clear what exactly led the British administration to single out the Baghdadis among Indian Jewry and what made them change their status in 1885, but it is obvious that the British distinguished among different Jewish groups of the subcontinent and were acquainted with the histories of their formation. The members of the community attempted to change their status in 1919, the time of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, which introduced special constituencies for a number of religious communities and socioeconomic interest groups of India. In the early 1930s, during the period of the Round Table Conferences in London at which the Indians were invited to take part in discussing a new constitution subsequently introduced under the 1935 Government of India Act. However, it did not happen in either case. Apparently, only a limited number of the Baghdadis were fighting for the status of the Europeans. The Baghdadi Jews of Bombay did not show much interest in this matter and supported the requests of their Calcutta coreligionists only once.

It may be argued that the general discourse of Indian Jews of the later British period reflected the diversity of their perceptions of their place in colonial India and a degree of anxiety about their future in the light of the political developments on the subcontinent; however, it expressed practically no concern about the contemporary attitudes of the Indians toward the Jews.

## Selected Bibliography

- Brown, J.M. 1994. *Modern India, the Origins of an Asian Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Musleah, E. N. 1975. *On the Banks of the Ganga—The Sojourn of Jews in Calcutta*. North Quincy, MA: Christopher.
- Roland, J. 1999. *The Jewish Communities of India*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transactions.

## The Benei Menashe of India

*Myer Samra*

---

The Benei Menashe are a community from northeast India and northern Burma who have adopted Judaism, believing they are descendants of the biblical tribe of Manasseh. In March 2005, Israeli chief rabbi Shlomo Amar accepted their claim to Jewish ancestry, calling for their formal conversion and reintegration with the Jewish people.

The Benei Menashe have emerged from the culturally and linguistically linked Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes, found predominantly in the hill districts of the Indian states of Manipur and Mizoram and Chin State in Burma. Historically, they were subsistence swidden cultivators. The total population of these tribes is estimated at around 2 million, most of them staunch Christians, although many also take pride in their reputed Israelite origins. The Benei Menashe, those members of these tribes who are practicing Judaism, presently number under 10,000. Nearly 1,000 have settled in Israel.

The territories inhabited by the Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes came under British control in the 1890s. To protect them from exploitation by the more sophisticated Indians and Burmese, the British restricted entry into the region but encouraged Protestant missionaries who commenced work in Mizoram and Manipur in 1894 and in Chin State in 1896.

The Chin-Kuki-Mizo people were preliterate animists before contact. The missionaries utilized the Roman script to create a written form of their language. In 1912, missionaries were handed complete control over education in Mizoram. Consequently, Christianity spread quickly throughout the region, and the Mizos now have the second highest literacy rate in India. However, Christianity and use of the Roman script increased their cultural distance from their neighbors. Entry into Manipur and Mizoram remains restricted, and special permits are required even for Indian citizens from outside the territories.

With their introduction to the Bible, many Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribespeople saw parallels between their pre-Christian traditions and those of the ancient Israelites, particularly with regard to sacrificial practices and ethical teachings. In 1951, Challianthanga, head deacon of the United Pentecostal Church in the village of Bualawn in Mizoram, had a vision from God telling him the Mizos were descendants of the Israelites. To survive Armageddon, they must return to their original homeland and practice their ancient religion. The vision did not reveal to which of the tribes of Israel the Mizos belonged, but Challianthanga came to assert descent from the tribe of Manasseh on the strength of advice from a *puithiam* (priest) from Burma. When facing any dangerous situation, the Chin-Kuki-Mizo peoples would call out to the spirits present not to harm them as they were “the children of Manasi” (or Manmasi). This Manasi/Manmasi was now identified with Manasseh son of Joseph in the Bible.

As descendants of Israelites, Challianthanga's followers, the “Buallawn Israel,” sought to follow the commandments God had given the Israelites, such as keeping Saturday as the Sabbath, observing the pilgrim festivals, and refraining from eating

unclean animals. They turned to the Bible to learn how they should fulfill these precepts. They saw no inconsistency in continuing to revere Jesus, seeing both the faith in Jesus and God's instructions to the Israelites as coming from the same source.

News of Challianthanga's vision spread widely through the Chin-Kuki-Mizo lands, and messengers were sent off to proclaim the thrilling news. In the mid-1950s, many people sold their property, abandoned the cultivation of their land, and withdrew their children from school to prepare for their return to Israel. As time went by and no evidence of the redemption was in sight, most eventually returned to normal life. However, a small group, residing in Buallawn and its surrounds, clung to their Israelite beliefs.

In 1966, after a famine that was mishandled by the Indian authorities, Mizoram revolted against Indian rule and fought for its independence. Although Challianthanga had died in 1959, his followers sympathized with the rebels, whose leader, Laldenga, they saw as God's instrument. The Indian army recaptured the territory, but the rebels maintained the insurrection for many years. Having popular sympathy, they could melt back into the civilian population after a raid. To counter this, the Mizos were clustered into larger villages where the army could better control them. The inhabitants of Buallawn were transferred to a larger village, Ratu, and warned against disseminating their subversive beliefs.

The rebels were sympathetically received among the ethnically related population of Churachandpur in Manipur, where interest in their possible Israelite origins was now developing. Many Mizos, including members of the Buallawn sect, fled to Churachandpur in 1966. The same year, a Bible tract awoke in several influential leaders (both locals and Mizo exiles) a concern that the Sunday observed by the Christian missionaries was not the Sabbath ordained in the Bible. The book of Daniel condemned those who "think to change times and laws," thereby challenging God. Christianity, it seemed, was guilty of such transgressions, both by ignoring the Sabbath and festivals and by abrogating the clear laws in the Bible forbidding the consumption, in particular, of pork.

Several communities sprang up in the Churachandpur district, seeking to return to the biblically ordained practices, which they combined with belief in Jesus. These included various strands of the Church of God, and a residential cluster called "Jews' Colony" was set up near Kotian village outside Churachandpur. In May 1972, the "Manipur Jews Organisation" was formed, led by Khaikhopau Vaiphei (also known as "Moses Isaac") as president and Vumzakap Ngaite (Kapu Stephen). Kapu Stephen, who had taught himself to read some Hebrew, guided this community. Although men wore skullcaps and women prayed with scarves over their heads, their beliefs remained essentially Christian.

During the 1970s, many groups published little booklets, some in English, others in the various dialects spoken in Mizoram and the Churachandpur district, recounting the history of the tribes of Israel who had been taken captive by the Assyrians in the eighth pre-Christian century, and resettled on the borders of Assyria. These booklets identified their tribal communities with the Israelites, recording their eastward wanderings over the centuries, through Afghanistan, through Central Asia to China, and on to Burma and northeast India where they are found today.



A Benei Menashe family poses in front of a monument erected on the grounds of the Beth Shalom Synagogue in Churachandpur, India, during Hanukkah, 2001. The monument, at the "mother" congregation of the Benei Menashe, marked 25 years of Judaic practice in the region. (Courtesy Dr. Myer Samra)

Despite their identification with the Israelites, particularly the tribe of Manasseh, the booklets reveal a familiarity with the New Testament as well as the Old and incorporate Christological elements. The most influential of these booklets, *Israel Ihiuve* (We are Israelites), appeared in 1974 in the Thadou dialect and was written by Thangkholum Lhungdim (who took the name "T. Daniel"), Jangkhothang Lhanghal (Joseph Jacob), and Sumkhothang Haokip (Sum Samuel).

Between 1972 and 1976, leaders of the Manipur Jews Organisation, the Church of God (Zionist), and others sought contact with the established Jewish communities of India in Bombay and Calcutta, to whom they turned for support and advice on the practice of Judaism. That Jews did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah came as a surprise, as did the fact that Jews sanctified the Sabbath with wine, whereas the Christian missionaries had steadfastly opposed the use of alcohol.

Such revelations led the members of the "Jewish" groups in Manipur to reconsider what they were doing. T. Daniel resolved to follow normative Judaism and sought to pass on to his colleagues all he had learnt from the Jews of Bombay. In

October 1974, a new group, called the United Jews of North East India (UJNEI), was formed but came to grief as its members, Sabbath observers all, had differing religious orientations.

On April 8, 1976, T. Daniel returned from his latest trip to Bombay with a tallith, tefillin, a (paper) Torah scroll, a siddur, and a copy of the Code of Jewish Laws, donated to the community by Mrs. Esther, a Jewess from Bombay who had voluntarily given instruction in Judaism to T. Daniel and Moses Isaac during their visits to Bombay. She had arranged their circumcisions, and their first call-up to the Torah in synagogue. The community records April 8, 1976, which happened to fall within the festival of Passover, as marking the "birth" of Judaism in the region. On August 12, 1976, the first synagogue, Beith Shalom, was inaugurated in Churachandpur.

In October 1976, T. Daniel handed over leadership of UJNEI, which was seen as the organization for those professing Judaism, to Vanlalmalsawm (Vania Levy Benjamin), a Mizo-speaking Vaiphei. Although the congregation was small, through the preaching of its dedicated members it was able to attract followers in both Manipur and Mizoram, particularly from erstwhile members of the Church of God (Zionist). The spread of this new faith to Mizoram was hastened by the return of Mizo "refugees," particularly Rohluma Chachuak (Joseph Rei), and Chahuak's invitation to the "speaker" of the group, Joseph Jacob, to tour Mizoram. Whereas Dr. H Thangruma (Dr. Solomon) the leader of the Church of God (Zionist) also preached that the Chin-Kuki-Mizo people were Israelites, he was not prepared to adopt Judaism, clinging to belief in Jesus while asserting his flock should be entitled to settle in Israel under the Law of Return.

On a visit to Bombay, V. L. Benjamin was able to secure the support of Mr. Gurej, director of ORT India, for selected students from Manipur and Mizoram to train for a trade such as printing, draftsmanship, stenography, or hairdressing, along with Jewish studies, and to reside at the ORT hostels, all without charge.

In 1979, the group initiated contact with Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail and his Amishav organization, which was searching for the lost tribes, hoping to bring them back to Judaism and thereby to help bring on the Messianic era. Rabbi Avichail proved very sympathetic to this community, which was identifying itself with one of the tribes, and keen to follow Judaism. Until then, Judaism in Manipur and Mizoram had been largely the creation of members of the local community. Henceforth, Rabbi Avichail assumed the role of spiritual authority for the Benei Menashe and guided them in their religious evolution.

In 1981, Rabbi Avichail made a trip to India to meet with members of the Benei Menashe, and he encouraged the community to select two young men to go to Israel to study in a yeshiva. The two selected, Vanlalkhuma Chachuak (Gideon Rei) and Simeon Gin Vaiphei arrived in Israel in January 1982. On their return to India, each took an active role in the religious development of the community. In 1988, Amishav arranged for a beth din to visit Bombay to conduct conversions. The beth din accepted around 30 Benei Menashe proselytes. However, these conversions were not recognized in Israel and the proselytes had to go through the process once more when they came to Israel.

Between 1989 and 2004, Rabbi Avichail and Amishav were responsible for the immigration of around 800 Benei Menashe to Israel. Because they were not recognized

as Jews when they arrived, however, they were not entitled to the benefits enjoyed by most immigrants to Israel until they underwent conversion. Rabbi Avichail assumed responsibility for finding sponsors to cover the airfares of these new immigrants, their accommodation and work opportunities, and religious training to prepare them to appear before the beth din for conversion. Given their limited entitlements when they arrived in Israel, the Benei Menashe generally found such opportunities in settlements in Yehuda and Shomron in the West Bank and in Gush Qattif, along the Gaza Strip, until its evacuation in August 2005.

Members of the community in Israel have shown a strong attachment to the State of Israel and many have exhibited tenacity and bravery in the army. They have remained devout, practicing Jews and willing workers, although the better educated have experienced a loss of status, having to accept menial labor jobs in Israel.

From September 2004, a new group, Shavei Israel, led by Michael Freund, took over from Amishav. It established and financed Hebrew Centers in Manipur and Mizoram to train candidates for conversion. Shavei Israel hosted a delegation of rabbis from Israel who investigated the claims and the practices of the Benei Menashe, leading to the recognition of the group by Rabbi Amar.

Since Rabbi Amar's pronouncement, Shavei Israel has built kosher mikvahs, ritual baths for immersing proselytes, in both states to facilitate conversion before emigration, so they can settle in Israel with the same privileges as other Jewish immigrants. In August 2005, a rabbinical delegation from Israel formally converted around 220 individuals in Mizoram, but their permits to enter Manipur were withdrawn. The rabbis were portrayed as agents of a foreign state (Israel) attempting forcibly to convert Indian nationals. The Benei Menashe responded by asserting they were not converting them to a new religion but regularizing their status in the religion they already practiced, as a community with an Israelite heritage.

Despite this setback, it is likely that all the members of the Benei Menashe will eventually be formally converted to Judaism, and thereby achieve the right to settle in Israel under the Law of Return. The settlement of Benei Menashe in Israel has had a powerful impact on other Sabbath-observing Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups. From 1992, some congregations went over en masse to Judaism, as the acceptance of the Benei Menashe as settlers in Israel appeared to validate their religious practices. Rabbi Amar's decision to accept their claims will doubtless stimulate further interest in Judaism among a wider segment of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo people.

### Selected Bibliography

- Halkin, Hillel. 2002 *Beyond the Sabbath River: In Search of a Lost Tribe of Israel*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Haokip, Lemuel Henkhogin. 2001. *Souvenir: The 25th Anniversary Foundation of Judaism in North East India*. Manipur, India: Benei Menashe Council.
- Katz, Nathan, and Ellen S. Goldberg. 1989. "The Mysterious Chin-Kuki Tribal Jews of the Indo-Burmese Border Region." *Journal of the American Association of Rabbis* 5 (1): 11–19.
- Parfitt, Tudor. 2002. "The Land of Strangers." In *The Lost Tribes of Israel: The History of a Myth*. London: Weienfeld & Nicolson.
- Samra, Myer. 1991. "The Tribe of Manasseh: 'Judaism' in the Hills of Manipur and Mizoram." *Man in India* 71 (1, special): 183–202.

- Samra, Myer. 1992. "Judaism in North East India: By-product of Christian Mission." *The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 6 (1): 7–22.
- Samra, Myer. 1996. "Buallawn Israel: The Emergence of a Judaizing Movement in Mizoram, Northeast India." In *Religious Change, Conversion and Culture*, edited by Lynette Olson. Sydney, Australia: Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture.
- Weil, Shalva. 2004. "Lost Israelites from the Indo-Burmese Borderlands: Re-Traditionalisation and Conversion among the Shinlung or Bene Menasseh." *The Anthropologist* 6 (3): 219–233.

## Jewish Parsis Relations in India and Pakistan

*Rashna Singh*

---

Dubbed "the Jews of India," largely because of their intellectual and commercial achievements, the Parsis and some communities of Jews in India would seem to have much in common. Because Pakistan was not created until 1947, the history of the relationship between the two communities runs parallel until that point. Jews in India fall into three groups: the Cochin Jews, the Bene Israel, and the Baghdadi Jews.

The Cochin Jews are the oldest community. Their settlement, which possibly dates as early as the first millennium BCE, was probably a result of trade contacts between the Mediterranean region and the west coast of India. The Bene Israel lived along the Konkan Coast in and around Bombay, Pune, and Ahmedabad for almost 2,000 years. Unlike the Cochin Jews, they were a rural community, oil pressers by occupation, and maintained little contact with other Jewish communities. However, they retained a memory of their original faith and practiced the Sephardic rite without rabbis, and the synagogue was the center of religious and cultural life. The Baghdadi Jews, the latecomers of India's Jews, emigrated from various parts of the Middle East, mostly from an area that is now modern Iraq (hence the appellation) from the end of the 18th century, in the wake of trade contacts established by the British Empire. The Baghdadi Jews settled in Bombay and Calcutta, where many of them became wealthy and participated in the economic leadership of these growing cities.

Although the Parsis share the closest cultural, economic, and social similarities with the Baghdadi Jews, significant aspects of the foundational histories of the Parsis, the Cochin Jews, and the Bene Israel are analogous. The experience of the Parsis and these two Jewish communities in India was one of acculturation rather than assimilation. They maintained their distinct religious, cultural, and social identities even while blending in and borrowing traditions from their local host communities. Transplanted to a new country, their identity required continuous negotiation, their selfhood strategized for historical and cultural reasons.

For both communities, Parsis and Jews, originary narratives contributed to the process of acculturation. "Parsi" was the term used to describe the new immigrants

from Pars. Zoroastrian by faith, they left their homelands in Persia, fearing further persecution after the Arab conquest of 641 CE. After a short hiatus on the Arabian Sea island of Diu, they arrived in Surat on the western coast of India, where they sought permission from the local Hindu raja, Jadhav Rana, to settle in his kingdom. Legend has it that when the newcomers first asked to live among his people, Jadhav Rana sent a bowl of milk filled to the brim to signal that there was no space for any more people in his kingdom. The people from Pars added sugar to the milk and returned the bowl. The message was that they would dissolve like the sugar without displacing the milk and, in fact, sweeten it and thus, symbolically, the land.

The origin legend of the Bene Israel is one of a shipwreck on Indian shores. Like the Parsis they were religious and political refugees. Only 14 of their group, seven men and seven women, are said to have survived the shipwreck, and these were cast ashore at a village called Nawgaon, also on the western coast of India. The Cochin Jews had their own originary tales and legends of arrival. The commonality in all of these apocryphal accounts is that they provide foundational myths that serve a metaphorical purpose in expressing community identity and adaptation to changed cultural contexts and circumstances. The Baghdadi Jews immigrated to India in stages and within recorded history and thus do not have a single story of origin and arrival. In Bombay, especially, as an affluent and highly educated community, Parsis served as a reference group and role model for the Baghdadis, particularly for the purpose of societal orientation.

The Baghdadis and Parsis shared a history of economic and social prominence in Bombay and were renowned for the philanthropy of their leading families. The Sassoons, Jeejeebhoy, Tatas, and others left a philanthropic legacy in the city of Bombay, a legacy of libraries, colleges, hospitals, parks, and shipyards, while streets and statues extol their names. Outstanding members of both communities emulated the British and maintained a staunch loyalty to British rule. However, although the Baghdadis were classified as Europeans in 1885, the Parsis were not (Katz 2000, 155). In addition, many Parsis were prominent leaders in the struggle for independence. Both communities saw the economic and social advantages of cooperation with the British and, along with the Ismaili Khojas, were engaged in the opium trade for a period. All three communities were also active in the cotton mill industry, which flourished in the 19th century. Of the eight Indians in the Bombay Presidency who were made hereditary baronets during British rule, three were Parsis and three were Jews.

Both the Jewish and the Parsi communities in India and Pakistan have seriously dwindled for various demographic reasons. Attenuation of Jewish communities has occurred chiefly as a result of immigration to Israel because of cultural and social considerations, whereas among the Parsis a number of factors come into play. Endogamy, late marriages, low birth rate, and the strictures against proselytization all contribute to the dwindling of the community. In India, both communities have lived among tolerant and welcoming host communities that allowed the free practice of religion and customs. Unfortunately, the Shiv Sena, a fundamentalist and extremist nationalist group that has in recent times dominated politics in the state of Maharashtra, where many Jews and Parsis live, has generated increas-

ingly nativist sentiments that can only bode ill for such tiny minority groups. M.S. Golwalkar, ideologue of the Hindu extremist party, the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), describes Jews and Parsis as “guests,” and Muslims and Christians as “invaders.” In general, however, both the remnants of Jewish communities and the Parsis continue to live in India in peace and prosperity.

In Pakistan there are only about 2,831 Parsis. They are accepted with far less prejudice than Hindu or even Christian minorities and are deemed apolitical. As in India their contributions, especially economical and educational, are enormous, particularly when one considers their minuscule presence. Barely any Jews remain in Pakistan, and the few that remain tend to live in relative anonymity, some even passing as Parsis. The creation of the State of Israel and subsequent Middle Eastern tensions adversely affected the perception of Jews in Pakistan and practically all have immigrated to India, to Israel, or to other places.

The relationship between Zoroastrians and Jews goes back all the way to the seventh century BCE when the Achaemenian emperor of Persia, Cyrus, who was Zoroastrian by faith, defeated Babylonia and allowed captive Jews to return to Israel, even financing the construction of the Second Temple. Leaders of these two communities, which in India share a record of prodigious achievement, particularly in relation to their small size, jointly contributed toward building the Gateway to India in what Katz (2000, 140) calls “a striking example of intercommunal philanthropy.” The major contributions to this monument came from two of Bombay’s leading citizens: Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy and Shaikh David Sassoon. As music director for life of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Maestro Zubin Mehta keeps the links between the two communities alive to this day.

### Selected Bibliography

- Katz, Nathan. 2000. *Who Are the Jews of India?* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mandelbaum, David G. 1984. “Social Stratification among the Jews of Cochin in India and in Israel” [Hebrew translation]. In *From Cochin to the Land of Israel*, edited by Shalva Weil, 60–91. Jerusalem: Kumu Berina.

## Jews in Indian Public Life

*Rashna Singh*

---

The long history of the Jews in India has produced many prominent personages active in public life. Although not necessarily involved in politics as such, they were and are presences on the political, social, economic, and cultural scenes. Shalom Obadiah Hakohen established the first Baghdadi community in India in Calcutta in 1798 and went on to great commercial success. In Calcutta, the name of David Joseph Ezra is associated with some of the city’s grandest buildings—esplanade mansions, Ezra mansions, and Chowringhee mansions, as well as Ezra Street. David

Joseph Ezra's fortune came from prime real estate. Elia David Ezra, son of David Joseph Ezra, built the city's most splendid synagogue—the Magen David Synagogue. D. J. Cohen and the Reverend E. M. D. Cohen played a more direct part in civic affairs and social work. Under Cohen's proprietorship, the Hebrew newspaper *Pariah* had a circulation of 500 copies a week in the 1880s. The most famous name in Indian Jewry is that of the Sassoon family. Along with Parsi industrialists such as the Tatas, the Sassoons loom large in the industrialization and building of Bombay. In 1828, Shaikh Daud Sassoon (1792–1864) arrived in Bombay after fleeing Basra to escape Daud Pasha's plunder. A native of Baghdad, David Sassoon's father was the chief treasurer for the Ottoman rulers but, although he inherited his father's role, he was soon obliged to flee the oppression of the pasha. Sassoon found his way into the city's import-export trade, which was dominated by the Parsis and the British. "Beginning with opium and expanding into real estate and textiles, Sassoon became patriarch of one of the wealthiest and most expansive Jewish families in the world, 'the Rothschilds of the East'" (Katz 2000, 139).

The Sassoons were so successful that word spread throughout Asian Jewry that any Jew in need of employment could find it in the Sassoon family's mills. David Sassoon's eight sons dispersed throughout the world and thus the Sassoon empire was established, not only in Bombay and Calcutta but also in Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Kobe, Molucca, Baghdad, Amsterdam, London, and New York. Bombay's first Baghdadi synagogue, Magen David, was built by David Sassoon, while his grandson, Sir Jacob Elias David Sassoon, built Keneseth Eliyahoo in 1884. Elias's brother, Solomon Sassoon, expanded the family's commercial enterprises worldwide, and his wife, Flora, after whom Bombay's famous Flora Fountain is named, "truly internationalized the family businesses as she continued its philanthropic endeavors" (Katz 2000, 141).

The Sassoons founded a number of educational institutions. In Bombay, David Sassoon built and endowed a number of Jewish educational institutions, including a Talmud Torah in 1861. The David Sassoon Benevolent Institution was founded for the purpose of acculturating the children of his immigrant employees from Iraq who were taught languages, arithmetic, vocational skills and shehitah or the ritual slaughter of animals. A reform school and a mechanics' institute were also built, and David Sassoon's son Abdullah built Bombay's well-known Elphinstone High School. The Sir Jacob Sassoon Free School was founded in 1903 to educate indigent Baghdadi children in English.

Other prominent Jewish personages in Indian public life include Subedar Abraham David Charikar, who was appointed superintendent of police in 1863, although not much is known about his life. A well-known and well-loved figure was Nissim Ezekiel, one of the leading lights of Anglophone Indian literature. Ezekiel was a poet and journalist who wrote for *The Illustrated Weekly of India* a now-defunct magazine that enjoyed great popularity in the past. He joined the magazine as an assistant editor in 1953. Ezekiel also worked as a broadcaster on arts and literature for *All India Radio*. Ezekiel was honored with the Sahitya Akademi cultural award in 1983 and the Padma Shri in 1988. The Padma Shri is awarded to recognize distinguished service to the nation, in any field, including services rendered by govern-

ment servants. Nissim Ezekiel became a professor of English and a reader in American literature at the University of Mumbai during the 1990s, and secretary of the Indian branch of the international writers' organization PEN. Some of his best-known poems include "Night of the Scorpion," "The Professor," "Case Study," and "Poster Prayers."

Perhaps the best-known Jewish public personage in Indian today is Lieutenant General J. F. R. Jacob, whose full name is Jacob-Farj-Rafael Jacob. Jacob was born in 1923. His father, a successful businessman, sent him to a boarding school in Darjeeling, about 500 kilometers from Calcutta, when he was only nine years old. At the age of 18, he enlisted in the Indian army, which was under British command. "My father was against my enlistment," he recalls, "but after I found out about the atrocities of the Nazis and their treatment of the Jews, I decided that I would be a military man" (DesPardes). Jacob joined an artillery brigade that was dispatched to North Africa to reinforce the British army against the German army under Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. The brigade arrived too late: the battles were over. Jacob's unit was subsequently sent to Burma. "I wanted to fight Germans," says Jacob, "but in the end I fought for three years against the Japanese."

Educated in artillery schools in England and the United States and specialized in advanced artillery and missiles, Jacob first came into the public eye when he served with Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora on the eastern front in the 1971 war against Pakistan when India's eastern wing broke off and became the independent nation of Bangladesh. Jacob made the arrangements for the surrender ceremony in Dhaka, where Aurora accepted the document of surrender from Pakistan's General A. A. K. Niazi. In the late 1990s, he became the governor of the state of Goa and subsequently governor of the state of Punjab. Jacob is the author of *Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a Nation*. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin invited Jacob to attend the Jerusalem 3,000 celebrations and, since the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel, Jacob has paid many visits to Israel.

Although tiny in terms of numbers, the Jews of India are akin to the Parsis in that they have made substantial contributions to the political, economic, educational, and cultural life of India. Those who remained in India, like General Jacob and Nissim Ezekiel, continued as outstanding public servants.

### **Selected Bibliography**

- "The Jewish General Who Beat Pakistan." DesPardes Web site. <http://www.despardes.com/newsmakers/gen-jacob-sep8.htm> (accessed June 6, 200)
- Katz, Nathan. 2000. *Who Are the Jews of India?* Berkeley: University of California Press.

# Jews in Pakistan

*Shalva Weil*

---

**General Population:** 135 million

**Jewish Population:** 300

**Percent of Population:** Less than 1 percent

**Jewish Population by City:** The remaining Jews mainly live in the port city of Karachi, although there are some in Islamabad and Peshawar.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Most of the Karachi Jews moved to Israel and live in Dimona, Beersheba, Lod, and Ramle and other cities in Israel. Their offspring intermarry with other Bene Israel and with other Jews in Israel. In Quetta and other cities, there were also other Jewish traders of Middle Eastern, Iranian, or Afghan origin.

**Languages Spoken:** The Bene Israel speak Marathi, which they originally spoke in Maharashtra, and Urdu, the local language. Most also speak English. Prayers are conducted in Hebrew.

---

## Historical Overview

**1768** The Bene Israel are first reported in the West in a letter from Ezekiel Rahabi of Cochin to his Dutch business partner, Tobias Boas. Rahabi indicates that Jews known as Bene Israel are found throughout the Maharatta province, which today is the Indian state of Maharashtra.

**19th century** Bene Israel migrate from the western part of Maharashtra to nearby cities, chiefly Bombay but also Poona, Ahmedabad, and Karachi, the latter in present-day Pakistan. At this time the main occupation of the Bene Israel is oil pressing. The Bene Israel are also known as Shaniwar Telis or Saturday Oil Pressers because they do not work on Saturdays

**1893** A Bene Israel, Solomon David Umerdekar, inaugurates the Karachi Magen Shalom Synagogue on the corner of Jamila Street and Nishtar Road.

**Early 20th century** There are approximately 1,000 Jews in the following major centers in Pakistan: Karachi, Peshwar, Quetta, and Lahore. Most of the Jews hail from the Bene Israel community of Bombay and the Konkan villages; they have reached Pakistan with the British as railway workers or soldiers in the British army. At this time Pakistan and India are still united.

**1903** The community sets up the Young Man's Jewish Association.

**1912** The synagogue is extended by Umerdekar's two sons, Gershon Solomon Umerdekar and Rahamim Solomon Umerdekar. A community hall named "Sheeoolabai Hall" is built by Abraham Reuben Kamerlekar in memory of Sheeoolabai Solomon Umerdekar, wife of Solomon David Umerdekar.

**1916–1918** The Karachi Jewish community opens a Hebrew school on the synagogue premises and in 1918 builds the Nathan Abraham Hall. The Karachi Bene Israel Relief Fund is established to support poor Jews in Karachi and the Karachi Jewish Syndicate is formed in 1918 to provide housing for poor Jews at reasonable rents. The All India Israelite League, founded by two prominent Bene

- Israel, Jacob Bapuji Israel and David S. Erulkar, first convenes in Karachi in 1918.
- 1919 The Karachi Jewish community entrusts Abraham Reuben (Kamerlekar), president of the All India Israelite League, to represent the 650 Bene Israel living in Sind province, which covers Karachi, Hyderabad, Larkana, Mirpur-Khas, and Sukkur. In relation to the Zionist movement, Reuben and his family had already gone on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1902. Bene Israel from other centers in India frequently join their Bene Israel brethren in Karachi for High Holiday prayers. There is also a prayer hall that serves Afghan Jews residing in the city.
- 1936 Abraham Reuben becomes the first Jewish councillor on the Karachi city corporation. In pre-partition India, the Jews are treated with tolerance and equality.
- 1941 A government census records 1,199 Pakistani Jews. Reissner, in his census of the Indian Jews, records 1,051 Jews in Karachi alone, of whom 220 are employed in transportation and 70 in commerce; 358 are clerks, 150 are employed in government service, and 80 are in the professions. The remainder are retired or serve the community.
- 1947 The first anti-Jewish riots around the time of the India-Pakistan partition cause the small community of Jews, with two prayer halls serving the mainly Persian and Middle Eastern Jewish traders in Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province, to close.
- 1947 Moses Samuel Reuben (Satamkar), the leader of the community and a foreman in the carriage and wagon shops in Mogulpura on the North Western Railway, is attacked in Lahore in July. He and his family flee to Karachi, as do the remaining Jews in the city.
- 1948 Demonstrators attack the Karachi synagogue and Jews in the city on Palestine Day (Israel's Independence Day) in May. Some members of the community immigrate to Israel via India and others settle in the United Kingdom. Many Karachi Jews move to Bombay.
- 1956 Pogroms against the Jews recur during the Suez War and the Six-Day War.
- 1967 Most of the remaining Jews immigrate to Israel or the United Kingdom.
- 1968 The Pakistan Jewish community numbers only 350 Jews in Karachi. The community has one synagogue, a welfare organization, and a recreational organization.
- 1979 Iranian Jews, escaping persecution in their country, secretly pass through Pakistan to reach India. However, the route is discovered and closed in 2000.
- July 17, 1988 The Magen Shalom Synagogue is destroyed by order of Pakistan's President Zai-Ul-Hak to make way for a shopping plaza in the Ranchore Lines neighborhood of Karachi.
- 1989 The original Ark and podium are stored by a non-Jew in Karachi, and a Torah scroll case is taken by an American Jewess to the United States. In 2004 she donates synagogue registers covering the period 1961–1976 to the Ben-Zvi Institute Library in Jerusalem. In these ledgers, a circumcision was recorded in 1963 and several weddings in 1963–1964. In 1973, only 15 names were written down, of whom 9 were listed as “left Karachi.”

2005 A meeting between members of the Pakistani and Israeli ministries of foreign affairs in September kindles renewed interest in the Jews of Pakistan. According to unofficial sources, several Jews remain in Pakistan, including doctors and members of the free professions who pass themselves off as members of other religions.

### Selected Bibliography

- Glatzer, Michael. 2006. "Ledgers of the Jewish Community of Karachi." *Tapasam: A Quarterly Journal of Kerala Studies* 1 (3): 589–595.
- Katz, Nathan. 2000. *Who Are the Jews of India?* Berkeley: University of California Press.

## The Pathans of Pakistan and Afghanistan and Their Israelite Status

*Shalva Weil*

---

Numbering more than 15 million, the Pathans (also known as Pashtun, Pakhtun, Afghan, and more) are the largest single tribe in the world. They inhabit an extensive area from Afghanistan through Pakistan to Kashmir in India. In Afghanistan alone, out of 25,315,000 people, the Pathans constitute 38 percent of the population. They speak Pushtu, or Pukhtu, an Aryan tongue that borrows from Persian and Hindustani and uses Arabic script; some words are similar to Hebrew. They are divided into distinct local subtribes reminiscent of the 10 lost tribes: Rabbani may be Reuben, Shinwari = Shimon, Efridar = Ephraim, Daftani may be a corruption of Naftali, Jajani = Gad, Ashuri = Asher, and so on. The tribal group of Yusuf-Zai straddles the Pakistani-Kashmiri border, and its members may be the descendants of the sons of Joseph. The Afghan royal family claim they are descendants of the tribe of Benjamin.

The 10 lost tribes of Israel were exiled by the Assyrians in the eighth century BCE, while the members of the Kingdom of Judah remained in Israel. The fate of the lost Israelites has always been something of an enigma, but Jews and Christians alike have generally believed they remained intact but would eventually be reunited with the descendants of the tribe of Judah.

Pathan legend has it that King Saul fathered a son by the name of Jeremiah, whose birth is not recorded in Jewish texts. Jeremiah fathered a royal prince called Afghana, whose descendants fled to Jat in Afghanistan. In 662 CE, the descendants of Afghana converted to Islam at the explicit request of Mohammed. The mission was accomplished by his emissary Khalid ibn al-Walid, who returned to his master in Arabia with proof of his activities: 76 converts and seven leaders of the "Children of Israel," including a descendant of Afghana named Kish. Kish later changed his name to Ibn Rashid and was entrusted by Mohammed to spread the Islamic word. Many of the Pathan today claim direct descent from Ibn Rashid.

Afghan and Western scholars alike have investigated the historical, anthropological, and philological origins of the Pathans and concluded they are of Israelite origin. This may have been encouraged by their physical appearance: They have sallow skins and dark hair and eyes, wear beards and sidecurls, and have a typically “Jewish” profile. They also wear shawls with fringes called *kafan*, similar to the four-cornered garments, the tallith, that Jewish males wear. According to 2 Kings 17:6, the 10 lost tribes were exiled to the geographic area inhabited by the Pathans. The Pathans themselves have shown exceptional tenacity in adhering to the legend that they are indeed “Bene Israel” or the “Children of Israel.”

There have been reports, particularly current among Afghan Jews but also recorded by British army officers in the 19th century, that the Pathans circumcise their boys on the eighth day; that their women observe purification laws similar to those prescribed in the Torah; that they have a bridal canopy like a chuppa; and that they wear amulets, reportedly containing the words “*Shema Yisrael*” (Hear O! Israel) The Pathans do not eat horse or camel meat, and, according to some sources, observe dietary laws similar to kashruth (Jewish dietary laws).

A Bukharan Jew, Gabriel Barukhoff, traveling to Kabul in 1935, told Israel’s second president, Yitzchak Ben-Zvi, that he had encountered fierce Pathan tribespeople who wore an embroidered Hanukkah lamp on their backs, had mezuzot on their doorposts, wrapped themselves in prayer shawls, and lit candles on Friday night. Ben-Zvi recorded this and similar accounts in his book *The Exiled and the Redeemed* (1958).

The Pathans’ ancient code of hospitality, *Pukhtunwali*, by which generosity and protection of guests are paramount, is sufficient proof for some of their Jewish affiliation, though hospitality is also a Muslim trait. Revenge (*bahal*) is one of the driving forces of Pathan society. If attacked, or if their pride is wounded, the Pathans will wage a jihad against the invaders. They succeeded in repulsing the British on the Northwest Frontier in the 19th century and resisted the communists in the late 20th century. In an ironic twist, in view of their purported Israelite connection, Pathan today make up the core of the Taliban movement, led by the wanted terrorist Osama bin Laden.

Although members of the Pathan tribes reiterated to this writer that they were definitely Bene Israel, the Pathans are notably anti-Zionist and certainly do not identify with other Israelite communities or Jews.

### Selected Bibliography

- Ben-Zvi, Itzhak. 1958. *The Exiled and the Redeemed*. London: Valentine Mitchell.
- Godbey, Allen. 1930. *The Lost Tribes: A Myth*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Weil, Shalva. 1991. “Beyond the Sambatyon: the Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes.” *Ariel* 85–86: 25–31.
- Weil, Shalva. 2001. “Our Brethren the Taliban?” *The Jerusalem Report*, October 22: 22.

# Southeast Asia

## Jews in Southeast Asia

*Jonathan Goldstein*

---

**General Population:** 545,079,159 in mid-2004 according to *Europa World*; see entries for each individual country.

**Jewish Population:** 813 overall in 2007, exclusive of about 100,000 Israeli tourists per year in Thailand

**Percent of Population:** Microscopic

**Jewish Population by Country:** As of 2007, the approximate Jewish populations are as follows: Indonesia, 100; Malaysia, 3; Myanmar, 10; Philippines, 100; Singapore, 300; and Thailand, 300 resident and about 100,000 Israeli tourists per year.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** It is impossible to generalize about the complex migration routes and diverse ethnic backgrounds of Jews in the 11 sovereign nations that make up Southeast Asia. See entries for each individual country.

**Languages Spoken:** English, Hebrew, Arabic, and Farsi overall, plus the local language[s] of each country.

---

### Historical Overview

According to *Europa World*, as of mid-2004 Southeast Asia had more than 545 million people. Its 11 sovereign nations contained approximately 8.7 percent of the world's population of 6.3 billion. Southeast Asia's vast manufacturing sectors create several of the world's fastest-growing economies, namely those of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam. In the mid-1970s, and again in 2006, Singapore was the world's largest seaport in terms of gross tonnage. Bangkok and Manila do not lag far behind.

For nearly 200 years, Jews have traded and settled across this vast region, from Zamboanga on the Philippine Island of Mindanao to Mandalay on Myanmar's upper Irrawaddy River. There has been a continuous and significant Jewish presence in Singapore plus resilient Jewish enclaves in Indonesia, Myanmar (formerly Burma), the Philippines, and Thailand (formerly Siam). Georgetown, on Penang Island in Malaysia, has the remains of what once was a Jewish settlement. Only Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Timor-Leste and Vietnam have had no substantial resident Jewish population, synagogues or cemeteries.

1601 The earliest literary reference to a Jewish presence in Siam appears in Marcello de Ribandeneira's *History of the Philippines and Other Kingdoms*.

1683 Abraham Navarro, an interpreter aboard the British East India Company ship "Delight," stops in Siam en route to China. This is the earliest fully documented record of a Jewish arrival in Siam.

1850 According to an 1850 census, a Rumanian Jewish merchant named Goldenberg makes a fortune in the Burmese teakwood trade and is the first recorded permanent Jewish resident in Burma.

- 1858 Jacob Saphir, visiting Singapore on a fund-raising mission for Jewish institutions in the Land of Israel, reports that 20 Jewish families of Baghdadi origin are engaged in the opium trade.
- 1861 Jacob Saphir visits Batavia and reports that 20 Jewish families of Dutch or German origin, including members of the Dutch colonial forces, live in the Dutch East Indies.
- 1866 Jacob Saphir publishes *Even Saphir* (The Sapphire Stone) in Lusk, Russian Poland. It is the first eyewitness account about Singapore and Batavia to be published in Hebrew.
- 1878 The Waterloo Street synagogue (Maghain Aboth) opens in Singapore.
- 1884 Salomon Rinmon, a Galician Jew, publishes *Masot Shelomoh* (Solomon's Travels) in Vienna. It is the first eyewitness account about Burma to be published in Hebrew.
- 1885 Britain annexes all of Burma. Under the protective umbrella of British rule more Bene Israel Jews arrive from Bombay to create an overwhelmingly oriental (Mizrachi) community.
- 1885–1890 Max Rosenberg is the first Jew recorded to have settled in Bangkok.
- 1898 After the United States replaces Spain as the Philippines's new colonial master, openly Jewish immigrants begin to arrive from Europe and America. Turkish, Syrian, and Egyptian arrivals help create a multiethnic community of approximately 50 people.
- 1905 Menasseh Meyer opens Chesed El Synagogue adjacent to his home in Singapore.
- 1918 At the request of Shanghai Zionist Association president Elly S. Kadoorie, Devawongse Varoprakar (1858–1923), the Siamese prince and foreign minister, publicly calls for the creation of a Jewish homeland in what had been the Ottoman Turkish province of Palestine. Siam thus becomes the first Asian and first non-Christian nation to issue a pro-Zionist declaration.
- 1921 British Zionist fund-raiser Israel Cohen visits the Dutch East Indies and finds about 2,000 Jews enjoying great political and economic privilege. He observes a similar situation in Manila, Rangoon, and Singapore.
- 1922 Menasseh Meyer becomes the founding president of Singapore's Zionist Society, an affiliate of the World Zionist Organization established by Theodor Herzl.
- 1924 A synagogue is finally built in Manila by a wealthy Ashkenazi benefactor. It has no full-time clergy and is rarely used up to World War II.
- 1926 Nederlands Indische Zionistenbond (Dutch Indies Zionist Association) is organized in Surabaya and Padang.
- 1929 Great Britain's King George V knights Menasseh Meyer of Singapore.
- 1937 On September 8, 28 German Jews from Shanghai arrive in Manila aboard the Norddeutscher Lloyd steamship *Gneisenau*. This unexpected arrival enervates Manila's Jewish Refugee Committee into further action to help refugees from Hitler.
- 1939 On February 15, Philippine president Manuel Quezon sends a message to the Philippine congress urging the admission of 10,000 German Jewish professionals

- and recommending a Philippine \$300 million subsidy to help them settle in Mindanao. Although this grandiose scheme never materializes, hundreds of Jews fleeing Hitler find refuge in the Philippines through other means.
- 1941 On December 8, Japanese troops land in the Gulf of Siam. They are subsequently given transit rights by the Thai government. Unlike Jews in the rest of Southeast Asia, the Jews of Thailand remain unscathed throughout the Pacific War.
- 1941 On December 9, Japan attacks the Philippines. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee aids Jewish refugees until then. Some aid before that date and all assistance for the duration of the war come from the Manila Jewish community itself. The Japanese intern several hundred Jews with American, Belgian, British, British Commonwealth, Dutch, and Polish citizenship, along with 5,000 non-Jews, in the Santo Tomas and Los Banos detention camps. “Third party aliens” or “stateless Jews” are registered with the Japanese words “*Mu Kokuseki Yudayajin*” (Jews without citizenship or country) stamped in their passports. Community members who hold Iraqi, Filipino, and—ironically—Austrian and German passports, initially escape detention as they are from countries not at war with Japan.
- 1941 On December 24, Japan begins bombing Rangoon.
- 1942 In March Japan invades the Dutch East Indies. On March 9, Rangoon surrenders, causing most of city’s 2,200 Jews, along with most of the British colonial population, to flee to the relative safety of India.
- 1943 In August the entire civilian Dutch East Indies Jewish community—men, women, and children, and irrespective of nationality—is taken to prison camps on the advice of German diplomats in Tokyo.
- 1945 On February 10, several Jewish refugees are butchered in cold blood by the Japanese during a rampage in the Manila Red Cross Hospital.
- 1945–1950 Indonesia achieves independence from the Netherlands.
- 1947 Members of the Philippine Jewish community who are close to postwar Philippine president Manuel A. Roxas are instrumental, along with key advisers to U.S. president Harry Truman, in convincing the Philippine delegation to the United Nations to vote in favor of the November 29 partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish territories. The Philippines thus becomes the only Asian nation to vote for Israeli independence. It is also among the first to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.
- 1947 Due to turmoil at home, Prince Wan Waithayakorn, the Thai delegate to the United Nations, is not present in New York for the November 29 partition resolution that leads to the creation of the State of Israel.
- 1948 On January 4, Britain grants total independence to Burma.
- 1948 On May 14, the State of Israel is reborn.
- 1949 In December, President Chaim Weizmann and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion of Israel send telegrams to President Sukarno and Vice President Muhammad Hatta of Indonesia congratulating them on their Treaty of Independence with the Netherlands.
- 1950 In January, Israeli foreign minister Sharett sends Indonesian vice president Muhammad Hatta a telegram granting Indonesia full diplomatic recognition.

- 1950 After the last organized transport of Jewish immigrants from China reaches Israel, the Surabaya-based Zionist Organization of Indonesia is the only full-fledged Zionist organization in East or Southeast Asia.
- 1953 Barely a handful of Jews remain in Burma to watch the government of Premier U Nu establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.
- 1954 On June 23, Thailand establishes full diplomatic relations with Israel. The Jewish state is represented in Bangkok by an honorary consul general until 1958, when a permanent embassy is established.
- 1955 David Saul Marshall ben Farha (1908–1995), an Iraqi Jew by origin, is elected Singapore's first chief minister.
- 1956 In November, when Burma's Muslim minority riots in the streets in the aftermath of the Sinai campaign, most of the remaining Jewish stalwarts leave the country.
- 1964 The Jewish Association of Thailand formally registers as a legal organization in Thailand.
- 1965 Israeli experts begin to train Singapore's new armed forces.
- 1966 Israeli agricultural project opens in Hup Kapong, Thailand. Israeli experts advise 130 Thai farm owners on collective and cooperative farming based on the models of the Israeli kibbutz and moshav.
- 1969 Full diplomatic relations and closer military ties are established between Singapore and Israel.
- 1970 Israeli experts begin teaching irrigation techniques at Thailand's Khon Kaen University.
- 1974 A Thai-Israel Friendship Foundation is founded in Bangkok.
- 1988 Thailand opens a trade office in Israel.
- 1990 A Thai-Israel Chamber of Commerce is established in Bangkok.
- 1996 Thailand opens an embassy in Israel; thousands of Thai migrant workers begin to arrive in Israel.
- 2004 On January 23, in the presence of Thailand's Princess Maha Chakri Siridhorn, Khon Kaen University opens a permanent Thai-Israel Techno-Demo Unit for irrigated high-value crops.

## Jews in Indonesia

*Jonathan Goldstein*

---

**Former Name:** Dutch East Indies

**General Population:** 184,600,000 (1989); 217,587,504 (2004)

**Jewish Population:** In 1921, there were approximately 2,000 Jews; in 2007, there were approximately 100 Jews.

**Jewish Population by City:** Traditionally, most Jews resided in Surabaya with smaller enclaves in Bandung, Jakarta, Malang, Medan, Padang, Semarang, and Yogyakarta. As of 2007, the Jewish population is almost exclusively in Surabaya and Jakarta.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** In 1861, Jerusalem-based Jacob Saphir visited Batavia, the capital of the Dutch East Indies, as part of a larger fund-raising trip to India and Australia. He met a Jewish merchant from Amsterdam who named 20 Jewish families of Dutch or German origin, including members of the Dutch colonial forces. Their forebears had begun to settle in the Indies in the late 1700s. He also recorded some Jews living in Surabaya on the eastern side of the island of Java. He observed that few had links with Judaism. Most had intermarried and had even abandoned the custom of circumcision. Baghdadi, Dutch, and German Jews continued to populate the Indies until Indonesia achieved independence in the period 1947–1950. Most Jews then left for Israel, the Netherlands, Singapore, and the United States.

**Languages Spoken:** Dutch, Indonesian Malay, English, and German

---

### Historical Overview

When Zionist fund-raiser Israel Cohen visited the Dutch East Indies in 1921, he found the Jewish community in many ways similar to what Jacob Saphir had observed in 1861. About 2,000 Jews enjoyed great political and economic privilege. The Dutch census of 1930 recorded slightly less than 300 Jews in Surabaya, making it the single largest, and only organized, Jewish community of many strewn across the archipelago. The resident governor of Surabaya, variously referred to as “Coen” and “Cohen,” was a Jew. Several other Jews held governmental positions and many engaged in commerce. The community included Russian and Rumanian Jews and an emigrant from the Palestinian colony of Zichron Yaakov. Ritually observant



Jacob Saphir, rabbi and world traveler.  
(Isadore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901)

Baghdadi and Adeni Jews had followed the Europeans and become a majority of the Jewish community of Surabaya. These Levantine Jews spoke Arabic and English at home, Dutch in school and in social circles, and Malay to their servants. Baghdadis such as the Bahars, Benjamins, Mizrahis, and Solomons retained close commercial ties with their brethren in Bombay, Calcutta, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore.

The religious life of Baghdadi Jewry in the Indies resembled that of their brethren in the aforementioned cities. The freedoms they enjoyed, plus their memory of persecution in Baghdad, motivated many of them to deepen their Jewish identity. Indeed, the Baghdadis were the only Jews in Surabaya to organize as a community. They had a central board of directors, which set up a burial society, purchased land for a cemetery, and engaged local Chinese carpenters and masons to build a synagogue and an adjoining club. On the other hand, Israel Cohen reiterated Jacob Saphir's observation of some six decades earlier, that in this seductive environment, many Jews "concealed or denied their Jewish origin." A Rumanian Jew who gave Cohen a generous contribution was married to a Madurese, as were five or six other Jews in the city. Cohen went so far as to say that, because of assimilation and intermarriage, it was "impossible to form an [accurate] estimate" of the number of Jews in Surabaya.

The community divided over the question of Zionism, which had been introduced by European immigrants. Cohen described an Austrian Jew who "proclaimed himself a skeptic on the advisability of bringing the Jews back to Palestine and made no secret of his views that they should be absorbed among the nations." His mentality was typical of the bulk of the Jews in Java who, according to Cohen, chose to ignore persistent "anti-Semitic pinpricks" in the local newspaper. Cohen complimented his Zionist colleagues for having "bravely succeeded in maintaining their enthusiasm in this spiritually asphyxiating atmosphere."

In 1926, a handful of Surabaya's and Padang's European Jews organized the Nederlands Indische Zionistenbond (Dutch Indies Zionist Association). The group affiliated with the World Zionist Organization, which had been established by Theodor Herzl some three decades earlier. On September 9, the group began publishing the monthly journal *Erets Israel* (*Het Joodsche Land* or the Land of Israel) in Dutch, German, and English. The founding editor was S. J. van Creveld. Surabaya also became the Indies headquarters for the Zionist charitable foundation Keren Hayesod. By 1928, Keren Hayesod had opened branch offices in Bandung, Batavia, Malang, Medan, Padang, Semarang, and Yogyakarta. The rise of Central and Eastern European fascism in the late 1920s directed more Jewish refugees to Surabaya and further energized its Zionist movement. By 1934, Zionist fund-raiser Benzion Shein, from Jerusalem, received a much warmer welcome and had greater financial success in Surabaya and Medan than had Israel Cohen 13 years earlier.

Japan invaded the Indies in March 1942, but Japanese control of this remote outpost of empire was decentralized. At least initially, Jewish civilians were able to escape punitive treatment because of bureaucratic inertia and because local Japanese officials believed Jews and Armenians were "peoples without countries" who

could simply be left alone. In the viewpoint of those local officials, the “Chrysanthemum nation” only saw itself at war with countries, not peoples. The Japanese treated Jewish prisoners-of-war such as Nathan Gutwirth, a Dutch national who was a member of the Dutch East Indies Volunteer Army, no differently than other Dutch soldiers.

The situation for Jewish civilians changed in August 1943 when Dr. Helmut Wohltach, a German envoy from Tokyo, arrived in Surabaya. At the urging of Wohltach and Eugene Ott, the German ambassador in Tokyo, the entire civilian Dutch East Indies Jewish community—men, women, and children, and irrespective of nationality—were no longer exempted as “peoples without countries” and were taken to prison camps. Internment effectively put a halt to Zionist and all other Judaic activity in the Indies. From then on Indies Jews suffered the same hardships as all white people who were not under the protection of neutral governments or nations allied with Japan. Some dark-skinned Jews managed to escape the Japanese dragnet by virtue of their skin color. When viewed from the broad perspective of the entire Southeast Asian region, the Indies Jews suffered far worse than the unscathed Jews of Thailand, a wartime ally of Japan, or the Jews of Rangoon, most of whom were able to flee to India for the duration of the war. Their fate was comparable to that of the interned Jews of Hong Kong, Manila, Shanghai, and Singapore.

When the Indian journalist Percy Gourgey visited Surabaya shortly after the end of the war, he found that “many (Jews), broken in health but not in spirit, emerged from the camps, and [then] went through another ordeal brought about by the Indonesian revolution.” By this time a Zionist leadership had reconstituted, promoted by a British Forces Jewish captain and chaplain named Bloch, who was based in Singapore, and E. J. (Vaandrig) Seeligmann, chaplain to the Jews among the Dutch forces who were trying to recapture the Indies. On November 15, 1947, Captain Joost Straus, one of Seeligmann’s servicemen, advised the Zionist executive in Jerusalem of the hardships facing Surabaya’s Baghdadi Jews. He wrote that “this group expects that by clever maneuvering of competitors they will be completely cut off [of] their possibilities to earn a decent living. There are also those who fear aggression against their person. These people [who] have no ties with Europe or America and can not go back to Iraq have no other choice than Israel.” Straus was even more explicit with respect to the Jews of European origin who remained in the Dutch East Indies. He wrote that “after what happened [e.g., Dutch collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust] the wish to go back to Holland is not so big, so many of them see the only way . . . is *aliyah* [immigration to Israel].”

Because of the efforts of Bloch, Seeligmann, Straus, and others, most Indies Jews evacuated to Israel in 1948–1950. After the last organized transport of Jewish immigrants from China reached Israel in 1950, the Surabaya-based Zionist Organization of Indonesia was the only full-fledged Zionist organization in East or Southeast Asia. A trickle of immigration from Indonesia to Israel continued into the mid-1950s. In May 1955, F. Dias Santilhano, chairman of both the Indonesian Jewish community (*Vereniging voor Joodse Belangen*) and the local Zionist organization, requested that the Jewish National Fund send some Israeli movies “to maintain

contacts with our small community here from which occasionally there are going some *olim* [immigrants] to our country.” Santilhano and his family would themselves immigrate to Israel in October 1955.

Indonesia achieved independence under Sukarno in 1945–1950. It thereby became the world’s largest independent Muslim nation. Sukarno brushed aside Israel’s recognition of his regime and other friendly gestures. Instead, it demonstrated unrelenting hostility toward the Jewish state. Despite an official policy of *Pancasila*, or secularism, independent Indonesia also displayed hostility toward its own Jewish population. Unlike independent Singapore, which gave full recognition to its small Jewish population, Indonesia recognized only five legitimate religions—Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It demonstrated scant toleration of indigenous beliefs. According to the American ethnologist Jeffrey Hadler, who made no secret of his Jewishness while doing research in Surabaya in 1994–1995, “foreign Jews encouraged one another to proclaim themselves ‘Buddhist’ or, better yet, ‘Unitarian,’ rather than face the prejudicial and bureaucratic headaches that could come with being *Yahudi*.” Hadler noted that Surabaya’s David Mussry had “*Hebrani*” on his national identity card until 1998, when he was shifted into the “approved and uncontroversial ‘Hindu’ category.” Shortly thereafter, Mussry immigrated to the United States, as did the keeper of the synagogue. The sign on the building was removed, although a Star of David remains on the door. The Jews of the Netherlands Indies, in a period of one century, with painful memories of Baghdad behind them, saw their place of refuge turn hostile. Some would rebuild their lives in the Netherlands, Singapore, and the United States. Many would do so in a reborn State of Israel.

### Selected Bibliography

- Barton, Greg, and Colin Rubenstein. 2005. “Indonesia and Israel: A Relationship in Waiting.” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 17 (1 and 2, Spring 2005): <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=253&PID=0&IID=1802> (accessed June 5, 2008).
- Cohen, Israel. 1925. *The Journal of a Jewish Traveller*. London: John Lane.
- Gourgey, P. S. 1953. “My Visit to Jewish Communities of the Far East.” *India and Israel* 20 (April): 37.
- Hadler, Jeffrey. 2004. “Translations of Antisemitism: Jews, the Chinese, and Violence in Colonial and Post-colonial Indonesia.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 32 (94): 295–299.
- Hamonic, Gilbert. 1988. “Milieux Marchands et Tentatives Commerciales: Note sur la communauté Juive de Surabaya” [Mercantile Environments and Commercial Ventures: A Note on the Jewish Community of Surabaya]. *Archipel* 36: 183.
- Kashani, Reuven. 1982. *Kehillot Ha-Yehudim Be-Mizrah Ha-Rachok* [The Jewish Communities in the Far East]. Jerusalem: Sephardic Council.
- Saphir-Halevy, Yaakov. 1866. *Even Saphir* [The Sapphire Stone]. Lusk, Poland: Hevrat Mekitzey Nirdamim.
- Schwarzbart, Isaac. 1957. *The Rise and Decline of Jewish Communities in the Far East and Southeast Asia*. New York: World Jewish Congress.
- Shanson, Lindsey. 1994. “Indonesian Jews: 5,000,000 to 1.” *Points East* 9, no. 1 (April): 12–13. Previously published in *The Jerusalem Report*, November 18, 1983.
- Yegar, Moshe. 2006. “The Republic of Indonesia and Israel.” *Israel Affairs* 12 (1): 136–156.

## Jews in Malaysia

*Jonathan Goldstein*

---

As of 1990, three Jewish families were left in Georgetown on Penang (Pulau Pinang) Island. The synagogue at 28 Jalan Nagore was closed. There was a small Jewish cemetery on Jalan Yahudi (Jewish Street). See the “Jews in Singapore” entry regarding the brief period in the 1960s when Singapore, and its substantial Jewish community, was part of Malaysia.

## Jews in Myanmar

*Jonathan Goldstein*

---

**Former Name:** Burma

**General Population:** Approximately 14,667,146 (1931); 18,489,000 (1956); 38,900,000 (1984); 40,800,000 (1989); 45,922,000 (2002); 50,003,988 (2007)

**Jewish Population:** Possibly 10 people in 2007

**Percent of Population:** Microscopic

**Jewish Population by City:** Almost entirely concentrated in Yangon, formerly Rangoon; scattered traders and settlers are in Mandalay and elsewhere.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The original Jewish settler in Burma may have been Solomon Gabirol, a Marathi-speaking Bene Israel from the Bombay region of northern India. He served as a commissar in the army of King Alaungpaya, who ruled from 1752 to 1760. According to an 1850 census, a Romanian Jewish merchant named Goldenberg made a fortune in the Burmese teakwood trade. In 1851, Salomon Rinmon, a Galician Jew, arrived in Rangoon as a supplier to the British military. He quickly established retail stores around the region. His *Masot Shelomoh* (Solomon’s Travels), published in Vienna in 1884, contains a long chapter on Burma and is the first Hebrew account of the country and its towns.

Rangoon was incorporated into British India after the second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852–1853. By 1885, Britain had annexed all of Burma. Under the protective umbrella of British rule, more Bene Israel arrived from Bombay, creating an overwhelmingly oriental (Mizrachi) community. It included Arabic-speaking Jews from Syria and Yemen and Malayalam-speaking Cochinites from Kerala, in South India. In 1896, the community built its major synagogue, Musmeah Yeshuah (Mazmiach Yeshu’a), followed shortly thereafter by a Jewish day school. A second synagogue, Beth El, opened in 1932.

**Languages Spoken:** Burmese, English, Marathi

---

### Historical Overview

In the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, approximately 2,000 Jews fled Ottoman and Iraqi persecution and found haven in Rangoon. Baghdadis were the

plurality of Rangoon's Jewish community for much of its existence. They maintained what ethnologist Chiara Betta terms "overlapping identities." After leaving the Ottoman Empire, they became anglicized but retained strong links to their Judeo-Arabic heritage. In this relatively unrestricted environment, remembrance motivated many Baghdadi Jews toward an intensification of ethnic identity.

For other Jews, the same rights and privileges that enabled intensification of belief provided opportunities for intermarriage and assimilation. When Israel Cohen, a London-based official of the World Zionist Organization, visited Rangoon in February 1921, he observed the mixed blessings of toleration. On the one hand, he stayed in the palatial residence of A. J. Cohen, a Baghdadi who had extensive gardens and 36 Burmese servants. The main Baghdadi synagogue was maintained by rents from adjacent shops. Baghdadi Jews served as magistrates, municipal councillors, commissioners, and at least once as sheriff of Rangoon. Yehuda Ezekiel Street honors one of several Jews who served as mayor. Cohen received significant contributions for institutions in the Land of Israel. On the other hand, Cohen saw Jews engaged in pitched legal battles with one another, including a much-publicized lawsuit between rival factions within one synagogue. He observed much intermarriage, including a Jewish merchant born in London who was married to a Burmese woman and another wed to a Japanese woman.

The Japanese invasion of 1941 shattered the peaceful environment the Burmese Jews once knew. On December 24, Japan began bombing Rangoon. On March 9, 1942 the city surrendered. Japanese rule caused most of Rangoon's 2,200 Jews, along with most of the British colonial population, to flee to the relative safety of India. Their flight overland was of epic and traumatic proportions. Between December 8, 1941, and the end of 1943, Burmese officials estimated that 500,000 residents fled the colony and at least 10,000 lost their lives on the trek. Actual census figures list 393,735 Burmese who evacuated to India. Approximately 1,000 Rangoon Jews settled in Calcutta alone. They relied chiefly on the hospitality of that city's 2,500 resident Baghdadi Jews and on occasional relief from the government of Bengal. Fewer than 400 Jews returned to Rangoon after the war.

During the Japanese occupation Burma gained nominal independence under the Burmese Independence Army. It was trained on Hainan Island and led by Aung San, father of Burmese Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Of the handful of Jews who remained in Burma during the war, a few were singled out for their "pro-British leanings," but never because they were Jews. The large synagogue remained protected with a sign identifying it as "enemy property." All 120 silver-cased Torah scrolls were still intact when the war ended.

On January 4, 1948, Britain granted total independence to Burma. Shortly thereafter, on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was reborn. Both of these independences had major consequences for Burmese Jews. On April 20, 1949, Eliyahu Mordecai, a former Rangoon Jew living in Ramat Gan, Israel, appealed to the Jewish Agency, the quasi-governmental authority involved in immigrant absorption, for "the immediate granting of 150 visas to Burmese Jews and [the subvention of] their transportation to Israel. The Jews of Rangoon are living under war conditions—a neutral community in a country torn with strife between the Karens, Communists,

and Burmans [sic]. Their existence is precarious in every respect. Their only fervent hope is to come to Israel." On May 3, 1949, Charles Manasseh wrote the Jewish Agency from Rangoon about "the chaotic conditions brought about by armed insurrection against the present government. Businesses have been stagnant owing to restrictive measures imposed by the government. Black marketeering is rampant and the cost of living has gone up by leaps and bounds. Law and order are things of the past. Armed robbery is the order of the day. What with communist threats from the north [China] and internal friction, I am inclined to think that the sooner people are evacuated to Israel the happier will be their lot." Manasseh described 45 destitute families who had left Burma during the Japanese invasion, returned to Burma after the war, and "need immediate repatriation to Israel."

For these reasons, by 1953 most Burmese Jews evacuated to Israel and other countries. In November of that year Israeli journalist Gershon Agron cabled Keren Hayesod, the Zionist charitable foundation, that the Rangoon Jewish community had "dwindled almost [to a] vanishing point." In that same year, barely a handful of Jews remained to watch the government of Premier U Nu solidify relations with the Israel of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett. In November 1956, when Burma's Muslim minority rioted in the streets in the aftermath of the Sinai campaign, most of the remaining Jewish stalwarts left the country. Although the Jews of Burma had never been discriminated against, the country had ceased to be a nurturing haven for them. At precisely the same time a New Jerusalem beckoned.

### Selected Bibliography

- Cernea, Ruth. 1988. "End of the Road." *Bnai Brith Jewish Monthly* 102, no. 10 (June–July): 26–30.
- Cohen, Israel. 1925. *Journal of a Jewish Traveller*. London: John Lane; 223–226.
- Hacohen, David. 1963. *Yoman Burmah* [Burma Diary]. Tel Aviv: Am Oved.
- Hacohen, David. 1974. *Et Le-Saper*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved. Reprinted as *Time to Tell*, translated by Menachem Dagut. New York; Cornwall, 1985.
- Hyman, Mavis. 1995. *Jews of the Raj*. London: Longdunn Press.
- Kashani, Reuven. 1982. *Kehillot Ha-Yehudim Be-Mizrah Ha-Rachok* [The Jewish Communities in the Far East]. Jerusalem: Sephardic Council.
- Rinman, Salomon. 1884. *Masot Shelomoh Be-Erets Hodu, Birman Ve-Sinim* [Solomon's Travels in the Land of India, Burma, and the Chinese]. Vienna: Ba-defus shel G. Brag.
- Schwarzbart, Isaac. 1957. *The Rise and Decline of Jewish Communities in the Far East and Southeast Asia*. New York: World Jewish Congress.
- Sharett, Moshe. 1957. *Mi-shut Be-Asiyah: Yoman Masa* [From Traveling in Asia: A Travel Diary]. Tel Aviv: Davar.
- Yegar, Moshe. 1984. "A Rapid and Recent Rise and Fall." *Sephardi World* (July–August): 8.

# Jews in the Philippines

*Jonathan Goldstein*

---

**General Population:** Estimated at 19,234,182 (1956); 54,500,000 (1984); 64,900,000 (1989); 75,967,000 (2002); 81,617,024 (2004)

**Jewish Population:** Estimated at 1,000 (1946); 600 (1948); 400 (1949); 250 (1968); 80 (1987); 150 (1990); possibly 100 (2007)

**Percent of Population:** Microscopic

**Jewish Population by City:** The country's Jewish population is almost entirely in Manila and its suburbs.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** When Manila was the capital of the Spanish Philippines, a handful of Marranos, or secret Jews, experienced persecution at the hands of the Inquisition. The Marrano, or "new Christian" brothers Jorge and Domingo Rodriguez may have been the first secret Jews to arrive in the Spanish Philippines. They are recorded as resident in Manila in the 1590s. By 1593, both had been tried and convicted at an auto-da-fé in Mexico City because the Inquisition did not have an independent tribunal in the Philippines. The Inquisition imprisoned the brothers and subsequently tried and convicted at least eight other Marranos from the Philippines.

After the United States became the new colonial master of the Philippines in 1898, openly Jewish immigrants began to arrive from Europe and America. Turkish, Syrian, and Egyptian arrivals helped create a multiethnic community of approximately 50 people. The early 20th-century newcomers also included American servicemen discharged in Manila after the Spanish-American War and World War I, plus Russian Jews fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. These immigrants engaged in the import and export trade and in portside land development. Because Manila Jews were not ethnically homogenous, they did not interact with a cohesive international Jewish merchant Diaspora. In this respect they differed from the Baghdadi Jews of Southeast Asia whose commerce was overwhelmingly characterized by ethnic networking.

**Languages Spoken:** English, Tagalog

---

## Historical Overview

By 1920, Manila Jewry included the founder of the Makati Stock Exchange, the conductor of the Manila Symphony Orchestra, physicians, and architects. Apart from these purely secular achievements, 22 years after the U.S. occupation began, there had been almost no Jewish institutional development. Although Spanish repression may explain this phenomenon before 1898, it does not account for the absence of institutional development under the Americans. A synagogue was finally built by a wealthy Ashkenazi benefactor in 1924. In that year the community began importing clergy and lay leaders from Shanghai and elsewhere for short stints. Full-time, ordained clergy rarely serviced the synagogue.

Manila's Jews clearly experienced precious little of the type of intensified rabbinic Judaism found in Singapore. Although some Manila Jews faded completely into the seductive woodwork of what community historian Annette Eberly calls "the good life out there," others assumed a secularized Jewish identity. The fullest

expressions of this identity were the significant assistance Philippine Jews extended to Jewish refugees fleeing from Hitler, the solidarity within the community during the Japanese occupation of 1941–1945, and the community's support for the creation and maintenance of the State of Israel.

The rise of Hitler mobilized some of Manila's most secularized Jews into communal service. The niece of the founder of the infrequently used Manila synagogue asserted that "we only became Jewish conscious in a deep way when the terrible threat came out of Europe and suddenly there were Jews in desperate need of help." Local Philippine Jews were able to assist Jews fleeing Hitler because of anomalies within the Philippine immigration system. The Philippines, as already noted, became an American territorial possession in 1898. Until the Philippines passed its own comprehensive immigration legislation on January 1, 1941, the immigration restrictions imposed by the United States Congress in 1924 theoretically applied in both the continental United States and the Philippines. But in practice the Philippines had some flexibility when it came to implementing immigration policies.

The first two German Jewish refugees from Hitler to reach the Philippines may have been Karl Nathan and Heinz Eulau, from Offenbach. They arrived in Manila in June 1934 on affidavits of support from Eulau's cousin, Dr. Kurt Eulau, who had lived in the islands since 1924 and would sponsor many other immigrants. On September 8, 1937, 28 German Jews from Shanghai arrived in Manila aboard the Norddeutscher Lloyd steamship *Gneisenau*. In this bizarre episode, Hitler's government evacuated these German Jews and an approximately equal number of ethnic Germans as a humanitarian gesture. In what surely must have been a bureaucratic lapse, the Nazi government wished to protect "all Germans" from Sino-Japanese hostilities. That was the extent of Nazi Germany's assistance to these and all other Jews who had fled to Shanghai to escape Hitlerian repression.

A Jewish Refugee Committee of Manila mustered to assist these unexpected arrivals. It quickly realized that it might be able to assist other Jewish refugees. Jack Rosenthal, an American-Jewish friend of Philippine president Manuel A. Quezon, was able to interest Quezon in the overall plight of European Jewry. The committee informed U.S. High Commissioner Paul McNutt, and ultimately Quezon himself, about the skills many Jewish immigrants could bring to the underdeveloped Philippine islands, especially Mindanao. On February 15, 1939, Quezon sent a message to the Philippine congress urging the admission of 10,000 German Jewish professionals and recommending a Philippine \$300 million subsidy to help them settle Mindanao.

Although this grandiose scheme never materialized, Rosenthal, Alex and Philip Frieder, and other Jewish residents were able to persuade Quezon to independently authorize the admission of perhaps as many as 1,000 Jewish refugees from Hitler. Even these admissions were problematical. The Philippines had no independent consular service and relied on U.S. diplomatic personnel for the worldwide implementation of its immigration policy. In the blunt words of Jack Netzorg, son of Morton Netzorg, president of the Manila Jewish community, "wherever the American consular staff was friendly to the Jewish people Jews got out, and where they shrugged their shoulders Jews did not get out." Netzorg added that although "the Jewish community was very small [it] practiced tithing to help the refugees. Five

hundred were brought over in a three year period.” Quezon himself donated seven and a half acres of a country estate at Marikina for a working farm for Jewish refugees. Marikina Hall was dedicated on April 23, 1940, and housed 40 residents.

Most refugees arrived penniless and on two-year temporary visas. Joseph Schwarz, the first full-time, ordained rabbi to serve in the Philippines, arrived with his wife from Germany in 1938. They ministered to the Manila community until moving abroad in 1949. Schwarz’s job was then filled by another refugee, Cantor Joseph Cysner.

The Philippine Jewish community’s effort to assist refugees is all the more impressive when one considers that after the Japanese attack of December 9, 1941, the entire archipelago was a battle zone. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee aided Jewish refugees until then. Some aid before that date and all assistance for the duration of the war came from the Manila Jewish community itself. The Japanese interned several hundred Jews with American, Belgian, British, British Commonwealth, Dutch, and Polish citizenship, along with 5,000 non-Jews, in the Santo Tomas and Los Banos detention camps. “Third party aliens” or “stateless Jews” were registered with the Japanese words *Mu Kokuseki Yudayajin* (Jews without citizenship or country) stamped in their passports. Community members who held Iraqi, Filipino, and—ironically—Austrian and German passports, initially escaped detention as they were from countries not at war with Japan. These exempted individuals were in a position to aid the Jewish internees.

The community suffered heavy losses during fighting in and around Manila in 1944–1945, when 79 individuals, or approximately 10 percent of the Jewish community, became wartime casualties, a rate similar to that experienced by Manila’s overall population. The Japanese arrested, tortured, and murdered several Jews at Fort Santiago, alleging that they collaborated with anti-Japanese resistance. Some, such as the ritual slaughterer Israel Konigsberg, were indeed active participants in the resistance. Several Jewish refugees were butchered in cold blood by the Japanese during a rampage in the Manila Red Cross Hospital on February 10, 1945.

Despite these difficulties the Jewish community of Manila managed to save perhaps 1,200 Jews from almost certain obliteration at the hands of the Nazis. For many members, the community’s postwar rebirth and embrace of Zionism were a natural outgrowth of the community’s wartime sacrifices on behalf of European refugees and significant losses at the hands of Hitler’s allies.

In the spring and summer of 1945, American servicemen helped the war-ravaged Manila Jewish community to reorganize. The community raised \$15,000 to rebuild the synagogue, which had been demolished during the February 1945 Battle of Manila. Simultaneously, four American Jewish servicemen organized a *Kvutsa chaverim* (group of friends) for the Jewish youth of Manila. Apart from social activities, the main function of the *chaverim* was to study modern Hebrew. In 1947, members of the Jewish community who were close to postwar Philippine president Manuel A. Roxas were instrumental, along with key advisers to U.S. president Harry Truman, in convincing the Philippine delegation to the United Nations to vote in favor of the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish territories. The Philippines thus became the only Asian nation to vote for Israeli independence, and it was among the first to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.

## Philippino Zionism and Ties with Israel

As was the case in independent Singapore, Manila's Jewish community worked diligently to cultivate Philippine-Israeli economic and cultural ties. In 1951, the Philippines signed an aviation agreement with Israel. In that same year, retired Lt. Col. Shaul Ramati, of the Israeli Defence Forces, paid a fund-raising visit. As a result of that campaign, Israeli consul Ernest E. Simke was able to write to the Central Zionist Executive that "the appeal was the highest collection ever made in the Philippines." In 1956, Simke wrote that "although the community is small, there is a strong Zionist sympathy." In that same year the Philippines welcomed Moshe Sharett, Israel's outgoing foreign minister and former prime minister, on a semiofficial visit. Sharett was accompanied by the deputy director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Elaishiv Ben-Horin.

Jewish emigration from the Philippines to Israel and elsewhere shrunk the Manila community from an immediate postwar peak of perhaps 2,500 to 1,000 in 1946, 600 in 1948, 400 in 1949, 250 in 1968, and approximately 80 families in 1987. Some families, such as the Simkes, had Filipino citizenship and chose to remain. The community remains a mix of Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Oriental Jews, Americans, Israelis, and ethnically Filipino spouses and/or converts. Its history exemplifies a secularized Jewish identity. Manila never had been a *Yiddishe Gemeinde*, or Jewish community in the classic European or even Baghdadi sense. Although small in numbers and weak in formal aspects of religiosity, the Jewish community in one of the world's largest cities and seaports remains secular, Jewish, Filipino, and overwhelmingly Zionist.

## Selected Bibliography

- Berger, Joseph. 2005. "A Filipino-American Effort to Harbor Jews is Honored." *Points East* 20, no. 2 (July): 15–16.
- Cohen, Israel. 1925. *Journal of a Jewish Traveller*. London: John Lane.
- Cohen, Israel. 1956. *A Jewish Pilgrimage*. London: Valentine Mitchell.
- Cowen, Ida. 1971. *Jews in Remote Corners of the World*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; 141–147.
- Eberly, Annette. 1975. "Manila? Where? Us? The Good Life Out There." *Present Tense* 2, no. 3 (Spring): 162–163.
- Ephraim, Frank. 2003. *Escape to Manila: From Nazi Tyranny to Japanese Terror*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Netzorg, Jack. n.d.. *Manila Memories*. Laguna Beach, CA: Pacific Rim Books.
- Sharett, Moshe. 1964. *Mi-shut Be-Asiyah: Yoman Masa* [From Traveling in Asia: A Travel Diary]. Tel Aviv: Davar/Am Oved.

# Jews in Singapore

*Jonathan Goldstein*

---

**General Population:** Estimated at 557,745 (1941); 940,824 (1956); 2,500,000 (1984); 2,700,000 (1989); 3,567,000 (2002); 4,240,300 (2007)

**Jewish Population:** Estimated at 300 (1988); 250 (1990), 300 (2007)

**Percent of Population:** Microscopic

**Jewish Population by City:** The island, city, and independent nation of Singapore are one and the same.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** Baghdadi Jews reached the British city/island/colony of Singapore in the mid-19th century by way of Bombay. They took full advantage of the favorable economic conditions created by the British colonial presence. They engaged in the opium trade and reinvested their profits in the import and export of other commodities and in land development. Because they spoke Arabic (and readily learned English but not Chinese) they tended to trade with other Baghdadi Jews as well as with ethnically Arab traders from the Hadramaut who had settled in Borneo, Burma, India, Java, Penang, and Sumatra.

**Languages Spoken:** English, Malay, Arabic, and some Chinese (Hokkien and Mandarin)

---

## Historical Overview

By 1907, Baghdadi trader and stockbroker Nissim Adis had built Singapore's Grand Hotel de l'Europe. For his private residence Adis built Mount Sophia, described as "one of the finest mansions east of Suez." Menasseh Meyer was Singapore's supreme Jewish entrepreneur and, by one account, "the community's revered benefactor." He was born in Baghdad in 1846, raised in Calcutta, and arrived in Singapore in 1873 to join his uncle's opium trading business, the largest in the port. He expanded the firm's real estate holdings to include the Adelphi and Sea View hotels. By 1900, he owned about three fourths of the island. One contemporary described Meyer as "the richest Jew in the Far East," exceeding even the Sassoons, Harpoons, and Ka-doories of Shanghai and Hong Kong. Another source claims that Meyer "eventually owned more real estate in Singapore than any other person." In 1929, Meyer was knighted by Great Britain's King George V. By all accounts, Sir Menasseh dominated and shaped the identity of the Jewish community for 60 years.

In the nurturing political and economic environment of Singapore, traditional rabbinic Judaic belief intensified. Simultaneously, Jews embraced secular culture, participated in local politics, and developed a Zionist movement. Singapore historian Charles Buckley notes that the pioneering Jewish merchant Abraham Solomon, while having much to do with the synagogue, educated his children "in an English school here, an advantage Baghdad did not offer." Many Anglophilic Baghdadis, including Sir Menasseh, followed Solomon's example when it came to their children's education. Meyer also oversaw the building of the monumental Magen Aboth synagogue and its religious school. In 1905, after a disagreement over who should run Magen Aboth, he built a second palatial synagogue, Chesed El, adjacent to his home.



Magen Aboth Synagogue in Singapore. (Photo by Jono David)

Sir Menasseh was also devoted to building Jewish institutions in Palestine. His efforts were contemporaneous with those of European Zionists but of a quite different origin. He was influenced by the pre-Herzlian religious Zionism of Hakham Yoseph Hayim of Baghdad, who officiated there from 1859 to 1909 and inspired many Iraqi Jews to visit and dwell in the Holy Land. Meyer took his family on a journey to Jerusalem “to inculcate in them a love for Israel.” In Palestine he maintained a house for Talmudic study as well as a small synagogue for Baghdadi Jews. Meyer subsequently affiliated with Herzl’s World Zionist Organization. By 1921, Meyer contributed £3,000 to World Zionist Organization activities, the largest individual gift Anglo-Jewish emissary Israel Cohen received on his Asia/Pacific fund-raising tour of that year. In the following year, Meyer became the founding president of Singapore’s Zionist Society, an affiliate of Theodor Herzl’s worldwide organization. Meyer’s home then became, according to one contemporary, a “beehive” of Zionist activity. In 1922, when Albert Einstein passed through Singapore on a fund-raising mission for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Meyer hosted a reception for 200 people that netted £10,000 of pledges for the fledgling school.

During Sir Menasseh’s later years, his daughter Mozelle Nissim broadened the scope of his Zionist philanthropy. In 1929, she committed £3,000 to build a school at Kfar Vitkin, then among the northernmost, and most strategically important, Jewish settlements in Palestine. Nissim quickly developed an international reputation for her charitable work. Zionist emissary to the Far East, A. Goldstein, writes back to the Zionist Executive that she “is really one of the best women our movement should be proud to have.”

After Sir Menasseh's death in 1930, the Zionism that he had promoted among Singapore Baghdadis continued to thrive. In early 1941, Singaporean Flora Shooker, in the tradition of her Baghdadi predecessors, established an educational trust for use in Palestine, Baghdad, and Singapore.

Singapore was overrun by the Japanese during World War II. Most of its Jews and other "enemy aliens" were incarcerated. In a major roundup on April 7, 1943, 481 Jews who were long established in the region were sent to the Sime Road camp. The men were later taken to Changi prison, where they suffered in horrendously overcrowded quarters. After the war the Baghdadi community and its Zionist movement rebounded. In 1955, one member of the community, David Saul Marshall ben Farha (1908–1995), was elected Singapore's first chief minister. In that capacity he gave Singapore its first measure of internal self-government and set the colony on its path to complete independence, which was achieved shortly after Marshall left office.

Jews enjoyed the same full equality in an independent Singapore as they had under the British colonial system. Singapore's long-term prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, and other leaders of independent Singapore also came to realize that there was much to be learned from the newly independent Jewish state, Singapore's Zionists labored diligently to cultivate such ties with Israel. A March 1962 visit and lecture by Keren Hayesod's director, Shlomo Temkin, was followed by a series of trade and technical aid agreements between Singapore and Israel and continuing visits by public figures, ministers, and other senior officials.

In 1965, Israeli experts began to train Singapore's new armed forces. Israeli diplomats, consultants, and businesspeople arrived on temporary assignments and were informally referred to as "the Mexicans." In 1969, this process culminated in the establishment of full diplomatic relations and even closer military ties between Singapore and the Jewish state.

The strengthening of Baghdadi Jewish life in Singapore and the strengthening of ties between Singapore and Israel occurred simultaneously with the almost complete disintegration of Jewish communal life in Iraq. In 2007, the core of Jewish residents of Singaporean citizenship remained overwhelmingly Baghdadi. Indeed, if one wishes to see a functioning Baghdadi Jewish community in the early 21st century, one only needs to visit Singapore. The community consists of about 180 people. Joan Bieder, an American academic who attended a Sabbath service in one of the Baghdadi synagogues in Singapore in 2000, observed both the recent diversity and traditional characteristics of the community. She wrote:

On the right side sit the old-timers, the men of Baghdadi origin who lived through the Japanese occupation. On the left side sit the wealthier members of the community and the younger generation of Jews and expatriate Israelis, some of whom have become important, active members of the community . . . When Frank Benjamin, President of the Jewish Welfare Board, stepped down from participating in the Torah service, he walked the room and wishes *Shabbat Shalom* [Sabbath peace] to all. The gesture is heartfelt and inclusive, consistent with his determination to bring all Jews living in Singapore together.

Frank Benjamin and others are determined to keep their community vibrant without sacrificing the basic Orthodox traditions that inspired Singapore's first Baghdadi Jews in the early 19th century.

### Selected Bibliography

- Bieder, Joan. 2003. "Jewish Identity in Singapore: Cohesion, Dispersion, Survival." *Sino-Judaica* 4: 54–55.
- Chee, Chan Heng. 1984. *A Sensation of Independence: A Political Biography of David Marshall*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, Israel. 1956. *A Jewish Pilgrimage*. London: Valentine Mitchell.
- Nathan, Eze. 1986. *History of Jews in Singapore*. Singapore: Herbilu.
- Sharett, Moshe. 1964. *Mi-shut Be-Asiyah: Yoman Masa* [From Travelling in Asia: A Travel Diary]. Tel Aviv: Davar/Am Oved.
- Yegar, Moshe. 1974. "Le-Toldot Ha-Kehillah Ha-Yehudit Be-Singapoor" [On the History of the Jewish Community in Singapore]. *Gesher* 1 (78): 50–65.

## Jews in Thailand

*Jonathan Goldstein*

---

**General Population:** Estimated at 17,324,581 (1956); 51,700,000 (1984); 55,600,000 (1989); 61,399,000 (2002); 63,693,660 (2004)

**Jewish Population:** Estimated at 1 (1683); 130 (1948); 40 (1954); 60–70 (1963); 300 (1983); 250 (1990); 250 resident and 100,000 per year transient, mostly Israeli (2007)

**Percent of Population:** Microscopic

**Jewish Population by City:** The resident Jewish population is almost entirely concentrated in Bangkok.

**Migration Routes and Ethnic Backgrounds:** For more than 400 years there have been Jewish travelers to the nation referred to internationally as Siam up to 1939 and as the Kingdom of Thailand ever since, with the exception of the years 1945–1949, when the name reverted to Siam. Overall, Thai Buddhism has been tolerant of Jews and Judaism, although intolerance may have occasionally been practiced by individuals. Indeed, the Jewish encounter with Thai Buddhism stands in contrast to the Jewish interaction with virulent Roman Catholicism in the Spanish Philippines and with Christian and Islamic fundamentalism in the Dutch East Indies and independent Indonesia.

The earliest literary reference to a Jewish presence in Siam appears in Marcello de Ribadeneira's 1601 *History of the Philippines and Other Kingdoms*. Ribadeneira describes some "Jews who having married Siamese women, worshipped in their own synagogues, where they preached the laws of Moses." The earliest fully documented record of a Jewish arrival in Siam occurs in 1683 when Abraham Navarro, a supercargo, negotiator, and interpreter aboard the British East India Company ship *Delight*, stopped in Siam en route to China.

Max Rosenberg is the first Jew recorded to have settled with his family in Bangkok, sometime between 1885 and 1890. He was born in Romania and went to Ceylon to become a tea exporter. He and his wife Rosa then migrated to Bangkok, where Rosenberg

owned the Hotel Europe. Beginning in 1917, Jewish refugees from Soviet Russia began to arrive. The interwar years also saw the genesis of a resident Mizrachi, or Oriental Jewish, community. Yehuda Assia, originally from Iraq, and Isaac Djemal, originally from Aleppo, Syria, arrived in Bangkok via Kobe in the early 1940s. Their presence sparked an influx of Jews from their home countries as well as from Afghanistan, Egypt, Gibraltar, Iran, the Land of Israel, Libya, and Uzbekistan. Many Mizrachi Jews became dealers of precious stones and jewelry settings. They worshipped in private homes and with borrowed Torah scrolls until the organization of Even Chen Synagogue. For decades Aleppo-born Salim Eubani has been the lay leader of the Mizrachi community, the president of Even Chen since 1984, and an active participant in overall Jewish community affairs.

**Languages Spoken:** English, Hebrew, Thai, Arabic, Farsi

---

### Historical Overview

Beginning in the late 1920s, the tiny Jewish community of Bangkok, along with much larger Jewish populations elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia, faced the prospect of confrontation with Imperial Japan as it edged toward an alliance with German Nazism. The situation in Bangkok was complex. There were historical grounds for trepidation on the part of Bangkok's Jewish community. King Rama VI, writing under a pseudonym sometime between 1910 and 1925, praised Japan and denounced Siam's resident Chinese as "the Jews of the East." This comment may simply have been an application of 20th-century European prejudice to the Chinese, a significantly large Siamese minority, as well as to the Jews, a microscopic Siamese minority. A much more troubling episode occurred in 1938 when, in a public lecture, the popular Thai writer Luang Wichit compared the Chinese in Siam to the Jews in Germany. Far from denouncing Hitler's treatment of the Jews, Wichit implied that Hitler's policies toward the Jews were worth considering vis-à-vis the Chinese of Siam. From 1938 to July 24, 1944, Colonel (later Field Marshal) Luang Phibunsongkhram served as prime minister. He also saw the authoritarian nationalism of Germany, Italy, and Japan as a possible model for Siam and aimed to glorify the Thai nation at the expense of its Chinese minority. Amid this troubling rhetoric, beginning in 1937, members of the Bangkok Jewish community nevertheless convinced the Siamese immigration authorities to allow approximately 120 German Jewish refugees to enter the country. Many came as capitalists.

The entire matter of further Jewish immigration became a moot point on December 7, 1941, with the escalation of war in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Combat effectively closed commercial shipping lanes and terminated nonmilitary travel. On December 8, 1941, Japanese troops landed in the Gulf of Siam. The Japanese ambassador demanded transit rights across Thailand to Burma and Malaya. According to historian George Kahin, Phibunsongkhram chose "cooperation over the martyrdom of an independence which had been preserved through the worst of European imperialism." Phibunsongkhram's government permitted Japanese troops to be stationed in Thailand as "friendly allies." The tiny Jewish community of Thailand was a beneficiary of these machinations. In Thailand, unlike other Axis-occupied parts of Asia, resident Jews were never ghettoized or in any other way discriminated against. The pro-Japanese Thai government did arrest some

Jewish refugees from Iraq, Syria, and Russia as potential collaborators from enemy countries and their assets were frozen, but incarcerated Jews were treated on precisely the same basis as non-Jewish “enemy aliens.” There was, in short, no explicitly anti-Semitic policy, discrimination, or persecution.

For many Jewish refugees, especially the Germans who spent the war years in Bangkok, the city had always been a port in a storm. Most left as soon as the war was over. In 1948, approximately 130 Jews remained in Thailand. Most of these were not religiously committed. In 1953, Israeli journalist Gershon Agron reported that the community had dwindled “almost [to the] vanishing point.” When ophthalmologist Franz Jacobsohn was appointed the first honorary Israeli consul in Thailand in 1954, he wrote pessimistically that “we have shrunk considerably to about 40. I wonder how many will attend the Purim party.”

But the community grew by other means. By 1973, near the end of America’s Vietnam War, there were approximately 100 Jewish families in Bangkok, 10 in Rajburi, 3 in Chiang Mai, and 1 in Kalasin. There were also approximately 20 American Jewish servicemen at nearby U.S. Air Force bases. There was at least one resident Jewish chaplain, Rabbi David Sobel, a Reform rabbi from West Hartford, Connecticut, who died tragically in an automobile accident in Bangkok. After American forces left Thailand in 1975–1979 the Jewish community again dwindled to 35 families and a handful of single people. It vacillated between 300 individuals in 1983, 250 individuals and 100 families in 1984, and 75 families in 1987.

As early as 1954, there was a loosely organized, officially unregistered Jewish communal structure in Thailand. Religious services were held in private homes on the High Holidays and occasionally on the Sabbath. In 1960, Singapore’s Jewish Welfare Board presented Bangkok’s Jews with a Torah scroll. In 1964, the Jewish Association of Thailand (JAT) formally registered as a legal organization. Under Thai law only Thai citizens or Thai corporations could own property, so it was important that JAT be officially recognized. The Thai citizens on the JAT Board filled this requirement, although none were ethnic Thais. Both Henry and Michael Gerson served as long-term presidents of JAT. In 1969, Elizabeth Zerner gave JAT land off Sukhumvit Road with a house that could be used for a synagogue. Zerner’s will provided additional funds to replace that old structure and build a new community center, which opened in 1981. In 1975, the community received a jolt of religiosity in the form of a surprise visit from a Rabbi Zohn of New York. He arrived because of a rerouted KLM flight that was originally scheduled to land in Bombay. Zohn lectured to the community and motivated some of its unobservant members to newfound religiosity. Several sought religious education outside Thailand and ultimately immigrated to Israel.

In 1988, JAT consisted of approximately 300 individuals in 70–80 families, a status it retained as of 2007. It is an ethnic mix of Jews from Afghanistan, Australia, Egypt, Europe, Gibraltar, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, the United States, and Uzbekistan. Most members are lawyers, financial consultants, gem dealers, and other types of businesspeople. Bangkok has three Orthodox synagogues, Beth Elisheva, Even Chen, and Ohr Menachem. Beth Elisheva and Even Chen are independent corporate entities.

All three Bangkok synagogues are serviced to a greater or lesser extent by rabbis from Chabad, the worldwide Hasidic religious and social welfare organization. Chabad Rabbi Yosef Kantor serves as communal ritual slaughter and kashruth supervisor. As of 2007, Even Chen pays part of Kantor's salary. On practically every Sabbath morning he makes the long trek from Sukhumvit to Even Chen, which is located on the opposite side of Bangkok in the Shangrila Hotel. Furthermore, because he does not return home until nightfall, he runs a class before the evening service. When Kantor is away other young men from the Chabad House in Khao San assist with Even Chen's services and kashruth supervision.

Chabad also helps run a religious school, ritual bath, cemetery, and kosher restaurant in Bangkok. Beyond Bangkok, it maintains centers in Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Ko Samui. In 2005, Chabad and several other important international Jewish organizations provided valuable assistance to Jewish and non-Jewish victims of the tsunami that devastated coastal Thailand. These multiple services have led some Bangkok Jewish residents to speak of "the chabadization" of Thailand.

### **Zionism and an Israeli Presence in Thailand**

The connections of Thailand and its resident Jews to the Zionist movement and the State of Israel go back decades. On August 22, 1918, at the request of Shanghai Zionist Association president Elly S. Kadoorie, Siamese prince and foreign minister Devawongse Varoprakar (1858–1923) publicly called for the creation of a Jewish homeland in what had been the Ottoman Turkish province of Palestine. Siam thus became the first Asian and first non-Christian nation to issue a pro-Zionist declaration. Because of turmoil at home, Prince Wan Waithayakorn, the Thai delegate to the United Nations, was not present in New York for the November 29, 1947, partition resolution that led to the creation of the State of Israel. Nevertheless, Thailand's friendliness to the Jewish state was demonstrated on June 23, 1954, when it established full diplomatic relations with Israel. The Jewish state was represented in Bangkok by an honorary consul general until 1958, when a permanent embassy was established. Thailand opened a trade office in Israel in 1988 and an embassy in 1996.

Political and diplomatic relations have remained low key. There have been low-level visits of the Thai royal family to Israel. No sitting head of state of either country has ever visited the other's country, however. Israeli visitors to Thailand have included the former prime minister Moshe Sharett; Yitzhak Rabin in his capacity as army chief of staff; and Moshe Dayan, Abba Eban, Golda Meir and Shimon Peres in their capacities as foreign ministers.

The two countries nevertheless enjoy extensive cultural and economic ties. In 1974 a Thai-Israel Friendship Foundation was founded in Bangkok. It is similar to associations that Israel, China, the Soviet Union and many other countries established around the world to promote cultural ties. In 1990, a Thai-Israel Chamber of Commerce was established in Bangkok. It annually takes about 20 Thai businesspeople to Israel. As a result of this and other focused promotional activity, between 1990 and 1996 bilateral trade expanded from \$166 million to \$500 million. By 2004 bilateral trade had expanded to \$777 million.

The centerpiece of Thai-Israeli economic cooperation has been the agricultural projects sponsored by MASHAV, the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Center for International Cooperation. MASHAV began operating in Thailand at the personal initiative of Foreign Minister Golda Meir, who wrote in her autobiography that "I am prouder of Israel's International Cooperation Program . . . than I am of any other single project we have ever undertaken." Large-scale bilateral cooperation began in 1966 in Hup Kapong and lasted for five years. In that royally approved project, Israeli experts advised 130 Thai farm owners on collective and cooperative farming based on the models of the Israeli kibbutz and moshav. Between 1973 and 1983, 730 Thais traveled to Israel for professional training, and 29 were enrolled as of 2004. In that same year 342 Thais participated in MASHAV courses taught in Thailand by Israeli experts. In 1970, Israeli experts began teaching irrigation techniques at Khon Kaen University. On January 23, 2004, in the presence of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirirhorn, that university opened a permanent Thai-Israel Techno-Demo Unit for irrigated high-value crops.

Israel has exported large amounts of military hardware to Thailand, including Uzi submachine guns, Gabriel sea-to-sea missiles, communications and electronic intelligence systems. In 1979, Israel sold Thailand the Arava, a short-distance take-off reconnaissance aircraft; in the 1980s, the Python air-to-ground missile; and in 2005, a more advanced version, the Python IV. In 1993, Thailand and Israel signed an aviation agreement. As of 2007, Israel's national carrier, El Al, and charter company, Israir, provide nonstop service between Bangkok and Tel Aviv. Thailand has waived requirements for Israelis to obtain visas before arrival, sparking an onrush of tourists. Most are backpackers who have just completed their basic army service and make up about 60,000 of an estimated 100,000 Israelis visiting Thailand each year. Chabad maintains six Hebrew-speaking campuses in Thailand to minister to the social and religious needs of these travelers. Additionally, since 1994 a growing number of Thais have been working in Israel in the agricultural sector; about 30,000 were employed in that capacity in 2007.

### Selected Bibliography

- Assia, Yehuda. 2005. *Ha-gesharim shel Chayai: Baghdad, Kobe, Japan, Bangkok, Geneva, Tel Aviv* [Bridges of My Life: Baghdad, Kobe, Japan, Bangkok, Geneva, Tel Aviv] Tel Aviv: no publisher given.
- Embassy of Israel. 2004. *Reflections on 50 Years of Friendship: A Jubilee of Diplomatic Relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the State of Israel 1954–2004*. Bangkok: Embassy of Israel.
- Fischel, Walter J. 1956. "Abraham Navarro—Jewish Interpreter and Diplomat in the Service of the English East India Company (1682–1692)." In *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 25 (Part One): 39–62.
- Kahin, George M. 1969. *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; 19–23.
- Kashani, Reuven. 1982. *Kehillot Ha-yehudim Ba-mizrah Ha-rahok* [Communities of Jews in the Far East]. Jerusalem: Sephardic Council.

# Glossary of Diaspora Concepts, Themes, Names, Places, People, and Organizations

**Abravanel, Benvenida** (ca. 1473–ca. 1560) Influential and wealthy Jewish woman during the Italian Renaissance.

**Adler, Hermann** Son of Nathan Marcus Adler; British chief rabbi, 1891–1911

**Adler, Nathan Marcus** British chief rabbi 1845–1890

**ADMOR** Acronym for *Adoneinu Moreinu ve-Rabeinu* (our master, our teacher, and our rabbi). The term is used in reference to the Hasidic rebbes.

**Agape** Love feast; a meal celebrated by early Christians on Sunday.

**Aggadah** The nonlegal contents of the Talmud and midrash, including ethical and moral teaching, theological speculation, and legends.

**Agudat Ha-Rabonim** An organization of rabbis; the umbrella organization of American Orthodox rabbis in the 1940s.

**Agudat Hasidei Habad** An organization of Habas Hasidim (Aguch), established in the 1930s, which became the umbrella organization for other Habad enterprises.

**Agudat Israel** A political organization that was started in Germany in 1912 to oppose political Zionism and spread to Israel and the United States. Presently, it represents ultra-Orthodoxy, is involved with political Zionism, and has a strong Hasidic representation.

**agunah** (pl. **agunot**) A woman whose husband is missing or has deserted her and who may not remarry until she gives proof of his death or obtains a bill of divorce.

**Ahavah Rabbah/Ahavat Olam** Prayers said once in the morning and once in the evening acknowledging the gift of Torah.

**Ahenu b'Eretz Israel** Means “Our brethren in the Land of Israel.”

**ahi temimim** “My Pure Brothers”; the name of RaYYaZ’s old boys’ organization comprising ex-yeshiva students from the Lubavitch yeshiva system. Originally an Eastern European organization, it was established in the United States in the 1930s.

**Ahiever** A youth Zionist organization in Baghdad in the beginning of the 1930s.

**Aleinu** A prayer said at the end of every service.

**Aleppo Codex** Hebrew manuscript of the Bible written by the scribe Shlomo Ben Buya’a during the first half of the 10th century (or 896) and then verified, vocalized, and annotated by Aaron Ben-Asher in Tiberias.

**alienation** This sociological term refers to a person or group’s sense of distance from and uninvolvedness with the dominant society. Jews, because of their minority status, have often been associated with such an experience. Many anthropologists and sociologists consider alienation a sign of modernity in the Western world and Jews as emblematic of that condition.

**aliyah** Hebrew word meaning “ascent” or “going up.” It is widely used to refer to Jewish immigration to the State of Israel. Originally it was the ultimate goal of members of the Zionist movement.

**aliyah, second** Immigration to Israel, then called Palestine, of Jews between 1904 and 1914, mainly from Russia. This group established Israel’s first kibbutz and the city of Tel Aviv.

**Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU)** The AIU was founded in France in the mid-18th century in response to the rise in anti-Semitism related to the Damascus Affair. The AIU’s goal is to protect human rights of Jews as citizens of countries where they live. The

- organization focuses on education and professional development and operates a number of Jewish day schools, many in the Middle East.
- Ameinu** The successor of the Labor Zionist Alliance, Ameinu has a 100-year history and works for a progressive Israel and America.
- America-Israel Friendship League** A nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening ties between the United States and Israel.
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)** The prominent force of advocacy in support of Israel in the United States; AIPAC has 100,000 members in the 50 states.
- American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)** American-based global charitable organization that provides humanitarian assistance to global Jewish communities.
- American Zionist Movement (AZM)** The American affiliate of the World Zionist Organization, the AZM is a coalition of Zionist groups and individuals.
- Americans for Israel and Torah (AMIT)** This group supports Israeli youth from diverse backgrounds and bolsters frameworks of academic achievement, religious values, and Zionist commitment.
- Amidah** From the Hebrew word *la 'amod*, meaning “to stand,” and used to describe the prayer also known as the Eighteen Benedictions, which is recited three times daily by Jews and is a series of blessings at the center of every religious service.
- Amir, Eli** An Israeli writer who was born in Baghdad in 1937 and immigrated to Israel via Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek at the age of 13. The author of four novels, Amir has served in various public roles, including work as an adviser on Arab affairs in the prime minister’s office and as an emissary in the United States.
- Amishav** An organization formed in 1975 by Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail to search for descendants of the lost tribes of Israel and help them return to the Jewish fold. The group worked in particular with members of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo communities of northeast India who identified as descendants of the tribe of Manasseh and with Peruvian villagers Avichail designated the Benei Moshe, arranging the immigration of hundreds of members to Israel, where they studied for conversion to Judaism.
- Amram Ga’on** A Babylonian rabbinic authority in the ninth century.
- Anderson, Benedict** Benedict Richard O’Gorman Anderson was born in China on August 26, 1938, and is a professor emeritus at Cornell University. His book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983) argues that national identity is culturally constructed. His approach valorizes members of communities living in exile or Diaspora and can be understood to affirm the Jewish Diaspora experience.
- Antichrist, the** This term, which appears in the New Testament, was used by Christian theologians to identify the false messiah whom God will allow Satan to send to the Jews because they refuse to believe in the true Messiah, Jesus. According to Christian folklore in the Middle Ages, the Antichrist, the son of the devil and a Jewish prostitute, would rule for a period of years in desolation and brutality until a great climactic battle between “Jewish evil” and “Christian good” would inaugurate the reign of heaven.
- Antioch** A city in Syria (now Turkey) with a noted Jewish community.
- anti-Semitic laws** Laws, adopted in 1940, and modeled on Nuremberg racist legislation.
- anti-Semitism** Basically, fear and hatred of the Jews. The term applies to all negative ideas about and feelings and behavior toward Jews; it can be expressed as avoidance, anti-locution, calumny, discrimination, assault, expropriation, expulsion, physical attack, torture, murder, and mass murder.
- anusim (Hebrew)** “The forced ones”; term preferred, along with *bnei anusim* (offspring of anusim), by many crypto-Jews in Spain and Portugal today, especially to avoid the pejorative term “Marrano.”

- Aristotelians** Disciples of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE) who functioned in the Greek and Roman empires and influenced subsequent Muslim, Jewish, and European Christian philosophers
- Ashkenaz** Identified as a great grandson of Noah in Genesis 10:3, and as one of the kingdoms that would rise up to destroy Babylon in Jeremiah 51:27. By medieval times, Ashkenaz came to mean Germany, and Jews from Germany are known as Ashkenazim. This designation, contrasted with Sephardim, embraces Jews of a particular cultural-religious tradition, which spread from France and Germany through to Northern and Eastern Europe, and remains the tradition of most of the Jews in North and South America, Australia, and South Africa. It embraces a distinct system of pronouncing Hebrew and its own liturgical and Halachic traditions, the historical use of Yiddish or Judaeo-German as a spoken language in locations far removed from Germany, and a shared cuisine. Although significant differences have developed between the traditions of Poland and Germany, these are relatively minor compared with the differences from the Sephardim. Although most of the Jews murdered during the Holocaust were Ashkenazim, today they are significantly more numerous than Jews of all other backgrounds.
- Ashkenazification** Long-term influence of Ashkenazic Jewry on the community, which resulted in the loss of Judeo-Arabic culture.
- Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA)** One of the principal Jewish institutions in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The AMIA suffered a terrorist attack on July 18, 1994, in which 86 people perished in an explosion that destroyed the building housing the AMIA.
- Aufklärung** The German word for “Enlightenment,” the term has also come to denote the specific German version of Enlightenment thought, centered on such individuals as Christian Wolff, G. E. Lessing, Moses Mendelssohn, and Immanuel Kant, which in some significant ways differed from its counterparts in Britain, France, and elsewhere.
- Auschwitz** The largest German extermination camp used by the Nazis during the Holocaust (full name Auschwitz-Birkenau). Situated in Poland (Auschwitz being the German name for the Polish town Ozwiecim), it is estimated that 1.1 million people died in this camp, at least 90 percent of whom were Jews.
- Avichail, Eliyahu** A Jerusalem rabbi who took on the task of searching for the lost tribes of Israel in the belief that the coming of the Messiah was imminent and restoring the tribes could hasten his appearance. To that end, Avichail founded the organization Amishav in 1975.
- Avinu Malkenu (Our Father, our King)** A prayer used on solemn occasions.
- Ba’al Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name)** Refers to the leader of the Hasidic movement —Yisrael, the son of Eliezer, in particular; however, many Ba’alei Shem were believed to be practicing in Eastern Europe in that period. This name suggests that the “master” may manipulate and recite the “good name” of God in secret combinations, thus wielding mystical powers and being able to perform wonders.
- Ba’al Teshuva** A newly repentant Jew.
- Baba Sali Synagogue** A Sephardi congregation in Sydney between 1994 and 2003, which met in the premises of the South Head Synagogue. Formed by Rabbi Joseph Bendavid, it attracted a predominantly Hebrew-speaking congregation, Jews from North Africa and the Middle East who had lived in Israel before settling in Australia.
- Babylonian Exile** The period and situation of Jewish existence in Babylonia caused by the deportations from Judah at the beginning of the sixth century BCE.
- Baghdadi** The Anglo-Indian name given to the community of Jews of Middle Eastern origin who settled in Indian port cities during the British raj.
- Bar Kokhba revolt** Bar Kokhba was a Jewish revolutionary leader who led a revolt against Rome with the intention of reestablishing an independent Jewish state in the Land of

Israel. One of Bar Kokhba's few rabbinic followers was Rabbi Aqiba, who hailed Bar Kokhba as the long-awaited messianic king. The Bar Kokhba revolt followed the first war against Rome, fought in the Land of Israel, both in Galilee and then in Judea, from 67 through 73 CE. The war reached its climax in August of 70 CE, when on the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Ab, the Temple was captured and burned by the Romans. Resistance continued for some time. The Bar Kokhba revolt, also referred to as the second war against Rome, was fought from 132 through 135 CE, probably in the expectation that after three generations had passed, Israel would regain Jerusalem, as had happened in the aftermath of the loss of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 BCE and its restoration three generations later, under Cyrus of Persia. The war was fiercely fought against Rome at the height of its power. When it was over, Jews were forbidden from entering Jerusalem, and the Temple was plowed over and a pagan temple was constructed in its place.

- bar mitzvah** Rite of passage to adulthood for males; takes place in the 13th year of birth.
- bath mitzvah** Rite of passage to adulthood for females; it takes place in the 12th year of birth.
- Bayazid (1481–1512)** As sultan he granted privileges to Jews in the Ottoman Empire.
- beit midrash** Torah study hall; an institution of higher Jewish learning.
- bek** Title of the king of Khazaria, also identified by the Hebrew term *mlk/melekh*. The bek held most of the political and military power in Khazaria during the Jewish era.
- ben Asher, Jacob** The author of the first printed book in the printing house in Constantinople (1493).
- Bene Israel** The largest Jewish community of India, originating in the coastal Konkan villages south of Bombay. The Bene Israel have a tradition that they are descendants of seven men and seven women, survivors of a shipwreck, who were washed up near the village of Navgaon many centuries ago. They became integrated into the caste system of the region as specialists in sesame oil production but did not work on the Sabbath. While retaining only a rudimentary knowledge of Judaism, they were keen to accept rabbinical Judaism when they came into contact with the Jews of Cochin in the 18th century and with Baghdadi Jews who settled in Bombay during the 19th century.
- Benei Menashe** Judaizing community that has developed in the states of Manipur, Mizoram, and Assam in northeast India and the state of Chin in Burma since the 1970s. Its members identify as descendants of the biblical tribe of Manasseh.
- Benjamin of Tudela** A Spanish Jew famed for his travels to Jewish Diaspora communities throughout Europe and Asia from 1160 to 1173, which he documented in *Sefer ha-Masa'ot* (*The Book of Travels*). He frequently noted the population sizes and customs of these communities and mentioned the names of their most prominent members. He also documented some of the Jews' occupations.
- Benonia (Vidin)** Ancient center of Jewish life in Roman Empire.
- Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer (1858–1922, born Perelman)** A Hebrew revivalist.
- Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153)** A Cistercian monk and promoter of the Second Crusade (1147–1149). Bernard denounced the violence against Jews in Europe by crusading Christians on their way to Palestine, but his treatise, "In Praise of the New Knighthood," written to encourage the Knights Templar to seize Jerusalem from "infidel" Muslims, contributed to the climate of fanaticism that made attacks on Jews possible.
- Beroia** Ancient center of Jewish life in Roman Empire.
- Besamim Rosh (Chief Spices; Exodus 30:23)** Spurious responsa attributed to R. Asher ben Yehiel.
- Bet Yosef—The Caro Synagogue** Congregation following the Sephardic tradition, formed in Sydney in 1992 after Rabbi Marc Sevy left the Sephardi synagogue. Members of this congregation tend to be more observant than other Sephardi congregations in the city.

**beth (pl. batei) din** A rabbinical court.

**Bevis Marks** Synagogue in London, founded in 1656 by Portuguese Jews from the Netherlands; the central institution of Sephardi Jewish life in England.

**Big Aliyah** The biggest wave of immigrants to Israel (1948–1949).

**Bildung** The closest translation of this key German word is “education,” but this does not completely cover the full sense of what Bildung stood for in 19th-century German liberal bourgeois society. Bildung meant both a form of German humanist, liberal arts education as well as a sense that this educational form would realize both the aesthetic and moral potential of the individual being or *gebildet*. The sense of moral improvement implicit in the concept was particularly appreciated by the ideologues of Jewish emancipation and hence the need for Bildung became a central tenet of the ideology of emancipation that was so central to 19th-century Central European Jewish culture and thought.

**Biltmore Conference** Held in the Biltmore Hotel in New York City in May 1942. Representatives of Zionist and non-Zionist organizations convened what was called an “extraordinary Zionist conference” and issued (in what became known as the Biltmore Program) a call for unlimited Jewish immigration to Mandatory Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth.

**Black Code** A law signed by Louis XIV in 1689 stipulating the expulsion of the Jews from the French Caribbean islands in America.

**blood libel** Accusing a particular group of killing people as human sacrifice and using their blood in various rituals. A common point of slander used against the Jews in medieval Christianized Europe.

**B'nai B'rith lodge** A local chapter of the organization B'nai B'rith, a world Jewish service organization.

**Bnai Zion** Founded in 1908, Bnai Zion is a charitable organization that supports humanitarian projects in Israel and the United States.

**Bodo** Chaplain to the court of Carolingian emperor Louis the Pious, Bodo caused a stir when he converted to Judaism in 838 and engaged in public disputations over the relative truth of the Jewish and Christian religions.

**Bolshevik Revolution** A major social upheaval in Russia in 1917, which overthrew the monarchy of the czar and replaced it with a communist regime known as the Soviet Union.

**bride wealth** Patrilineal societies consider women to be valuable resources of lineage continuation, sexuality, and work force. Upon marriage, the groom's lineage acquires the rights to the bride's powers of childbearing and sexuality and the bride's lineage by paying bride wealth in money and/or property.

**Buallawn** The village where Chhallianthanga preached and where a Judaizing sect arose in Mizoram in northeast India.

**Bukharan Jews** The indigenous Jews of Central Asia. The group takes its name from the city of Bukhara in Uzbekistan.

**Bukovina** Acquired from the Ottoman Empire by Austria in 1775, this territory on the eastern borderland of the Habsburg monarchy had as its capital Czernowitz (Cernauti), where a German-speaking university was established in 1875. Almost one third of Czernowitz's population was Jewish around 1910.

**Bulgaria** One of the oldest European states, Jews have lived there more than 20 centuries.

**Bund** General Jewish Workers' Union, a secular, socialist Jewish party opposed to Jewish religious life. It was founded in Vilna in 1897 to support Jewish national rights. It was Yiddishist and anti-Zionist and operated in Eastern Europe from the 1890s to the 1930s.

**Bwl'n (Bulan)** The first king (melekh) of the Khazars to practice Judaism. He was also known as Sabriel.

- caliphate** The Islamic state established after the death of the Muslim prophet Muhammad in 632 CE; it became a vast empire resulting from conquests in the following decades.
- Carolingian dynasty** The princely house founded by Pepin the Short in 751 and reaching its greatest extent under Charlemagne (742–814), who unified most of the Christian states of Western Europe under his rule. The dynasty fell in 887 with the deposition of Charles III (“the Fat”) but returned intermittently to power until 987. Carolingian rulers generally treated the Jews well, seeing them as useful contacts in the Mediterranean trade.
- Carvajal, Luis de** Jewish victim of the Spanish Inquisition in 16th-century Mexico. Famous for the detailed written accounts of his persecution.
- catholicos** The representative leader of Persian Christianity recognized by the Sasanian Dynasty. This position, held by the bishop of Seleucia, probably began in the fourth century CE.
- Cattaoui, Moise de (1850–1924)** Member of a leading Egyptian Jewish family and president of the Jewish community of Cairo, Egypt, for more than 50 years.
- Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)** The CCAR, which was founded in 1889 by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, is the principal organization of Reform rabbis in the United States. The CCAR publishes responsa, resolutions, and platforms, but in keeping with the principles of Reform Judaism, their positions are nonbinding on individual rabbis or congregations.
- Central Council of Jews in Germany** The official representative of German Jewry. Its aim is to promote and foster religious and cultural activities within local Jewish communities and to look after Jewish political interests. One important aspect of this work is to integrate Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union by providing language courses, political education, religious instruction, and other integration measures. Additionally, the Central Council aims to promote understanding and mutual respect between Jews and non-Jews in Germany. On the international level, the group maintains close links with Jewish communities around the world.
- Chabad** A Jewish religious movement, considered the most intellectual of the Hasidic movements that originated in Eastern Europe in the early 19th century.
- Challianthanga** Catechist with the United Pentecostal Church in Mizoram. After what he understood to be a divine revelation in 1951, he began to preach that the Mizos were descendants of Israelites and had to return to the practices ordained in the Bible. He founded a colony of people who sought to follow the precepts given to Israelites in the Bible, while retaining a belief in Jesus as the Messiah.
- Champagne** During the 12th and 13th centuries, this region of France was ruled by counts who were independent of the French monarchy. The region prospered because of its rich agriculture—most famously its wines—and seasonal commercial fairs. Champagne was home to the great biblical and Talmudic commentator Rashi (1040–1105) of Troyes and many of his successors, the Tosafists.
- chavruta** Study in pairs; a traditional method of Torah (particularly Talmud) study whereby two individuals grapple with a text, studying, analyzing, and discussing the passages together to arrive at a better understanding of the text.
- chevra kadisha** A Jewish burial society.
- Chin-Kuki-Mizo** Terms used to refer to a coterie of around 45 related tribes in northeast India and northwest Burma. Most have accepted Christianity, although a judaizing movement among them arose during the second half of the 20th century (the Benei Menashe). The terms “Chin,” which is used in Burma, and “Kuki,” which is used in India, were general terms for these tribes, imposed from outside their communities. Members chose a term of their own, “Mizo,” meaning “hill people,” to identify themselves. However, this term has come to be identified with the residents of the territory known as Mizoram since 1952, making it problematic as a term for people not residing there.

- Chmielnicki massacre** Massacre of tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews between 1648 and 1649. Bogdan Chmielnicki led a campaign to incite the Cossacks against the Jews in his attempt to rid the Ukraine of Polish domination.
- Christian Socialism (Austria)** The roots of the Christian Social Party go back to the early 1880s when artisans launched anti-Semitic protests against the supposedly Jewish perpetrators of their economic distress. An alliance of Catholic social theorists, democratic radicals, lower-middle-class economic anti-Semites, German nationalist racial anti-Semites, and opportunist politicians led in 1887 to the formation of the United Christians in 1887 under the leadership of Karl Lueger. Under the name of the Christian Socials, this group then took power in Vienna's city council in 1895 and did not relinquish it until 1918. The party combined shrewd populist propaganda and an extensive program of municipal socialism with an often vitriolic rhetoric of anti-Semitism, which was reflected in several discriminatory policies against Jews.
- Chufut-Qal'eh (Chufut-Kale)** A city near Bâhçe-Sarây that saw Jewish settlement activity by the 14th century. Originally called Qırqyer, it served as the capital of the Crimean khanate for 100 years. After the khanate transferred the capital to Bâhçe-Sarây, Qırqyer became known by its new name, Chufut-Qal'eh, meaning "Fortress of the Jews" and continued to be the home of an important Karaite Jewish community.
- Churachandpur** The second-largest town in Mamipur. Here, in around 1976, T. Daniel introduced Judaic practices to the region. Until then, judaizing groups had sought to combine observance of the precepts ordained in the Jewish Bible with faith in Jesus as Messiah.
- circumcision** The removal of the foreskin of males, performed ritually for Jewish males, normally on the eighth day after birth or upon conversion to Judaism. It is considered the sign of the divine covenant with Abraham, as described in Genesis 17:1–14 and Leviticus 12:3.
- City Committee for Assistance of Haganah** Volunteer organization set up in 1947, under the auspices of the consistory, to support Israeli army.
- Cochin (Kochi)** A port on the coast of Kerala in southwest India that has been home for a significant Jewish community since at least 1341.
- Cohen, Shalome** Merchant and jeweler from Aleppo in Syria, who became the first Jewish settler in Calcutta in 1797; he attracted around him a community of Iraqi and Syrian Jews. He was appointed court jeweler to the nawab of Lucknow in 1816.
- Comtat-Venaissin** A papal enclave in the Provence region of southern France, including the cities of Carpentras and (from the 14th century) Avignon. Outside the jurisdiction of the French crown, the comtat became a refuge to Jews who were expelled from France in 1394, and subsequently from independent Provence in the 15th century. Confined to ghettos and subjected to humiliating restrictions, they nevertheless developed a vibrant form of Judaism with its own Judeo-Provençal liturgy and literature. Many Jews from the comtat migrated to Bordeaux and Bayonne in southwestern France in the 18th century, where they formed separate communities alongside the Portuguese Sephardim.
- Conservative Judaism** This American Jewish movement began as a rejection of Reform Judaism in the United States. It drew on the Positive Historical School of Judaism founded by Zechariah Frankel in Germany. In the United States, Solomon Schechter, who shaped the movement through his tenure as head of the Jewish Theological Seminary, made Zionism an important part of the movement.
- Constantine** Constantine ruled as emperor from 306 until his death in 337 and made Constantinople (modern Istanbul) his capital and Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.
- converso** The term for a Spanish or Portuguese Jew who had to convert to Catholicism under the pressure of persecution in the 15th and 16th centuries.

- covenant** This theological concept claims that God has a special relationship with the Jewish people. Some Jews emphasize the role of a chosen land, the Land of Israel, as part of this covenant. Other Jews claim that covenant depends on obedience to Jewish laws independent of national status and that Jews in the Diaspora live a covenantal life no less than those in the State of Israel.
- Cranganore** The Anglo-Indian name for the town of Koungallur (Malayalam), a former capital city known to the Romans as Muziris and in the Jewish world as Shingly. Cranganore is the ancestral home of the Jews of Cochin.
- Cresson, Warder (1798–1860)** Born a Quaker in Philadelphia, Cresson converted to Judaism and in the 1840s became the first American consul in Jerusalem. After changing his name to Michael Boaz Israel, he circulated plans for the agricultural development of the Holy Land.
- crypto-Jew** A hidden or secret Jew; the term was in use especially in Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition.
- Cyrus the Great (ca. 585–529 BCE)** The first Achaemenian emperor of Persia, Cyrus issued a decree in 538 BCE that gave permission to Jews who had been exiled by the Babylonians to return home.
- dayan (pl. dayanim)** A judge in a rabbinical court.
- Decalogue** The ten words or Ten Commandments publicly revealed to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai as described in Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21 and written on the two stone tablets of the covenant.
- Deutero-Isaiah** Designation for the anonymous biblical prophet whose words are preserved in chapters 40–55 of the book of Isaiah.
- Development Corporation for Israel/State of Israel Bonds** Since 1951, sales of Israel bonds have helped Israel's Finance Ministry support projects in key sectors. Bond sales have exceeded \$25 billion.
- dhimma, dhimmi, dhimmitude** Translated as “protection” or “covenant,” the legal and social condition in Islam whereby indigenous non-Muslim people were subjected to Islamic rule and protected from the rules of jihad against infidels by their submission to Islamic supremacy without fighting. These were the “People of the Book” (mostly Jews and Christians); they were afforded communal autonomy and religious liberty in exchange for subservient social status and a head tax, called *jizya*, in exchange for military protection and religious autonomy. According to the Koran, dhimmi status did not entitle Jews to the same or equal rights as Muslim citizens.
- di groyse aktie** Yiddish for “the great action,” where many Jews were killed in a mass murder raid in Lithuania in October 1941.
- Diaspora** A term from ancient Greek meaning “a scattering” or “sowing of seeds.” It is used to describe any ethnic group forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic homeland. It is commonly used to describe Jewish communities living outside the Land of Israel. It is often translated to the Hebrew word *galut*, or exile, although the Hebrew word *tefutzot* (dispersions) is the more exact equivalent. Usually this term implies a more favorable view to these communities, although Jeremiah 25:34 uses the term in conjunction with the slaughter of Jews. Diaspora, then, may be used to indicate a neutral view of Jewish dispersion, a favorable view, or even a negative view. Medieval Christian theologians interpreted the Diaspora as divine punishment for the crucifixion and rejection of Jesus.
- Didache** An early Christian document dating from the second or third century outlining early church discipline.
- din (pl. dinei) Torah** A rabbinical arbitration.
- divine presence (in Hebrew, Shekhinah)** A Talmudic concept representing God's dwelling and immanence in the created world, especially among the people of Israel.

- dual residence** Jews have been accused of having a divided loyalty to the nation in which they live and to world Jewry or to Jews in the State of Israel. Mordecai M. Kaplan coined the term “dual residence” as a contrast to either “dual loyalty” or “dual citizenship.” Jews, he claimed, could see themselves as living fully in two places—their Diaspora home and the Land of Israel. Such dual residence did not, he argued, entail any ambivalence toward either of the two places in which someone would reside.
- Dubnow, Simon (1860–1941)** Born in White Russia, Dubnow later became one of the founding fathers of modern Jewish historiography. Besides his monumental book, *History of the Jewish People*, he dedicated many years to research on the Hasidic movement and East European anti-Semitism. He was murdered by the Nazis in Riga in the Rumbula massacre.
- East** From biblical times to the present, Jews have faced Jerusalem when they pray. As Jews moved westward away from Israel, east came to symbolize Jerusalem, the source of Jewish faith and national memory. East became a holy direction in Jewish prayer, and a seat on the eastern wall of the synagogue became a sign of high social status. In many Jewish homes, a calligraphic design called a mizrach hangs on the eastern wall to aid meditation and prayer and to orient the Jewish householder toward Jerusalem.
- Eastern Jewish Association** An organization catering to the religious needs of some of the Sephardi Jews in Sydney, Australia. Formed as a breakaway group from the New South Wales Association of Sephardim in 1960, the association attracted a membership largely among Jews of Iraqi origin from India, Burma, and other East Asian settlements. Although it fostered some social and cultural activities in its early years, its main function has been the organization of religious services during the High Holy Days.
- ecumenical council** An assembly of bishops and priests from all parts of the known world to discuss and regulate matters of church doctrine and discipline.
- Edirne** A town in the Ottoman Empire that was populated with Jews after 1496.
- Egeria** A religious woman who made a pilgrimage in the fourth century to the holy places in the Land of Israel and left a description of her travels and the early Christian liturgies in Jerusalem.
- Eghegis** Located in southeastern Asia, Eghegis was a small city during the Middle Ages, but the population gradually shrank until it became a town and eventually merely a village. During the period when Jews are known to have lived in Eghegis, the Orbelian family of princes resided in the city and this region of Armenia was prosperous.
- Elephantine** A city on an island in the Nile; the site of an ancient Jewish community.
- Elias, Benjamin Nissim** A Calcutta Jew who developed a large range of commercial and manufacturing concerns across India, which came to be a major source of employment for members of the community.
- Elijah** Biblical prophet who lived in the ninth century BCE during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. By the end of the prophetic period, the biblical figure of Elijah achieved legendary stature as a harbinger of Messianic redemption. According to Jewish tradition and lore, Elijah will blow the shofar at the End of the Days, revealing the primal light of creation, reviving the dead, rebuilding the Temple, and heralding the dawn of the Messianic age when the Jewish exiles will return to Zion.
- Emunah of America** Chapters and divisions of this organization around the United States support Israel’s largest religious Zionist educational and social welfare organization.
- Epicureans** Disciples of the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–271 BCE) who functioned in the Greek and Roman empires and influenced subsequent Muslim, Jewish, and European Christian philosophers.
- Eretz Israel (sometimes Yisrael)** The Land of Israel.
- Esau** Son of Isaac and twin brother of Jacob, who appears in the later events in the book of Genesis. In rabbinic symbolism he was often equated with the despised Roman Empire.

- ethical nationhood** The term, coined by American Jewish theologian Mordecai M. Kaplan, points to a “transnational” identity by which Jews embrace the needs of all humanity through their affirmation of Zionism. For Kaplan, Zionism is ethical because it seeks the welfare of humanity and looks beyond its own national borders to an international constituency whose needs shape Israel’s national policies. He sees this type of nationhood as a model for all modern nations.
- Etz Hayyim (Tree of Life)** From Proverbs 3:18; a medieval English Halachic work.
- Eucharist** Meaning “thanksgiving”; a sacred Christian liturgy using the elements of bread and wine to represent the presence of Jesus.
- Eusebius** A church historian of the fourth century who wrote the early history of the church.
- exilarch** The foremost leader of Babylonian Jewry in the Sasanian era (224–651 CE) and in the 7th to 11th centuries. Based in the empire’s capital, the exilarch was the official representative of the Babylonian Jews before the crown. Rabbinic literature is the main source so the image of the exilarch reflects its mixed relationship with the rabbis. The rabbis criticized the exilarchate as a symbol of Persian cultural assimilation and for its lack of identity with rabbinic ideals, but the exilarch was also the focus of Babylonian Jewish patriotism vis-à-vis Palestine.
- Ezekiel** A Judean prophet during the first Babylonian Exile at time of destruction of Jerusalem (586 BCE) who presented a particularistic interpretation of the relationship between God and Israel.
- faqir** A Hindi term, borrowed from the Arabic, meaning poor; the designation for a Muslim holy man, it was inaccurately applied to Hindu mendicants as well.
- farbrengin (gathering)** A Yiddish term for a Hasidic gathering. If the rebbe is present, he gives a Hasidic discourse or talks about Hasidic issues. If the rebbe is not present, songs are sung, stories are told praising the rebbe, and people commit themselves to greater piety and more devotion. Alcohol contributes to the intimate nature of these gatherings.
- Farhud** A pogrom in Baghdad against Jews perpetrated on June 1, 1941, by the pro-Nazi Iraqi government.
- Firkowicz, Avraham** A 19th-century Karaite collector and communal functionary who discovered and publicized many Hebrew, Arabic, and Samaritan manuscripts and burial inscriptions. He is controversial because of his attempts to change texts and his outright forgeries. One of his aims was to prove that the Karaites had been separate from rabbinical Jews since ancient times.
- Freud, Sigmund (1856–1939)** The originator of the model of the mind and corresponding method of psychotherapy known as psychoanalysis. A Viennese psychiatrist, Freud first made significant contributions to the field of neurology. In the last decade of the 19th century, his focus shifted to the psychology of the human mind, beyond neurological elucidation. Freud saw neuroses as resulting from unconscious forces, particularly suppressed complexes of a taboo nature stemming from early childhood. He developed the psychotherapeutic method of dream analysis and free association that would theoretically shed light on the unconscious and, in so doing, alleviate the neuroses.
- Friedenwald, Harry (1864–1950)** An ophthalmologist from a prominent Baltimore Jewish family, he served as president of the Federation of American Zionists before World War I. After the British conquest of Palestine during the war, Friedenwald served as chairman of the Zionist Commission and was involved in war recovery and health projects in the Yishuv.
- ga’on (pl. ge’onim)** “excellency”; term referring to the head of a Babylonian academy, 6th–11th century.
- Galicia** The part of Poland under Habsburg control from the time of the partition of Poland at the end of the 18th century. The major cities were Krakow in the west and the provincial capital, Lemberg (Lviv), in the east. Approximately one tenth of Galicia’s population was

Jewish. Approximately one quarter or more of the population of both Lemberg and Krakow was Jewish in the 19th century, and Jews were the majority in several Galician towns.

**galut** Hebrew word for exile, captivity.

**Gaon** Rabbi Elijah ben Judah Solomon Zalman, a literary Torah genius, was known as “the Vilna Gaon.” He and his followers opposed the Hasidic movement and were known as “mitnaggedim,” or opponents.

**Gaul** The region of ancient Europe that includes present-day France, southern Belgium, western Germany, and northern Italy. Gaul was conquered by Julius Caesar in 58–50 BCE and administered as Roman provinces until the fifth century CE. The Jewish presence in Gaul dates from the fourth century CE.

**Gehenna (or Gehinnom)** In rabbinic discourse, the place of dreadful punishment, or hell, for the unrighteous in the afterlife; it is usually identified with an infamous site of child sacrifice in the biblical era.

**genizah** A store of religious books and appurtenances, especially in Cairo.

**Geonic** The literature composed by the Geonim. The Geonim were the leading rabbis in Babylonia and Palestine who lived under the Muslims and wrote in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic.

**ger toshav (righteous Gentile)** A non-Jew whom rabbinic Judaism affirms will have a share in the world to come when the world is redeemed at the end of days.

**ger, gerim** A biblical term that means alien resident; in rabbinic Judaism, the term comes to mean a convert.

**German Immigration Law** The law went into force on January 1, 2005, after a long and difficult legislative process and an intense public discussion. For the first time in Germany, immigration is officially recognized and a legislative framework is provided to control it. Key principles are to manage immigration in a way that takes Germany’s economic and social needs into account, to fulfill humanitarian obligations derived from the German constitution, to integrate legal immigrants living permanently in Germany, to advocate Germany’s views within the European Union and the United Nation, and to ensure the protection and security of Germany and the people who live there.

**Geshem** Prayer for rain.

**get (pl. gittin)** Religious divorce.

**Golda Meir (Meyerson) (1898–1978)** Israel’s fourth prime minister (1969–1974). Born in Kiev in 1898, she immigrated to the United States as a young child and then moved to Palestine in 1921. After spending some time on a kibbutz, she became a leader of the Histadrut, Israel’s labor union. She was one of the signers of Israel’s Declaration of Independence and served in various ministerial positions before becoming prime minister.

**Goren, Shlomo (1917–1994)** Chief rabbi of the Israel Defence Forces and, later, of the State of Israel (1949–1968).

**goy (pl. goyim)** In the Bible, the term means a member of any nation; in rabbinic Judaism, it comes to mean a non-Jew.

**Guide of the Perplexed** The major text on Jewish philosophy by Moses Maimonides.

**Habad** An acrostic form of the initial letters of the Hebrew words *hokhma* (wisdom), *binah* (understanding), and *da’at* (knowledge), these are the first three of the ten sefirot. Habad is also the name of the intellectual school of Hasidism founded by Shneur Zalman of Liadi and otherwise known as Lubavitch.

**Hacı-Girây** Khan of the Crimean khanate from the 1440s until 1466. His rule was beneficial for Crimean Jews. In 1459, he granted a bill of rights to the Jews living in Qırqyer.

**Hadassah** A women’s international Zionist service organization founded in the United States in 1912 by Henrietta Szold (1860–1945). The largest women’s and Zionist membership organization in the United States, Hadassah has more than 300,000 members.

- Hadith, the** A body of writings that developed in the century after Muhammad's death in 632 that narrates what he and his companions did and said and redacts much oral tradition, law, and legend; it is central for commentary and interpretation of the Koran. It is scathing in its relentless vituperation against the Jews.
- haftarah (pl. haftarot)** Prophetic readings.
- haham (pl. hahamim)** Means sage; literally, "wise one"
- Haketía (also known as North African Judeo-Spanish)** A fusion language spoken by North African Sephardim; it is composed of elements originating in Old Castilian and other medieval Ibero-Romance varieties, Hebrew and Aramaic, North African Arabic, Berber, and French, with significant internal innovations. *See also* Judezmo.
- hakham bashi** Chief rabbi appointed by the Ottoman government to be head of the community and pay and collect taxes. He was distinguished by his fine robes, ceremonial medals and gold embroidery, the size and color of his turban, and the long, wide sleeves of his outer garments. The hakham bashi had two government-appointed bodyguards who carried his staff of office and cleared the way for him.
- Halabies** Syrian Jews from Aleppo.
- Halacha** The generic term for the entire body of Jewish law, religious and civil law as opposed to the nonlegal or Aggadic aspect of Judaism.
- Halevi, Yehudah** A 12th-century Spanish Jewish philosopher and poet best known for his religious philosophy book *Sefer ha-Kuzari* (The Book of the Kuzari). He based the book on the story of the conversion of the Khazar king Bwl'n to Rabbinical Judaism and intended to prove the truth and beauty of the religion.
- halutz** A pioneering Zionist who worked on the land or in industry, generally in the pre-1948 period. The term is rife with connotations, referring to a new sort of pioneering Jew. Primarily, but not exclusively, it is associated with Labor Zionist heritage and often refers to a Zionist pioneer who worked on the communal settlements.
- Hamburg** A German city with noted Sephardi and Ashkenazi traditions.
- Hannover, Nathan** A 17th-century kabbalist, historian, and liturgist.
- Hanukkah** The Jewish festival celebrating the rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees after it was desecrated by Greek invaders.
- Haquitia (also written Haketia and Hakitia)** Today this Jewish-Moroccan language, also known as Djudeo Español or Ladino Occidental, is almost extinct. It was spoken on the northeast coast of Morocco and used by many Moroccan Jews who immigrated to the Amazon region. It is a mix of old Spanish, Hebrew, and Arabic words and was originally written using Hebrew letters.
- harbi** An unprotected infidel targeted by jihad.
- Harbin** The capital city of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province when thousands of Jewish people lived here between the late 19th century and mid-20th century.
- Harkavy, Alexander (1863–1939)** A philologist and author of Yiddish dictionaries.
- Hasdai ibn Shaprut** A 10th-century Spanish Jewish diplomat and physician, Hasdai wrote letters to various Jewish communities, including those of Babylonia and Khazaria. His letter to King Joseph of Khazaria, in which he asked Joseph about the country and its people, is one of his most famous writings.
- Hashofar** Periodical publication of the Bulgarian Zionists.
- Hashomer Hatsair** A Zionist youth organization, established in Bulgaria in 1921.
- Hasid (pl. Hasidim), Hasidic (pious)** Followers of Israel ben Eliezer (1698–1760) and other Hasidic masters
- Hasidim** Members of the Jewish religious group of Hasidic Judaism, which began in Eastern Europe in the 18th century. From the Hebrew "chasidut," meaning "piety," and the Hebrew root word "chesed," meaning "loving kindness."

- Hasidut** Hasidic philosophy based on Kabbalah and its application in social wisdom.
- Haskalah (Enlightenment)** A movement to assimilate Jews into modern European culture and promote secular education (1750–1880).
- hassagat gevul (Deuteronomy 19:14)** Encroachment on another's territory.
- hazzan (pl. hazzanim)** cantor.
- heave-offering (Hebrew, *terumah*)** According to biblical law, a portion of the produce that must be separated from the total output and assigned to the priests, to be consumed only in a state of purity.
- Hebrew Christian** A Jewish convert to Christianity who leaves the Jewish community and joins a Christian church. They do not consider Jewish life to be a matter of covenant responsibility and attach little or no importance to Jewish continuity.
- Hebrew Scriptures** The Jewish canon of the Bible.
- heder** A yeshiva system in Israel in which young men mandated to fulfill military duty (high school graduates) can instead do a combined program in which they both perform their army service and study in yeshiva over a five-year period.
- herem** A decree of religious excommunication or a ban based on Numbers 18:14.
- Herod** The often ruthless king of Judea who ruled from 37 BCE to 4 CE.
- Herzl, Theodor (1860–1904)** Herzl was the founder of the political Zionist movement, which called for the migration of Jews to Palestine. Herzl sought to open up Palestine, which was then a territory of the Ottoman Empire, to Jewish immigration. In 1897, Herzl organized and was elected head of the First Zionist Congress. When the Ottomans rejected Jewish immigration to Palestine, Herzl approached the British government with plans to permit the creation of Jewish colonies in Egypt and Uganda. He died prematurely before a Jewish homeland could be created.
- Herzog, Isaac HaLevy (1889–1959)** The first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of the State of Israel.
- Hibat Zion (literally, “Lovers of Zion”)** Groups of Jews who organized in the 1880s in Eastern Europe for aliyah immigration and settlement in Ottoman-controlled Palestine.
- Hoffmann, David** An Orthodox leader; rector of Hildesheimer seminary 1899–1921.
- Holocaust denial (commonly called Holocaust revisionism)** The belief that the Holocaust did not happen as described by mainstream historiography. The belief fundamentally rejects the facts that the Nazi government targeted Jews, those with Jewish ancestry, and Gypsies for extermination as peoples; that more than 6 million Jews were systematically killed by the Nazis and their allies; and that tools of efficient mass extermination, such as gas chambers, were used in extermination camps to kill Jews.
- Hoshen mishpat (Breastplate of Judgement; Exodus 28:15)** Halachic work on civil law.
- Iberia, Iberian** Refers to the Iberian Peninsula and islands: today's Spain and Portugal.
- Ibn Khurradadhbih** Ninth-century Islamic geographer whose treatise *Kitab al-Masalik wa'l-Mamalik* (Book of Roads and Kingdoms) includes descriptions of many distant lands, including India, Burma, China, and the Spice Islands, then familiar to the Islamic world. In particular, Ibn Khurradidhbah reports the prodigious trading routes followed by the Jews of Radhan.
- Ibn Nahmias, David and Shmuel** Owners of the first printing house in the Ottoman Empire, 1493–1518.
- intifada** An Arabic word meaning “uprising.” It has come into common English usage to describe two Palestinian directives aimed at ending Israeli military presence. The first intifada occurred from 1987 to 1991 or 1993 (when the Oslo Peace Accords were signed). The Al-Aqsa Intifada (the second) was the violent conflict that began in 2000.
- Isaiah** A Judean prophet during the first Babylonian exile who presented a universalistic interpretation of the relationship between God and Israel.
- Israel Ihiuve** Booklet in the Thadou language prepared by T. Daniel and his colleagues, Joseph Jacob and Sum Samuel, proclaiming the Chin-Kuki-Mizo people to be descendants

of Israelites. This booklet was influential in setting the course for the adoption of Judaism in the region.

**Israeli** A term used to describe citizens of the modern State of Israel. It also refers to the modern Hebrew language in distinction from Biblical Hebrew.

**Istria (Siliistra)** Ancient center of Jewish life in the Roman Empire.

**Ivan-Asen II** King of Bulgaria who received the “heretic” Jews from Hungary in 1238.

**Izmir** An important Turkish town in Jewish history in the 17th and 18th centuries.

**Jackson-Vanik amendment** U.S. law signed in January 1975 that denied normal trade relations to states that restrict emigration rights. This bill was intended to place pressure on the Soviet Union, which was then preventing Jews from emigrating.

**Jakov, Frank** Pseudo-messiah from Nikopol in the 18th century.

**Jewish National Fund (JNF)** The JNF was created by the fifth Zionist Congress in 1901 as a national fund to purchase land in Palestine. Over the past century, the JNF has planted more than 240 million trees and has developed more than a quarter million acres of land throughout Israel.

**Jewish National Party (Austria)** Closely associated with (indeed a domestic political form of) the Zionist movement, this political party contested elections to Austria’s parliament, sending three deputies from Galicia to Vienna in 1907.

**Jews for Jesus** A Protestant evangelical missionary organization that represents a Hebrew Christian orientation toward Jewish life and identity; it should not be confused with Messianic Jews, Messianic Judaism, or Messianic synagogues.

**jihād** The Islamic war waged to impose Islamic law over the world.

**jizya** Head tax paid by the head of the Jewish or Christian community based on male head of household. The tax was paid to the Muslim government as part of the *dhimmi* status of Jews or Christians.

**Joseph II (1740–1790)** The son of Maria Theresa, Joseph became Holy Roman emperor in 1765 and sole ruler of the Habsburg monarchy in 1780. He was an enlightened absolutist of conviction and introduced many rational and radical reforms in the Habsburg monarchy, including a set of Toleration Edicts for his Jewish subjects in Bohemia (1781), Moravia (1782), Hungary (1783), and Galicia (1789). Although these have subsequently been criticized as a harsh attack on Jewish communal autonomy, at the time many maskilim saw them as progressive measures of emancipation.

**Joseph, King of the Khazars** He succeeded to the throne after the death of his father, King Aaron. As the ruler of Khazaria in the middle of the 10th century, Joseph struggled against increasingly dangerous military threats from neighboring Kievan Rus’ and the Pecheneg people.

**Josephus** A Jewish historian in the employ of the Romans who wrote a history of the Jews in the first century and several other books.

**Judah Ha-Levi (d. 1140 CE)** A medieval Jewish philosopher and poet from Muslim Andalusia who presented a distinctively particularistic interpretation of the Jewish people.

**Judah Ha-Nasi (b. ca. 135 CE)** A rabbi who governed Judea as a nasi (president of the ruling rabbinic assembly, the Sanhedrin) during the first and second century CE.

**Judea** The historical Jewish territory in present-day Israel. The land became a united Jewish entity in the second millennium BCE and was conquered by the Babylonian empire in the sixth century. From the fourth to second centuries it was ruled by the Hellenic Greeks. In 141 BCE, Judea became an autonomous Jewish state. Self-rule lasted until 63 BCE when it became a Roman possession. In 400 CE, Judea came under the control of the Byzantine Empire, and in 638 CE, it fell to Arab rule. In the 1500s, Judea was annexed to the Ottoman Turkish Empire, and in 1919 it was incorporated into the British-ruled Palestinian Mandate.

- Judenrat** Administrative bodies that the Germans required Jews to form in each ghetto in Nazi-occupied Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Judeophobia** Irrational hatred of Jews, sometimes grounded in rational opposition to Judaism.
- Judezmo (also known as Djidyó, Ladino, Judeo-Spanish, Spanyol)** A fusion language spoken by Ottoman Sephardim, composed of elements originating in Old Castilian and other medieval Ibero-Romance varieties, Hebrew and Aramaic, Arabic, Turkish, Greek and other Balkan languages, Turkish, Italian, and French, and exhibiting significant internal innovations. *See also* Haketía.
- Justinian (527–565)** Byzantine emperor; during his reign anti-Jewish legislation came into force.
- Kabbalah** Collective term for all forms of Jewish mysticism; the chief work is the Zohar.
- Kaddish** Prayer of sanctification; versions include Mourner's Kaddish.
- Kadoorie** Baghdadi Jewish family of industrialists, businessmen, and philanthropists, based in Hong Kong beginning in the late 19th century. Their commercial interests included hotels, banking, power generation, textile manufacture, and mass transport facilities. While living outside Iraq, the family showed continued interest in the country, endowing separate schools for Jewish boys and girls (both academic and an atelier for training in sewing) in various towns, agricultural schools for Jews and Arabs, an eye hospital, and a school for the blind. Other educational facilities supported by the family included a school for the Marathi-speaking Bene Israel in Bombay, agricultural schools in Israel and Canton, a chair in physics at Hong Kong University, and a contribution toward establishing the Hebrew University. Several members of the family were honored with knighthoods, and Baron Laurence Kadoorie of Hong Kong (1899 to 1993) was made a British life peer in 1981.
- Kaffa** A city situated on the Crimean Peninsula, today called Feodosiya. Jews were living in Kaffa by the late 13th century. As it developed, it included both Karaite and Rabbinical Jews. The Rabbinical community was quite diverse, consisting of Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Romaniots, Babylonians, and others.
- Kafka, Franz (1883–1924)** A world-renowned author of alienation and a leading figure in the literary movement of German Expressionism, Kafka also saw the German usage of Central European Jews as a “minor language” unto itself, a view that has fascinated many students of the immense contribution of German-speaking Jews to modern German and world literature.
- kahal (pl. kehillot)** The official governing body of the traditional Jewish communities in Russia. This body was elected every year by all taxpayers and was dominated by the local financial elite. Beside its role as the official representative body of the Jewish community, the kahal was mainly involved in internal affairs, such as setting annual regulations in regard to tax payments, providing the sources and supervising the methods of weekly charity distributions to the poor and needy, providing basic education for orphans and children of poor families, assisting poor brides, and running the local burial system. The institution of the kahal was abolished by the Russian government in 1844.
- Kaifeng** City in China with historic Jewish tradition.
- kaji** The religious and communal leaders of the Bene Israel during the 18th and 19th centuries in rural Konkan. The term “kaji” was given by their “discoverer,” patron, and teacher, David Rahabi of Cochin.
- Kallen, Horace (1882–1974)** Jewish American philosopher. Kallen received his bachelor's degree and doctorate from Harvard University and developed his influential theory of cultural pluralism from 1915 through the 1920s.

- Kaplan, Mordecai Menahem (1881–1983)** Kaplan was associated with the Conservative movement in American Judaism his entire life. In 1934, he published *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life* in which he set out the principles of Reconstructionist Judaism. He emphasized Judaism as a religious culture that embraced both a Jewish homeland in Israel and a vibrant Diaspora community.
- Karaism, Karaite** A form of Judaism based on the Hebrew Bible to the exclusion of rabbinic oral tradition. In the 10th and 11th centuries, Karaism was marked by a flourishing center in Jerusalem with writers producing a wide range of material, including biblical commentary, Halachic compendia, and philosophy, among others.
- karet (excision)** A penalty prescribed in the Torah for several serious sins: “the soul shall be cut off from among its people.” According to the standard rabbinic interpretation, it refers to a divinely inflicted premature death.
- Karo, Josef** Author of the famous Halachic work, *Shulan Aruh*.
- kashruth** Dietary laws (adjective, kosher).
- Kassin, Jacob (1900–1994)** Chief rabbi of Brooklyn’s Syrian and Near Eastern Jewish community from 1933 until his death.
- kavvanah** Intention, meditation.
- Keren ha Yesod** The main fund for the construction of Palestine.
- ketubah (pl. ketuboth)** The Hebrew term for a marriage contract. This economic contract, instituted in the rabbinic period to guarantee financial resources for widows and divorcées, includes details of the amount payable to a wife after her husband’s death or dissolution of her marriage.
- Kfar Habad** Habad Hasidic village in Israel, just outside Tel Aviv.
- khachkar** An Armenian word meaning “cross-stone.” A khachkar was an Armenian Christian gravestone that featured inscribed crosses in the design. Jewish gravestones in medieval Armenia had similar ornamentation and symbols, but lacked the Christian-specific cross motif.
- kharaaj** A land tax imposed on non-Muslim *dhimmi*s in Muslim societies.
- khawaja** A Persian word meaning “master, respected person.” It was in use by the Jews of Eghegis, Armenia, and is one of several clues pointing to the probable Persian origins of Armenia’s medieval Jewish community.
- Khazar** Seminomadic Turkish people from Central Asia who led a powerful state in the northern Caucasus from the 7th to the 10th centuries. Originally Shamanists, some of them converted to Judaism, others to Islam or Christianity. They founded a polity in the Caucus region in which Judaism became the official religion.
- kipa (pl. kipot)** Yarmulke; skullcap worn by religiously observant males and, more recently, some females.
- Kitzur Shulchan Aruch** The 19th-century legal commentary that is supposed to be a summary of the Shulchan Aruch, a Jewish law code.
- Knesset** The parliament of Israel; literally means “assembly.”
- kollel (pl. kollelim)** Institute of fellowship-supported Talmud study, typically for married men.
- Konkan Coast** Located immediately south of Bombay (Mumbai), the Konkan Coast has been home to a Jewish population for centuries.
- Koran** The Muslim holy book believed by them to have been revealed by God to Muhammad the Prophet over the course of his lifetime. The canonical version dates from about 651, when Caliph Othman promulgated it, having destroyed all other competing versions. It is both negative and positive in its references to the Jews, but over the centuries commentators have ignored or obscured the positive references.
- kosher** Food prepared in accordance with Jewish laws.
- Kozer, José** Jewish Cuban author.

- Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass)** A massive nationwide pogrom in Germany and Austria on the night of November 9, 1938 (including the early hours of the following day). It was directed at Jewish citizens throughout the country and preceded the events of the Holocaust.
- Law of Denaturalization** A law passed by the Iraqi parliament on March 9, 1950, authorizing Jewish emigration for a period of one year. The Jews who registered had to give up their Iraqi citizenship and were obliged not to return.
- Lazarus, Emma (1849–1887)** This Jewish American poet affirmed her Jewish heritage only toward the end of her life, in response to the plight of Russian Jewry and the pogroms of 1880. She recognized two streams of Jewish exile—some turning to their ancient homeland in Israel and others to the new hope of Western civilization, the United States. This latter idea animates her most famous poem, “The New Colossus,” which is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor.
- Lebenson, Abraham (Adam Ha-Cohen; 1794–1878)** The most famous Hebrew poet in mid-19th-century Eastern Europe, Lebenson was also known as a playwright and philologist. He was a key figure in the early Jewish enlightened circles in Vilnius and served as a teacher in the local governmental rabbinic seminary.
- Leeser, Isaac (1806–1868)** A Philadelphia-based rabbi and a leading Jewish spokesman in the United States in the middle decades of the 19th century. As editor of the Jewish periodical *The Occident*, and in numerous other ways, Leeser influenced processes of change and continuity in American Judaism.
- Leschchinsky, Jacob (1876–1966)** An economist and sociologist, head of the department of economy and statistics in YIVO, the Jewish scientific institute.
- Levinas, Emmanuel (1906–1995)** Major post-World War II French Jewish philosopher. Noted works include *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (1963) and *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (1972).
- Lilienthal, Max (1815–1882)** Born in Munich, Lilienthal migrated to the United States after serving the Russian government in its attempt to modernize its Jewry. From 1855 onward he was an influential leader and spokesman for American Reform Judaism. He stressed the “spirit of our glorious American institutions” and sought to foster a uniquely American Judaism.
- limpieza de sangre** Spanish term for having no Jewish ancestry; it translates roughly as “clean blood.”
- Lopato brothers** The representatives of Karaites in Harbin were Ely Aaronovitch Lopato (1874–1936) and Abraham Aaronovitch Lopato (1877–1953). They built a large tobacco factory in Harbin in early 20th century.
- Luria, Isaac (“The Ari”)** Kabbalistic thinker in 16th-century Safed.
- ma'amad** Money sent to the rebbe for his upkeep.
- ma'amar** A Hasidic discourse.
- Magain Shalome Synagogue** Built in Karachi in 1893 by Shalome Solomon Umerdekar and his son Gershone Solomon, the synagogue was torn down by property developers in the 1980s to clear the ground for a commercial building.
- Magen David Adom** Israel's national emergency medical, disaster, ambulance, and blood bank service. The name means “Red Shield of David,” but is usually translated as “Red Star of David.”
- maggid (pl. maggidim)** A preacher.
- Maggid-Shteichneider, Hillel Noah (1829–1903)** A stonemason and the first historian of the Vilna Jewish community. By using different types of sources, including thousands of epitaphs from the local Jewish cemeteries, he composed and published a collective communal biography: *Ir Vilna* (The City of Vilnius).

- Magyarization** The policy and process used after Hungary achieved autonomy in 1867 by which non-Magyar speakers in Hungary (approximately 60 percent of the population in 1867) were turned into Magyar speakers in order to strengthen and confirm Hungarian (Magyar) national unity. This process was largely part of education policy and was partly voluntary, as was the case with the linguistic transformation within the Jewish community. In other cases, especially regarding Romanians and Slovaks, the process was associated with harsh coercive measures.
- mahzor** Prayer tradition; festival prayer book.
- Maimonides, Moses (1135–1204)** An influential rabbi-philosopher and the most important Jewish physician in premodern times. A citizen of Cairo, expelled from his native Spain by an intolerant Islamic sect, Maimonides achieved renown for codifying Jewish law and applying Aristotelian logic to the Jewish scriptures and the Talmud by distinguishing between what is to be taken literally and what is to be interpreted allegorically, figuratively, or hyperbolically. A physician by profession, Maimonides also systematized and codified the classical Greco-Roman medical texts, while making his own contributions, particularly in the field of mental health.
- mamzerim** A biblical term for illegitimate offspring, who may not marry other Hebrews. According to the prevalent rabbinic interpretation, this status applies primarily to the children of incestuous or adulterous unions.
- Manmasi/Manasi** Putative ancestor of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo people, frequently identified with Manasseh in the Bible.
- Ma'oz Tzur** Hymn sung on Hanukkah.
- Marrano (literally, “pig”)** A pejorative designation the Spaniards used for Jews who converted to Catholicism, whether unwillingly or not. In Portugal the term often does not have such a strong negative association; nevertheless, in both Spain and Portugal other terms are preferred.
- mashgiah (pl. mashgihim)** Kosher supervisor.
- matricentric family group** A matricentric group is based on the mother and her children, centered on the mother, and is typical of patriarchal societies. The mother forms close affectionate ties with her children. Strong affectionate ties are also found in sibling groups. In patriarchal societies, the father is often perceived by his sons and daughters as a remote, formal, demanding figure, but the mother is perceived as a warm, nurturing, close, caring, informal, supportive figure. In such societies, women gain considerable informal power through their influence over their children. This is the source of the folk image of the “Jewish mother” or “Italian mother.” Within patrilineal patriarchal extended family households women acquire great behind-the-scenes power over their husbands and daughters-in-law through their control over their sons.
- matzo** Unleavened bread for Passover festival.
- Mekhilta** Early midrashic collections on the book of Exodus. Two Mekhiltas are known, that of Rabbi Ishmael and that of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai.
- Mercaz USA** The Zionist membership organization of the Conservative movement, Mercaz USA represents Conservative Jewry within the World Zionist Organization.
- Merkaz L'Inyanei Hinukh (Centre for Educational Issues)** The primary organization of the Habad movement under Ramash.
- Messiah (English adjective: messianic)** From the Hebrew for “anointed.” In biblical times, the ceremonies for installing priests and kings involved the ritual anointing of their heads with olive oil. Hence, the vision of restored Jewish sovereignty in a redeemed future came to be associated with the figure of an anointed monarch from the line of King David, who will rule over an ideal and united Israel in the end of days.

- Messianic (Judeo-Christian) communities** These are synagogues where all facets of Jewish teaching, worship, and way of life are understood and practiced in the light of Messiah *Yeshua* (Jesus). Messianic synagogues are the communal context in which Messianic Jews live out their covenant responsibilities as Jews.
- Messianism** Belief in the coming of the Messiah.
- Metz** A city in northeastern France. Formerly an independent city within the Holy Roman Empire, Metz came under French control in 1552. It was the first home to Ashkenazi Jews in France after the expulsion of 1394, and by the 18th century, Metz was a center of Talmudic scholarship. Geographically part of the region of Lorraine, Metz became German after the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871). It returned to French control after World War I.
- midrash** The component of ancient rabbinic teachings and literature that is related to the Bible. The term “midrash” (from a root meaning “search, seek”) can refer to the method of interpretation, to the teachings themselves, or to the collections and books in which they appear. Midrash can be exegetical, focusing on the systematic interpretation of biblical texts, or homiletic, artistically using biblical quotations to fashion a structured literary sermon.
- midrashot (pl. midrashah)** Institutions of higher Jewish learning for women.
- mikvah** A ritual bath containing some water of natural origin, such as rain water, spring water, lake water, and the like, which are used by Jewish married women and men.
- Mikveh Israel** First permanent Jewish house of worship in Pennsylvania in 1740.
- millet system** Separates the non-Muslim population into religious communities with internal autonomy in Ottoman Empire.
- minhag (pl. minhagim)** Custom, religious tradition.
- minyán (pl. minyanim)** A quorum of 10 Jewish males with whom it is permissible to recite certain prayers.
- Mishawites** A movement based on teachings of the ninth-century Mishawayh al-‘Ukbari. Mishawites observed a solar calendar and differed with other Jews on dietary laws. They were known in 12th-century Byzantium, but likely died out in the 13th century.
- Mishnah** The first document of rabbinic Judaism, a legal composition edited early in the third century CE by Judah Ha-Nasi. It is the first legal code to define Jewish practice and belief but contains statements attributed to rabbis who lived over the preceding approximately 200 years. Referred to variously as a legal code, a transcript of scholastic debates, or a rabbinic study book, the Mishnah presents in highly formalized language anonymous rules as well as discussions by named rabbis on a wide range of issues important to the implementation of rules only briefly sketched in the Hebrew Bible. Judaism views the Mishnah as the central core of the Oral Law (*Torah She’BI Peh*) understood to have been transmitted by God to Moses at Mount Sinai along with the written revelation preserved in the Hebrew Scriptures. Accordingly, although the Mishnah’s rules are cited in the names of specific rabbinic authorities, they are understood to have their ultimate legitimacy as aspects of the original revelation of God to the people of Israel. This Mishnah stands at the foundation of the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, the defining documents of rabbinic religion, which are commentaries on the Mishnah’s laws and discussions.
- Mishneh Torah** The major text in Jewish law; it was written by Moses Maimonides in the 12th century.
- Mithraism** The worship of Mithras, the Persian god of light often identified with the sun; the religion was especially popular among the Roman military and was a strong rival to Christianity in its early stages.
- mitnagged (pl. mitnaggedim)** Refers to mainstream Orthodoxy, which opposed the Hasidic movement.

- mitzvah (commandment)** Religious duty or obligation.
- Mizoram** State in northeast India with a population of around 800,000, more than 90 percent of whom belong to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes.
- modernity** The period in Jewish history, beginning in the last quarter of the 19th century, marking the political end of rabbinic governance, when Jews in large numbers accepted citizenship in European nation states.
- mohel (pl. mohels)** A circumciser.
- Montefiore family** A distinguished Anglo-Italian Jewish family, various members of which have played a role in the development of the Australian Jewish community. Sir Moses Montefiore was a benefactor to many congregations across the continent in the 19th century. Jacob Montefiore was 1 of 11 commissioners appointed to establish the city of Adelaide in 1835. Joseph Barrow Montefiore became a pastoralist and businessman in the first half of the 19th century. Denzil Sebag Montefiore, president of the World Sephardi Federation, financed the purchase of property to build the first Sephardi Synagogue in Australia in 1962.
- Mourners of Zion (also known as Mourners for Zion)** A medieval Jewish movement in Constantinople during the middle ages whose ideology was centered on the loss of the Temple and its absence in the Exile. It was characterized by pietism, religious rigor, and a positive concern for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel.
- Musar movement** An ethical movement developing in the latter part of the 19th century among Orthodox Jewish groups in Lithuania; founded by R. Israel Lipkin.
- National Committee for Labor Israel** A group created in 1923 in New York that supports Israel's labor sphere; working with the American labor movement and Jewish communities, the organization supports labor Zionist institutions.
- National Council of Jewish Women** A women's service organization founded in the United States in 1893 by Hannah Greenebaum Solomon (1858–1942).
- Nebuchadnezzar** King of Babylon between 604 BCE and 561 BCE. He was traditionally thought to act cruelly toward the people he conquered, including the Israelites. Under his rule Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and the Israelites were exiled from the Land of Israel.
- New Christians** The term (*Cristianos Nuevos* in Spanish and *Cristãos Novos* in Portuguese) used to refer to the Jews and Muslims (Moors) who converted to Christianity and their baptized descendants. After the expulsion of the Jewish population from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497, the remaining Jewish population became officially Christian. The Spanish Inquisition in 1478 and the Portuguese Inquisition in 1536 were created because of a claimed need to fight heresy. Although much of the apostasy was related to Christian paganism, the Church also believed many New Christians were practicing their original religion in secret. The inquisitional concept of cleanliness of blood (*limpieza de sangre*, in Spanish, *limpeza de sangue*, in Portuguese) divided New Christians from society, independent of their degree of sincerity as Christian converts.
- nussah** Jewish prayer text and tradition (including melodies).
- oleh (pl. olim)** A Jew who immigrates to Israel. The term literally means ascender, as Israel, the Holy Land, is viewed as the highest land spiritually.
- One Million Plan** A Zionist plan, designed in 1943–1944, to bring 1 million Jews from Europe and the Middle East to Palestine as a means and a stage to establish a state. It was the first time the Jews of Islamic countries were explicitly included in a Zionist plan.
- ORT** Charitable program founded in 1880 in Czarist Russia; it was originally called Drop of Milk and was later known as ORT (in Russian *Obshestvo Remeslenofo zemledelcheskofo Truda*, which means Organization for the Distribution of Artisanal and Agricultural Skills among the Jews). It has worked in many countries where Jews were in need.

- Orthodox Judaism** Modern Orthodox Judaism can be traced back to Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888) and other traditionalist rabbinic leaders in Italy and Germany who resisted efforts to reform Jewish religious life. Orthodoxy originally rejected Zionism (although Hirsch's grandson Isaac Breuer [1883–1946] embraced religious Zionism). This movement encompasses traditionalists who reject Zionism and modernization as well as modernists, many of whom affirm the State of Israel and negate the Diaspora.
- other** A specialized term used in medieval Jewish philosophy to denote God as a being who is beyond description, and in modern French philosophy to identify the person with whom individuals enter into moral relations. The counterpart to this term in modern German Jewish philosophy is the “neighbor.”
- Ottoman Sephardim** Descendants of medieval Iberian Jewry who, after expulsions and forced conversions, made their home in the former Ottoman Empire, its successor states, and immigrant communities elsewhere.
- Pact of Umar** Laws created in 717 CE that set the foundation for the way Muslims treat Christians and Jews living in Muslim lands. They included regulations such as wearing distinctive dress, not riding horses or any animal that would make a Muslim look up to a Jew, not building new synagogues or churches, and not selling alcoholic beverages.
- Pale of Settlement** An area in western Russia, from 1762 to 1917, in which Jews were permitted to reside. Areas of Russia beyond the Pale were closed to Jewish settlement; a small number of Jews could live there only with special permission.
- Palestinian messengers (Hebrew, *Shlichot Me-eretz Yisrael*)** Refers to itinerant rabbis who visited such places as colonial America to collect money for Jewish settlements in Israel and who also brought Jewish culture to Diaspora communities.
- paradise (Hebrew, *Gan Eden*)** In traditional Jewish thought it is the place of eternal reward for the righteous in the afterlife.
- Parsi** A member of the Zoroastrian community based in the Indian subcontinent. Parsis are descended from Persian Zoroastrians who immigrated to the Indian subcontinent more than 1,000 years ago to escape religious persecution after the Islamic conquest. Their population is seriously declining due to various reasons. Over the centuries the Parsis have integrated into Indian society while maintaining their distinct religion, customs, and traditions. Their lingua franca is Gujarati, and Avesta is the language of the ancient religious texts. Their contributions to India and Pakistan in the areas of education, medicine, commerce, and the arts and sciences have been outstanding.
- patrilineal descent** According to the Halacha (Jewish law) the offspring of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father are recognized as Jews, but the offspring of a non-Jewish mother and a Jewish father are considered non-Jews. In 1983, the Central Conference of American Rabbis declared that children are “under the presumption of Jewish descent if either of their parents are Jewish.”
- Pesach (Passover)** A festival celebrating the exodus of the Jews from Egyptian slavery.
- Philipopolis (Plovdiv)** One of the most significant towns in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula where the oldest known synagogue in Bulgaria was found.
- Philippi** A town in Thrace (modern-day Greece), mentioned in the biblical book of Acts, or Apostles' Deeds, as a Jewish settlement.
- pidyon haben** Redemption of first-born son (Numbers 18:15).
- piyyut (pl. piyyuyum)** A liturgical poem.
- pogrom** An act of group violence, often organized or permitted by the government, against Jews in Eastern Europe.
- posek (pl. poskim)** The term for an authoritative decider on Halacha.
- Purim** A festival marking events in Book of Esther.
- rabbanit** The wife of a rabbi; a learned or highly respected woman.

- rabbi (my master)** A title that came into use toward the end of the first century CE to designate an ordained authority on Jewish tradition, authorized to serve as a judge on a religious court and to issue rulings on matters of religious law and practice. “Rav” is an alternative form for the title “rabbi,” bestowed on Babylonian teachers who did not acquire full ordination.
- rabbinic Judaism** The form of postbiblical Judaism in which officials identified as rabbis govern the Jewish people by a tradition of decisions by earlier rabbis whose authority rests on a claim that the words of the Torah are divinely revealed.
- Rabbinite** A term to identify Jews and Judaism whose communities and leadership are rabbinic, in contradistinction to Karaism and other nonrabbinic types of Judaism.
- Radhan** A quarter of medieval Baghdad, the Jewish inhabitants of which were renowned for their trading routes, which stretched right across Europe and Asia.
- Radhanites** Rabbinical Jewish traders in Europe and Asia during the early Middle Ages who dealt in such commodities as spices, jewelry, and furs. They probably played a role in encouraging the Khazars to convert to Rabbinical Judaism.
- Rahabi, David (1720–1791)** Son of and successor to Ezekiel Rahabi. A Hebrew author and merchant who “discovered” the Bene Israel and recognized their Jewishness.
- Rashi** An 11th-century leading commentator on Bible and Talmud in northern France.
- rebbe** A Hasidic spiritual leader.
- rebbetzin** A Yiddish term for the wife of a rabbi; a learned or highly respected woman.
- Reconquista** The recapture by Christian Spaniards of parts of Spain conquered by the Moors in 711; the Reconquista ended in 1492 with the expulsion of the Moors and Jews.
- Reconstructionist Judaism** This recent movement in American Jewry follows the teachings of Mordecai Kaplan. While resisting creating a new Jewish movement, Kaplan organized the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (1922), the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation (1941), and the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations (1955). Finally, in 1967, he was persuaded to break with the Conservative movement by founding a Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.
- Red de Juderías en España (Network of Spanish Jewish Quarters)** A Spanish organization open to towns that choose to celebrate their Jewish history with various types of events.
- redemption** The sought after state of the entire universe in the end of days.
- Reform Judaism** This form of modern Judaism began in Germany under the influence of such figures as Abraham Geiger (1810–1874). It emphasizes the evolving nature of Jewish belief and practice. Although American Reform Judaism rejected Zionism through the 1940s and affirmed the importance of Diaspora Judaism, after the establishment of the State of Israel anti-Zionism was rejected. Reform Judaism today honors the State of Israel but still gives primacy to the Jewish communities of the Diaspora.
- refusenik** Someone, especially a Jew, who was refused permission to emigrate (usually to Israel) from the former Soviet Union; someone who refuses to comply with laws or follow orders, especially as a protest.
- Reizen, Zalman (1887–1940)** A key figure among the “Yiddishists” in Vilnius, Lithuania, and editor of several Yiddish newspapers and journals (e.g., *Vilner Tog*, *Yivo Bletter*). Among his many publications is the lexicon of Yiddish literature, press, and philology.
- Religious Zionists of America (RZA)** The American branch of the World Mizrahi/Hapoel Hamizrachi movement, the RZA cultivates religious Zionist commitments among American Jews and supports affiliate religious Zionist organizations, including the Bnei Akiva youth movement.
- Reshit Tzemihat Ge’ulatenu (the beginning of the flowering of our redemption)** The return to Zion, the return of the Judean exiles to Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile, under the Persian king Cyrus, in the sixth century BCE, as described in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

**Romaniotes** Refers to Jews of Greek origin.

**Romanus Lecapenus** Reigned as Byzantine emperor from 920 to 944 and had a strong commitment to Orthodox Christianity. His persecutions and forced conversions of Byzantine Jews led many to migrate to Khazaria.

**Romm Printing and Publishing House** Established in Vilnius, Lithuania, in the beginning of the 19th century by Mannes Romm. During the second half of the century, this firm, which was the biggest and the most important publishing house in the Jewish world, was headed by Deborah Romm. According to her business policy, the company printed and published a variety of books, pamphlets, and other materials of a religious nature and of general interest. Her most famous project was a new edition of the Babylonian Talmud, known all over the Jewish world as *Shas Vilna*.

**Rosh Hashanah** A New Year Festival and name of a Talmudic tractate.

**Rosh Hodesh** A minor holiday marking the first day of each Jewish month.

**Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP, also known as the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party and the Russian Social-Democratic Party)** A revolutionary socialist Russian political party formed in 1898 in Minsk to unite the various revolutionary organizations into one party. The RSDLP later split into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, and the Bolsheviks eventually became the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

**Sa'adia Gaon** 10th-century philosopher, philologist, and biblical commentator.

**Saatchi** Family of Iraqi Jews in Britain, founders of a highly successful advertising agency and patrons of the arts. Responsible for establishing a synagogue in London.

**Sabbatai Zevi (Shabbatai Zvi; 1626–1676)** A pseudomessiah who led a widespread messianic movement that resulted in his conversion to Islam and the apostasy of some of his followers. His followers are referred to as Sabbateans.

**sabbatical year** According to the law of the Torah, the land must remain fallow and uncultivated every seventh year; its produce treated as ownerless and debts forgiven.

**Safra v'Safya (book and sword)** A reference to the philosophy of Israel's national religious community whose men attend *Hesder* yeshiva programs, which enable them to both serve in the army and study Torah.

**Samizdat** The clandestine copying and distribution of government-suppressed literature or other media in Soviet-bloc countries.

**Sanhedrin (high court)** The Sanhedrin (a term derived from Greek) was the Jewish assembly of 71 people that constituted the supreme legislative and judicial authority of the Jews during the Second Temple period and some time thereafter.

**Sassoon, House of** Founded by Shaikh David Sassoon (1792–1864), one of the leading commercial and industrial houses in British India. Headquartered in Bombay, it had branches throughout South, Southeast, and East Asia, eventually spreading as far as London and New York.

**Schindler, Oskar (1908–1974)** German industrialist who saved 1,200 of his Jewish workers during World War II.

**Schnitzler, Arthur (1862–1931)** Leading figure in the modernist literary group of "Young Vienna," Schnitzler is famous for evoking the decadent sensuality of Vienna in 1900, in such plays as his 1897 work *Reigen* (La Ronde). He was a most perceptive observer of his times, and his novel *Der Weg ins Freie* (The Road to the Open, 1908) is a brilliant depiction of the problem of Jewish existence in turn-of-the-century Vienna.

**Seder** The highly ritualized meal on the first night of Pesach.

**Seder Olam Zuta** An Aramaic composition that provides a genealogical list from Adam until the descendants of a certain sixth-century CE exilarch named Mar Zutra. It incorporates additional material and a lengthy narrative section toward the end. The aim of

this work was to demonstrate that the progeny of Mar Zutra, who lived in Palestine, were the only surviving descendents of the Davidic line.

**semikah** Rabbinic ordination.

**Sepharad** The term appears once in the Bible, in Obadiah 1:20, which declares that “the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.” Wherever this Sepharad was meant to be, by medieval times the term came to mean the Iberian Peninsula, and Jews from that area came to be called Sephardim. More broadly, this term is used, in contrast with Askhenazim, to include, along with the descendants of Jews who had lived in Spain and Portugal, most Jews who hail from communities throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia (apart from the Jews of Yemen) who share with the descendants of Spanish Jews a liturgical tradition, a system of pronunciation of Hebrew, and acceptance of Joseph Caro’s codification of Jewish law.

**Sephardi (pl. Sephardim)** Originally, a Jew of Spanish origin who speaks Ladino. More broadly, the term refers to all Jews who are not Ashkenazic. Jews of the Iberian Peninsula (Spanish), their descendents, and those Jews who have adopted the Sephardic rite, especially in lands around the Mediterranean.

**Sephirot** Originally referred to the primordial numbers. In later kabbalistic writings, Sephirot refers to the emanations and manifestations of the Godhead according to the teachings of the Kabbalah.

**Septuagint** The Greek translation of the Torah; the term was later used to designate the Greek translation of the entire Jewish Bible plus additional books.

**Serdica (Sofia)** This Bulgarian city has been home to a Jewish settlement since the first century CE.

**shaatnez** A forbidden mixture of textiles (Leviticus 19:19).

**Shabbat (pl. Shabbatot; Sabbath)** Jewish day of rest falls on a Saturday and is both celebratory as well as being characterized by strict legal restrictions on work and technology.

**shaharith** The morning prayer service.

**Shaham, Nathan** Born in Tel Aviv in 1925, Shaham has been a member of Kibbutz Beit Alfa since 1945. A prolific author, his almost 40 books have been published in a number of languages.

**Shalev, Meir** Born in 1948 in Nahalal, Israel, Shalev is the author of such acclaimed novels as *Blue Mountain* (1988), *Esau* (2001), and *The Pigeon and the Youth* (2006). Shalev has written children’s books and is a frequent presence in Israeli media.

**shaliah (pl. shlichim)** Emissaries of religious or secular Jewish/Zionist organizations.

**Shammies** Syrian Jews from Damascus.

**Shaniwar Telis** The name by which the Bene-Israeli Jewish community in India was first known. They claim to be descended from Jews who escaped persecution in Galilee in the second century BCE. Although they assimilated into the local culture to become a caste of oil pressers (*teli*), they retained their dietary restrictions and the practices of circumcision and observing the Sabbath.

**Sharansky, Natan (Anatoly Shcharansky)** A Russian refusenik, Sharansky served more than 10 years in Soviet prison on false charges. After worldwide political pressure, he was released in a prisoner exchange and immigrated to Israel, where he served in its government.

**Shavei Israel** Organization founded by Michael Freund, a *Jerusalem Report* staffer and former adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2004. Shavei Israel has assumed responsibility from Amishav for the conversion and settlement in Israel of the Benei Menashe from northeast India. It has advocated on behalf of Sabbotniks (Russians whose ancestors had adopted Judaism during Czarist times) for the right to settle in Israel and has

- funded rabbis to assist the Anousim (Marranos) in Portugal, the remaining Jews in Portugal, and the descendants of Jewish settlers in the Andean upper reaches of the Amazon.
- She'elot Ut'shuvot (Questions and Answers)** Halachic rulings.
- Shearith Israel** First permanent Jewish house of worship in North America, established in 1730.
- shehitah** Ritual slaughter of animals for food.
- Shekinah (she who dwells)** A divine aspect of God. In biblical literature, Shekinah is associated with the portable Tabernacle and then the Temple in Jerusalem. In rabbinic literature, the Shekhinah is characterized as feminine, and sometimes described as having absented herself from the Jewish people after the destruction of the First Temple or having gone into exile with the Jewish people after the destruction of the Second Temple. In Kabbalah, the Shekhinah is identified as the lowest and most immanent of the 10 sefirot (divine emanations of the Godhead), separated from the Godhead at Creation. It is the task of the Jewish people to reunify—through prayer, study, and performance of the mitzvot (commandments)—God's primal unity, thus ending God's own exile.
- Shema** Daily proclamation of monotheistic faith.
- shlichut** Work undertaken by an ambassador; a mission.
- Shlilat Hagola (negation of the Diaspora)** One Zionist interpretation holding that Jewish life in the Diaspora is necessarily beholden to humiliation, persecution, and strife. The act of Jewish state-building was often conceptualized as rejection or "negation" of Diaspora life.
- Shoah** The Hebrew word for the Holocaust; it means "catastrophe."
- shohet** The person who slaughters kosher animals, pursuant to Jewish religious law.
- shtetl** Jewish small-town community in Eastern Europe.
- shul** Yiddish for synagogue.
- Shulhan Arukh (Laid Table)** A 4-volume code of Jewish law by Joseph Karo (16th century).
- siddur (pl. siddurim)** Prayer book.
- Sifra** An early midrash to the book of Leviticus.
- Sifré** Early midrash to the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- Simhat Torah** End and recommencement of annual Torah reading.
- Simon, Silas** First rabbi of the Sephardi synagogue in Sydney, Australia, serving the congregation between 1963 and 1980. Born in Calcutta while his wife came from Egypt, the couple reflected the two main strands within the Sephardi community that developed in Australia after World War II.
- Singer, Simeon (1846–1906)** British rabbi and editor of the standard prayer book in late 19th century.
- Society for the Dissemination of the Enlightenment among Russian Jewry** Founded in 1863 in St. Petersburg by Jewish oligarchs under the leadership of Baron Y. Y. Ginzburg. Until its abolition in 1930, the society was involved in many aspects of Russian Jewish cultural lives, mainly by promoting and supporting hundreds of educational and literary projects.
- Society of Mekitsei Nirdamim** Founded in 1862 by Eliezer Silberman, the editor of the Hebrew newspaper *Ha-Magid*, to promote the scientific publication of historical and literary Hebrew manuscripts.
- sopher (pl. sopherim)** Scribe.
- Spinoza, Baruch (1632–1677)** Rationalist philosopher whose thinking predated modernity by centuries. An Amsterdam-born son of refugees from the Portuguese Inquisition, as a young man Spinoza was excommunicated from the synagogue for his rationalist view of religion. In his philosophical writings, Spinoza consistently used the words "God" and

“divine,” but equated these with the whole of nature (and natural laws), refusing to recognize any supernatural entity. Nevertheless, Spinoza, by sheer geometric exposition, proposed very “saintly” guidelines to ethical living and obtaining higher knowledge. His works would also influence the fields of psychology and physiology.

**Star of David** A six-sided star used as the Israeli national symbol and Jewish religious symbol.

**Strashun, Matityahu (1817–1885)** Born to a rabbinic family and a Talmudic scholar himself, Strashun was also known as a historiographer, publicist, and communal leader as well as the owner of a large private library and a collection of rare manuscripts.

**Suichmezov, Assen** Member of the delegation from Kyustendil to Sofia on March 9, 1943, to protest against the deportation of the Jews.

***sujets locaux*** Term to designate those among the non-Muslim minority groups who, although natives of Egypt, never acquired or were never granted Egyptian nationality and remained stateless.

**Sura** One of major Talmudical academies in Babylon.

**synagogue** A place where Jewish religious services are conducted.

**Szold, Henrietta (1860–1945)** The daughter of a Baltimore rabbi, Szold studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary and worked with Russian Jewish immigrants and the Jewish Publication Society before dedicating her energy to Zionism. After founding Hadassah before World War I, she spearheaded the emergence of the Women’s Zionist Organization of America as a major presence in the American Jewish scene and an important contributor to the health and social welfare spheres of the Jewish state-in-the-making.

***taharat mishpachah* (family purity)** A euphemistic reference to the body of Jewish law that governs the periods of intimacy and separation for a married couple.

**tallith (pl. tallithim)** Prayer shawl.

**Talmud** One of two monumental commentaries on the Mishnah collecting the opinions and debates of Jewish religious scholars beginning in the third century CE and lasting for several centuries afterward. Two Talmuds survive: the Jerusalem or Palestinian Talmud and the Babylonian. Though the two works are similar in their purpose and structure and contain much common material, it was the Babylonian Talmud that achieved prominence during the Middle Ages and is usually referred to as “the Talmud.” The Talmuds are composed in a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic. They are distinguished by the intricate modes of logical argumentation that the rabbis apply to the interpretation of the Mishnah and to other topics. The opinions of the participating rabbis are subjected to critical scrutiny and logical analysis and are compared to proof-texts from the Bible and other statements by the rabbis. Although they are organized principally as critical expositions of the religious law of the Mishnah, the Talmuds contain diverse types of material, including biblical exegesis, homiletics, moralistic teachings, case law, legends about biblical figures and rabbis, and much more.

**tannaitic** From the Aramaic root *tana*, meaning to teach, or *shana* in Hebrew, it refers to the generation of rabbis living in the first and second centuries CE who wrote the mishnah, the oral torah codified by Yehudah Ha Nasi at the end of the second century CE.

**Targum Onkelos** Aramaic translation/paraphrase of the Torah by Onkelos, a proselyte.

**Tcherikover, Eliyahu (1881–1943)** Head of the history department of YIVO and the editor of the institute’s historical journal *Historische Schriften*. Tcherikover published extensively on the history of East European Jewry; among his most known books are books on the history of the Society for the Dissemination of the Enlightenment among Russian Jewry and on Jews in times of revolution.

**Temple** The sanctuary in Jerusalem that was, according to biblical law, the only place where sacrificial worship might be conducted. The Bible relates that the First Temple was built

by King Solomon and destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. The Second Temple was constructed by the exiles returning from the Babylonian Captivity and destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

**Thessalonica** A Jewish community in existence since the first century CE.

***tikkun olam*** The commandment or injunction to repair or improve the world.

**Tishah B'Av** A fast marking the destruction of First and Second Temples.

**tithe (Hebrew, *Ma'aser*)** According to biblical law, a tenth of the produce must be set aside for the Levites. From this the Levites must assign a tenth to the priests. A second tithe must be separated, which must be consumed by the owners in Jerusalem; or (in certain years) assigned to the poor.

***tkhines* (Hebrew, *t'hinnot*)** The Yiddish word for personal supplicatory prayers in the vernacular intended for women to use in the synagogue and in their domestic lives. They began to appear in print in the 16th century.

**Torah (teaching or instruction)** Torah is applied most specifically to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (also known as the Pentateuch or "Five Books of Moses"), which Jewish tradition regards as the most important and authoritative section of the Bible. In a more general sense, the term is used to refer to the full range of Jewish religious teaching.

**Tosefta** A collection of oral teachings composed as a supplement to the Mishnah and following its general structure. It contains alternative traditions and some explanations. It was probably composed in the early or mid-third century CE.

**tsedaka** Technically charity, but taken to mean an injunction to behave with righteousness and to promote social justice.

***tzimtzum* (contraction)** In Lurianic Kabbalah, the process whereby God, who is all, withdraws or contacts himself sideways so as to leave a kind of primordial space or nondivine vacuum within which creation can take place.

**Umma** The Islamic religious and political world community.

**Unetanneh Tokef** High Holy Day prayer attributed to Amnon of Mayence from the 10th century.

**Union of Jewish Women** A Jewish women's service organization founded in Great Britain in 1902.

**United Israel Appeal (UIA)** The major power block within the United Jewish Appeal, the UIA's mission is to raise funds for Israel.

**United Jewish Communities (UJC)** Formerly the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF), the UJC is the umbrella organization of more than 150 Jewish federations that advocate for Jewish needs as well as raise and allocate funds for the philanthropic and social service institutions of the American Jewish community.

**Vilna Gaon (1720–1797)** The Vilna Gaon, or Rabbi Elijah, son of Solomon Zalman, known also as the Gra, was the most famous rabbinic scholar in the last quarter of the 18th century. He was the ultimate representative of the rationalistic scholar, a method that was adopted in all the Lithuanian yeshivas. Unlike other contemporary scholars he was interested not only in the study of the Babylonian Talmud but also in the Jerusalem Talmud, Kabbalah (Jewish philosophy), and general studies (mathematics, astronomy, and the like). Though did not hold any official rabbinic post, he was considered most influential in public matters and was spiritual leader of the opponents of the Hasidut.

**Vitry** A town in northern France that was the site of a renowned Jewish community in medieval times.

**Wessely, Hartwig (1725–1805)** One of the more prominent members of the Haskalah, his book, *Words of Truth and Peace*, was a pedagogical manifesto aimed at supporting the efforts of Joseph II to integrate Habsburg Jewry fully into secular society.

**Western Wall** Also known as "the Wailing Wall," a section of the western supporting wall of the Temple Mount, the only remaining part of the destroyed Second Temple. For

centuries, this remnant has been the focus of mourning for the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people. After the Western Wall was returned to Jewish rule during the Six-Day War in June 1967, it became a symbol of the ingathering of Jewish exiles to the State of Israel. Images of the Wall have appeared in Jewish folk art, symbolizing both the Exile as well as the continued hope of redemption and return to the land.

**White Australia Policy** Policy adopted in 1901, when the Australian colonies federated, to exclude non-European immigrants. Jews from the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa were affected by this policy, which was not formally repealed until 1973.

**Wise, Isaac Meyer (1819–1900)** Wise emigrated from Bavaria to the United States and established the major institutions of Reform Judaism—its seminary, union of congregations, and rabbinical association. He considered the American environment a unique opportunity to create a Diaspora Judaism. He named his revised prayer book *Minhag America* (Custom of America) to emphasize his acceptance of this Diaspora culture.

**Wissenschaft des Judentums (Scientific Study of Judaism)** This post-Enlightenment Jewish movement, which began in Germany, was dedicated to promoting the rational, scientific, and critical study of Jewish religion, history, and culture.

**WIZO** The Women's International Zionist Organization is a nonpartisan movement dedicated to the advancement of the status of women, support of all sectors of Israeli society, and encouragement of Jewish education in Israel and the Diaspora.

**Yekke** A German Jew; a member of the German Jewish community.

**yeshiva (pl. yeshivas)** An academic establishment for the study of Torah (the central document of Judaism; the first five books of the Hebrew Bible and the basis of Jewish law) and Talmud (a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history) within Orthodox Judaism, primarily attended by males.

**Yeshuat Israel** The first permanent Jewish house of worship in New England, founded in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1763.

**Yiddisher Wissenschaftelecher Institute (YIVO or Institute for Jewish Research)** Founded in 1925 in Vilnius, Lithuania, as a research center for the culture and history of central and east European Jewry.

**yishuv (Hebrew, settlement)** Term used in the Zionist movement to refer to the Jewish settlement in Palestine before the establishment of Israel. The settlers and new residents became known collectively as “the Yishuv.”

**Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israeli Independence Day)** Commemorates the Declaration of the Independence of Israel in 1948. It falls on the 5th of the Jewish lunar month, Iyar. It is the day after Yom Hazikaron, Remembrance Day for fallen Israeli soldiers, which occurs on the 4th of Iyar.

**Yom Kippur** Day of Atonement, marked by a 25-hour fast.

**Yom Tovim** The high holidays of the Jewish communities, including Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

**Yomtov Sheni Shel Galuyyot** Second day of festivals in the Diaspora.

**Yulee, David** In 1845, he became the first Jew elected to the U.S. Senate.

**Zaddik (pl. Zaddikim; Righteous)** A term used in particular reference to the hasidic rebbes, believed to be perfect.

**zar (pl. zarim)** A term that in the Bible means a foreigner but that comes to mean an idolater in rabbinic Judaism.

**Zionism** This term formally and narrowly applies to the movement begun by Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) in 1887 to seek a political route to an independent Jewish state. More generally, however, the term refers to all Jewish theories and movements aimed at restoring the Jewish people to their homeland. Used this way, many who preceded Herzl, such as Moses Hess (1812–1875) and Leo Pinsker (1821–1891), as well as many who disagreed

with him, such as Asher Ginsberg (known as Ahad Ha-Am, 1856–1927) and Jacob Klatzkin (1882–1948), are part of Zionism. As a movement, it supported the national liberation of Jews and a homeland for the Jewish people in Israel.

**Zionist Organization of America (ZOA)** The ZOA has a national membership of 30,000 and chapters across the United States. It works today to strengthen U.S.–Israeli relations via educational activities, public affairs programs, and Israel advocacy on Capitol Hill, campuses, and elsewhere.



# Index

- Aaron, 292  
Aaron, Aaron, 528  
Aaron, Reuben, 528  
Aaron of Lincoln, 930  
Aaronovitch, Eli, 1184  
Abadi, Shaul Matlub, 791  
Abayudaya, 451, 515  
Abbas, 501  
Abbasid Caliphate, 768  
Abd-al-Nabi b. al-Mahdi, 794  
Abdurakhmanov, Mikhail, 1145  
Abennamias, Santo, 877  
Abensour, Miguel, 165  
Aboab, Immanuel, 318  
Aboab da Fonseca, Isaac, 650–651, 726  
Aboriginal Reconciliation body, 524  
Aboulke, Jose, 457  
Abrabanel, Isaac, 875  
Abrabanel, Jacob, 875, 877  
Abrabanel, Joseph, 875  
Abrabanel, Judah, 875  
Abrabanel, Samuel, 875, 877  
Abraham, 18, 128, 449, 751  
Abraham, David, 1088, 1173  
Abraham, Pearl, 249  
Abraham, Robert, 1081  
Abraham family, 357, 1189  
Abraham Fund, 627  
Abraham-Ishmael story, 151  
Abrahams, Israel, 498  
Abrahamsen, Rita, 1085  
Abrahamson, Abe, 519  
Abrahamson, Leizer, 519  
Abramovich, Jayzuño, 730  
Abramovitch, Sholem-Yankev, 1043  
Abravanel, Benvenida, 253  
Abravanel, Yitzhak, 31, 317  
Abulafia, Hayyim, 32–33  
Abulafia, Meir, 909  
Abulafia, Abraham, 84  
Abyssinia, Ethiopia, 450  
Abzug, Bella, 621  
Academy Board of Jewish Education, Sydney, Australia, 525  
Acción Revolucionaria Mexicana, Mexico, 674  
Acher, Paul, 728  
Achron, Joseph, 212, 213  
Ackerman, Boris, 733  
Activa Business Center, 677  
Adam, 5, 292, 1161  
Adani, Solomon, 798  
Adas, Shafiq, 378, 379  
Adass Israel, Melbourne, Australia, 525  
Addiel, King, 82  
Adeb, 799  
Adelaide, Australia, 521, 528  
Aden, 799  
Ades, Victor, 528  
Adis, Nissim, 1247  
Adler, Hermann, 334, 934, 935  
Adler, Nathan Marcus, 924–925, 934  
Adler, Rachel, 406, 622  
Adler, Sam, 226  
Adler, Solomon Alfred, 935  
Adolph, José, 709, 736–737  
Adventist Church, 633  
Afendopolo, Caleb ben Elijah, 93  
Affonso Henriques, King, 893  
Afghanistan, 1129–1132  
lost tribes of Israel and, 85  
Africa, Jews in, 449–452. *See also countries in*  
historical overview, 449–452  
African Jewish Congress (AJC), 492, 498  
African National Congress (ANC), 500  
Agaronov, Albert, 1117  
Agbai, Avishai, 493  
Age groups and Jewish populations (1897–2004), 400 (table)  
Aggadic Ein Ya'akov, 797  
Agippa I, 69  
Agippa II, 69  
Agitators, 121–122  
Agosin, Marjorie, 708  
Agre, Anna, 1183  
Agrippa, 70  
Agron, Gershon, 1242, 1252  
Agronov, Ya'acov, 1116  
Agudat Hasidei Habad (AGuCH or Union of Habad Hasidim), 605  
Agudat Hasidim Anshei Habad (ACHACH or the Union of Hasidim), 605  
Agudath Israel, 612  
Aguilar, Grace, 319  
Aguinis, Marcos, 707–708  
Ahaba Ve Shalom, Mexico, 675  
Aharon, Beth, 980  
Ahasuerus, King, 1204  
Ahi Ezer Yeshiva, 618–619  
Ahi Temimim, 605  
Ahiyau, 755  
Aisenstadt, Hirsch, 1026  
Ai Tian, 1161  
Akiva, 81–82, 133, 351  
Akum, Ferede, 470  
Akselrod, Meir, 231  
Aksum, 467  
Aladjem, Israel, 958, 961  
Al-Aksa Intifada, 588  
Alaouite Dynasty, 482  
Alaungpaya, King, 1240  
Al-Bakri, 1099  
Al-Balkhi, Hiwi, 1123  
Albania, 942–946  
Alberta, Canada, 550  
Albert V, King, 805  
Albo, Joseph, 910  
Al-Buhori, Yusuf Yahudi, 1124  
Alcades, Jacques, 730, 733  
Alcazarquivir, Morocco, 488, 489  
Alcurnia, 159  
Aleichem, Shalom, 178, 195, 234, 235  
Aleppan Jews, 615  
Aleppo, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790  
Syrian Jews and, 218–219  
Aleppo Codex, 786, 787, 790–791  
Alexander, 1111, 1112  
Alexander, Emperor, 1037  
Alexander, Theodora, 955  
Alexander I, Emperor, 992, 1010  
Alexander II, 102, 690  
Alexander II, Czar, 925  
Alexander II, Emperor, 1025, 1035, 1036  
Alexander III, Emperor, 1011, 1036  
Alexander the Great, 73, 87, 477–478, 752, 856, 953, 1103  
Alexandria, 752  
Jewish settlement in, 449  
Alfasi, Yitzhak, 315  
Alfonsin, Raul, 711  
Alfonso I, King of Aragon and Sicily, 875, 877  
Alfonso X of Castile and Leon, 905  
Algazi, Hayyim, 858  
Algazi, Isaac, 216, 217

- Algeria, 514  
 Arab period in, 456  
 contemporary overview of, 457–458  
 French invasion of, 456–457  
 French period in, 456–457  
 important personalities in, 458  
 Jews in, 455–458  
 Turkish period in, 456  
 World War II (1941–1945) and, 457
- Algerian Zayyanids, 456
- Algiers, 455
- Alhadeff, Bohor, 859
- Alhadeff, Gabriel, 370
- Alhadeff, Maurice, 370, 462
- Alhambra, 228
- Al-Hanadhani, Ibn al-Faqih, 1094
- Al-harar, Eliyah b., 312, 313
- Alia, Ramiz, 945
- Al-Jarmi, 1099
- Al-Jayhani, 1099
- Alkabets, Shelomo, 776
- Alkalai, Sason, 958
- Alkalai, Yehudah, 33, 37, 319
- Allen, Woody (Allen Stewart Konigsberg), 243, 246, 247, 709
- Allenby, Edmund, 131
- Alliance Israélite Universelle, 469, 485, 489, 512–513, 778, 792, 798
- Al-Maqdisi, 1137
- Almeida, Luis, 1196
- Almohads, 450, 456, 482, 510
- Almoravids, 456, 482
- Almosnino, Gabriel, 957, 958
- Alonso, Hernando, 673
- Alperavicius, Simeonas, 1038
- Alpha-Thalassemia (a-T), 278
- Al Qaeda, 511
- Al Qaradawi, Yusuf, 929
- Al-Qumisi, Karaite Daniel, 1130
- Al-Rahman, Abd, I, 913
- Al-Rahman, Abd, III, 913, 915
- Alshansky, Naum, 948
- Alsheh, Eliezer, 966
- Alsheikh, Moshe, 776
- Altenberg, Peter, 45
- Amalgamated Clothing Workers, 593
- Aman, Rabbi, 1105
- Amar, Shlomo, 1159, 1218, 1222
- Ameinu, 640
- America. *See also* United States  
 art by Jews before World War II, 237–242  
 attitude of Jewish thinkers toward Diaspora, 566–570  
 denomination and Jewish identity in, 613–614  
 Jewish Diaspora in, 571–591  
 Jewish Orthodoxy in, 608–612  
 Jewish renewal in, 624–629
- Jewish women of early West, 563–565  
 women's contributions to, 620–623
- La America* (newspaper), 561
- America-Israel Friendship League, 640
- American Catholicism, 634
- American Christian attitudes, to Jewish Diaspora, 632–634
- American Federation of Teachers, 593
- American film industry, Jewish contributions, 238–242
- American Friends of Likud, 640
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), 639, 640
- American Jewish Committee, 597, 638, 640
- American Jewish Liberalism, 580–586
- American Jews  
 Israel and, 586–589  
 portrayal of, in Israeli literature, 645–649  
 radicalism and, 592–596  
 response of, to Holocaust, 597–601  
 State of Israel and, 642–645
- American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), 471, 599, 742
- American pragmatism, 626
- American Reform Judaism, 568, 642
- American Sephardi Federation (ASF), 562
- Americans for Peace Now, 640
- American universities, Jewish studies in, 629–631
- American Zionist Movement, 635–641
- Amir, Eli, 380, 646, 648–649
- AMIT, 640
- Amit, David, 1112
- Amitin-Shapiro, Z. L., 1126, 1150
- Amram, gaon of Sura, 25
- Amster, Enrique, 708–709
- Ancient Armenia, 1108–1113
- Ancient world literature, 64–71  
 Artemidorus, 70  
 Cicero, 65  
 Dio, 70–71  
 Diodorus Siculus, 64  
 Hecataeus of Abdera, 64  
 Horace, 65–66  
 Juvenal, 69–70  
 Libanius, 71  
 Martial, 67  
 Ovid, 65  
 Petronius, 66  
 Plutarch, 67  
 Quintilian, 66  
 Seneca the Younger, 66  
 Suetonius, 68–69
- Strabo, 65  
 Tacitus, 67–68  
 Tibullus, 65  
 Valerius Maximus, 66
- Ancona, Ronni, 897
- Andalucian melodies and poetry, 484
- Andromachus, prefect of Syria, 87
- Andy Statman Klezmer Orchestra, 227, 228
- Angel, Saúl, 746
- Anglo-American colonies, Judeo-Portuguese in, 553–559
- Anglo Boer War (1899–1902), 494
- Anglo-Dutch Wars (1652–1654), 555
- Anglo-Jewish community, 113
- Anissimow, Myriam, 839
- Anski, Solomon, 965
- Ant, Clara, 722
- Antin, Mary, 236
- Antioch, Syria, 752, 789
- Antiochus, King, 855
- Anti-Semitism, 485–486, 501, 504  
 in Australia, 525–526  
 in Austria, 807–808  
 in Baltic States, 1019–1024  
 in Belarus, 950–951  
 in Belgium, 814  
 in Brazil, 718–719, 721–722  
 in Canada, 550, 551–552  
 in Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Russia, 940–941  
 Christianity and, 109, 130  
 classic images and, 119  
 demonization of Jews, 104–105  
 distinguishing new from criticism of Israeli policy, 120–121  
 economic and political reasons, 76, 105  
 emergence of Christianity and, 104  
 Enlightenment, 105  
 Euro-Arab, 115–118  
 in Europe, 804  
 in Finland, 1075–1076  
 in Hong Kong, 1193  
 in Hungary, 977  
 in Italy, 870  
 in Latin America, 691, 692–693  
 literary, 107–111  
 in Mexico, 674, 675, 680  
 in Middle Ages, 104–105  
 nationalist, 105–106  
 new, 118–122  
 in North America, 548  
 in Norway, 1087  
 in Poland, 987  
 in Russia, 996–997  
 in Scandinavia, 1056  
 in Scotland, 899  
 in Shanghai, 1175–1176  
 in Sweden, 1091–1092

- in Switzerland, 920–921  
 in Tunisia, 514  
 in Ukraine, 1015  
 in United Kingdom, 928–929  
 in Uruguay, 744  
 varieties of, 103–107  
 in Venezuela, 749  
 Worldwide Report on, 118  
 in Zimbabwe, 519–520
- Anti-Zionism, 485–486  
 in Australia, 525–526  
 in Austria, 807–808  
 in Belgium, 814  
 Bund, 335–336  
 in Canada, 551–552  
 in Central Europe, Eastern  
   Europe, and Russia, 940–941  
 Diaspora, 333–340  
 in Europe, 804  
 in Finland, 1075–1076  
 in Hong Kong, 1193  
 in Hungary, 977  
 in Mexico, 680  
 in North America, 548  
 in Norway, 1087  
 in Poland, 987  
 in Russia, 996–997  
 in Scandinavia, 1056  
 in Scotland, 899  
 in Shanghai, 1175–1176  
 in Sweden, 1091–1092  
 in Switzerland, 920–921  
 in Tunisia, 514  
 in Ukraine, 1015  
 in United Kingdom, 928–929  
 in Uruguay, 744  
 in Venezuela, 749
- Antokolsky, Mark, 1037  
 Antonescu, Ion, 989  
 António Vaz, 557  
 Apartheid, 497  
 Apion, 108  
 Apocrypha, 11, 15  
 Appian, 1110  
 Aquila, 13, 133, 134  
 Aquinas, Thomas, 812  
 Arab countries, Jewish refugees  
   from, 382–386  
 Arab League, 511, 514  
 Arafat, Yasir, 336  
 Aragawi, 469  
 Aramaic, 167, 171–172, 177–178  
 Aram Soba, 787  
 Aranha, Oswaldo, 719  
 Aranne, Zalman, 348  
*Arbeiter Ring*, 593  
 Archelaus, King, 1112  
 Arch of Titus (photo), 20  
 Arcrumi, T'ovma, 1108  
 Arendt, Hannah, 42, 837  
 Arequipa, Peru, 735  
 Arevalo, Juan Jose, 667  
 Argentina, Jews in, 690, 691, 693,  
   694, 710–715  
 Arias, Pedro, 671  
 Aridjis, Homero, 695  
 Arihi, 755  
 Aristobulus, King, 1111, 1112  
 Aristotle, 296  
 Armed Islamic Group, 458  
 Armenia, 1104–1107  
   ancient, 1108–1113  
   medieval, 1113–1114  
 Armstrong, Diane, 524  
 Arnheim, Arthur, 1063–1064  
 Aron, Raymond, 830  
 Artawazd II, King, 1109, 1110, 1111  
 Artemidorus, 70  
 Artemisa, Cuba, 664  
 Artists at work in SS camps,  
   816–820  
 Arts, Jewish contributions to,  
   233–250  
 Arts Advisory Council, 544  
 ArtScroll and Mesorah  
   Publications, 610, 611–612  
 Aruba, Jews in, 655, 656–657  
 Arzila, Morocco, 488, 489  
 Asa, King, 80  
 Asad, Abukarib, 793  
 Asceticism, 91  
 Asch, Sholem, 234  
 Aschberg, Olof, 1090  
 Ascher, 143  
 Asenath, 19  
 Ash, Shalom, 628, 965  
 Asher, Kasiel Noah, 967  
 Asher, tribe of, 79, 82, 84  
 Ashkelon, Libya, 481  
 Ashkenazi, 452, 507  
   Balkan conduit for, 186  
   German-Jewish and German  
   anti-semitic thought, 48–52  
   Hasidic philosophy and music,  
   211  
   idealization of Sephardi, 49–50  
   internal and external  
   influences, 27  
   Jewish music, 208–209  
   liturgy, 25, 218–219  
   reform congregations, 561  
   Slavo-Turks, 185  
   tradition variants, 26–27  
   Yiddish songs, 210–211  
 Ashkenazi, Bezalel, 35  
 Ashkenazi, Eli, 961  
 Ashkenazi, Ilko, 966  
 Ashkenazi, Isaac Luria, 35  
 Ashkenazy, Vladimir, 1081  
 Ashur, 752  
 Asociación de Médicos Judíos  
   (Association of Jewish  
   Doctors), 730  
 Asociación Israelita de Venezuela,  
   746, 748  
 Asociacion Juvenil Judia de Cuba,  
   664  
 Asociación Mutual Israelita  
   Argentina (AMIA), 698, 702,  
   712, 714  
 Asociación Unión Hebreo-Polaca,  
   746  
 Asociación Menorah, Mexico,  
   675  
 Assa, Greddi, 967  
 Assia, Yehuda, 1251  
 Assimilation, 20, 76  
 Association Culturelle Israelite  
   de la Martinique, 660  
 Association of Reform Zionists  
   of America/World Union  
   North America, 640  
 Associations of Friends of  
   Universities, 681  
 Assurbanipal, 3  
 Assyria, 80–81, 96  
   Israelites and Judeans in,  
   754–756  
 Aston, William, 528  
 Astor, Alexander, 544  
 Astrukov, Emil, 966  
 Ateek, Naim, 132  
 Attali, Jacques, 458  
 Attas, Ivonne, 747  
 Attia, Yitzhak, 791  
 Auckland, New Zealand, 535,  
   538–539, 541  
 Auckland Hebrew Congregation,  
   544  
 Auerbach, Berthold, 44  
 Auerbach, Charlotte, 897  
 Augustine, Saint, 104, 295  
 Augustus, Philip, II, 100, 821  
 Augustus Caesar, 1111  
 Aurangzeb, 1214–1215  
 Aurora, Jagjit Singh, 1227  
 Auschwitz, 115  
 Australia, Jews in, 521–531  
   contemporary overview,  
   523–526  
   conversion to Judaism in  
   Sydney Jewish community,  
   531  
   historical overview, 521–523  
   Sephardi, 526–530  
 Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs  
   Council, 525  
 Australian Jewish Historical  
   Society, Victoria, Australia,  
   532  
*Australian Jewish News*  
   (newspaper), 522  
*Australian Jewish Times*  
   (newspaper), 522  
 Australian Jewish Welfare Society,  
   522, 528  
 Australian Wallabies, 524  
 Austria, 805–808  
   Jewish immigration, 114  
   society, politics, and medicine  
   in Vienna, 301–302  
 Austria-Hungary, 75  
 Aventura, Florida, 562  
 Averroës, 821  
 Avicenna, 821

- Avichail, Eliyahu, 85–86, 1221, 1222
- Ávila, Marquitos Karushansky, 737
- Avinum de Lima Semah de Varenca, Ydelfonso, 662
- Avni, Haim, 704
- Avshalomov, Aaron, 1169–1170
- Avshalomov, Jacob, 1170
- Awret, Azriel, 816, 819, 820
- Awret, Irene Spicker, 819, 820
- Azancot, Miriam, 223
- Azerbaijan, 1114–1119
- Azerbaijan Jews in Beijing, China, 1180–1181
- Azgur, Zair, 949
- Azoulay, Andre, 484
- Azulai, Haym Joseph, 352
- Azulay, Jom Tob, 700
- Baal Teshuva movement, 627–628
- Baazov, David, 1121
- Babylonia, 752
  - Jewish leadership in, 762–767
  - Judeans in, 757–762
- Babylonian Captivity of Judah, 453
- Babylonian exile, 1, 7, 72
- Babylonian Jewish Heritage Center, 481
- Babylonian Talmud, 768
- Baby Snooks, 243
- Bacharach, Naphtali Hertz, 37
- Bachayev, Mordakhay “Muhib” H., 1144
- Badalov, Rahmin, 1150, 1151
- Badoglio, Pietro, 479
- Badt, Gustavo, 729
- Baghdad, 768, 771
- Bahamas, Jews in, 662–663
- Bahia, Dutch occupation of, 650
- Bahri, Sadok, 512
- Baiz, Jacobo, 667
- Bajer, David, 672
- Baker, Mark, 524
- Bakhshiev, Mishi, 1116
- Bakovitch, Tuvia, 465
- Bakst, Leon, 949
- Bala Sali, 529
- Balbo, Italo, 479
- Balfour Declaration (1917), 131, 636, 741
- Balkans, Jewish settlements in, 186
- Balkenende, Jan Peter, 889
- Ballarat, Australia, 521
- Balta, José, 728
- Baltic States
  - anti-Semitism in, 1019–1024
  - countries in, 1017
  - Estonia, 1025–1028
  - general population, 1017
  - historical overview, 1017–1019
  - Jewish population in, 1017
  - Latvia, 1028–1034
  - Lithuania, 1034–1045
  - Nazi occupation (1941–1944), 1021–1022
  - postwar era, 1024
  - Soviet rule, 1021, 1022–1024
  - Vilnius as Jewish city, 1046–1049
- Banco Comercial, 712
- Banco del Caribe, 748
- Banco del Nuevo Mundo, 733
- Banco de Venezuela, 748
- BancoFondoComún, 748
- Banco Mayo, 713
- Banco Mercantile, 712
- Banco Patricios, 713
- Banu Hilal, 456
- Banu Nadir, 752
- Banu Qaynuga, 752
- Banu Qurayza, 752
- Barabbas, 104
- Barak, Aharon, 1038
- Barbados, Jews in, 657
- Barbarossa, 455
- Barbary Wars, 455
- Bar Bisna, Amora Samuel, 1146
- Barcelona, Venezuela, 745
- Barcelona Haggadah, 210
- Bard, Solomon, 1188
- Barenboim, Daniel, 712
- Bar Gal, Dvir, 1174
- Bar Hanina, Yosé, 7
- Bar Moshe, Yitzhak, 380, 381
- Bar Nahman, Samuel, 7
- Bar Nâthân, Yitzhaq, 1099
- Barnato, Barney (Isaacs), 496, 519
- Barnett, John, 544
- Barnett, Louis, 543
- Baron, Ben, 520
- Baron, Phillip, 520
- Baron, Salo, 90
- Barouch, André, 512
- Barre, Raymond, 829
- Barreto de Menezes, Francisco, 555, 556–557, 651
- Barrios, Rufino, 667
- Barros Basto, Artur de
- Barsimson, Jacob, 558
- Bartal, Professor, 348
- Bartov, Hanoch, 646, 647–648
- Baruchia Russo, 781
- Baruh, Armand, 961
- Baruh, Emi, 967
- Baruh, Josef Marko, 958
- Baruh, Viktor, 961, 967
- Barukhoff, Gabriel, 1231
- Bar Yohai, Shimon, 316
- Bashyachi, Elijah ben Moses, 93
- Basir, Yusuf, al-, 92
- Basra, 771, 773, 774
- Basri, Yosef, 775
- Bassan, Yehiel, 858
- Bassatine cemetery, 466
- Batar youth movement, 341
- Batei din (house of judgment), 419–421
- Batory, Stefan, King, 1008
- Battenberg, Alexander, 958
- Batto Sfez, 511
- Bat Yam, Libya, 481
- Baume, Lulah, 543
- Bayezid I, Sultan, 956
- Bayezid II, Sultan, 34
- Bearstead, Lord, 1199
- Beck, Andrej Kozar, 1006
- Becker, Jurek, 47
- Beer, Amalie, 262
- Beer-Hoffman, Richard, 45
- Begin, Menachem, 587, 746, 950
- Behar, Nansen, 966
- Behar, Ruth, 701
- Behar, Viktoria, 967
- Beijing, China, 1176–1182
- Beirut Declaration by the League of Arab States, 722
- Beit, Alfred, 519
- Beit, Lipper, 519
- Bela IV, King, 972, 1001
- Belarus, 946–952
- Belev, Alexander, 960
- Belgium
  - See also* Luxembourg, Belgium
  - anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, existential community problems, 814
  - artists at work in SS camps in, 816–820
  - contemporary overview, 813–815
  - culture, science, and the humanities, 813
  - demographic movement and emigration, 814
  - economic conditions, 813
  - general population, 812
  - historical overview, 812–813
  - Holocaust art, 815–820
  - industries, trades, and professions, 813
  - Jewish education, religious denominations, communal and political institutions, 813–814
  - Jewish population in, 812
  - languages spoken in, 812
- Believing Youth, 795
- Belisario, J. M., 527
- Belize, 656
  - Jews in, 668
- Belkovski, Zvi, 958
- Bell, Francis Dillon, 536
- Bell, Francis Henry Dillon, 535, 536–537
- Bell, Margaret Hort, 536
- Bellew, H.W., 85
- Bellow, Saul, 244, 245
- Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 720
- Belski, Asael, 948
- Belski, Zus, 948
- Bely, V., 1148
- Bénabou, Marcel, 839

- Ben Abraham Anav, Zedekiah, 866  
 Benacerraf, Baruj, 458, 747  
 Benacerraf, Margot, 748  
 Benacerraf, Paul, 458  
 Benai Menashe family, 1220  
 Ben-Ali, 512  
 Benamor, Abraham, of Mekenes, 489–490  
 Benamozegh, Eliyahu, 319  
 Benaroya, Mois, 966  
 Ben-Asher, Aaron, 208, 790  
 Benatar, Abraham, 462  
 Benatar, Gabriel, 369  
 Benatar, Mousa, 369  
 Benatar, Salomon, 369, 462  
 Benattar, Hayyim, 32–33  
 Ben-Avi, Itamar, 200  
 Benavides, Oscar, 729  
 Benbassat, Albert, 967  
 Ben Buruel, Leon, 1187  
 Benda, Julien, 835  
 Bendavid, 143  
 Ben David, Anan, 90  
 Ben David, Mordechai, 226  
 Ben David, Moshe, 1124  
 Ben-David, Yosef, 530  
 Bender, A. P., 498  
 Bendigo, Australia, 521  
 Benedict XIII, 910  
 Benedict XVI, 131  
 Benedikt, Moriz, 59  
 Benei Menashe of India, 1218–1223  
 Bene-Israel and Baghdadi Jews in India (20th Century), 1216–1217  
 Ben Eliezer, Israel, 211, 1009  
 Ben Eliezer, Judith, 1184  
 Ben Eliezer, Tovia, 954  
 Ben Eli Hallewi, Yaphet, 1130  
 Ben Eliyahu Israel, Moshe, 858  
 Ben Farha, David Saul Marshall, 1235, 1249  
 Ben Gabbai, Meir, 317  
 Benghazi, Cyrenaica, 480  
 Ben-Gurion, David, 37, 115, 640, 1157, 1234, 1242  
 Ben Hananiah, Joshua, 133  
 Ben Harash, Matya, 14  
 Ben Hatar, Moses, 849  
 Ben Hayyim, Abraham, 866  
 Ben-Horin, Elaishiv, 1246  
 Ben Hyrcanus, Eliezer, 133  
 Beniesh, Mois, 961, 966  
 Beni Musa, legend of, 454  
 Ben Isaac, Nathan, 311  
 Ben Isac Abrabanel, Iehuda Leão, 875  
 Ben Israel, Manasseh, 82, 84, 144, 318, 363, 923, 1161  
 Benjamin, 18  
 tribe of, 78, 79  
 Benjamin, Ethel, 543  
 Benjamin, Frank, 1249  
 Benjamin, Israel Joseph, 353  
 Benjamin, Rabbi, 1103  
 Benjamin, V. L., 1221  
 Benjamin, Walter, 42, 43–44, 837  
 Benjamin of Tudela, 84, 351, 352, 464, 786, 794, 1008, 1105, 1115, 1123, 1130, 1149  
 Ben Jerham, Salmon, 92  
 Ben Josef Sason, Aharon, 980  
 Ben Joseph, Aaron, 92  
 Ben Judah, Gershom, 252  
 Ben Judah, Jacob, 25  
 Ben Judah Solomon Zalman, Elijah, 1035  
 Benkow, Jo, 1085  
 Ben Lev, Josef, 980  
 Ben Levi, Joshua, 5–6  
 Benlolo, Jack, 221  
 Ben Mahir Ibn Tibbon, Jacob, 351  
 Ben Meir ha-Kohen, Shabbetai, 1041  
 Ben Moses Farhi, Estori, 351  
 Ben-Moshe, Danny, 118  
 Ben Moshe Moskona, Judah, 980  
 Ben Nahman, Moshe, 316  
 Ben Nissan, Mordecai, 93  
 Benny, Jack (Benjamin Kubelsky), 241, 243  
 Benoliel, Abraham, 459  
 Benoliel, David, 459  
 Benoliel, Esther Benathar, 459  
 Benoliel, Judah, 849  
 Ben Porat, Mordechai, 378, 775  
 Benros, Gardenia, 459  
 Benros, Isaac, 459  
 Ben Samuel, Baruch, 352  
 Ben Samuel, Samuel, 1149  
 Ben Samuel, Simhah, 25  
 Ben Samuel, Solomon, 1124  
 Ben Samuel Adrabi, Ishaak, 980  
 Ben Sarûq, Menahem, 1099  
 Ben Schloyme Zalmen, Eyliohu, 211, 1038, 1041  
 Ben Shmuel, Elisha, 1095  
 Bensusan, Menahem, 958  
 Benvenisti, Maxim, 966  
 Ben Yahi, Yahia, III, 893  
 Ben Yehuda, Baruch, 347  
 Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer, 197, 200, 201, 1038, 1044  
 Ben Yohai, Simeon, 6  
 Ben Yonah, Benjamin, 980  
 Ben Zakkai, Rabban Yohanan, 5  
 Benzaquén, Willy, 730  
 Ben-Zvi, Yitzchak, 1231  
 Ben Zvi Institute, 791  
 Ber, R'Dov, 326  
 Berab, Jacob, 35  
 Berakhiah, 7  
 Berav, Yaacov, 31  
 Berdichevsky, Micha Joseph, 403  
 Berendsen, Ivar, 1069  
 Berenson, Bernard, 235, 1037  
 Berg, Gertrude, 242  
 Bergen-Belsen, camps at, 479  
 Berger, Adolfo, 733  
 Berger, Elmer, 339  
 Berger, Victor, 593  
 Bergson, Peter, 599–600  
 Berle, Milton (Mendel Berlinger), 243  
 Berlin, Irving, 237  
 Berlin, Isaiah, 1031, 1032  
 Berlin, Saul, 933  
 Bermant, Chaim, 897  
 Bernard of Clairvaux, 129  
 Bernburg (Liepman), Paul, 1052, 1078  
 Bernhardt, Sarah, 825  
 Bernice (wife of Aristobulus), 1112  
 Bernice, Queen, 69, 70–71  
 Bernstein, Aaron Simcha, 635  
 Bernstein, Eduard, 846  
 Bernstein, Herman, 943  
 Bernstein, Leonard, 227, 238  
 Bessantchi, Jewish member of Parliament, 366  
 Bessels, Emil, 353  
 Bessis, Albert, 512  
 Beta Israel, Ethiopia, 450, 468–469, 472, 473  
*Betar* (Likud), 499, 664, 733, 743  
 Bet-El Community, Mexico, 675  
 Beth Israel Community Center, Mexico, 675  
 Beth Knesset Siyahh Israel, Abuja, 493  
 Betta, Chiara, 1242  
 Bettelheim, Bruno, 59–60  
 Bet Yosef, 529–530  
*Beyachad* Communal Centre, Johannesburg, 498  
 Beyda, Raymond, 616  
 Bezalel, 292  
 Bezmozgis, David, 249  
 Biale, Rachel, 406  
 Bialik, Hayim Nahman, 234  
 Bibas, R. Hayim, 488  
 Biberach, camps at, 479  
 Bible, 11–12  
 Abraham-Ishmael story, 151  
 Greek versions, 132–135  
 Moses, 151  
 symbols of diaspora, 17, 18–22  
*ta'amim* (marking signs), 215  
 vernacular translations, 178, 253  
 Biblical cantillation, 215–216  
 Biblical Hebrew, 193  
 Biblical literature, 1–4, 5  
 Biblical prehistory of Israel and symbols of diaspora, 17–18  
 Bieder, Joan, 1249  
 Bild, Benjamin, 1084  
 Biller, Maxim, 47  
 Billy, André, 836  
 Binger, Louis Gustave, 353  
 Birmajer, Marcelo, 709  
 Birman, Meir Mendelevich, 1184  
 Birnbaum, Nathan, 46  
 Birnbaum, Solomon A., 193

- Bismarck, Otto von, 192, 845  
 Bismüth, Roger, 512  
 Bizerte crisis (1961), 511  
 Black Code, 659–660  
 Black Death (1348–1349), 76, 98  
 Blaisten, Isidoro, 698  
 Blanc, Herman, 734  
 Blanco, Antonio Guzmán, 746  
 Blau, Amram, 336  
 Blaumanis, Rudolf, 1032  
 Blaustein, Jacob, 640  
 Bleich, Yaakov Dov, 1014  
 Bleichröder, Gerson, 845  
 Blida, 458  
 Bloch, Ernest, 227, 919  
 Bloch family, 1189  
 Block, Abraham, 476  
 Bloemfontein, South Africa, 494  
 Bloom syndrome, 278  
 Bluestone, Joseph Isaac, 635  
 Blum, Karen, 491  
 Blum, Léon, 827  
 Blumenthal, Nissan, 212  
 B'nai Akiva, 743  
 B'nai Brak, 513, 514  
 B'nai B'rith, 523, 525, 551, 597, 665, 668, 670, 672  
 B'nai Jerusalem, 554  
 B'nai Zion, 640–641  
 Bnei Akiva (Religious Zionist), 499, 541, 768  
 Bnei Akiva youth movement, 341, 641  
 Bnei Ephraim, 451  
 Bnei Gat, 451  
 Bnei Menashe, 451  
 Bnei Zebulun, 451  
 Boas, Franz, 353  
 Boas, Tobias, 1228  
 Boa Vista, 459, 460  
 Bodson, Victor, 885  
 Boemas, Abraham, 1034  
 Boerne, Ludwig, 43  
 Boers, 494  
 Bogale, Yona, 469  
 Bohbot, Mercedes, 220–221  
 Bolado, C., 720  
 Bolaffi, Albert, 528  
 Boleslaw V, Prince, 983  
 Bolívar, Simón, 745  
 Bolivia, Jews in, 694  
 Bomasz, M., 985  
 Bonder, Nilton, 721  
 Bonnet, Charles, 143  
 Bonnier, Albert, 1055, 1090  
 Bonnier, Eva, 1054, 1090  
 Bonsenior, Judah, 906  
 Borchardt, Rudolph, 45  
 Bores, Tato, 698  
 Borges, Jorge Luis, 695  
 Borinsky, Alicia, 709  
 Boris, Ernst, 299  
 Boris, Prince, 954  
 Boris III, King, 960  
 Borisovich, Aulov Semen, 1153  
 Borokhov, Ber, 1043  
 Borowitz, Eugene, 568  
 Borsippa, 759  
 Borsky, Maros, 231  
 Borso I, 877  
 Boruhov, Boris, 1145  
 Botswana, Jews in, 452  
 Botz, Gerhard, 808  
 Bougie, 455  
 Bourguiba, Habib, 511, 512  
 Boyington, Mike, 160  
 Brandeis, Louis, 344, 636–637  
 Brandes, Georg, 1069  
 Brandon, David Henry, 672  
 Brandwein, Naftule, 228  
 Brann, Ross, 154  
 Brasch, Charles, 543  
 Brazil  
   Jews in, 690, 693, 694, 716–722  
   Portuguese, 650  
   transatlantic trade and, 723–727  
 Brazilian Marranism, 160–166  
 Brazilian National Commission for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue, 720  
 Breast cancer, 278–279  
 Breen, Joseph I., 240  
 Bremer, Max, 733  
 Brenner, Sydney, 502  
 Breuer, Isaac, 336  
 Brice, Fanny (Fania Borach), 243  
 Bridgetown, Barbados, 657  
 Briem, Helgi, 1079–1080  
 Brigham, Daniel, 461  
 Brisbane, Australia, 522  
 British  
   chief rabbinate, 933–936  
   influence on world Jewry, 936–937  
 British East Africa, 475. *See also* Kenya  
 British Levant Company, 789  
 British Mandatory Palestine, 572, 598  
 British South African Company, 518  
 Brit Millah, 511  
 Brod, Max, 970  
 Broder, Henryk M., 47, 107  
 Brodie, Israel, 935  
 Broido, G., 1138  
 Broken Hill, Zambia, 516, 517  
 Bronze medal depicting Gracia Nasi, 253  
 Brooks, Mel (Melvin Kaminsky), 243, 246  
 Brown, David, 895  
 Brown, Denise Scott, 517  
 Bruce, Lenny (Leonard Schneider), 243  
 Bruller, Jean, 837  
 Brusilovsky, Evhenii, 1134–1135  
 Buber, Martin, 42, 46, 80, 403, 404, 625, 628  
 Buchenwald concentration camp, 396  
 Buchwald, Theo, 730, 733  
 Buckley, Charles, 1247  
 Buenos Aires, 713–714  
 Bukharan Jews in Central Asia, 1123–1125  
 Bukiet, Melvin Jules, 249  
 Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation in Rhodesia, 518, 519, 520  
 Bulgaria, 953–967  
   contemporary overview, 963–967  
   ethnic backgrounds, 953  
   general population, 953  
   historical overview, 953–963  
   important personalities, 966  
   Jewish contributions, 966–967  
   Jewish population in, 953  
   languages spoken, 953  
   migration routes, 953  
   synagogue in Sofia, 965  
 Bulliet, Richard, 140  
 Bulz, Emmanuel, 884  
 Burchardt, Hermann, 353  
 Burghal, Ali, 478  
 Burman, Daniel, 702  
 Burns, George (Nathan Birnbaum), 243  
 Burrows, Abe, 238  
 Bursa, 776  
 Burshtein, Chaim, 1037, 1038  
 Burstein, Zuño, 733  
 Burton, Monatgue, 932  
 Buzaglo, David, 216  
 Buzand, P'awstos, 1108, 1109, 1110  
 Bwl'n, 1102  
 Byzantine Empire and Karaites, 92  
 Cadmus, 64  
 Caesar, Julius, 68  
 Caesar, Sid, 243  
 Cahan, Abraham, 236, 594, 836  
 Cairo Genizah fragment, 311  
 Calah, 752, 755  
 California gold rush, 671  
 Calles, Plutarco Elias, 674  
 Calochristianakis, Police Chief, 366  
 Camaguey, Cuba, 664  
 Canada, Jews in, 548–552  
 Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy, 550, 551  
 Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), 549, 551  
 Canavan disease, 279  
 Canetti, Elias, 919, 963, 966  
 Cantares, 487  
 Cantor, Eddie (Israel Iskowitz), 243  
 Cape Santo António, 557–558  
 Cape Verde, Jews in, 459–461  
 Cape Verde-Israel Friendship Society, 461

- Cap Francais, Haiti, 660, 661  
 Cap Haitien, Haiti, 660  
 Caracalla, Emperor, 865  
 Caracas, Venezuela, 746  
 Cardenas, Lázaro, 674  
 Cardoso, Isaac, 318  
 Cardozo, Aaron, 849  
 Cardozo, Benjamin Nathan, 563  
 Caribbean Islands and hidden  
   Jews, 158–159  
 Carlebach, Ezriel, 157  
 Carlebach, Shlomo, 214, 226, 625,  
   628, 629, 721  
 Carlo V, King, 871  
 Carlton, Australia, 522  
 Carlyle, Thomas, 931  
 Carmel, Yosef, 429  
 Caro, Joseph, 797  
 Carter, Jimmy, 385, 583  
 Carthage, Jewish settlement in,  
   449  
 Casa de la Comunidad Hebrea de  
   Cuba, 664  
 CASA Sefardita, 714  
 Casa Sephardi, Argentina, 712  
 Casipoera, 654  
 Cassab, Judy, 524  
 Cassel, Ernest, 932  
 Cassell, Curtis, 338  
 Cassin, René, 830  
 Castan, Ron, 524  
 Castan, Siegfried Ellwanger, 722  
 Castiel, Carol, 461  
 Castro, Fidel, 664  
 Cathedral Synagogue, Sydney, 521  
 Catherine I, Empress, 1009  
 Catherine II, Empress, 1009, 1010  
 Catherine of Braganza, 489  
 Caucasus, 1093–1097  
 Caucasus and Central Asia  
   Afghanistan, 1129–1132  
   ancient Armenia, 1108–1113  
   Armenia, 1104–1107  
   Azerbaijan, 1114–1119  
   Caucasus, 1093–1097  
   Central Asia, 1122–1129  
   Georgia, 1119–1122  
   Kazakhstan, 1132–1136  
   Khazaria, 1097–1104  
   Kyrgyzstan, 1136–1141  
   medieval Armenia, 1113–1114  
   Tajikistan, 1142–1146  
   Turkmenistan, 1146–1149  
   Uzbekistan, 1149–1154  
 Cayman Islands, Jews in, 663  
 Cedex Malta, Charles V, Emperor,  
   886  
 Ceiba, Honduras, 669  
 Celan, Paul, 42  
 Céline, Louis-Ferdinand, 837  
 Center for Jewish Art rescue and  
   preservation of Diaspora  
   cultural heritage, 229–233  
 Center for Jewish History, New  
   York City, 562  
 Center for Sephardic Studies, 747  
 Central African Zionism  
   Organization, 518  
 Central America. *See also*  
   *countries in*  
   Jews in, 667–673  
 Central and Eastern Europe and  
   Russia  
   Albania, 942–946  
   Belarus, 946–952  
   Bulgaria, 953–967  
   Central Europe, Eastern  
   Europe, and Russia, 938–942  
   Czech Republic, 968–971  
   Hungary, 971–979  
   Poland, 982–988  
   relationship between Habad  
   Hasidism and Russia,  
   998–1001  
   Republic of Macedonia,  
   979–982  
   Romania and Moldova, 988–992  
   Russia, 992–997  
   Slovakia, 1001–1004  
   Slovenia, 1004–1007  
   Ukraine, 1007–1016  
 Central Asia, 1122–1129  
   Bukharan Jews, 1123–1125  
   countries, 1122  
   early Jewish history, 1122–1123  
   general population, 1122  
   Jewish population in, 1122  
   languages spoken, 1122  
   Russian rule, 1125–1126  
   Soviet Era, 1126–1128  
 Central Europe, 938–942  
   anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism  
   movements, and community  
   existential problems,  
   940–941  
   contemporary overview,  
   939–941  
   culture, science, and the  
   humanities, 939  
   demographic movement and  
   emigration, 941  
   economic conditions, 939–940  
   general population, 938  
   historical overview, 938–939  
   Jewish education, religious  
   denominations, communal  
   and political institutions, 940  
   Jewish population in, 938  
 Central Europe and Jewish women  
   (19th–20th centuries),  
   260–263  
 Central Sephardic Jewish  
   Community of America, 562  
 Centro Deportivo Israelita (CDI),  
   675, 685  
 Centro Hebreo, 667  
 Cerro, Sánchez, 729  
 Ceuta, Morocco, 487, 489  
 Chachuak, Rohluma, 1221  
 Chachuak, Vanlalkhuma, 1221  
 Chacrón, Isaac, 709  
 Chad, 454  
 Chagall, Marc, 231, 819, 827, 829,  
   836, 949  
 Chaim, Chafetz, 950  
 Chaim Weizmann Research  
   Institute, 747  
 Challianthanga, 1218–1219  
 Chaluchuapa, 668  
 Chamama, Banat, 512  
 Chamberlain, Houston Stewart,  
   51–52, 106  
 Charikar, Abraham David, 1226  
 Charity Organization Society, 564  
 Charlemagne, 821, 842  
 Charles I, King, 923  
 Charles II, King, 489, 658, 923  
 Charles IV, Emperor, 968  
 Charles VI, King, 822, 969  
 Charles VIII, 866  
 Charles X, 825  
 Charlestown, Barbados, 658  
 Chaskalson, Arthur, 502  
 Chaucer, Geoffrey, 110  
 Chávez, Hugo, 749  
 Chechuen, 487, 489  
 Cherikover, Elyahu, 1048  
 Chervonenko, E., 1014  
 Chester, Ilan, 748  
 Child-rearing in Scandinavia, 1060  
 Chile, Jews in, 690, 694  
 Chilova, Nina, 966  
 China, 1155–1159  
   *See also* Beijing, Kaifeng  
   and Shanghai, China  
   contemporary overview,  
   1176–1179  
   ethnic backgrounds, 1155  
   general population, 1155  
   historical Jewish personalities,  
   1167–1171  
   historical overview, 1155–1159  
   Jewish population in, 1155  
   languages spoken, 1155  
   major cities, 1176–1182  
   migration routes and ethnic  
   backgrounds, 1155  
 Chinandega, Nicaragua, 669  
 Chirac, Jacques, 829  
 Chironomy, 208  
 Chlimper, José, 731  
 Chmielnicki, Bogdan, 101  
 Chmielnicki massacres, 76  
 Chocrón, Isaac, 748  
 Christ. *See* Jesus  
 Christchurch, New Zealand, 535  
 Christensen, Karsten, 1062  
 Christianity  
   anti-Semitism and, 104,  
   109–110, 130  
   dissemination of early beyond  
   Jewish Diaspora, 123–125  
   emphasis on divine  
   vulnerability, 62  
   Jewish converts to, 138

- Christianity (*continued*)  
 Jewish Diaspora and spreading of, 126–132  
 Jewish influence on formation of Scripture, 132–136  
 Pauline mission, 123–124  
 Roman Empire and, 123–124, 127  
 Samaritans, 124  
 as threat to Jewish Diaspora, 129  
 transformation in relations between Jews and, 130
- Christian IV, King, 1050, 1062
- Christian–Jewish dialogue, 141–146
- Christian lands, expulsion from, 129–130
- Christian populations indicated by delegates to Council of Nicaea, 124–125
- Christians  
 censorship of Jewish worship, 27  
 Greek-speaking, 133–134  
 influencing love for Judaism, 149
- Christian Zionists, 131
- Christina, Queen, 1050, 1088
- Chronology of Jewish travelers and explorers, 351–354
- Chrysostom, John, Saint, 104
- Churchill, Winston, 112, 1188
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 632–633
- Cicero (106–43 BCE), 65, 104
- Cinematheca National, 748
- Circolo Sion, 479
- Citrin, Walter J., 1202
- Civil rights end, 847–848
- Classical liberalism, 74
- Claudius, Emperor, 69–70
- Clement VII, 83
- Clinton, Bill, 1158, 1166, 1167
- Clinton, Hillary, 1158
- Clore, Charles, 932
- Clovis, King, 821
- Club Social y Deportivo Hebraica, Venezuela, 748
- Coalition for the Advancement in Jewish Education, 548
- Code Noir*, 559
- Cohen, A. J., 1242
- Cohen, Albert, 837, 919
- Cohen, Arthur, 248
- Cohen, Ben, 601
- Cohen, D. J., 1226
- Cohen, E. M. D., 1226
- Cohen, Elliot, 595
- Cohen, Francis Lyon, 28
- Cohen, Henry Freeman, 502
- Cohen, Hermann, 337, 404
- Cohen, Isaac, 365, 366, 896
- Cohen, Israel, 1236, 1237, 1242, 1248
- Cohen, John Jacob, 522
- Cohen, Joshua, 1134, 1135
- Cohen, Judith R., 228
- Cohen, Leonard, 550
- Cohen, M. L., 492
- Cohen, Marcel, 839
- Cohen, Matt, 550
- Cohen, Morris Abraham “Two Gun,” 1168
- Cohen, Moss (Paddy), 519
- Cohen, Philip, 137
- Cohen, Phillip Joseph, 521
- Cohen, Robert, 458
- Cohen, Robert Waley, 935
- Cohen, Samuel, 1186
- Cohen, Sandro, 709
- Cohen, Sara, 966
- Cohen, Sathie, 355
- Cohen, Shalom, 512, 1205, 1207
- Cohen, Shalome, 355, 356–357
- Cohen, Simon “Sam,” 491
- Cohen, Theodore, 1199
- Cohen, Tobias, 352
- Cohen, Yeshaya, 1135
- Cohen modal haplotype, 450
- Cohen-Tannoudji, Claude, 458
- Cohn, Felice, 564
- Cohn, Ferdinand, 299
- Cohn, Harry, 240
- Colegio Sinai, 747
- Colegio Yavne, Cuba, 664
- Colombia, Jews in, 690
- Colón, Cristóbal, 651
- Colón, Diego, 651
- Colón, Isabel, 651, 658
- Colón, Louis, 651
- Colón, Portugallo, 658
- Colorectal cancer, 279–280
- Columbus, Christopher, 352, 689
- Comision Coordinadora de lasw Sociedades Religiosas Hebreas de Cuba, 664
- Comité Central de la Comunidad Judía de Mexico, 679
- Comité Central Israelita del Uruguay, 743
- Comité Central Israelita de México, 674
- Comité de Orden y Vigilancia, Mexico, 679
- Comité de Protección de Ayuda al Inmigrante (Protection Committee to Help Immigrants), 730
- Comite Israelita Cubano de Ayuda a los Aliados, 664
- Comité Peruano Pro Palestina Hebrea (Pro Hebrew Palestine Peruvian Committee), 730
- Comite udio Anti-Nazi, 664
- Commerce in Salonica, 860–864
- Communication in premodern diaspora, 38–42
- Communist Party (CPUSA), 593, 594–595
- Community-based kollels, 428
- Como, Moise, 874
- Comsejo Mexicano de Mujeres Israelitas, Mexico, 679
- Comte d’Estaing, Jean Baptiste Charles Henri Hector, 660–661
- Concejo Central Sionist, 742
- Conchillos, Lope de, 665
- Confederação Israelita do Brazil (CONIB), 720
- Confederación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela, 748–749
- Confederation of Jewish Associations of Venezuela (CAIV), 747
- Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, 640
- Congruence principle (multiple causation), 204
- Consejo Central Comunitario Hebreo de Panama, 672
- Consejo Central de la Comunidad Judia de Guatemala, 668
- Conservative Judaism, 225–227, 271, 613  
 in Canada, 550, 568
- Consistoire d’Algerie, 458
- Constantine, 127, 455, 865
- Constantine I, Czar, 992
- Constantinople, 753
- Samaritans and, 88
- Contemporary Diaspora conversion patterns into Orthodox Judaism, 421–424
- demography of modern Diaspora Jewry, 392–402
- Habad movement organizations and influence in Diaspora, 430–447
- insight into workings of Batei Din, 419–421
- international network of religious Zionist Kollels, 427–429
- Jewish day school education in French-speaking Europe, 424–426
- Jewish values and philanthropy, 407–412
- reflections on modern nate and Jewish community, 416–418
- responses to intermarriage, 412–416
- self-revitalization of Diaspora Life, 402–407
- Contemporary Jewish music in America, 225–229
- Contemporary migration patterns of Russian Jews to Germany, 386–391
- Contreras, Eleazar López, 746
- Cook, Michael, 153

- Copland, Aaron, 237  
 Cordova, Emmanuel de, 549  
 Cordovero, Moses, 34, 35, 317, 776  
 Cornelius Hispalus, 66  
 Coro, Venezuela, 745  
 Cortés, Hernán, 673  
 Corvinus, Matthias, 972  
 Cosgrove, Hazel, 897  
 Cosimo I of Florence, 866  
 Cosmides, G., 368  
 Costa Rica, Jews in, 694  
 Costeff optic atrophy syndrome (3-methylglutaconicaciduria type 3), 280  
 Cotler, Irwin, 550  
 Cotton, Jack, 932  
 Coughlin, Charles, 634  
 Council for Zambia Jewry, 516  
 Council of Jewish Communities in Iran, 770  
   in Morocco, 485  
 Council of Jewish Federations, 643  
 Council of Jewish Women, 522  
 Countries with largest Jewish populations (2005), 398 (table)  
 Crema, Rafael, 874  
 Cremasco, Isaco, 874  
 Crémieux, Adolphe, 825  
*Crémieux* decree (1870), 455, 457  
   reinstatement of, 457  
   repeal of, 457  
 Cresques, Abraham, 352  
 Cresques, Jehuda, 352  
 Cresson, Warder, 635  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 363, 658, 923, 930, 1161  
 Crone, Patricia, 153  
 Cronenberg, David, 550  
 Crusades, 97–98, 129  
 Cuba, Jews in, 663–665  
 Cuernavaca, Mexico, 679  
 Cultural Zionists, 75  
 Cultures, 73  
 Curaçao, Venezuela, 660, 745  
   Jews in, 654–656  
 Curiel, Morris E., 747  
 Curitiba, Brazil, 720  
 Cutha, 752  
 Cutler, Ivor, 897  
 Cyprus and Jewish rebellion, 71  
 Cyrene, 449, 477  
   Jewish revolt in, 70, 71  
   Jewish settlement in, 449  
 Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop, 96  
 Cyrus, Emperor, 2, 81, 767, 1225  
 Cysner, Joseph, 1245  
 Cystic fibrosis, 280  
 Cytrynowicz, Roney, 708  
 Czech Republic, 968–971  
 Czeller, Arthur, Dr., 292  
  
 Da Joao III, King of Portugal, 161  
 Da Bahia, Salvador, 726  
 Da Bozzolo, Viviano, 874  
 Da Costa, Isaac, 654  
 Dacosta de Andrade, Benjamin, 659  
 Dacy, Marianne, 123  
 D'Aguilar, Moses Rafael, 651  
 Dahan, Yitzhak, 791  
 Dahlberg, Edward, 595  
 Dahya, 510  
 Daiches, David, 897  
 Daiches, Salis, 896  
 Damascene Jews, 615  
 Damascus, Syria, 218–219, 753, 786, 787, 788  
 Damasio, Antonio, 165  
 Dan, tribe of, 79, 82, 84  
 Danas, 64  
 Danby, Michael, 525  
 Daniel, 19  
 Daniel, Andrei, 966  
 Daniel, Ida, 966  
 Daniel, Isak, 966  
 Daniel, Leon, 966  
 Daniel, T., 1220–1221  
 Danish Virgin Islands, 671  
 Dannecker, Theodore, 960  
 Danovski, Boyan, 966  
 Darius, 767  
 Darmon, Raoul, 512  
 Darwish, Shalom, 381  
 Da Silva, Lula, 722  
 David, 79, 196, 292, 751, 787  
 David, Larry, 244  
 David ben Zimra (Radbaz), 468  
 Davidov, Yuri, 1139  
 Davidovich, Bella, 1117  
 Davidovich, Efim, 948  
 Davidovs family, 1126  
 Davidson, Henrik, 1090  
 Davidsson, Elias, 1081  
 Davis, Edmund, 517  
 Davis, Ernest, 542  
 Davis, Samuel, 491  
 Davydov, Valery, 1145  
 Davydov, Yosef, 1150  
 Dayan, Moshe, 1253  
 Day school education in  
   French-speaking Europe, 424–426, 832–834  
 Dead Sea Scrolls, 133, 791  
 De Barros Basto, Arthur Carlos, 893, 894  
 De Beers Diamond Mining, 496  
 Deborah the prophetess, 79  
 De Carvajal, Luis, 700  
 De Castro, Aida, 672  
 De Castro, Benedictus, 1088  
 De Castro, Herbert, 672  
 De Castro, Hernand, 663  
 De Cattaoui, Pasha Moise, 527  
 De Champlain, Samuel, 548  
 De Dios Porta, Dolores, 663  
 De Fano, Menahem Azariah, 22  
 De Hevesy, George, 975  
 De Hirsch, Baron Maurice, 701, 711, 717  
 Deive, Carlos Esteban, 665  
 Dekalo, Fenya, 967  
 DeKeyser, Desire, 812  
 De Klerk, Willem, 497  
 De la Barre, Lefebvre, 652  
 De Lagarde, Paul, 452  
 De la Motthe, Jacques, 557  
 De la Torre, Raúl, 702  
 De Leão, Duarte Nunes, 163  
 Delegacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA), 714  
 De Leon, Moshe, 316  
 De Lesseps, Ferdinand, 826  
 De Lima, Duarte, 1062  
 Delvalle, Max Shalom, 672  
 De Marchena, Enrique, 666  
 De Marchena, Rafael de  
   Mordeciah, 666  
 De Medici, Ferdinando I., Grand Duke, 362  
 De Medina, Samuel, 317, 980  
 De Meneses, Luís, 555  
 De Mercado, Rafael, 657  
 Democracies, 112–113  
 Democratic Republic of Congo, 452  
   Jewish community of, 461–463  
 Democritus, 108  
 Demography of modern Diaspora Jewry, 392–402  
 Dengel, Sarsa (1563–1597), 468  
 Denmark, 1062–1070  
   general population, 1062  
   historical overview, 1062–1070  
   Jewish population in, 1062  
   languages spoken, 1062  
   migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 1062  
 Denomination and Jewish identity, in America, 613–614  
 De Parquet, M., 659  
 De Pass, Aaron, 490–491  
 De Pass, Elias, 490–491  
 De'Pastorini, Giovan Michele, 253  
 De Piérola, Nicolás, 728  
 De Puig, Luis Maria, 117  
 De Rothschild, Edmund, 469  
 Derrida, Jacques, 165, 458, 830, 839  
 De Salomo Levi Maduro, Moses, 656–657  
 De Sola, Abraham, 549  
 De Sola, Herbert, 668  
 De Sola Pool, David, 562  
 D'Este, Ercole I, 877  
 D'Este, Ercole II, 877, 881  
 De Thiery, Baron, 671  
 De Torres, Luis, 663  
 De Tudella, Benjamin, 955  
 Deutero-Isaiah, 2  
 Deutsch, Carol (Karel), 818  
 De Vallsecha, Gabriel, 352  
 Development Corporation for Israel/State of Israel Bonds, 641

- De Vidas, Eliyahu, 776  
 De Villadestes, Mecia, 352  
 De Vushal, Moshe, 858  
 Dewey, John, 627  
 Dey, Hussein, 455, 456  
 Deyfus, Salomón Joseph, 730  
 Dhamar, 799  
*Dhimmi* (statute), 455, 456, 510  
 Diamond, David, 227  
 Diaspora  
   aliyah, 344  
   anti-Zionism, 333–340  
   attitude of American Jewish thinkers toward, 566–570  
   batei din (house of judgment), 419–421  
   contemporary Judeo-Christian communities, 146–150  
   demography of modern Jews, 392–402  
   dissemination of early Christianity beyond, 123–125  
   education, 340–341  
   education in Israel about, 345–350  
   engagement with Israel, 340–345  
   generational factor, 345  
   genetic diseases, 287–292  
   Habad movement, 430–447  
   history of, 64–94  
   history of Judeo-Christian communities, 136–139  
   immigration to Israel, 331–332  
   influences on modern Hebrew, 200–205  
   Jewish Enlightenment and impact on, 320–324  
   Jewish music, 206–214  
   Jewry as archetypal, 54–57  
   languages of, 167–207  
   Lurianic kabbalah and, 34–38  
   medicine, 294–300  
   philanthropy and Jewish values, 343–344, 407–412  
   political activism, 344  
   Portuguese Jews, Italy and beyond, 875–883  
   role of women, 251–255  
   self-revitalization, 402–407  
   and spreading of Christianity, 126–132  
   symbols of, 17–23  
   transition from negation to Jewish continuity, 346–347  
   varieties of languages, 171–180  
   volunteering, 342–343  
   Yiddish, 193–197  
   youth movements, 341–342  
 Diaspora Batei Din, insight into workings of, 419–421  
 Diaspora cultural heritage, rescue and preservation by Center for Jewish Art, 229–233  
*Diaspora Jiosy Gasy* (Diaspora Jewish Malagasy), 452  
 Diaspora languages  
   Aramaic, 177–178  
   Yiddish, 193–197  
 Diaspora themes  
   biblical literature, 1–4  
   communication in premodern diaspora, 38–42  
   concept of Sephardi and Ashkenazi in German-Jewish and German anti-semitic thought, 48–52  
   German-Jewish literature and art, 42–48  
   Hellenistic period, 8–16  
   Jewish identity, 61–63  
   Jewish self-hatred, 57–60  
   Jewry as archetypal Diaspora, 54–57  
   Joseph B. Solovetchik, 52–54  
   liturgy, 23–30  
   Lurianic Kabbalah and idea of diaspora, 34–38  
   Sephardi exile and diaspora concepts, 31–34  
   symbols of diaspora, 17–23  
   Talmudic thought, 4–7  
 Diaz, Porfirio, 690  
 Dickens, Charles, 110  
 Didi, 514  
 Diestel family, 1189  
 Dighet, 509  
 Dik, Aizik Meir, 1047  
 Dik, Isaac Meir, 1043  
 Dillon, Francis Henry, 545  
 Dimanshtein, Simon, 1138  
 Dina, Abraam (of Fontanella), 874  
 Dinur, Ben-Zion, 347  
 Dio, 70–71, 1110  
 Diocletian, 124  
 Diodorus Siculus (late first century BCE), 64  
 Diogenes, 68–69  
 DioGuardi, Joe, 945  
 Dionis, Albert, 1050  
 Dionysus, 67  
 Dioscorides, 915  
 Diseases. *See* Genetic diseases  
 Dispensationalism, 633  
 Disraeli, Benjamin, 925  
 Djemal, Isaac, 1251  
 Djerassi, Robert, 966  
 Djerba (island), 509, 513  
 Djerrada, 483  
 Djibouti, 451  
 Dobkin, Barbara, 406  
 Döblin, Alfred, 43, 47  
 Dohm, Christian W., 143–145  
 Domin, Hilda, 47  
 Dominican Republic, Jews in, 665–666  
 Dominican Republic Settlement Association (DORSA), 666  
 Domitian, Emperor, 71  
 Donme, 780, 781, 782, 783–785  
 Dorfman, Ariel, 698, 708  
 Dorfman family, 1189  
 Douek, Ezra, 530  
 Dov Ber, Shalom, 439  
 Dov-Ber Lebensohn, Abraham, 1044  
 Drabinsky, Garth, 550  
 Dreifuss, Ruth, 919  
 Dreyfus, Alfred, 240–241, 826, 827, 835  
 Dreyfus, Augusto, 728  
 Dreyfus, George, 524  
 Dreyfus affair, 457  
 Drory, Rina, 154  
 Drucker, Jack, 491  
 Druckman, Chaim, 429  
 Drumont, Edouard, 826  
 Dubinsky, David, 593, 596  
 Dubnow, Simon, 335, 949, 1032, 1048  
 Dunedin, New Zealand, 535  
*Dunera*, 523  
 Dunn, James, 127  
 Durban World Conference against Racism (2001), 501  
 Durkheim, Émile, 627, 825  
 Dushan the Great, 980  
 Dutch Brazil, 650–651  
 Dutch invasion of Brazil, 162  
 Dutch West India Company, 558, 559, 651, 654, 726  
 Dvorkis, D., 1014  
 Dylan, Bob, 226  
 Early Jewish history  
   Caucasus, 1093–1094  
   Central Asia, 1122–1123  
 East Asia  
   China, 1155–1159  
   historical Jewish personalities in, 1167–1171  
   major cities in, 1176–1182  
   Harbin, 1182–1185  
   Hong Kong, 1186–1193  
   Japan, 1196–1203  
   Kaifeng, China, 1160–1167  
   Shanghai, 1172–1176  
   Taiwan, 1193–1195  
 Eastern Diaspora, 11, 15  
 Eastern Europe, 938–942  
   anti-Semitism, 940–941  
   anti-Zionist movements, 940–941  
   beginnings of Hasidism, 325–327  
   communal institutions, 940  
   community existential problems, 940–941  
   contemporary overview, 939–941  
   culture, 939  
   economic conditions, 939–940  
   emigration, 941  
   general population, 938  
   historical overview, 938–939  
   humanities, 939

- Jewish education, 940  
 Jewish population by country, 938  
 Karaites, 93  
   political institutions, 940  
   religious denominations, 940  
 Eastern Jewish Association, 529  
 Eban, Abba, 1253  
 Ebansu, Subaru, 1202  
 Eber, Irene, 1162  
 Eberly, Annette, 1243  
 Ecuador, Jews in, 694  
 Ecumenism, 626  
 Edelstein, Heinz, 1081  
 Eden, 17  
 Edict of Expulsion, 689  
 Edirne, 776  
 Edison, Thomas, 239  
 Edmonton, Canada, 551  
 Edom, 20, 80  
 Education, 340–341  
   challenges and activities, 349–350  
   Diaspora, 340–341  
   international network of religious Zionist kollels, 427–429  
   in Israel about Diaspora, 345–350  
   Jewish continuity efforts in Israeli, 347–349  
   Jewish day school in French-speaking Europe, 424–426, 832–834  
 Edward I, King, 99–100, 923  
 Edward VII, King, 932  
 Egalitarianism and women in American Judaism, 271–274  
 Egypt, 71, 73, 449, 450, 453  
   attack on Israel, 80  
   exile to, 18–19  
   Jewish rebellion in, 71  
   Jews expelled from, 64  
   Jews in, 4, 8, 463–467  
   Karaites, 92, 93  
   migration routes, 375–378  
   Samaritans, 87, 89  
   Therapeutic community, 252  
 Ehrenpreis, Markus, 958  
 Ehrlich, M. Avrum, 1159  
 Ehrlich, Paul, 299  
 Eichmann, Adolf, 346, 452, 711, 816, 974  
 Eidelman, Samuel, 729  
 Einfeld, Marcus, 524  
 Einfeld, Sydney D., 377, 528  
 Einhorn, Ephraim F., 1194  
 Einstein, Albert, 42, 233, 358, 919, 965, 1183, 1185, 1248  
 Eisenberg, Shoul, 1157, 1202  
 Eisenmenger, Johannes, 98  
 Eishel, 679  
 Eisner, Kurt, 847  
 Eitinger, Leo, 1055, 1085  
 Eitingon, Max, 949  
 Elafrit, Cheikh, 512  
 Elam, 768  
 Elat Hayyim, 626  
 Elbaz, Massoud, 507, 508  
 Eldad Ha-Dani, 468  
 Eldad of tribe of Dan, 82  
 Eleazar, 6, 1213  
 Elephantine, Egypt, 752, 761  
   Jewish military colony in, 449  
 Eli, Japheth ben, 90–91, 141  
 Elias, Benjamin Nissim, 357  
 Elias, Ney, 353  
 Elias family, 1187, 1189, 1215  
 El-Idrisi, Mohammed, 1130  
 Eliezer, 31, 82, 954  
 Eliezer, Matzliah, 506  
 Elijah, 19, 1210, 1211  
 Elijah, Aaron ben, 92  
 Eliot, George, 130, 201  
 Eliot, T. S., 110  
 Eliez (Elias), 1120  
 Elisabeth, Queen, 817  
 Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi), 462  
 Elisa or Dido, Carthage, 510  
 "Eli the Fanatic," 246  
 Eliyahu, Mordechai, 429  
 Elizabeth, Queen, 923  
 Elizabeth Petrovna, Empress, 1009  
 El Kahina, 454  
 Elkan, Sophie, 1055, 1090  
 Elkes, Elhanan, 1037  
 Elkin, Judith Laikin, 696, 704, 705  
 El Levi, Ferrer, 877  
 El Salvador, Jews in, 668–669  
 Elstätter, Julius, 845  
 Elyah, Matzliah b., Rav., 312, 313  
 Emancipation struggle for Jews in Germany (1848–1933), 844  
 Emigration  
   motivation, 387–389  
   Syrian Jews, 218  
 Emmanuel, King of Portugal, 101  
 Emmanuel, Taamrat, 469  
 Emunah of America, 641  
 Engel, Joel, 212  
 England, 99–100, 104, 113–114, 119, 254  
 English, integration of Yiddish into, 197–199  
 Enlai, Zhou, 1157, 1163, 1171  
 Enlightenment, 74, 75  
   anti-Semitism, 105  
   Germany, 192  
   philosophy of tolerance, 142  
 Ensor, James, 818  
 Entebbe, Uganda, 789  
   rescue of Israeli hostages from, 477  
 Entrepreneurial niches in Salonica (1912), 863  
 Epelbaum, Rene, 712  
 Ephraim, tribe of, 79–81  
 Epiphanius, 133  
 Epstein, Israel, 1170–1171, 1183, 1184, 1185  
 Epstein, Lazar, 1184  
 Equal rights in theory and practice, 844–846  
 Erato, Queen, 1111  
 Ercole I, 877  
 Erik, Max, 1048  
 Eritrea, 451  
 Erter, Isaac, 323  
 Erulkar, David S., 1229  
 Esau, 18, 20  
 Esh, B'not, 406  
 Esharhaddon, king of Assyria, 2  
*Esnoga* (synagogue in Portuguese), 362  
 Essequibo (Republic of Guyana), 652  
 Esther, Mrs., 1221  
 Esther, Queen, 19, 158  
 Estonia, 1025–1028  
 Ethical nationhood, 568  
 Ethiopia, 451, 453  
   contemporary overview, 471–474  
   historical overview, 467–471  
   Jews in, 25, 86, 467–474  
 Euchel, Isaac, 322  
 Eugenius IV, 866  
 Eulalia, Saint, 158  
 Eulau, Heinz, 1244  
 Eulau, Kurt, 1244  
 Euro-Arab anti-semitism, 115–118  
 Europe, 801–804  
   anti-Israeli strategy, 117  
   anti-Semitism, 76  
   Arab/Muslim policies, 115–116  
   increase in Christianity's power, 129  
   Jewish day school in French-speaking countries, 424–426, 832–834  
   modern, 298–299  
   Reformation, 101  
 European Jewish Diaspora  
   languages, 193–194  
 Eusebius, 124  
 Evans, Sam, 1201–1202  
 Evian Conference (1938), 522, 600, 666  
 Evolution of Jewish genealogical studies, 292–294  
 Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), 523, 525  
 Exile, 17–19, 31  
   applying to human condition, 61  
   biblical characters associated with, 19  
   distinction between holy and profane, 37  
   final end of, 37  
   finding meaning in, 61  
   Garden of Eden, 61  
   as harsh and humiliating punishment, 6

- Experts Conference on Latin America and the Future of Its Jewish Communities, 703–705  
*Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple, The* (Raphael), 10  
 Ezekiel, 2, 81  
 Ezekiel, Nissim, 1226–1227  
 Ezra, 3, 667, 751, 761  
 Ezra, David Joseph, 1225–1226  
 Ezra, Elia David, 1226  
 Ezra, Rachel, 527  
 Ezrachi, Alan, 586  
 Ezra family, 357  
 Ezras family, 1187, 1189  
 Ezrat Nashim, 622
- Fackenheim, Emil, 897  
 Factor XI deficiency (FXI), 280–281  
 Faitlovitch, Jacques, 469–470  
 Falasha, Ethiopia, 470, 471, 472–473  
 Falkon, Jack, 734  
 Falmouth, Jamaica, 658  
 Familial dysautonomia, 281  
 Familial Mediterranean fever (FMF), 281  
 Fanconi's anemia, 281–282  
 Fardis, Nikos, 365  
 Farjeon, Benjamin, 527  
 Farrisol, Abraham, 352  
 Fasilades, 468  
 Fatimids, 456  
 Federación Sionista Territorial Unificado, 681, 742  
 Federación Zionista, 749  
 Federal B'nai B'rith, 525  
 Federal Jewish National Fund, 525  
 Federal United Israel Appeal, 525  
 Federation of American Zionists (FAZ), 636  
 Federation of Australian Jewish Welfare Societies, 525  
 Federation of Jewish Community Centers of Argentina, 714  
 Federation of Oriental Jews, 562  
 Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 516, 517, 518  
 Feher, Shoshanah, 148  
 Feierstein, Ricardo, 697, 698, 699, 707, 708, 709  
 Feijóo, Beda Docampo, 702  
 Fein, H., 476  
 Feinberg, Kai, 1085  
 Feinstein, Moshe, 950  
 Feiwei, Berthold, 46  
 Feldman, A., 1014  
 Felesmura, 471  
 Félix, Rachel, 825  
*The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan), 621  
 Ferdinand I, Grand Duke, 881  
 Ferdinand I, King, 969 [czech]
- Ferdinand of Aragon, King, 101, 316, 866, 901, 912, 980  
 Fernando I, Grand Duke of Livorno, 875  
 Ferrante I, King, 875  
 Ferrer, Vicente, 910  
 Ferrin, Marx, 565  
 Fettmilch, Vincent, 102  
 Feuchtwanger, Lion, 43, 45, 965  
 Fez, Morocco, 482, 483, 487  
 Fierstein, Harvey, 248  
 Fifth aliyah, 329  
 Fiji, Jews in, 532–533  
 Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 731  
 Finberg, L., 1013  
 Finberg, Mikhail, 949  
 Fineshriber, William, 339  
 Fingueret, Manuela, 699  
 Finkas, Hizkiah, 469  
 Finkel, Nossou Tzvi, 1038  
 Finkielkraut, Alain, 830  
 Finland, 1071–1076  
 Finn, Samuel Joseph, 1047  
 Fintzi, Itzko, 967  
 Firer, Ruth, 346  
 Firestone, Reuven, 151  
 Firestone, Shulamith, 621  
 First aliyah, 328  
 First Barbary War, 456  
 First Crusade (1095), 76  
 First Narayever, Toronto, Canada, 551  
 First Temple in Jerusalem, 509  
 First Zionist Congress, 635  
 Fischer, Robert (Bobby), 1081  
 Fischer, Stanley, 517  
 Fishbein, M., 1013  
 Fisher, Woolf, 538, 544  
 Fishman, Sylvia Barack, 233  
 Flaccus, governor of Asia, 65  
 Flannery, Edward, 131  
 Flatbush, Brooklyn, New York, 562  
 Fleg, Edmond, 835  
 Fleischman, Cyrille, 839  
 Fleischmann family, 1189  
 Fleisher, Benjamin, 1198  
 Fleisher, Benjamin Wilfred, 1200  
 Flexner, Abraham, 299  
 Flexner, Simon, 299  
 Flores, Lourdes, 734  
 Foer, Jonathan Safran, 249  
 Folkist/Bundist Naye Yiddishe Shule, 684  
 Fonds-de-Isle de Vaches, Haiti, 660  
 Football Federation Australia, 524  
 Ford, Henry, 240, 307  
 Fort de Fance, 660  
 Fostat (Old Cairo), 450  
 Foulds family, 825  
 Founder principle, 203  
 Fourier, Charles, 825
- Fourth aliyah, 329  
 Fox, Vicente, 680  
 Fox, William, 239  
 Fraenkel, Siegfried, 496  
 France, 820–832  
   contemporary overview, 829–831  
   culture, science, and the humanities, 829–830  
   demographic movement and emigration, 831  
   emancipation of Jews, 212  
   ethnic backgrounds, 820  
   general population, 820  
   historical overview, 820–829  
   industries, trades, and professions, 829  
   Jewish education and communal institutions, 830–831  
   Jewish population in, 820  
   languages spoken, 820  
   migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 820  
   persecution and expulsion, 100  
   religious denominations, 830  
 France, Mendes, 660  
 Francis II, Emperor, 1005  
 Francis Joseph, Emperor, 301, 973, 1010  
 Franco, Rahamim, 859  
 Franco, Vitaly, 733  
 Frank, Anne, 890  
   House (Amsterdam), 890  
 Frank, Hannah, 897  
 Frank, Jakob, 957  
 Frank, Mayer, 967  
 Frankel, Judy, 228  
 Frankfurter, Felix, 601, 637  
 Franks, Moses, 662–663  
 Franz II, 973  
 Franzos, Karl Emil, 44  
 Fraser, Malcolm, 529, 530  
 Frederick III, King, 805  
 Frederick the Great of Prussia, 44  
 Frederick VII, 662  
 Frederick William, 841  
 Frederik, Crown Prince, 1067  
 Freed, Isadore, 213  
 Freedman, David, 527  
*Freiheit*, 593  
 Freilich, Segal Alicia, 697  
 Freiman family, 1189  
 French Alliance Israelite Universelle, 478  
 French Guiana, Cayenne, Jews in, 651–652  
 French literature, Jewish identity and society (20th century), 835–840  
 French Polynesia, Jews in, 533–534  
 French-speaking Europe, Jewish day school in, 424–426, 832–834

- Freud, Sigmund, 42, 233, 299, 301–304
- Freund, Michael, 1166, 1222
- Freundlich, Dini, 1159, 1180
- Freundlich, Rabbi, 1159
- Fridman, Naftali, 1036
- Fried, Avraham, 226
- Friedan, Betty, 621
- Friedenwald, Aaron, 635
- Friedenwald, Harry, 636
- Frieder, Alex, 1244
- Frieder, Philip, 1244
- Friedlaender, 143
- Friedlander, Marti, 543
- Friedman, Debbie, 226
- Friends of Israel Defense Forces, 641
- Frimerman, Amatoly, 1106
- Frisch, Efram, 46, 47
- Frumkin, Esther, 1043
- Fuchs, Daniel, 236, 595
- Fuentes, Carlos, 695
- Fujimori, Alberto, 731, 732, 734
- Fundación Activa, 677
- Fundación Menorah Erej of Naamat, 679
- Fundacion Tzedakah Uruguay, 742
- Fundamental Pact (1857), 511
- Fur and Leather Workers' Union, 593
- Fuzaylov, Amnun, 1145
- Fuzes, Peter, 524
- Gabirol, Solomon, 1240
- Gabler, Neal, 238
- Gabrovsky, P., 960
- Gad, tribe of, 79, 82, 84, 85
- Gadhafi, Mu'ammarr, 480
- Gadol, Moise, 561
- Galante, Abraham, 858, 859
- Galaun, Abe, 517
- Galaun, Michael, 517
- Galemire, Julia, 709
- Galen, 296
- Galibov, Zafer, 967
- Galibova, Rena, 1144
- Galilee, Sea of, 32
- Galleon Trade, 671
- Galut* (exile), 4, 61–62, 73, 126, 346, 347
- Galvin, Patrick, 377
- Gama, Vasco da, 352, 1205, 1206–1207
- Gamaliel, Simeon b., 766
- Gamedze, Natan, 452
- Gamonike, 557, 559
- Gandhi, Indira, 1207
- Gandhi, Mahatma, 496
- Gans, Herbert, 572
- Gaon, Hai, Rav, 312, 314
- Gaon, Nessim, 505
- Garcia, Alan, 730, 732
- Garcia, Hananiel, 549
- Gardizi, 1099
- Garfield, John, 242
- Garfinkle, Bouena Sarfatty, 221
- Garfinkle, Jacob Julius, 242
- Garti, Moshon, 957
- Garti, Rahamim Moshonov, 958
- Gather, 1123
- Gatton family, 1189
- Gaucher's disease type 1, 282
- Gaulle, Charles de, 116, 828
- Gavriellov, Meirkhaim, 1144
- Gediminas, Grand Duke, 1034
- Gediminas, Yagiello (Wladislawll), 1034
- Gedye, G. E. R., 808
- Geelong, Australia, 521
- Geiger, Abraham, 50, 150
- Gelber, Mark H., 107
- Gelfand, Michael, 520
- Geller, Samuel, 732
- Gellert, C.F., 44
- Gellert, Christian G., 142
- Gelman, Juan, 698
- Gelvan, Katie, 496
- Genealogic studies, evolution of, 292–294
- Genealogy and Marranos, 157
- General Law of Population, 674
- Generational factor and Diaspora, 345
- Genetic diseases, 275–287
- alpha-Thalassemia (a-T), 278
  - Ashkenazi Jewish population, 276
  - Bloom syndrome, 278
  - breast cancer, 278–279
  - Canavan disease, 279
  - colorectal cancer, 279–280
  - costeff optic atrophy syndrome (3-methylglutaconicaciduria type 3), 280
  - cystic fibrosis, 280
  - Diaspora, 287–292
  - Factor XI deficiency (FXI), 280–281
  - familial dysautonomia, 281
  - familial Mediterranean fever (FMF), 281
  - Fanconi's anemia, 281–282
  - Gaucher's disease type 1, 282
  - glycogen storage disease, 282–283
  - hereditary inclusion body myopathy, 283
  - inflammatory bowel disease, 283
  - mucopolidosis IV (MLIV), 283–284
  - myotonic dystrophy, 284
  - Niemann-Pick disease type A, 284
  - nonclassical congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), 284–285
  - Sephardic and Oriental Jewish populations, 277
  - Tay-Sachs disease (TSD), 285–286
  - torsion dystonia, 286
  - Usher's syndrome (US), 286
- Genetic mutations, 291
- Genetics, medicine, and genealogy
- evolution of Jewish genealogic studies, 292–294
  - Freud, Judaism, and emergence of psychoanalysis, 301–304
  - genetic diseases and the Diaspora, 287–292
  - Jewish genetic diseases, 275–287
  - Jews, Diaspora, and medicine, 294–300
- Genghis Khan, 768
- Gens, Jacob, 1037
- George I, King, 924
- George II, King, 924
- George V, King, 522, 1233, 1247
- Georgia, 1119–1122
- Gerchunoff, Alberto, 697, 701, 706
- German-Jewish literature and art, 42–48
- German-Jewish thought, concept of Sephardi and Ashkenazi, 48–52
- German Nazism, 737
- German *Schutztruppen*, 491
- German South West Africa, 491
- Germany, 192
- achievements and frustrations, 846
  - anti-Semitic thought concept of Sephardi and Ashkenazi, 48–52
  - Christian-Jewish dialogue, 141–144
  - civil rights end, 847–848
  - contemporary migration patterns of Russian Jews to, 386–391
  - contemporary overview, 843
  - emancipation of Jews, 212
  - emigration admission policy, 387–389
  - Enlightenment, 192
  - Enlightenment and Mendelssohn, 143
  - equal rights theory and practice, 844–846
  - general population, 840
  - historical overview, 841–842
  - Jewish immigrants from former Soviet Union, 389 (table)
  - Jewish population in, 840, 841
  - Jews, 840–848
  - languages spoken, 841
  - migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 841, 843
  - Second German Reich, 192
  - struggle for emancipation, 841
  - Third German Reich, 192–193
  - war, revolution, and democracy, 847
  - women, family, and identity (1871–1918), 264–267

- Gerovitsch, Eliezer, 212  
 Gershon, Rabbenu, 40, 127, 414, 841, 842  
 Gershov, Solomon, 231  
 Gershowitz, Jacques, 1202  
 Gershwin, George, 238  
 Gershwin, Ira, 238  
 Gerson, Henry, 1252  
 Gerson, Michael, 1252  
 Gertopan, Susana, 707  
 Gervitz, Gloria, 708  
 Gessler, Sara, 1106–1107  
 Ghana, 451, 454  
 Ghardaia, 457  
 Ghriba Synagogue, 509  
 Ghurayr, 795  
 Gibbons, James Cardinal, 634  
 Gibraltar, 449, 460, 848–854  
 Gideon (judge), 79  
 Gideon, Sampson, 931  
 Gideon, tribe of, 80  
 Gihon Synagogue, 493  
 Gilgil, Kenya, detention camp in, 476  
 Ginsbourg, Sam, 1171, 1182  
 Ginsburg, Mordechai-Aaron, 1044  
 Gin Vaiphei, Simeon, 1221  
 Giordano, Ralph, 47  
 Giraud, General, 457  
 Girrema, 757  
 Gitai, A., 720  
 Gitlow, Benjamin, 593  
 Glantz, Margo, 699  
 Glaphyra, 1112  
 Glaser, Eduard, 795  
 Glass, Jonathan, 427  
 Glaxo, 538  
 Gleim, J.W.L., 44  
 Glickman, Nora, 697  
 Global (NGO) Forum, 501  
 Gluckman, Henry, 496  
 Gluckman, Peter, 543  
 Gluzman, Michael, 570  
 Glycogen storage disease, 282–283  
 Godbey, Allen, 85  
 Godkin family, 1189  
 Goethe, 45, 57  
 Goibov, Goib, 1145  
 Goitein, S. D., 151  
 Gold, Ben, 593  
 Gold, Mike, 595  
 Goldansky, Vitaly, 949  
 Goldberg, B. Z., 720  
 Goldberg, Daniel, 701  
 Goldberg, David, 1053, 1084  
 Goldberg, Molly, 242  
 Goldberger, Joseph, 300  
 Goldblatt, David, 502  
 Goldblatt, Israel, 491  
 Goldblatt, Sidney, 502  
 Goldemberg, Efraim, 731, 734  
 Goldemberg, Isaac, 697, 698, 708, 733, 737  
 Goldenberg, Merchant, 1232, 1240  
 Goldfaden, Abraham, 211  
 Goldman, Dave, 242  
 Goldman, Emma, 1038  
 Goldman, Nahum, 43  
 Goldschmidt, Levin, 845  
 Goldsmid, Isaac L., 931  
 Goldstein, A., 1248  
 Goldstein, Moritz, 45  
 Goldstein, Perez, 974  
 Goldstein, Pétur, 1080–1081  
 Goldstein, Rebecca, 248  
 Goldstein, Warren, 498  
 Goldstone, Richard, 503  
 Goldwyn, Samuel, 239  
 Goloboff, Mario, 697, 699  
 Gomer, Rabbi, 1026  
 Gomez de Leon, Francisco, 663  
 Gonatas, General, 366  
 Gondar, 468  
 Goodman, Allegra, 248  
 Goodman, Isadore, 524  
 Goodman, Richard, 275  
 Gorbachev, Mikhail, 948, 994  
 Gordimer, Nadine, 501–502  
 Gordon, Robert, 516  
 Gordon, Yehuda-Leib (Leon), 1044  
 Gorelick, Nahum, 492  
 Gorelick, Zvi, 492  
 Goren, Shlomo, 29, 470  
 Gornick, Vivian, 621  
 Gorriti, Juana Manuela, 736  
 Gottheil, Richard, 636  
 Gourgey, Percy, 1238  
 Gover de Nasatsky, Miryam, 708  
 Gozan, 755  
 Grade, Chaim, 234  
 Grade, Haim, 1048  
 Grade, Michael, 926  
 Gradis, David, 660, 824  
 Graf, Gerhard, 338  
 Grana, split between Tounsa and, 513  
 Granada, 487  
 Granados, Jorge Garcia, 667  
 Grasiani, Moreno, 958  
 Graumann, Harry, 496  
 Grazi, Shlomo, 616  
 Great Britain  
   *See also* United Kingdom  
   British chief rabbinate, 933–936  
   history of Jewish wealth, 930–933  
   influence of British Jewry on world Jewry, 936–937  
 Great Famine (1888–1892), 469  
 Great Synagogue, Aleppo, 786, 787  
 Great Synagogue, Sydney, 521  
 Great Trek, 494  
 Greece, 855–857  
   population transfer on Jews of Thessaloniki, 364–369  
 Green, Arthur A., 405, 406  
 Green, Michael, 1190  
 Green, Philip, 932  
 Greenberg, Blu, 406  
 Greenberg, Harold, 550  
 Greenberg, Hayim, 76–77, 595  
 Greenberg, Shalom, 1158  
 Greene, Graham, 110  
 Green family, 1189  
 Green March (1975), 484  
 Greite, Augustus, 519  
 Griffith, D. W., 239  
 Grigorius IV, 955  
 Grill, Marcus, 517  
 Grimberg, Susana, 708  
 Grimsson, Olafur Ragnar, 1081  
 Grossman, Vasily, 1106  
 Gruenberg, George, 734  
 Grünewald, Isaac, 1054, 1090  
 Grünfeld, Berthold, 1085  
 Guadeloupe, Jews in, 660  
 Guang, Pan, 1176  
 Guangyuan (Shlomo), Jin, 1159, 1166  
 Guangzhou, China, 1181  
 Guantanamo, Cuba, 664  
 Guas Nigshu, Kenya, 475  
 Guatemala, Jews in, 667–668  
 Guatemala City, 668  
 Gubbay, Abraham, 359 (photo)  
 Gubbay, Leah, 1187  
 Gubbay, Menashe, 359  
 Gubbay, Sima, 359  
 Guðmundsson, Haraldur, 1078  
 Guedemann, Moritz, 334  
 Guggenheim, Paul, 919  
 Guiana, Pomeroon, Jews in, 652–653  
   *Guide for the Perplexed* (Maimonides), 482  
 Guinea-Bissau, Angola, 460  
 Gumperts, 143  
 Günther, Hans F.K., 106–107  
 Gurary, Shmaryahu, 442, 607  
 Gurej, Mr., 1221  
 Gurevitch, Aba David, 1153  
 Gurevitch, Sofia, 1043  
 Gurock, Jeffrey, 609  
 Gurvits, M., 1013  
 Gurvitz, E., 1014  
 Gushen, 468  
 Gusinski, Vladimir, 996  
 Gutwirth, Nathan, 1238  
 Gwelo, 518  
 Gweru, 519  
 Gymnasien (Vienna, Austria), overrepresentation of Jews, 809–811  
 Ha'am, Ahad, 404  
 Habad, 523, 525  
 Habad Hasidism, unique relationship between Russia and, 998–1001  
 Habad movement, 430–447  
   campus outreach, 431–432  
   drawbacks of outreach, 438–439  
   emissaries/missionaries, 435–436

- fund-raising, 446–447  
 Habad House, 442–444  
 Habad Yeshiva system, 439–442  
 history of, in United States, 602–607  
 modern technology, 437–438  
 other organizations, 444–446  
 outreach concept, 430–431  
 public relations, 436–437  
 synagogues, 432–433  
 Habal, 799  
 Habonim (Labour Zionist), 499, 541  
 Habor, 81  
 Habsburg, Maximilian of, 673  
 Hacoaj, 714  
 Ha-Cohen, Adam, 1047  
 Hadani, 82  
 Hadassah, 254  
 Hadassah, Puerto Rico, 599, 637–638, 641, 665  
 Hadassi, Judah, 92  
 Haddad, Ariel, 1006  
 Hadini, Eldad, 351  
 Hadler, Jeffrey, 1239  
 Hadrian, Emperor, 88, 126, 127  
 Hafkine, Walter M., 1215  
 Hafsids, 510  
 Haganah, 772, 774–775  
 Haggai, 2  
 Ha Halutz ha Dati, 768  
 Haham, Shimon, 1126  
 Hahn, Otto, 897  
 Haifa, 452  
 Haim, Shemuel b., 313  
 Haiti, Jews in, 660–661  
 Hajinuj, Vaad, 677  
 Haketia, 487  
 Hakim, al-, Caliph of Fatimite Egypt, 306  
 Hakim, Samuel b. Moses ha-Levi ibn, 92  
 Hakoah Club, Sydney, Australia, 524  
 HaKohen, Mordekhai Amiess, 513  
 Hakohen, Obadiah, 1225  
 Halabo, 7  
 Halah, 81  
 Haleva, Izak, 181  
 Halevi, Abraham, 35  
 Halevi, Judah, 31, 37, 153, 315, 317, 821, 915, 1101, 1103  
 Halévy, Fromenthal, 825  
 Halévy, Joseph, 469, 794  
 Halimi, Ilan, 829  
 Halkin, Hillel, 85–86  
 Hall, Nathan Abraham, 1228  
 Hallenstein, Bendix, 544  
 Hamadan, 768  
 Hamburg, G., 1134  
 Hamilton, Alexander, 658  
 Hamilton, New Zealand, 535, 549  
 Hammerstein, Oscar, 238  
 Ha-Naggid, Shemuel, 315  
 Hananel, Asher, 961, 962  
 Hananel, Rav, 313  
 Hanina, 7  
 Hannover, Nathan, 28  
 HaNoar HaTzioni, 733–734, 743  
 Haokip, Sumkthoang, 1220  
 Hara, 514  
 Harare, 518, 519, 520  
 Harbin, 1182–1185  
 Harcourt, Cecil, 1188  
 Harden, Maximilian, 59  
 Hardoon, Silas, 357, 1173  
 Hardoon family, 1172, 1247  
 Harissa.com, 513  
 Haritopoulos, 368  
 Harizi, Judah al-, 798  
 Harkavy, Alexander, 1048  
 Harran, 755  
 Harris, Ann, 499  
 Harris, Cyril, 499  
 Harrtz, Michael, 476  
 Hart, Aaron, 549, 933  
 Hart, Moses, 933  
 Hartwig, Jacob, 1065  
 Harvey, Laurence, 502, 1038  
 Hashomer, 733  
 Hashomer Hatzair, 341, 664, 743  
 Hasid, Yehudah, 1103  
 Hasidic Lubavitch movement, 485  
 Hasidism, 625–626  
     beginnings in Eastern Europe, 325–327  
     types of groups, 326–327  
     Yiddish, 196  
 Haskalah, 234–235, 253–254, 320–324  
 Hassan Ibn Numan, 454  
 Hassan II, 485  
 Hasson, Leon, 370  
 Hastings, New Zealand, 535  
 Hatikva, Mexico, 675  
 Hatta, Muhammad, 1234  
 Hatzala, 679–680  
 Hayeem family, 1187  
 Hayes, Isaac Israel, 352, 353  
 Hayesod, Keren, 501  
 Hayim, Ellis, 357  
 Hayim, Yoseph, 1248  
 Hayim family, 1189  
 Hays, Will, 240  
 Hazoni, Yoram, 348  
 Hazzan, Eliyahu, 506  
 Heard, John, 1181  
 Hebraic University, Mexico, 677  
 Hebreá B'nai B'rith de Venezuela, 749  
 Hebrew, 167  
     Diaspora influences on, 200–205  
     Diaspora influences on modern, 200–205  
     illuminated manuscripts, 231  
     linguistics, 188  
     sacred texts and formal prayers, 167  
 Hebrew Benevolent Society, Panama, 671  
 Hebrew Haskalah, 771  
 Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), 714  
 Hebrew Israeli songs, 227  
 Hebrew literature, 154  
*Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (newspaper), 522  
 Hebrew Union College, 568  
 Hecataeus of Abdera (fourth century BCE), 64  
 Hecht, Ben, 241  
 Hecht, Raúl, 709  
 Hecksher, Eli, 1055, 1090  
 Hedaya, Moshe, 791  
 Hegel, 44  
 Hehalutz Hatza'ir youth movement, 664, 773  
 Heifetz, Jascha, 1037  
 Heilbuth, Herman, 1069  
 Heilpin, Angelo, 353  
 Heine, Heinrich, 43, 49–50, 105, 235, 352  
 Heiwot, Gebra, 469  
 Hekatia, 484  
 Hellenistic period Siaspora, 8–16, 20  
 Heller, Joseph, 243  
 Helprin, Mark, 248  
 Henle, Jacob, 298  
 Henri II, 822  
 Henriques, Basil, 338  
 Henriques, Ruben, 1051, 1077  
 Henriquez y Carvajal, Federico, 666  
 Henriquez y Carvajal, Francisco, 666  
 Henry III, Duke, 812  
 Henry III, King, 823  
 Henry III, King of England, 99  
 Henry the Navigator, 490  
 Heraclius, Byzantine emperor, 97  
 Herbst, Karl, 958, 966  
 Herder, Johann Gottfried, 105, 143, 174  
 Hereditary inclusion body myopathy, 283  
 Hermann, Georg, 44–45  
 Hermias, Gete, 469  
 Hermlin, Stephan, 47  
 Herod of Palestine, 69–70  
 Herod the Great, 1111, 1112  
 Hersch, Jeanne, 919  
 Hershkovich, Isidor, 966  
 Hertz, Joseph Herman, 497, 935, 937  
 Herz, Henri, 825  
 Herz, Marcus, 143, 144  
 Herzberg, Jacobo, 729  
 Herzl, Joseph, 635, 636  
 Herzl, Theodor, 131, 262, 333, 334, 708, 826, 958, 965, 977, 1036, 1233, 1237  
 Herzl Association, 479

- Herzog, Chaim, 538  
 Herzog, Isaac, 29, 935  
 Herzog, Jacob, 935  
 Heschel, Abraham Joshua, 403, 406, 568, 569–570, 625  
 Hess, Moses, 43  
 Hesse-Cassel, South Africa, 494  
 Heyman, Edgard, 733  
 Hezbollah, 749  
 Hezekiah, King, 81  
 Hibat Zion Eretz Israel, 635  
 Hibat Zion movement, 635  
 Hicham, Moulay, 488  
 Hidden Jews  
   applying to Jewish communities to regain heritage, 156  
   Brazilian Marranos, 160–166  
   Caribbean Islands, 158–159  
   widespread phenomena of Marranism and, 156–160  
 Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, 476  
 Hillel, Shlomo, 378  
 Hillman, Sidney, 593, 596, 1038  
 Hillquit, Morris, 593  
*Hiloulot*, 485  
 Himmelfarb, Milton, 589  
 Himmler, Heinrich, 114, 115  
 Hippocrates, 296  
 Hirsch, Maurice, 696–697  
 Hirsch, Moshe, 336  
 Hirsch, Samson Raphael, 934  
 Hirsch, Samuel, 884  
 Hirschel, Solomon, 924–925, 934  
 Hirszfeld, Ludwik, 299  
 Historical migration patterns in Harbin, 1182–1185  
 History of Diaspora  
   history of Jews as minority, 72–78  
   Jews and Judaism in ancient world literature, 64–71  
   Karaites Diaspora, 90–94  
   lost tribes of Israel, 78–86  
   Samaritan Diaspora, 87–89  
 Hitler, Adolf, 112, 115, 120, 162, 240, 304, 452, 522, 597, 1215, 1234, 1244, 1251  
   alliance between Mussolini and, 479  
   anti-Semitism reappearing in France, 827  
   historical overview of Jews in Germany, 841  
   Nazi Party leadership, 847  
   Pétain seeking collaboration with, 828  
 Hiyya, Rabbi Abraham bar, 7, 37, 766  
 Hizbollah, 747  
 Hoa, Fengshan, 1194  
 Hobart, Australia, 521  
 Hobart Hebrew Congregation, 527  
 Hodeidad, Nathaniel, 1124  
 Hod Yoseph, 513  
 Hoffman, David, 30  
 Hoffmann, Frank, 543  
 Hoffmannsthal, Hugo von, 45  
 Hogar del Inmigrante, 730  
 Hogar Javad Lubavitch, 747  
 Hokitika, New Zealand, 535  
 Holland. *See* Netherlands  
 Hollander, Leo H., 665  
 Hollander Law, 665  
 Holliday, Judy, 242  
 Holocaust  
   American Jewry's response to, 597–601  
   art in Belgium, 815–820  
   communication and, 42  
   decimation of Yiddish language and culture, 195  
   denial, 122  
   differentiating Jews and Germans identities, 176  
   Western democracies and, 112–115  
 Holocaust Centre, Perth, Australia, 524  
 Holocaust Museum, Melbourne, Australia, 524  
 Holocaust Remembrance Day, 540  
 Holzman, Rodolfo, 733  
 Honduras, Jews in, 669  
 Honen Dalim, 656  
 Hong Kong, China, 1186–1193  
   anti-Semitism and  
     anti-Zionism, 1193  
   communal institutions, 1192–1193  
   contemporary overview, 1191–1193  
   culture, science, and the humanities, 1191  
   demographic movement and emigration, 1193  
   economic conditions, 1191  
   general population, 1186  
   historical overview, 1186–1191  
   industries, trades, and professions, 1191  
   Jewish education, 1192  
   Jewish population in, 1186  
   languages spoken, 1186  
   migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 1186  
   Ohel Leah Synagogue, 1189  
   religious denominations, 1191  
 Honigman, Barbara, 47  
 Honigsman, Y., 1013  
 Hook, Sidney, 595  
 Horace, 65–66  
 Horkheimer, Hans, 730  
 Hort, Abraham, 535, 536, 537  
 Hoshea, 81, 754  
 Hospital of Israel, 681  
 Host countries, settling in, 55–56  
 Host culture, impact on women, 251–254  
 Host desecration, 95, 96, 98  
 Host society, 127–129  
 Houel, M., 660  
 Hoveve Zion society, New York, 635  
 Howard, Leslie, 926  
 Howard, Lord, 917  
 Howe, Irving, 595  
 Hrac'eay, King, 1112  
 Hudson, Henry, 554  
 Hugh of Lincoln, 923  
 Huli, Yaacov, 318, 778  
 Humala, Ollanta, 734, 735  
 Humboldt, Wilhelm von, 144  
 Humor and satire in Judeo-Spanish song, 220–222  
 Huna, Ray, 7  
 Hungarian uprising (1956), 536  
 Hungary, 971–979  
   alternative Jewish culture, 976  
   anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, community existential problems, 977  
   communal and political institutions, 977  
   contemporary overview, 977–979  
   culture, science, and the humanities, 975–976  
   demographic movement and emigration, 977  
   Dohany Synagogue (Budapest), 978  
   economic conditions, 976  
   general population, 971  
   historical overview, 971–977  
   industries, trades, and professions, 975  
   Jewish education, 976  
   Jewish population in, 971  
   languages spoken, 971  
   migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 971  
   religious denominations, 976–977  
 Hur, 292  
 Hurwitz, Ezra, 672  
 Hushiel, Rabbenu, 513  
 Hussein, Saddam, 117  
 Husseini, Haj Amin al-, 116, 384  
 Hyams, Harry, 932  
 Hyde, Orson, 633  
 Hyksos, 108  
 Hyman, Paula, 406  
 Hycranus, 1109  
 Iavelberg, Iara, 721  
 Iberian crypto-Jewish identity, music and reconstruction of, 222–224  
 Ibibio, 493  
 Ibn Abi Zimra, David, 317  
 Ibn Adret, Solomon, 909  
 Ibn Al-Walid, Khalid, 1230  
 Ibn Daud, 313

- Ibn Ezra, Abraham, 315, 351, 915  
 Ibn Ezra, Moses, 315, 915  
 Ibn Gabirol, Shelomo, 315  
 Ibn Hawqal, Mohammed  
     Abul-Kassem, 1130  
 Ibn Khurradadhbih, 354  
 Ibn Megas, Joseph, 908  
 Ibn Naghrillah, Samuel, 905, 915  
 Ibn Naghrillah, Yusuf, 915  
 Ibn Nahmiyas, David, 956  
 Ibn Nahmiyas, Shmuel, 956  
 Ibn Pakuda, Bahya, 315  
 Ibn Paqudah, Bahya, 153  
 Ibn Rashid, 1230  
 Ibn Rusta, 1099  
 Ibn-Saleh, Sason, Sheikh, 355  
 Ibn Shaprut, Hasdai, 315, 905, 914,  
     1099, 1100  
 Ibn Tagriberdi, 1095  
 Ibn Tibbon, Judah, 297  
 Ibn Yahia, David, Rabbi, 877  
 Ibrahim I, 753  
 Iceland, 1077–1082  
 Idel, Moshe, 37  
 Ideological extremism, 346  
 Idriss I, 482  
 Igbo, 492–493  
 Ignaski, Paul, 119  
 Ilan, Nahem, 505  
 Iliescu, Ion, 990  
 Imam al-Mutawakkil, 794  
 Imar, Vivián, 701  
 Imber, Sofia, 748  
 Imperial Germany, women, family  
     and identity, 264–267  
 Ince, Thomas, 239  
 Inchiquin, Lord, 489  
 India, 1204–1212  
     Baghdadi Jews, 1217  
     Benei Menashe, 1218–1223  
     Bene-Israel and Baghdadi Jews  
         in, 1216–1217  
     contemporary overview,  
         1208–1212  
     general population, 1204  
     historical Jewish-Indian  
         contacts, 1213–1215  
     historical overview, 1204–1205  
     Jewish communities, 1204–1208  
     Jewish Parsis relations,  
         1223–1225  
     Jewish population in, 1204  
     Jews in Indian public life,  
         1225–1227  
     Jews in Pakistan, 1228–1230  
     Jews in public life, 1225–1227  
     languages spoken, 1204  
     migration routes and ethnic  
         backgrounds, 1204  
     Pathans of Pakistan and  
         Afghanistan, 1230–1231  
 Indonesia, 1235–1239  
 Inflammatory bowel disease, 283  
 Innocent III, Pope, 97  
 Inquisition, 157, 160–163  
 Institute for Contemporary Jewry  
     of the Hebrew University, 704  
 Institute of Jewish Affairs,  
     703–705  
 Instituto Venezolano de  
     Investigaciones Científicas  
     (IVIC), 747  
 Integration of Yiddish into  
     English, 197–199  
 Intercommunity links, 39–40  
 Interfaith Initiative, 501  
 Interfaith marriage, 577–580  
 Inter-marriage, 240, 412–416,  
     1057–1061  
 International Council of Jewish  
     Women, 666  
 International Jewish Movie  
     Festival, Mexico, 675  
 International Ladies Garment  
     Workers, 593  
 International network of religious  
     Zionist kollels, 427–429  
 International War Crimes  
     Commission (1994–1996), 503  
 International Workers' Order, 593  
 Ioffe, Yu., 1014  
 Ipekci, Abdi, 784  
 Ipekci, Cepil, 784  
 Ipekci, Nukhet Izet, 784  
 Iquitos, 730  
 Iran  
     Jews in, 767–770  
     lost tribes of Israel and, 85  
 Iraq, Jews in, 771–775  
     arriving at Lod Airport, 380  
     immigration to Israel in  
         Operation Ezra and  
         Nehemya, 378–382  
     migration patterns, 354–360  
     snowball effect, 381–382  
     yearning for Zion, 379–381  
 Iriss II, 482  
 Isaac, 18, 128, 292, 449  
 Isaac, Aaron, 1051, 1088  
 Isaac, Isaac, 522  
 Isaac, Moses, 1221  
 Isaac, Solomon, 469  
 Isaac, Yahya, 799  
 Isaacs, Jeremy, 897  
 Isaacs, Jorge, 696  
 Isaacs, Nathaniel, 496  
 Isaac the Jew, 821  
 Isabel, Queen, 80  
 Isabella, Queen, 101, 316, 689, 901,  
     912, 980  
 Isaiah, 2  
 Isfahan, 768  
 Ishaq, 468  
 Ishmael, Moulay, 483  
 Isin, 759  
 Islam  
     influence on liturgy, 27  
     Jewish influence on, 150–156  
     Jews under Muslim rule,  
         305–309  
 Islamization and Jews in Medieval  
     Middle East, 139–141  
 Israel, 325  
     American Jews and state of,  
         642–645  
     biblical prehistory and symbols  
         of diaspora, 17–18  
     Christian attitudes toward,  
         130–131  
     continuing educational  
         challenges and activities,  
         349–350  
     Diaspora immigration to  
         (1948–2000), 331–332  
     funds raised by U.S.  
         organizations, 343  
     immigration of Iraqi Jews to,  
         378–382  
     immigration to pre-state and  
         modern Israel, 328–333  
     Jewish arrivals (1948–1951), 330  
     Jewish arrivals from Asia and  
         Africa, 330  
     Jewish continuity efforts in  
         education, 347–349  
     lost tribes of, 78–86  
     modern Hebrew, 201  
     transition from negation of  
         Diaspora to Jewish  
         continuity, 346–347  
 Israel, Abraham, 362, 858  
 Israel, David, 556  
     American Jewry and, 586–589  
 Israel, Edmond, 885  
 Israel, Eliyahu, 858  
 Israel, Jacob Bapuji, 1229  
 Israel, Michael Boaz, 635  
 Israel, Michael Yaacov, 858  
 Israel, Mikve, 654  
 Israel, Moshe, 858  
 Israel, Raphael, 857  
 Israel, Raphael Yitzhak, 858  
 Israel, Reuben Eliyahu, 858, 859  
 Israel, Victor, 730  
 Israel, Wilfrid B., 926  
 Israel Aliya Center, 644  
 Israel and Diaspora  
     anti-Zionism, 333–340  
     education about Diaspora,  
         345–350  
     engagement with Israel,  
         340–345  
     Jewish immigration to pre-state  
         and modern Israel, 328–333  
 Israel Association for Ethiopian  
     Jews, 473–474  
 Israelawi, 472  
 Israel brothers, 370  
 Israel Defence Forces or National  
     Service, 473  
 Israeletoch, 472  
 Israeli-Arab War (1948), 483  
 Israeli-Arab War (1967), 486  
 Israeli-Arab War (1973), 486  
 Israeli Beneficial Society, 746

- Israeli education, Jewish  
continuity efforts in,  
347–349
- Israeli Independence Day, 540
- Israeli Knesset, 474
- Israeli literature, portrayal of  
American Jews in, 645–649
- Israeli Mossad, 470
- Israeli Sephardi, 450
- Israeli's Red Cross (Magen David  
Adom), 472
- Israelite Congregation of  
Argentina, 714
- Israelites, 78–81
- Issachar, tribe of, 79, 82
- Isserlein, Israel, 1004
- Istakhri, 1099
- Istanbul, 181–183, 776
- Istiqlal Party, 483–484
- Italy, 865–870  
*See also* Milan  
anti-Semitism, 870  
contemporary overview, 868  
demographic movement and  
emigration, 869–870  
general population, 865  
historical overview, 865–867  
Jewish education and  
communal institutions,  
868–870  
Jewish population in, 865  
languages spoken, 865  
migration routes and ethnic  
backgrounds, 865  
Portuguese Jews of Diaspora,  
875–883  
religious denominations, 868  
Samaritans and, 88
- Itamaracá, 557
- Itshaki, Selomo, 182
- Ivan Alexander, King, 955
- Ivan-Asen II, King, 955
- Ivanova, Anna, Empress, 1009
- Ivcher, Baruch, 732
- Ivory Coast, 451
- Iyaev, Amnon, 1145
- Iyasu II, 469
- Izmir, 776
- Izmirim, 781
- Jabad Lubavitch de Venezuela,  
748
- Jabès, Edmond, 839
- Jabotinsky, Vladimir (Ze'ev), 919,  
1184
- Jabukowicz, Salomón, 748
- Jacmel, Haiti, 660
- Jacob, 79, 449, 751
- Jacob, Jacob-Farj-Rafael, 1227
- Jacob, Joseph, 1220, 1221
- Jacobi, Fernando, 728
- Jacobi, Segismundo, 728
- Jacob of London, 933
- Jacobs, Frances Wisebart, 564
- Jacobs, Gertie, 476
- Jacobs, Louis, 926, 927
- Jacobs, Sammy, 476
- Jacobsohn, Franz, 1252
- Jacobson, Dan, 502
- Jacobson, Matthew F., 572
- Jacobson, Naomi, 491
- Jaffe, Mordechai, 1041
- Jagello, E., 985
- Jagiello, Wladyslaw, II, King, 1008
- Jagiellonczyk, Aleksander, King,  
1008
- Jagiellonczyk, Kazimierz, IV, King,  
1008
- Jaime I of Aragon-Catalonia, 905
- Jakob, Benno, 43
- Jakobson, Max, 1074
- Jakubowicz, Jonathan, 747
- Jamaica, Jews in, 658–659
- James, Sid, 502
- Jamestown, Virginia, 554
- Japan, 1196–1203  
contemporary overview,  
1202–1203  
general population, 1196  
historical overview, 1196–1199  
Jewish communities, 1200–1201  
Jewish population in, 1196  
Kobe, 1201–1202  
languages spoken, 1196  
migration routes and ethnic  
backgrounds, 1196  
Nagasaki, 1201  
prominent historical figures,  
1199–1200  
Tokyo, 1202  
Yokohama, 1201
- Jeejeebhoy, Jamsetji, 1225
- Jeejeebhoy family, 1224
- Jehoiakin (Judean king), 752, 757,  
758
- Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, 80
- Jehovah's Witnesses, 633
- Jekabpillis, 662
- Jeremiah, 2–4, 81, 464, 751
- Jeremie, Haiti, 660
- Jerome, 134, 135
- Jerusalem, 21–23, 449, 752, 776  
establishment of Karaite  
community, 91–92  
restoration of, 2–3
- Jerusalem Day, 540
- Jerusalem Foundation, 501
- Jesofovich, Isaac, 947
- Jesofovich, Michael, 947
- Jesus, 104, 105, 955  
Bernardim Ribeiro's works, 876  
events in life of, 109  
introducing to Kaifeng Jews,  
1164  
Jewish followers of, 126–128  
Jewish Scriptures highlighting  
role, 123  
Jews as killers of, 95, 96, 109  
Jews not recognizing as  
Messiah, 1220  
as Messiah, 131, 134, 136, 146,  
1161  
preaching reaches Mtskheta,  
1120
- Jesus-believing Jews, 136
- JewBu (Jewish-Buddhist)  
phenomenon, 628
- Jewish  
day school education in  
French-speaking Europe,  
832–834  
emancipation, 74  
Enlightenment and impact on  
Diaspora, 320–324  
entry into western artistic  
activities, 234–235  
identity in French literature  
and society (20th century),  
835–840  
influence on formation of  
Christian Scriptures, 132–135  
influence on Islam, 150–156
- Jewish-Arabic, 168
- Jewish-Aramaic, 167, 193
- Jewish art, symposiums on,  
231–232
- Jewish authors and literary  
anti-Semitism, 110–111
- Jewish Board of Deputies, 518
- Jewish Colonization Association,  
696–697, 701, 717
- Jewish Communal Appeal, Sydney,  
Australia, 523
- Jewish communities  
adopting language of Gentile  
neighbors, 178–179  
basing existence on law of host  
society, 127–128  
close geographical association,  
124  
converts and Jewish languages,  
184–185  
courts to handle disputes, 72  
Egypt, 73  
example of genetic mutations  
in, 291 (table)  
hidden Jews applying to regain  
heritage, 156  
host society and, 251  
India, 1204–1208  
under Islamic rule, 150  
Istanbul, 181  
Middle High German, 191  
modern, 74  
rabbi's reflections on, 416–418  
social changes to benefit  
women, 253–254
- Jewish Community Council, 514
- Jewish contributions to arts,  
233–250  
active participants in modern  
Western culture, 233–234  
after 1960s, 247–249  
American art by Jews before  
World War II, 237–242

- American film industry, 238–242
- American Jewish immigrant realities, 235–237
- comedy, 242–243
- entry into Western artistic activities, 234–235
- films, 243–244
- Jewish novelists, 237
- Jewish performers in American culture, 242–244
- Jewish writers, 247–249
- music, 237
- post-World War II, 244–247
- show business, 237–238
- stereotypes, 246–247
- theater and musical theater, 237–238
- The Jewish Daily Forward* (newspaper), 593, 594
- Jewish day school education in French-speaking Europe, 424–426, 832–834
- Jewish dialects, 73
- Jewish Diaspora in America, 571–591
- American Christian attitudes to, 632–634
- Jewish education, 170
- Jewish Education Service of North America, 548
- Jewish Federations of North America, 714
- Jewish feminism, 622
- Jewish followers of Jesus, 126–127
- Jewish genealogic studies, 292–294
- Jewish genetic diseases, 275–287.  
*See also* Genetic diseases
- Jewish Greek, 167
- Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society, 498
- Jewish identity, 61–63
- Inquisition, 163
- language as symbol of, 179
- Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, Canada, 549
- Jewish immigrants from former Soviet Union in Germany, 389 (table)
- Jewish immigration to pre-state and modern Israel, 328–333
- Diaspora immigration to Israel, 331–332
- Jewish arrivals in Israel (1948–1951), 330 (table)
- Jewish immigrants from Asia and Africa, 330 (table)
- Jewish-Indian contacts over the ages, 1213–1215
- Jewish institutions, reconfiguration of, 74–75
- Jewish international migration, 395 (table)
- Jewish-Islamic mutual influences, 150–156
- Jewish languages, 172
- Aramaic, 167
- biblical Hebrew, 193
- bilingual dialectology, 189
- borrowing from Hebrew and Aramaic, 175
- borrowing from other Jewish languages, 173
- characteristics of, 167–171
- converts to Jewish community, 184–185
- culture areas and, 190
- documenting, 177
- dying as spoken languages, 179
- Hebrew, 167
- Hebrew-Aramaic alphabet, 173
- interest in, 177
- Jewish-Aramaic, 167, 193
- Jewish Greek, 167
- Judeo-Spanish (Ladino), 167
- linguistic geography, 189
- listing of, 175–176
- non-Jewish alphabets, 171
- writings in, 178
- Yiddish, 167
- Jewish literary sources, 230
- Jewish migration, 34
- Jewish Museum of Australia, Melbourne, Australia, 524, 525
- Jewish National Fund, 540, 641, 749
- Jewish novelists, 237
- Jewish Ollanta lobby, 735
- Jewish Orthodoxy, in America, 608–612
- Jewish Palestine Brigade, 479
- Jewish particularism, 247–249
- Jewish People's Fraternal Order, 593
- Jewish performers in American culture, 242–244
- Jewish persecution and expulsion, 95–103
- Jewish population
- 15 countries with largest (2005), 398
- future demographic change, 401
- international migration, 395
- major regions (1700–2005), 394
- official language of country of residence (1931–2005), 397
- by official language of country of residence (1931–2005), 397
- refugees from Arab countries and descendants, 385
- selected by main age groups (1897–2004), 400
- 20 metropolitan areas with largest (2005), 399
- Jewish Relife Committee of Honduras, 669
- Jewish renewal, in America, 624–629
- Jewish Savanna, 653, 654
- Jewish self-hatred, 57–60
- The Jewish Spectator*, 599
- Jewish studies, in American universities, 629–631
- Jewish Theater Festival, 677
- Jewish Theological Seminary, Argentina, 713
- Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS), 599, 645
- Jewish travelers and explorers, chronology of, 351–354
- Jewish values and Diaspora philanthropy, 407–412
- Jewish Welfare Board, 665, 671
- Jewish women in Central Europe: 19th–20th centuries, 260–263
- Jewish women in Yemen, 267–271
- Jewish women's contributions to contemporary American and Jewish life, 620–623
- Jewish Women's Welfare Organization, 670
- Jewry as archetypal Diaspora, 54–57
- Jews
- as active participants in modern Western culture, 233–234
- adoption of Arabic, 152
- affirming Jewishness, 51
- in Africa, 449–452
- in Algeria, 455–458
- ancient world literature, 64–71
- from Arab countries, 384
- in Argentina, 710–715
- assimilation into bourgeoisie, 244–247
- in Australia, 521–531
- in Baltic States, 1019–1024
- in Brazil, 716–722
- in Canada, 548–552
- in Cape Verde, 459–461
- in Central America, 667–673
- converts to Christianity, 138
- Egyptian origin of, 64
- emphasis on education, 244
- in Ethiopia, 467–474
- in Europe
- contemporary overview, 803–804
- development of medical practices in Gibraltar, 851–855
- historical overview, 801–803
- expulsions from Christian lands, 129–130
- in Fiji, 532–533
- in French Polynesia, 533–534
- hidden language, 60
- history as minority, 72–78
- history of persecution and expulsion, 95–103
- in Iran, 767–770

- Jews (*continued*)  
 in Iraq, 771  
 Islamization in Medieval  
 Middle East, 139–141  
 in Kenya, 475–477  
 in Libya, 477–481  
 in Macedonia, 981  
 medicine, 294–300  
 in Middle East, 751–799  
 as minority, 72–78  
 in Morocco, 481–486  
 under Muslim rule, 305–309  
 in Namibia, 490–492  
 in New Zealand, 534–545  
 in Nigeria, 492–493  
 in North America, 546–649  
 in Ottoman Empire, 776–779  
 in Peru, 728–735  
 rise of scripturalism, 90–91  
 Second German Reich, 192  
 in South Africa, 493–503  
 in Sudan, 503–505, 505–509  
 Third German Reich, 192–193  
 in Tunisia, 509–514  
 in Uganda, 515  
 in Uruguay, 741–745  
 in Venezuela, 745–750  
 world population by major  
 regions (1700–2005), 394  
 (table)  
 yearning for Zion and its  
 meaning, 379–381  
 in Yemen, 793–799  
 in Zambia, 516–517  
 in Zimbabwe, 518–520
- Jews, Diaspora, and medicine,  
 294–300
- Jews Diaspora engagement with  
 Israel, 340–345
- Jews for Jesus, 138–139, 147
- Jews of Thessaloniki population  
 transfer, 364–369
- Jhirad, Jerusha, 1210
- Jiangnu, Meng, 1170
- Jiang Zemin, 1166
- Jiménez, Marco Pérez, 747
- Jinan, China, 1182
- Jintao, Hu, 1171
- Joao, D., III, 161
- João II, King, 875
- Jodensavanne, 739, 740
- Joel, Moses, 896
- Joel, Solly, 517
- John, King of England, 99, 933
- John II, Duke, 812
- John II, King of Portugal, 101
- John III, King of Portugal, 83
- John of Ephesus, 88
- John Paul II, 131, 868
- Johnston, Lieutenant-Governor,  
 917
- Joint Emergency Committee on  
 European Jewish Affairs, 600
- Jolson, Al, 236, 1037
- Jonah, 751
- Jónasson, Hermann, 1078, 1079,  
 1080
- Jorge, Francisco, 878
- Josef II, Emperor, 1009, 1010
- Joseph, 18–19, 80, 151, 414, 464,  
 751
- Joseph, Khazar ruler, 1101, 1102,  
 1103
- Joseph, Micah, 1044
- Joseph II, Emperor, 44, 144, 322,  
 805, 969, 972, 1002
- Josephson, Ernst, 1054, 1090
- Josephson family, 1090
- Josephus, Flavius, 72, 82, 477, 757,  
 767–768, 965, 1109, 1110,  
 1111, 1122–1123
- Joshua, 2, 79
- Journou, Victor, 512
- Jovian, Flavius, Emperor, 1108
- Juan Carlos, King, 902
- Judah, 756  
 tribe of, 78–81
- Judah, Rav, 7
- Judaism, 66  
 in ancient world literature,  
 64–71  
 emergence of psychoanalysis,  
 301–304
- Judaized German, 186, 190
- Judea, 752
- Judeans, in Babylonia, 757–762
- Judenrat*, 457
- Judeo-Arabic, 172–173, 190  
 separation between Jews and  
 Arabs, 176  
 women's songs, 209
- Judeo-Aramaic linguistics, 188
- Judeo-Castilian, 190
- Judeo-Catalan, 190
- Judeo-Christian communities  
 contemporary, 146–150  
 history in Jewish Diaspora,  
 136–139
- Judeo-French, 190
- Judeo-Greek studies, 189
- Judeo-Ibero-Romance languages,  
 187–191
- Judeo-Italian, 190
- Judeo-Latin, 188, 190
- Judeo-Portuguese, 190  
 in Anglo-American colonies,  
 553–559
- Judeo-Provençal, 190
- Judeo-Romance languages,  
 188–189
- Judeo-Spanish, 167, 172, 189, 190,  
 193–194  
 distinctive from Gentile forms  
 of language, 173  
 humor and satire in songs,  
 220–222
- Istanbul, 182–183
- Jewish music, 209–210
- migration routes of Rhodian  
 Jews, 369–374
- Sephardi, 180  
 in Turkish social context,  
 180–184
- Juderia*, 488
- Julius III, 879
- Jung, Carl Gustav, 304
- Jusid, Juan José, 697, 701
- Justin, 1110
- Justinian I, 455
- Juvenal, 69–70
- Kades, Charles, 1198–1199
- Kadima* (magazine), 463
- Kadima, Mexico, 675, 679
- Kadimah, Australia, 522
- Kadish, Sharman, 231
- Kadoma, 519, 520
- Kadoorie, Ellis, Sir, 357, 358, 1187
- Kadoorie, Elly (Eleazar Silas), Sir,  
 894, 1187, 1188, 1233, 1253
- Kadoorie, Horace, 357, 1189
- Kadoorie, Lawrence, 357–358,  
 1188, 1189
- Kadoorie family, 1172, 1187, 1189,  
 1247
- Kafka, Franz, 42, 43, 970
- Kafri, 765
- Kagan, Boris, 1139
- Kagan, Israel Meir HaCohen, 950
- Kahan, Louis, 529
- Kahanoff, H. E. Ruth, 532
- Kahin, George, 1251
- Kahina Dahiyah Bint Thabitah ibn  
 Tifan, 454, 455, 456
- Kahn, Florence Prag, 564
- Kahn, Julius, 338
- Kaidonover, Aaron Samuel, 1041
- Kaifeng, China, 1160–1167  
 contemporary overview,  
 1163–1167  
 general population, 1160  
 historical overview, 1160–1163  
 Jewish population in, 1160  
 languages spoken, 1160  
 migration routes and ethnic  
 backgrounds, 1160
- Kairouan, Tunisia, 450
- Kaiser, Alois, 213
- Kakungulu, Semei, 515
- Kalagu Khan, 768
- Kalev, Eliezer, 957
- Kalev, Mosei, 957
- Kalev, Yeshua, 958
- Kalisher, Abraham, 37
- Kallas, Miklos, 974
- Kallen, Horace, 595, 636
- Kallenbach, Hermann, 496
- Kalman, King, 1001
- Kalmanovitch, Zelig-Hirsh, 1043
- Kalo, Emil, 966
- Kalonymus, 865
- Kámán, Theodor von, 975
- Kamerlekar, Abraham Reuben,  
 1228, 1229
- Kaminska, Ida, 1139–1140

- Kanem-Bornu empire, 454  
 Kanovich, Grigory, 249  
 Kant, Immanuel, 105, 106, 143  
 Kantor, Yosef, 1253  
 Kaplan, Mendel, 501  
 Kaplan, Mordecai, 404, 568–569, 626, 1038  
 Kapo, Josef, 956  
 Karabichevsky, Yui, 1106  
 Karaism  
     History of Diaspora, 90–94  
     Islam instrumental in rise of, 152–153  
 Karaites, 90–93, 154, 465  
 Karl XI, King, 1050, 1088  
 Karl XIV Johan, King, 1052, 1089  
 Karo, Yosef, 317, 776  
 Karp, Eliane, 734  
 Kasparov, Garry, 1117  
 Kaspe, Simeon, 1183  
 Kasrils, Ronnie, 502  
 Kassir, Jacob S., 616, 619  
 Kassir, Rafael, 791  
 Kassir, Shaul, 790  
 Kassir, Yehuda, 790  
 Katsav, Moshe, 1122  
 Kattan, Naim, 550  
 Katz, Eduardo, 746  
 Katz, Jacob, 76  
 Katz, Mane, 829  
 Katzenelson, Yitzhak, 838  
 Kaufman, Abram Yosifovich, 1183, 1184, 1185  
 Kaufman, George S., 238  
 Kaufman, Moisés, 748  
 Kaufman, Nikolai, 966–967  
 Kaufman, Theodor, 1185  
 Kaunda, 517  
 Kawkaban, 799  
 Kay, Colin, 542  
 Kaye, Danny (David Daniel Kaminsky), 243  
 Kazakhstan, 1132–1136  
 Kazimierz III the Great, King, 983, 1008  
 Keegstra, James, 550  
 Keetmanshoop, Namibia, 491  
 Kehath (Ka'ti) family, 451  
 Kehillah, 684  
 Kenen, I. L., 639  
 Kentridge, Sidney, 502  
 Kentridge, William, 502  
 Kenya, 451  
     Jews in, 475–477  
 Kerby, George, 491  
 Keren Hayesod, 681, 749  
 Keren Kayemet, 681  
 Kermanshah, 768  
 Kern, Jerome, 237  
 Kerouan, 513  
 Kerren Kayemet Leisrael, 749  
*Kessotch*, 473  
 Key, John, 545  
 Kfar Batya, 470  
 Khair ad Din, 455  
 Khan, Buta, 1008  
 Khan, Fatali, 1115  
 Khartoum, Sudan, 504, 506  
 Khattab, 'Umar ibn al-, 140  
 Khaybar Oasis, 753  
 Khazaria, 1097–1104  
 Khazarian Empire, 1094–1095  
 Khazzoum, Saleh, 527, 528  
 Khuzestan, 768  
 Khvoles, Abraam, 1121  
 Kierkegaard, Soren, 130  
 Kifu-Qen (1888–1892), 469  
 Kikoine, Michel, 949  
 Kilda, St. Hebrew Congregation, Melbourne, 521  
 Kilez, 789  
 Kimiagarov, Boris, 1144  
 King, Alan (Irwin Alan Kniburg), 243  
 King, Miss, 1181  
 Kingdom of Judah, 80  
 Kingston, 549, 658–659  
 Kinsman, Nathan, 1181  
 Kiriath Bialik, 329  
 Kirkuk, 774  
 Kirschbaum, Simon, 733  
 Kisch, David Montague, 518  
 Kisch, Egon Erwin, 970  
 Kise Rahamim Yeshiva (Bnai Brak), 513  
 Kish, 759, 1230  
 Kishon, Efrem, 965  
 Kisilev, Aharon Moshe, 1183, 1184  
 Kissinger, Henry, 1177  
 Kitwe, Zambia, 517  
 Kjartansson, Aliza, 1081  
 Klages, Ludwig, 58  
 Klapheck, Elisa, 891  
 Klarsfeld, Serge, 837  
 Klatshko family, 1044  
 Klatzkin, Jacob, 43  
 Klausner, Israel, 1048  
 Klausner, Joseph, 1048  
 klezmer music, 227–228  
 Kligman, Mark, 214  
 Kliman, Evelyn, 709  
 Klug, Aaron, 502, 1037  
 Kluger, Wladyslaw, 729  
 Knipper, Lev, 1144  
 Kodron, Hizkiah, 859  
 Kodutto, Angelo, 943  
 Koen, Leo, 966  
 Koen, Shlomo, 980  
 Koffinas, Moshe, 371  
 Kohanim, 450, 509  
 Kohinov, Moisei, 958  
 Kohler, Max, 568  
 Kohn, Pinchas, 1048  
 Kolchak, Admiral, 1184  
 Koloman, King, 971  
 Kol Shearit Israel Burial and Charitable Society, 671  
 Kommissar, Vera, 1085  
 Kompaneets, Z., 1148  
 Kompert, Leopold, 44  
 Konforti, Leo, 966  
 König, Karl, 897  
 Konviser, Maurice, 520  
 Konyoses, 781  
 Kook, Abraham Isaac, 36  
 Kook, Hillel, 599–600  
 Koran, 150–151  
 Kordon, Bernardo, 699  
 Koritzinsky, Ephraim Wulff, 1084  
 Koskas, Marco, 512  
 Kosmin, Barry, 119  
 Kossuth, Lajos, 973  
 Kottler, Moses, 502  
 Koukiya, 454  
 Kovadloff, Santiago, 699  
 Kovner, Abba, 1038  
 Kovno Gubernia, 494–495  
 Kozer, José, 708  
 Kozliner, Yosif, 1106  
 Kraus, Karl, 59  
 Kremegne, Pinchus, 949  
 Kremer, Arkady, 336  
 Kremer, Elijah, 1046  
 Kremer, Isaias, 707  
 Krespin, Mordecai, 859  
 Kreuse, Ethel, 708  
 Kreutzer, Leonid, 1203  
 Krinski, Shlomo, 1038  
*Kristallnacht* pogrom, 599  
 Kroner, Karl, 1079–1080, 1081  
 Krudo, Leon, 957  
 Krüger, August, 1089  
 Kruger, Paul, 496  
 Kubitschek, Juscelino, 375  
 Kuh, Anton, 58  
 Kulanu, 451, 515  
 Kulbak, Moyshe, 1043  
 Kuli, Yakov, 957  
 Kulka, Henry, 543–544  
 Kultur Verein Morris Vintschevsky, 741  
 Kun, Bela, 976  
 Kupfer, Thomas, 920  
 Kurzweil, Arthur, 292  
 Kusayla, 456  
 Kutama of Kabylie, 456  
 Kwe Kwa, 519  
 Kyi, Daw Aung San Suu, 1242  
 Kyrgyzstan, 1136–1141  
  
 Labaton, Haim Mordecai, 791  
 Labaton, Helfon, 791  
 Labaton, Isaac, 791  
 Labaton, Sarah, 791  
 Labi, Shimon, 478  
 Lacretable, Jacques, 837  
 Ladejidsky, Wolf, 1199  
 Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Societies, 565  
 Ladino, 167, 172, 189, 193–194, 484  
     music, 209–210, 228  
     publications, 778  
 Ladislav VI, King, 972  
 Laemmle, Carl, 239  
 Lafer, Celso, 721

- Lag B'Omer, 485, 513  
 Lagos, 477  
 La Kahéna, 510  
 Lakshin, R' L.M., 604  
 Laldenga, 1219  
 Lamm, Martin, 1055, 1090  
 Lamms family, 1090  
 Landau, Judah Leib, 497  
 Landau, Lev, 1117  
 Landau, Lon (Leon), 816, 818–819  
 Landauer, Gustav, 847  
 Landsteiner, Karl, 299  
 Lane, Michael, 517  
 Langbehn, Julius, 51  
 Langermann, Max, 496  
 Languages of Diaspora  
   Aramaic, 171–172  
   characteristics of Jewish  
     languages, 167–171  
   Congruence principle (multiple  
     causation), 204  
   Diaspora influences on modern  
     Hebrew ("Israeli"), 200–205  
   integration of Yiddish into  
     English, 197–199  
   Judeo-Ibero-Romance, Yiddish,  
     and Rotwelsch, 187–191  
   Judeo-Spanish in the Turkish  
     social context, 180–184  
   two-tiered relexification in  
     Yiddish, 184–187  
   varieties of, 171–180  
   Yiddish, 172, 193–197  
   Yiddish-German irony, 191–193  
 Lankin, Eliahu, 1184  
 Lantos, Robert, 550  
 Lantos, Tom, 945  
 Laqe, 755  
 Larache, Morocco, 488, 489  
 Las Comisas Doradas, Mexico,  
   674  
 Lasker, Eduard, 845  
 Lasker-Schüler, Else, 42, 43  
 Laskin, Bora, 549  
 Lasky, Jesse, 239  
 Lasry, Abraham, 746  
 Latin America. *See also*  
   *countries in*  
   Jewish identity in cinema,  
     700–702  
   Jewish identity in fiction,  
     695–699  
   Jews in, 650–750  
 Latin American Jewish Congress,  
   714  
 Latin American Jewish literature,  
   705–710  
 Latin American Jewish Studies  
   Association, 703, 704, 705  
 Latin American studies, Jewish  
   studies as subject of, 703–705  
 Latrun internment camp, 451  
 Latvia, 1028–1034  
 Lau, Meir, 747  
 Lauder, Estée, 979  
 Launceston, Australia, 521  
*La Vara* (newspaper), 561  
 Lavater, Johann C., 143, 144  
 Lawrence, Ian, 537  
 Lazar, Ruth, 545  
 Lazon, Morris S., 339  
 Lazarova, Becca, 966  
 Lazarus, Emma, 563, 567–568  
 Leah, 18  
 Lebanon, 774  
   2006 war in, 541  
 Lebanon War (1982), 587  
 Leaser, Isaac, 635  
 Leib Gordon, Judah, 323, 324  
 Leibler, Isi, 523  
 Leibler, Mark, 523, 524, 525  
 Leib Lilienblum, Moshe, 323  
 Leib Mieses, Yehudah, 323  
 Leibowitz, Necham, 1032  
 Leibowitz, Yeshayahu, 1031, 1032  
 Lelouch, Claude, 458  
 Lemba, 450  
 Lemchen, Chatzkel, 1038  
 Lemlij, Moisés, 733  
 Lemor, David, 734  
 Lemor, José, 733–734  
 Lenin, Vladimir, 920, 993  
 León, Luis, 708  
 Leon, Nicaragua, 669  
 Leon, Tony, 500  
 Leonard Hoffman, 503  
 Léopold, Duke, 823  
 Leopold II, King of Belgium, 462  
 Leopold III, King of Belgium, 817  
 Le Pen, Jean-Marie, 829  
 Lerich, Robert, 152  
 Lerner, Jacobo, 737  
 Lerner, Michael, 405  
 Les Cayes, Haiti, 660  
 Leschchinsky, Jacob, 1048  
 Leslie, Daniel D., 1161  
 Lessing, G.E., 44  
 Lessing, Gotthold E., 142–144  
 Lessing, Theodor, 57–58  
 Lessner, Sigmund David, 1201  
 Levertin, Oscar, 1055, 1090  
 Levertoff, Paul, 137  
 Levi, 5  
   tribe of, 78, 79  
 Levi, Aron, 1090  
 Levi, Elizabeth, 967  
 Levi, Etien, 967  
 Levi, Joseph, 896  
 Levi, Leon, 967  
 Levi, Robert, 462, 967  
 Levi, Sylvain, 337  
 Levi, Venice, 967  
 Levi de Barrios, Daniel, 662  
 Leviev, Lev, 996  
 Leviev, Milcho, 967  
 Levieva, Yana, 967  
 Levin, Hirschel, 933, 934  
 Levin, Mona, 1055, 1085  
 Levin, Robert, 1055, 1085  
 Levin, William Hort, 537  
 Levin, Y., 1140  
 Levin, Z., 1148  
 Levinas, Emmanuel, 839, 1037  
 Leviné, Eugen, 847  
 Levinson, Jack, 491  
 Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 830  
 Levitas, I., 1013  
 Levitin, Moshe, 1184  
 Levitz, Fischel, 516  
 Levy, Assar (Asher), 556  
 Lévy, Bernard-Henri, 830  
 Levy, Daniel, 522  
 Levy, Enrique, 746  
 Levy, Isaac, 733  
 Levy, Jaco, 733  
 Levy, Mark John, 137  
 Levy, Michiel, 496  
 Levy, Moise M., 462  
 Levy, Nello, 512  
 Lévy, Raphaël, 512  
 Lévy, Samuel, 823  
 Lévy, Solly, 220  
 Levy, Uriah P., 563  
 Lewandowski, Louis, 212  
 Lewin, Kurt, 59  
 Lewis, Bernard, 306  
 Lewis, Jerry (Joseph Levitch), 243  
 Lhanghal, Jangkhothang, 1220  
 Lungdim, Thangkholun, 1220  
 Libanius (fourth century CE), 71  
 Liberman, Yaacov, 1184, 1194  
 Libermann, Max, 46  
 Libson, Gideon, 154  
 Libya, 514  
   Italian occupation of, 478–479  
   Jews in, 477–481  
 Lichtenberg, Julius, 653  
 Lichtenstein, Aaron, 429  
 Lichtenstein, Isaac, 137  
 Lichtenstein-Herschensohn,  
   Yehiel Tsvi, 137  
 Lieberman, Joseph I., 612  
 Liebes, Ernesto, 668–669  
 Liebshtein, Jacob, 593  
 Lilien, Moses, 46  
 Lilienthal, Max, 568  
 Lima, 730  
 Lincoln, Abraham, 159  
 Lindo, Don Joaquin Fernandez,  
   669  
 Lindo, Edward Maduro, 672  
 Lindo, Joaquin Fernandez, 668  
 Lindo, Juan, 668, 669  
 Linstead, Jamaica, 658  
 Lion, Dimitry, 231  
 Lipchitz, Jacob Chaim, 1037  
 Lipchitz, Jacques, 827, 1037  
 Lipke, Zanis, 1031  
 Lippert and Albu brothers, 496  
 Lipschitz, Jacques, 836  
 Lipschitz, Lippy, 502  
 Lipshits, Pinkas, 1139  
 Lipson, Roberta, 1180  
 Lisenheim, Moses Henry, 896  
 Literary anti-Semitism, 107–111

- Literature, 154  
 anti-Semitic, 107  
 Portugal, 163  
 Yiddish, 178, 194–195
- Lithuania  
 contemporary overview, 1037–1039  
 culture, science, and the humanities, 1037–1038  
 demographic movement and emigration, 1039  
 general population, 1034  
 historical overview, 1034–1037  
 Jewish culture on, 1040–1045  
 Jewish education and communal institutions, 1038  
 Jewish population in, 1034  
 Jews in, 1034–1039  
 languages spoken, 1034  
 migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 1034  
 Vilnius as Jewish city, 1046–1049
- Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, 99
- Liturgical music of Sephardi Jews, 214–218
- Liturgical rites, 207–209
- Liturgy, 216–217  
 Ashkenazi, 25, 218–219  
 Diaspora themes, 23–30  
 Sephardi, 26, 218–219  
 Syrian Jews, 218–220
- Livingstone, Ken, 929
- Livingstone, Zambia, 516, 517
- Livnat, Limor, 348
- Livornese Jews, 514
- Livornian Jews, 456
- Livorno, 478
- Llosa, Mario Vargas, 736
- Lobengula, 518
- Locke, John, 142
- Loeb, Jacques, 300
- Loesser, Frank, 238
- Loew, Marcus, 239
- Loewenberg, Ida, 564
- Loez, Isak Magrisso Meham, 957
- Loifer, Karina-Rivka, 1152
- Lojamei Jerut, Mexico, 675
- Lombard, Carole, 241
- Lombroso, Judah, 878
- London, M. W., 476
- London, Meyer, 593
- London Society for Promoting Christianity, 469
- Long, Breckinridge, 600
- Long, Edward, 658
- Loos, Adolf, 544
- Lopato, Abraham Aaronovitch, 1184
- Lopez, Roderigo, 923
- Lopez de Pas, Michel, 660
- Lopez de Sequiera, Juan, 671
- Lopez-Penha, Haim Horacio, 666
- Lorenzo II Magnifico of Florence, 866
- Lost tribes of Israel, 78–86
- Lotman, Jury, 1027
- Louis IX (Saint Louis), 100, 822
- Louis Philippe, 456
- Louis the Pious, 821
- Louis X (Louis the Stubborn), 822
- Louis XIV, 659–660, 822
- Louis XV, 822
- Loukanov, Andrewi, 963
- Lovestone, Jay, 593
- Lowy, Frank, 524
- Luanshya, Zambia, 517
- Lubavitch movement, 498, 719–720
- Lubitsch, Ernst, 241
- Lueger, Karl, 301
- Lumbroso, Moses, 556
- Lumbrozo, Jacob, 559
- Lumet, Sidney, 242, 249
- Lunel, Armand, 836
- Luperon, Gregorio, 666
- Luria, Isaac, 26, 35
- Luria, Solomon, 1041
- Lurianic cosmology, 36
- Lurianic Kabbalah and idea of Diaspora, 34–38
- Lusaka, Zambia, 516
- Lusaka Hebrew Congregation, 517
- Lusitano, Amato, 878, 879
- Luther, Martin, 101, 104, 105, 129
- Lutz, Charles, 974
- Lutzki, Simha Isaac, 93
- Luxembourg, Belgium, 883–886
- Luxemburg, Rosa, 335, 846
- Lyon, Hart, 933
- Lyon, Herman, 896
- Lyons, Israel, 352
- Ma'asum, Emir, 1124
- Macabich, Isadoro, 903
- Macao, China, 1181–1182
- Macarthur, Douglas, 1198, 1199
- Maccabee, Judah, 865
- Maccabi clubs, 664, 668, 712, 746, 1134
- Macedonia, 979–982
- Mack, Julian, 637
- Mada, 493
- Madagascar, 452  
 Jews in, 452
- Madagascar Plan, 452
- Madjar, Simantov, 966
- Maduro, Delvalle, 672
- Maduro, Ricardo, 669
- Magen David Yeshiva, 618, 620
- Maggid Mesharim* (journal), 528
- Maggid-Shteinschneider, Hillel Noah, 1047
- Maghreb, North Africa, 510, 512  
 Semitic migrations into, 453–454
- Magid of Mezeritch, 998
- Magnin, Mary Ann Cohen, 564
- Magnus, Elias, 1088
- Magnus, Laurie, 337
- Magnuses family, 1090
- Magnuss, Duke, 1029
- Magrebi, Yosef Maman, 1124
- Maguen David, 667
- Maguen David Youth Cultural Center, Mexico, 675
- Mahari, Abba, 469
- Mahdi, al-, 504, 794
- Mahdia, 513
- Mahmut II, 782
- Mahoza, 752
- Mailer, Norman, 243
- Maimon, 143
- Maimon, Solomon, 949
- Maimonides, Moses (Moses ben Maimon), 37, 129, 296, 297, 302, 315–317, 450, 464, 482, 797, 910  
 codification, 40  
 on converts, 423  
 fleeing from Spain and Morocco, 383  
 messianic age, 31  
 ruling on ritual purification, 92
- Maimonides, Abraham, 153
- Maisels, Isie, 499
- Majorca hidden Jews, 157
- Makashov, Albert, 994
- Malamud, Bernard, 244, 245
- Malawi, 516
- Malaysia, 1240
- Maldonado Da Silva, Francisco, 696
- Mali, 451, 454  
 Jews in, 451
- Malka, Eli, 504, 505, 508
- Malka, Shlomo, 504, 505, 506
- Malki, Ezra, 857, 858, 859
- Mallah, Asher, 366
- Malta, 886–887
- Maltzen, Heinrich Freiherr von, 382
- Maman, Yosef, 1126, 1150
- Ma'mun, Caliph al-, 306
- Managua, Nicaragua, 669
- Manasseh, 1–2, 79, 84, 1218
- Manasseh, Charles, 1242
- Mandari, al-, 487
- Mandela, Nelson, 497, 499, 500
- Mandelstam, Osip, 1106
- Manetho, 108
- Mann, Hans, 1080
- Mann, Helene, 1080
- Mann, Thomas, 1203
- Mannheimer, Herman, 1090
- Mannheimer, Theodor, 1090
- Mapu, Abraham, 1038, 1044
- Marad, 759
- Marcellinus, Ammianus, 1108
- Marcus, Gill, 502
- Marcus, J., 476
- Marcus, Jacob, 1090
- Margarita Island, 747
- Margrethe, Queen, 1070
- Margules, Paula, 709
- Mariam, Mengistu Haile, 470

- Mariamme (wife of Herod the Great), 1112
- Maria Theresa, 101, 969, 972
- Marich, David, Rabbi, 877
- Marilus, I. M., 990
- Mark, Henry, 532
- Mark, Yehezkel, 990
- Marks, Alexander, 1197, 1201
- Marks, David W., 934
- Marks, Herbie, 524
- Marks, Sammy, 496
- Markus, Otto, 476
- Marlowe, Christopher, 110
- Marquart, J., 1098
- Marr, Wilhelm, 59
- Marrakesh, 483
- Marranism, phenomena of, 156–160
- Marranos (New Christians), 100–101, 689
- avoiding attention to secret way of life, 158
  - Brazilian, 160–166
  - dual personalities, 165
  - family names, 157
  - genealogy, 157
  - Jewish customs and laws, 157–158
  - Portugal, 161
  - practicing Judaism in secret, 164–165
  - youth and, 158
- Marriage
- across cultural bounds, 240
  - Messianic, 147
  - patterns of, in Scandinavia, 1058
  - restrictions, 72
- Marshall, David, 358
- Marshall, Louis, 638
- Marthinsen, K. A., 1084
- Martí, José, 696
- Martial (late first century CE), 67
- Martin, David, 524
- Martin, Pope, 866
- Martínez, Ferrand, Archdeacon, 100
- Martinique, Jews in, 659–660
- Martov, Julius, 335
- Martyr, Justin, 88, 134
- Marx, Chico, 243
- Marx, Groucho, 243
- Marx, Harpo, 243
- Marx, Karl, 42, 43
- Mary, mother of Jesus, 876
- Mar Zutra, 766
- Mashhad, 768
- Mashkevich, Alexander, 996, 1134
- Mashonaland, 518
- Masliah, Sahl ben, 92
- Mason, Jackie (Yacov Moshe Moaza), 243
- Matanzas, Cuba, 664
- Matatov, Abo, 1143
- Matheson, Jardine, 1172
- Matsiyahu, 228
- Mattuck, Israel, 338
- Maurice of Nassau, 726
- Maurícia, 557
- Mauritius, Jews in, 452
- Max, Lesley, 544
- Maximillian, Emperor, 669, 690, 969
- May, George, 491
- Mayer, Alain, 885
- Mayer, Kurt, 730
- Mayer, Louis B., 239–240
- Mazarita, 466
- Mazouz, Matsliah, 513
- Mazursky, Paul, 245
- Mbabane, Jews in, 452
- Mbale, 515
- McCarthy, Joseph, 240
- McGovern, George, 583
- McNutt, Paul, 1244
- Mecca, 752
- Mecid, Abdul, 782
- Medem, Vladimir, 336
- Medes, 81
- Medicine, 294–300
- American century, 299–300
  - Biblical and Talmudic background, 296
  - European reawakening, 297
  - Gentiles choosing Jewish doctors, 295–296
  - in Gibraltar, 851–855
  - Islamic Era, 296–297
  - Jews choosing profession, 295–296
  - Modern Europe, 298–299
  - recent developments and future trends, 300
  - Vienna, Austria, 301–302
- Medicks, Simon, 476
- Medieval Armenia, 1113–1114
- Medieval Spain
- See also* Spain
  - changing conditions in Jewish community, 910–911
  - daily life as Jew, 909–910
  - expulsion and final stage, 911–912
  - Jews and Jewish communities in, 905–913
  - leadership of Jewish community, 907–909
  - relations between Jews and Muslims in, 913–916
- Medina, Benjamin, 730, 752, 753
- Mediterranean basin migration routes of Rhodian Jews, 369–374
- Megorashim*, 487
- Mehoza, 764, 765
- Mehta, Zubin, 1225
- Mehubad, Feizolla, 769
- Meier, Jeanette Hirsch, 564
- Meiggs, Enrique, 729
- Meiji, Emperor, 1200
- Meir, Golda, 743–744, 747, 1253, 1254
- Meir, R., 766
- Meir, Yosef, 380
- Meir Berstein, Gershom, 1106
- Mekenes, Morocco, 487
- Mekler, Issac, 734–735
- Melbourne, Australia, 521, 522, 528
- Melchior, Michael, 1085, 1086
- Melchior, Yoav, 1085
- Melilla, Morocco, 489
- Mellahs*, 483
- Memmi, Albert, 511, 512, 838
- Memmi-Sandhaus, Lynda, 512
- Men, acculturation in Central and Western Europe (19th and early 20th century), 254
- Menasse, Robert, 47
- Mendel, Menachem, 947, 998
- Mendelevich, Yosef, 994
- Mendelian disorders, 288–290 (table)
- Mendelowitz, Shraga Feivel, 609
- Mendelsohn, Moses, 781
- Mendelsohn, Oscar, 1085
- Mendelsohn, Emmanuel, 496
- Mendelsohn, Felix, 235
- Mendelsohn, Moses, 43, 44, 142–145, 235, 253–254, 321, 1065
- Mendes, Grácia Nási, 880
- Mendes, Henry Pereira, 319, 561
- Mendès-France, Pierre, 660, 830
- Menelik, 468
- Menem, Carlos Saul, 711
- Menophilius, 67
- Menuhin, Yehudi, 919
- Menzies Commission, 523
- Mercado, Judith, 556
- Mercas USA, 641
- Merenids, 482
- Meridor, Yaakov, 476
- Merrick, David, 237
- Merseburg, Thietmar von, 865
- Messele, Adisu, 474
- Messiah, 31–33, 306
- criteria, 37
  - utopianism, 91
- Messianic age, 31
- Messianic communities. *See* Judeo-Christian communities
- Messianic Jews, 138
- Messianic synagogues, 127, 147–149
- Metchnikoff, Eli, 299
- Metropolitan areas with largest Jewish populations (2005), 399 (table)
- Mevorah, Valeri Nisim, 966
- Meico
- contemporary Jewish identity in, 685–688
  - history of Jewish migration to, 682–685
  - Jews in, 673–681, 690, 694

- Meyer, Elias, 358  
 Meyer, Marshall, 693  
 Meyer, Menasseh, 358, 1233, 1247, 1248  
 Meyers, Bertha Frank, 565  
 Meyerson, Golda, 994  
 Meza, Abraham, 745  
 Meza, Ricardo, 745  
 Micas, João, 880  
 Michaelis, Johann D., 142, 143  
 Michaels, Anne, 550  
 Michelstaedter, Alberto, 1006  
 Michlin, Irwin, 671  
 Middle Ages  
   anti-Semitism, 104–105  
   high literacy rate of Jews, 39  
   Karaites, 90  
 Middle East. *See also countries in*  
   Islamization in, 139–141  
   Jews in, 139–141, 751–799  
 Middle Eastern Jews, in United States, 560–563  
 Midia, 768  
 Midler, Bette, 248  
 Midrash, 11, 13  
 Miesis, Matisyohu, 193  
 Migal, Arcady, 949  
 Migdal, Zwi, 697, 702  
 Mignogna, Eduardo, 702  
 Migration  
   chronology of Jewish travelers and explorers, 351–354  
   contemporary migration  
     patterns of Russian Jews to Germany, 386–391  
     of Egyptian Jews, 375–378  
     of Iraqi Jews, 354–360  
     Jews of Iraq migrated to Israel in Operation Ezra and Nehemya, 378–382  
   modern Jewish refugees from Arab countries, 382–386  
   patterns of Iraqi Jews, 354–360  
   population transfer of the Jews of Thessaloniki, 364–369  
   of Rhodian Jews, 369–374  
   westward migration routes of Sephardi Jews, 361–364  
 Mihalev, Petar, 960  
 Milan (1535–1597), 870–874  
 Milan, Gabriel, 661, 1064  
 Milan, Italy, 872–873  
 Milhaud, Darius, 836  
 Miller, Arthur, 238  
 Miller, Henry, 243  
 Miller, William, 633  
 Millin, Sarah Gertrude, 501  
 Milstein, Cesar, 712  
 Mindlin, José, 721  
 Minorca, 916–918  
 Minute Book, 492  
 Miramer, Isaac, 549  
 Miró, José María, 695  
 Mishkin, Jacobs, 730  
 Mishnah, 11, 13  
 Mithridates, 70  
 Mitman, Bronislav, 730  
 Mitten, Richard, 808  
 Mnaseas, 108  
 Moab, 80  
 Moati, Nine, 512  
 Moatti, Rene, 457  
 Mobutu, 462  
 Mocatta, Solomon, 527  
 Moch, Regina, 564  
 Modena, 867  
 Modern Diaspora Jewry  
   demography of, 392–402  
   prospective, 401  
   17th century to World War II, 393–395  
   World War II to present, 396–401  
 Modern Jewish refugees from Arab countries, 382–386  
 Modern period communication, 40–42  
 Modiano, Patrick, 839  
 Modigliani, Amedeo, 829, 836  
 Moellin, Jacob, 208  
 Mogador (now Essaouira), Morocco, 460  
 Mogilevski, Aleaner, 1203  
 Mohamed VI, 485  
 Mohammed, 296, 1230  
 Mohammed, Moulay, 483  
 Mohammed V, 483, 484  
 Mohilever, Shmuel, 1184  
 Moïssis, Asher, 365  
 Mokotoff, Gary, 293  
 Molcho, Solomon, 83  
 Moldova, 988–992  
 Molho, Salamon, 980  
 Molhov, Yako, 961  
 Molina, Tirso de, 165  
 Molon, Apollonius, 108  
 Momchilov, Ivan, 960  
 Monash, John, 522, 926  
 Monastir, 776  
 Mondolfi, Alejandro, 746  
 Mongols, 83  
 Monis, Judah, 630  
 Monogamy, 252  
 Montagu, Edwin Samuel, 337  
 Montagu, Samuel, 931  
 Montaigne, 165  
 Montefiore, Claude, 130, 337  
 Montefiore, Jacob, 526–527  
 Montefiore, Joseph Barrow, 527  
 Montefiore, Moses, 483, 527, 925, 931, 934, 1035  
 Montesinos, Vladimiro, 734  
 Montevideo, Uruguay, 741, 742, 743–744  
 Montreal, Canada, 549, 550, 551, 552  
 Monza, Rica, 874  
 Mordecai, Eliyahu, 1242  
 Mordecai, Haim, 791  
 Morgenthau, Henry, Jr., 600–601  
 Morgulev family, 1189  
 Moriah College, Sydney, Australia, 523, 525  
 Morin, Edgar, 165  
*Moriscos*, 487  
 Moroccan High Institute for Hebrew Studies, 485  
 Moroccan Marinids, 456  
 Morocco, 450  
   Jewish community in, 481–486  
   Sephardic Jews in, 220–221, 487–490  
 Morse, Arthur, 112  
 Mortality differentials according to religious affiliation in Gibraltar, 853 (table)  
 Morteira, Saul Levi, 727  
 Moses, 64, 79, 464, 751  
   Bible versus Koran stories, 151  
   dire prophecies about future of Israel, 22  
   holding ten commandments (illustration), 24  
   instigator of malice, 66  
   intermarriage, 414  
 Moses, Joseph, 1181  
 Moses, Moisés, 729  
 Moses, R., 865  
 Moses, Solomon, 1216  
 Moses Isaac, 1219  
 Moshe, Shmuel, 366  
 Moskona, Leon-Judas, 954  
 Mossad le-Aliyah Bet, 772  
 Mosse, Albert, 1197  
 Mosse, George, 143, 145  
 Mosse, Rudolf, 846  
 Mostel, Zero, 246  
 Mosul, 771, 773  
 Mota, Nehemia, 1213  
*Moukadem*, 456  
 Mound, Gloria, 156  
 Mountain Jews, 1095–1097  
 Mount of Olives, 466  
 Mount Scopus College, Melbourne, Australia, 523, 525  
 Moussaëff, Dorrit, 1081  
 Mozambique, 460  
   Jews in, 452  
 Msika, Habiba, 512  
 Mucopolipidosis IV (MLIV), 283–284  
 Mugabe, Robert, 518  
 Muhammad, 150–151, 153, 306, 753  
 Muhammad, Askia, 454  
 Mullokandov, Avner, 1144  
 Mullokandov, Gavriel, 1153  
 Mumford, Lewis, 595  
 Mung, Leon, 980  
 Mung, Yehuda Lev, 954  
 Muni, Paul, 213, 242  
 Muñiz-Huberman, Angelina, 698–699, 708  
 Munz, Peter, 543

- Murashu, 760  
 Musaphia, Benjamin, 1062  
 Musgrave, Lord, 352  
 Mushel, Georgy, 1153  
 Music  
   in America, 213–214  
   Ashkenasi, 208–209  
   choral singing, 217, 228  
   contemporary in United States, 225–229  
   detachment from Eastern European styles, 226  
   folk, 212, 226  
   Hasidic, 211  
   Hebrew Israeli songs, 227  
   history of post-Temple, 206–207  
   humor and satire in Judeo-Spanish song, 220–222  
   influence of Islam, 208  
   Jewish contributions to the Arts, 233–250  
   klezmer, 227–228  
   Ladino, 209–210, 228  
   liturgical, of Sephardi Jews, 214–218  
   liturgical music, 207–209, 212  
   men's songs, 209, 210  
   Middle East tradition, 215  
   Near East tradition, 215  
   New York avant-garde jazz style, 228  
   North Africa tradition, 215–216  
   overview of Diaspora Jewish, 206–214  
   paraliturgical, 219  
   popular song, 209–211  
   psalms, 207  
   reconstruction of Iberian Crypto-Jewish identity and, 222–224  
   rescue and virtual preservation of Diaspora cultural heritage by the Center for Jewish Art, 229–233  
   Sephardi, 208, 209, 214–218, 228  
   Southern Arabian Peninsula tradition, 215  
   symphonies, 227  
   of Syrian Jews, 218–220  
   traditional, 207–209  
   women's songs, 209–210  
   Yiddish, 210–211, 227  
 Musica Aviva, 524  
 Muslims  
   Jews under rule of, 305–309  
   relationships with Jews in medieval Spain, 913–916  
 Mussolini, 869  
   alliance between Hitler and, 479  
 Mussry, David, 1239  
 Mutations prevalent among Jews and other populations, 291 (table)  
 Myanmar, 1240–1242  
 Myers, Arthur, 542  
 Myers, Joseph Hart, 895  
 Myers, Michael, 537, 543  
 Myotonic dystrophy, 284  
 Na'amat, 679, 681  
 NAAMAT USA, 641  
*Nação Portuguesa*, 558  
 Nacon, Yitzhkan, 747  
 Nahmanides, Moses, 37, 317, 908, 909, 910  
 Nairobi Hebrew Congregation, 475, 476  
 Najara, Israel, 776  
 Najenson, Luis, 709  
 Najran, 794  
 Namib, 490  
 Namibia, Jewish community of, 490–492  
 Nantes Code, 559  
 Naphtali, tribe of, 79, 82, 84  
 Napoleon, 825, 844, 867, 886, 984, 1067  
 Napoleon, Louis, 888  
 Napoleon III, 673  
 Naqqash, Samir, 382  
 Narkiss, Bezalel, 230  
 Nascimento, Janeiro, 461  
 Nasi, Gracia, 253, 880  
 Nási, José, 880  
 Nasi, Judah, 787  
 Nasi, Yosef, 31  
 Nassau, 663  
 Nasser, Gamal, 308, 464–465  
 Nasserism, 511  
 Nassy, David, 651  
 Natan, R., 766  
 Nathan, David, 544  
 Nathan, Fritz, 1052–1053, 1078  
 Nathan, Joseph Edward, 537–538  
 Nathan, Karl, 1244  
 Nathan, Matthew, 1187  
 Nathan, Nathan, 662  
 Nathan of Gaza, 83, 980  
 Nathanson, M. L., 1052, 1066, 1067, 1068  
 National Anti-Chinese and Anti-Jewish league, Mexico, 674  
 National Commerce Day, Mexico, 674  
 National Committee for Labor Israel, 641  
 National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, 720  
 National Council of Jewish Women, 525  
 Nationalist anti-Semitism, 105–106  
 National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives, 564  
 National Society for Hebrew Day Schools, 609  
 Naumbourg, Samuel, 212  
 Navarro, Abraham, 1232, 1250  
 Navon, Yitzchak, 472  
 Nazis, 47, 106, 112–114  
   Karaites, 93  
   occupation of Baltic States, 1021–1022  
   Sephardi differences and, 52  
 Nebuchadnezzar II (King of Babylon), 449, 752, 757, 1111, 1119  
 Nechemias, Baruch, 1050, 1088  
*Nefesh B'Nefesh*, 644  
 Negoosie, Hiob, 469  
 Nehardea, 764, 765  
 Nehemia, 422, 423  
 Nehemiah, 292, 751, 760, 761  
 Nelson, Admiral Lord, 924  
 Nelson, New Zealand, 535  
 Neo-Hasidism, 628–629  
 Nero, 1111  
 Netanya, 481, 513  
 Netherlanders, 555–556  
 Netherlands, 887–892  
 Netto, Isaac, 849  
 Netzer (Reform), 499  
 Netzorg, Jack, 1244  
 Netzorg, Morton, 1244  
 Neubauer, Adolf, 85  
 Neuman, John von, 975  
 Neusner, Jacob, 573  
 Nevis, Jews in, 658  
 New Amsterdam, 553, 554–555, 557, 559, 560, 654  
 New Andalusia, Venezuela, 745  
 New anti-Semitism, 118–122  
 New Christians, 160–162, 650, 658  
 New Jewish Agenda, 627  
 New Left, 596  
 Newman, Frederick, 543  
 New Middleburgh, Essequibo, 652  
 New Right, 583  
 New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 522  
 New York, Syrian Jews in, 615–620  
 New Zealand, Jews in, 534–545  
*New Zealand Jewish Chronicle* (newspaper), 540  
 New Zealand Jewish Council, 541  
 New Zealand Opera Company, 544  
 Ngaite, Vumzakap, 1219  
 Niazi, A. A. K., 1227  
 Nicaragua, Jews in, 669–670  
 Nicholas, 1095  
 Nicholas I, 992, 1035  
 Nicholas II, 1036, 1133  
 Nicoidski, Clarisse, 839  
 Nicolai, 143  
 Niebuhr, Reinhold, 132, 633–634  
 Niego, Alberta, 733–734  
 Niemann-Pick disease type A, 284  
 Nieto, David, 318  
 Nieuhof, Johannes, 726  
 Niger, Shmuel, 595  
 Nigeria, 451  
   Jews in, 492–493  
 Nikolas I, 954  
 Nimroy, Leonard, 199

- Nineteenth Amendment, 564  
 Nineveh, 751, 752, 755, 756  
 Ninio, Albert, 528  
 Ninio, Henry, 528  
 Ninio, Jacqueline, 528  
 Nippur, 752, 757, 759, 761  
 Niskier, Arnaldo, 721  
 Nissán, Rosa, 699, 701, 708  
 Nissenson, Hugh, 248  
 Nissim, Mozelle, 1248  
 Nissim, Rav, 314  
 Nissim family, 1187  
 Nixon, Richard M., 583  
 Niyazov family, 1148  
 Noah, 17, 18, 292, 1123, 1161  
 Noah, Mordechai, 635  
 Nobile, Umberto, 354  
 Noll, Chaim, 47  
 Nonclassical congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), 284–285  
 Nordau, Max, 44, 1078  
 Norden, Benjamin, 496  
 North African desert war (1941–1943), 479  
 North America, 546–649. *See also* America  
     Jews in, 546–649  
 North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (NACOEJ), 471  
 Northern Rhodesia, 516, 518  
 Norway, 1082–1087  
 Novinsky, Anita Waingort, 160  
 Nowakowsky, David, 212  
 Nunes, Ricke, 556  
 Nunez Martinez, Elias, 671  
 Nussah S'farad, 26  
 Nussbaum, Felix, 817–818  
 Nussimbaum, Lev, 1117  
 Nu-wa, 1161  
 Nuwas, Dhu, 794  
 Nyasaland, 516, 518  
  
 Obadiah, Prince, 1123  
 Obadiah, Rabbi, 857  
 Ochs, Jacques, 816, 817, 818  
 Odets, Clifford, 238  
 Old Testament, 797  
 Olinda, Brazil, 650  
 Oliver, Haim, 961  
 Olmert, Amram, 1183  
 Olmert, Ehud, 1183, 1185  
 Omdurman, Sudan, 505–506  
 Omri, King of Israel, 80  
 Operation Defensive Shield, 118  
 Operation Ezra and Nehemya, 378–382  
 Operation Magic Carpet, 795  
 Operation Moses, 470  
 Operation On Eagles' Wings, 797  
 Operation Sheba, 470  
 Operation Solomon, 470–471  
 Ophir, 453  
 Opis, 759  
 Oppenheim, Samuel, 557  
 Oppenheimer, Enrique, 729  
 Oppenheimer, Ernest, 496, 517  
 Oppenheimer, Joseph, 841  
 Oppler, Alfred C., 1199  
 Oral Law, 469, 473, 796  
 Oran, 455, 458  
 Orange River Colony, 494  
 Order of the Tunisian Republic, 512  
 O'Reilly, Justo Sierra, 696  
 Orgambide, Pedro, 697  
 Oriental Jewry, history of religious leadership, 309–315  
 Orloff, Chana, 836  
 Ornitiz, Samuel, 595  
 Orpha, 789  
 Or Shalom, 551  
 Or Shalom Center (Bat Yam), 481  
 Orthodox Comunidad Maguén David, Mexico, 675  
 Orthodox Comunidad Sefaradí, Mexico, 675  
 Orthodox Judaism, 550, 566, 613–614  
     contemporary conversion patterns into, 421–424  
     growth of music, 225–226  
     Halacha (Jewish law), 272  
 ORT Uruguay, 744, 769  
 Or Yehuda, Libya, 481  
 Osar Hatorah, 485  
 Oslo Peace Process, 514  
 Osnapar, 3  
 Ostraca, 754–755  
 Ostrowski, Grisha, 966  
 Ott, Eugene, 1238  
 Ottawa, Canada, 549  
 Otto, Julius Conradus, 895  
 Ottolenghi, Giuseppe, 867  
 Ottoman Empire  
     collapse of, 131  
     Jewish exiles and, 254  
     Jews in, 776–779  
     migration routes of Rhodian Jews, 369–374  
     Sabbatean movement in, 779–785  
 Ottósson, Hendrik Siemsen, 1077, 1078, 1079, 1080–1081  
 Otzar ha-Torah, 770  
 Ouaknin, Marc-Alain, 839  
 Oudtshoorn, 497  
 Oujda, 483  
 Ovid, 65  
 Ovsishcher, Lev, 948  
 Oz, Amos, 965  
 Ozick, Cynthia, 248  
  
 Pacific Foundation for Health, Education, and Parent Support, 544  
 Pacifico, Don, 925  
 Pact of Umar, 798  
 Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza, 769  
 Pakistan, 1228–1230  
 Palestine  
     Arabs from, 384–385  
     capture of, 131  
     decline of authentic traditions, 25  
     Jewish immigration to, 113–114  
 Palestine Brigade, 480  
 Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), 116, 501, 514  
 Palley, Ahrn, 520  
 Palmerston, Lord, 925, 1186  
 Palmerston North, New Zealand, 535  
 Paltiel, Julius, 1085  
 Panama, Jews in, 670–673  
 Pan Gu, 1161  
 Pann, Abel, 231  
 Papeete, Tahiti, 533  
 Pappenheim, Bertha, 262  
 Paqatha, 755  
 Paraliturgical music, 219  
 Paramaribo, 653–654, 739, 740  
 Pardes Hayeladim, Iraq, 771  
 Pardo of Salonika, Josiau, 654  
 Parker, Dorothy, 836  
 Parmet, Simon, 1074  
 Parsis relations in India and Pakistan, 1223–1225  
 Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, 548  
 Pascin, Jules, 829, 966  
 Pasha, Daud, 355, 528, 1226  
 Pasha, Heykal, 384  
 Pasha, Syuleiman, 957  
 Paskhaver, A., 1014  
 Passi, Solomon, 966  
 Passion Plays, 98–99, 109–110  
 Passover seder, 551  
 Paszkowski, Diego, 699  
 Pataki, Lazlo, 669  
 Pathans of Pakistan and Afghanistan, 1230–1231  
 Patilahovs family, 1126  
 Patinkin, Mandy, 228  
 Paul, Apostle, 8, 104, 123, 147  
 Paul, Saint, 856  
 Pauli, Hanna, 1054, 1090  
 Paul II, 877  
 Paul III, 879  
 Pauline mission, 123–124  
 Paul IV, Pope, 866, 879–880  
 Paull, Laura, 701  
 Paulli, Holger, 1064  
 Paul of Tarsus, 127, 128  
 Paul V, Pope, 972  
 Pavlova, Mihailina, 966  
 Paxton, Tom, 226  
 Paykel, Maurice, 538, 544  
 Pehle, John, 115  
 Peixotto, Jessica, 564–565  
 Pelinka, 808  
 Pen, Yehuda, 819, 949  
 Peña, Saúl, 733  
 Pepin the Short, 821  
 Pereira, Duarte, 878

- Pereires, 825  
 Perelman, Eliezer Yitzhak, 1038  
 Peres, Shimon, 747, 950, 1253  
 Perets, David, 966  
 Peretz, Avraham, 367  
 Peretz, Y. L. (Yehuda Leib), 178, 195, 234, 628  
 Pérez, Alan García, 734  
 Perez, Young, 512  
 Perez de Almazan, Miguel, 665  
 Pergament, Moses, 1055, 1090  
 Perl, Yosef, 323  
 Perlman, Eliezer, 1044  
 Perlman, Elliot, 524  
 Perlman, Itzhak, 228  
 Pernambuco, Brazil, 650  
 Peron, Juan, 711  
 Persecution, 95–103  
   dissemination of early  
     Christianity beyond Jewish  
     Diaspora, 123–125  
   Euro-Arab anti-semitism,  
     115–118  
   history of, 95–103  
   literary anti-semitism, 107–111  
   massacre of Jews in York, 99  
   new anti-Semitism, 118–122  
   riot instigated by Fettmilch, 102  
   in Russia, 102–103  
   in Spain, 100–101  
   varieties of anti-Semitism,  
     103–107  
   in Vienna, 98  
   Western democracies and the  
     Holocaust, 112–115  
 Persia, Jews in, 156, 752  
 Perspective on Judeo-Ibero-  
   Romance, Yiddish, and  
   Rotwelsch, 187–191  
 Perth, Australia, 528  
 Perth Hebrew Congregation, 527  
 Peru, Jews in, 690, 694, 728–735  
   in literature of, 735–737  
 Peruvian Commercial Stock  
   Market, 728  
 Peruvian Jewish Association, 735  
 Peshev, Dimitar, 960  
 Petachya of Regensburg, 786  
 Petahiah, Rabbi, 1103  
 Petah Tikvah, Libya, 481  
 Petain, Philippe, Marshall, 455,  
   457, 827, 828  
 Peter I, 1009  
 Pethahiah, 351  
 Petronius (first century CE), 66  
 Petrov, Valeri, 961  
 Phibunsongkhram, Luang, 1251  
 Philanthropy  
   Diaspora, 343–344  
   Jewish values and, 407–412  
 Philip II, King of Spain, 870  
 Philip IV (Philip the Fair), 822  
 Philippines, 1243–1246  
 Philippino Zionism and ties with  
   Israel, 1246  
 Philipson, Aron, 1052, 1089  
 Philipson, Charles, 1085  
 Philistines, 80  
 Phillips, Jacob, 1186  
 Phillips, Lionel, 496  
 Phillips, Philip Aaron, 537, 542  
 Philo of Alexandria, 8, 252, 464,  
   466, 767  
 Phipps, Captain, 352  
 Pichanick, Harry, 520  
 Pichanick, Ivor, 520  
 Pick, Israel, 137  
 Picon, Molly, 242  
 Picquart, Georges, 826  
 Pidal, Ramón Menéndez, 487  
 Pieters, Laurie, 492  
 Pietersen, Solomon, 558  
 Pietre's Point, 660  
 Pilosof, Vladimir, 967  
 Pinchuk, V., 1014  
 Pincus, Arieh Louis, 501  
 Pinhel, Duarte, 877  
 Pinkhasov, Yakov-Hai, 1150  
 Pinochet, Augusto, 698  
 Pinson, 513  
 Pinter, Harold, 926  
 Pinto, António Dias, 878  
 Pioneer Corps, 518  
 Pirani, Frederick, 527  
 Pirani, Henry Cohen, 527  
 Pisko, Seraphine Eppstein, 564  
 Pissarro, Camille, 829  
 Pius V, 98  
 Pius X, 131  
 Pivín, José, 709  
 Plager, Silvia, 698, 708  
 Plaskow, Judith, 406  
 Platek, Felka, 818  
 Pliny the Elder, 82  
 Plutarch (ca. 46–ca. 120 CE), 67,  
   1110  
 Poalei Zion, 741  
 Pogrund, Benjamin, 502  
 Pointe-à-Pitre, 660  
 Polak, Henry S. L., 496  
 Poland, 101–102, 982–988  
   anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism,  
     and community existential  
     problems, 987  
   contemporary overview,  
     986–987  
   general population, 982  
   historical overview, 983–986  
   Jewish education, religious  
     denominations, communal  
     and political institutions,  
     986–987  
   Jewish population in, 982, 983  
   languages spoken, 983  
   migration routes and ethnic  
     backgrounds, 983  
   rebirth of young Jewish life, 987  
   Reform Judaism Tempel  
     Synagogue (Kazmierz), 986  
 Polanyi, Michael, 975  
 Polemon, 70  
 Polhemiu, Dominus Johannes, 556  
 Political activism during Diaspora,  
   344  
 Pollak, Hayyim Yedidyah (Lucky),  
   137  
 Pollitzer, Robert, 1169  
 Polyakov brothers, 1139  
 Polygamy, 259  
 Polygyny, 252  
 Pompey, 68  
 Pontius Pilate, 109  
 Ponve, Anatole, 1202  
 Popkin, Richard, 165  
 Popper, Karl, 543  
 Popper-Lynkeus, Josef, 301  
 Popular song, 209–212  
 Population transfer on Jews of  
   Thessaloniki, 364–369  
 Port Antonio, Jamaica, 658  
 Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 660  
 Port Cortes, Honduras, 669  
 Porto Alegre, Brazil, 720  
 Port Royal, Jamaica, 651, 658  
 Portugal, 101, 161–164, 892–895  
 Portuguese Brazil, 650  
 Portuguese Jews of Diaspora:  
   Italy and beyond, 875–883  
 Porzecanski, Teresa, 708  
 Post-World War II period, focusing  
   on Jewish assimilation into  
   bourgeoisie, 244–247  
 Potelyahov, Rafael, 1150  
 Potok, Chaim, 247, 436  
 Poujade, Pierre, 829  
 Prag, Mary Goldsmith, 564  
 Prayers, 27–29  
 Premodern diaspora  
   communication in, 38–42  
   protecting themselves, 75–76  
 Pressner, Irene, 748  
 Preston, Betty, 884, 885  
 Pretoria, Zimbabwe, 518  
 Preuß, Hugo, 847  
 Primrose, Hannah, 897  
 Principe, 460  
 Pringshein, Klaus, 1203  
 Pritsak, Omeljan, 1095  
 Progressive King David,  
   Melbourne, Australia, 525  
 Progressive movement, 525  
 Proust, Marcel, 835  
 Prouville de Tracy, Alexandre, 652  
 Prussian Emancipation Edict  
   (1812), 144  
 Psalmody, 207, 216  
 Psalms, 207  
 Pseudepigrapha, 11, 15  
 Psychoanalysis, emergence of,  
   301–304  
 Ptolemaic dynasty, 73  
 Ptolemy, 477, 856  
 Ptolemy Lagus, 87  
 Puerto Rico, Jews in, 665  
 Pumbedita, 752, 765

- Pupkewitz, Harold, 491, 492  
 Pupkewitz, Max, 491  
 Purim Burghal, 478  
 Purim Sherif, 478  
 Pyrrard de Laval, Françoise, 725
- Qarase, Laisenia, 532  
 Qingdao, China, 1182  
 Qozmos, 468  
 Quartet, 722  
 Quebec City, Canada, 549  
 Queen of Sheba, 793  
 Quetzaltenango, 668  
 Quevedo, Fray Juan, 663  
 Quezon, Manuel, 1233, 1244, 1245  
 Quintilian, 66  
 Qumisi, Daniel ben Moses al-, 91  
 Quota Act (1930), 495  
 Qwara, 470–471
- Rabat, Morocco, 459, 460  
 Rabb, Maurice, 517  
 Rabban, Joseph, 1213  
 Rabbin, Pinehas, 1127  
 Rabbinate, rabbi's reflection on modern, 416–418  
 Rabbinic Judaism, 61–62, 251  
 Rabbinic legend, symbols of diaspora, 18–21  
 Rabbinic scholarship, 1041–1043  
 Rabbis  
   ordination of women as, 254  
   reflections on modern nate and Jewish community, 416–418  
 Rabin, Yitzhak, 747, 1165, 1227, 1253  
 Rabinovich, V., 1014  
 Rabinovici, Doron, 47  
 Rabinowitz, Joel, 498  
 Rabinowitz, Joseph, 137, 138  
 Rabinowitz, Louis I., 497–498  
 Rabinowitz, Moritz, 1084  
 Rachel, 18, 19  
 Rachid, Moulay, 482  
 Rachman, Z. W., 492  
 Racial anti-Semitism, 106–107  
 Racial science, 51, 106–107  
 Raczymow, Henri, 839  
 Radicalism, American Jews and, 592–596  
 Radner, Gilda, 244  
 Radonski, Henrique Capriles, 747  
 Rafael de Aguilar, Moses, 726  
 Ragen, Naomi, 248  
 Raghib, Elisha, 1124  
 Rahabi, David, 1205, 1214  
 Rahabi, Ezekiel, 1205, 1207, 1213, 1228  
 Rahy, Philip, 595  
 Raitzin, Misha, 1153  
 Rakusen, Nathan, 1188  
 Ramalovski, Hirsh, 958  
 Ramati, Shaul, 1246  
 Rama VI, King, 1251  
 Rambam, 529, 795–796  
 Rami, Ahmed, 1054  
 Raphael de Aguilar, Moses, 726  
 Rapoport, Solomon J. L., 25  
 Rashbam, 822  
 Rashi, 822  
 Rashid al Davia, 768  
 Rasmussen, Anders Fogh, 1070  
 Rathenau, Emil, 491  
 Rathenau, Walther, 59, 491, 847  
 Rathjens, Carl, 799  
 Rav Shimon ben Zemah Duran, 456  
 Rav Yitzchak ben Sheshet Perfet, 456  
 Rayda, 798, 799  
 Raymond family, 1187  
 Reading, Fanny, 522  
 Rebecca, 18  
 Recanati, David, 366  
 Recife, Brazil, 650, 651, 716, 720, 726  
 Reconstructionist Judaism, 550, 566, 568, 626–627  
 Redemption  
   Islam, 153  
   Lurianic Kabbalah, 36  
 Reder, Bernard, 1070  
 Reflexification and Sorbs, 185  
 Reformation  
   demonization of Jews, 104–105  
   persecution and expulsion, 101  
 Reform Beit Shalom Synagogue, 528  
 Reform Judaism, 550, 566, 568, 636  
   German Lutheranism and, 129  
   religious contexts for Jewish music, 225–226  
   women as rabbis, 254  
 Rehoboam, 79  
 Rei, Gideon, 1221  
 Rei, Joseph, 1221  
 Reich, Ranicki, Marcel, 47  
 Reich, Steve, 227  
 Reinach, Jacques, 826  
 Reinach, Joseph, 334  
 Reinhart, Harold, 338  
 Rejzen, Zalman, 1048  
 Relativism, 122  
 Relexification, 184–186  
 Religions  
   communication, 38–39  
   sharing ethical values, 144  
 Religious (pagan) anti-Semitism, 108–109  
 Religious affiliation and cause-specific mortality differentials, 853 (table)  
 Religious contexts, 225–227  
 Religious fusion and interaction  
   Brazilian Marranism, 160–166  
   Christian-Jewish dialogue (18th Century), 141–145  
   contemporary Judeo-Christian communities in Jewish Diaspora, 146–150  
   history of Judeo-Christian communities in Jewish Diaspora, 136–139  
   Islamization and Jews in Medieval Middle East, 139–141  
   Jewish Diaspora and spreading of Christianity, 126–132  
   Jewish influence on formation of Christian Scriptures, 132–135  
   Jewish-Islamic mutual influences, 150–156  
   widespread phenomena of Marranism and hidden Jews, 156–160  
 Religious leadership of Oriental Jewry, 309–315  
   Sicily and community subordination, 312–314  
   super-communal authorities, 309–312  
 Religious Right, 583  
 Religious Zionists of America, 641  
 Remak, Rober, 298  
 Rendev, Petar, 958  
 Reuben, tribe of, 79, 82, 84  
 Reubeni, David, 35, 82–83  
 Reyzen, Zalmen, 1043  
 Rezeph, Syria, 752  
 Rhodes, 776  
 Rhodes, Cecil John, 496, 518, 519  
 Rhodes, Jews in, 857–860  
 Rhodian Jews of Ottoman Empire migration routes, 369–374  
 Ribeiro, Bernardim, 876, 877  
 Ricardo, Mordechai, 745  
 Ricci, Matteo, 1156, 1161  
 Rich, Lewis, 496  
 Richard I, King, 129  
 Richard the LionHeart, 99  
 Richler, Mordecai, 246, 839  
 Richter, Elise, 261 (photo), 262  
 Richthofen, Ferdinand von, 786  
 Riegner, Gerhart, 599  
 Riess, Ludwig, 1197  
 Riesser, Gabriel, 844  
 Rifkind, Malcolm, 897  
 Riklis, E., 720  
 Riley-Day syndrome. *See* Familial dysautonomia  
 Rimmon, Salomon, 1233, 1240  
 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 716, 717, 720  
 Rio Group, 722  
 Riot instigated by Vincent Fettmilch, 102 (photo)  
 Ripstein, Arturo, 700  
 Ritual murder, 95–96  
 Ritual objects, 230–231  
 Rivadavia, Bernardino, 711  
 Rivera, Andrés, 699  
 Rivers, Joan (Joan Sandra Molinsky), 244  
 Rivkes, Moyshe, 1041  
 Rivonia Trial (1964), 499

- Robinson, Dove-Meyer, 537, 542  
 Rodgers, Richard, 238  
 Rodney (Admiral), 657, 661  
 Rodrigues, João, 879  
 Rodriguez, Jorge, 1243  
 Rodriguez de Fonseca, Juan, 665  
 Rodriquez, Domingo, 1243  
 Rohling, August, 307  
 Roitman, Marcos, 733  
 Romanelli, Samuel Aaron, 352  
 Romania, 988–992  
 Romano, Albert, 958  
 Romanovich, Daniil, 1008  
 Romans  
   anti-Semitism and, 104  
   Bar-Kokhba Revolt and, 200  
   Christianity and, 123–124, 127  
   harsh tax on Jews, 69  
   impact of Judaism on, 66  
   persecution and expulsion and, 96  
 Romanticism, 75  
 Rome, 65, 67–68, 70  
   Arch of Titus in, 20  
   Samaritans, 88  
 Rommel, Erwin, 1227  
 Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 112, 522, 582, 596, 597, 599  
 Rosen, Jonathan, 248  
 Rosen, Kipps, 520  
 Rosen, Moses, 990  
 Rosen, Muriel, 520  
 Rosenbaum, Thane, 249  
 Rosenberg, Harold, 595  
 Rosenberg, Lev, 949  
 Rosenberg, Max, 1233, 1251  
 Rosenberg, Rosa, 1251  
 Rosenblum, M., 1134  
 Rosenblum, Myer, 524  
 Rosencof, Mauricio, 698  
 Rosenfeld, Jacob, 1168–1169, 1182, 1183, 1185  
 Rosenman, Samuel, 601  
 Rosenstein, I, 1012  
 Rosenstock, Joseph, 1203  
 Rosenthal, Jack, 1244  
 Rosenthal, Moyshe, 1044  
 Rosenwald, Lessing J., 339  
 Rosenzweig, Franz, 42, 404  
 Roseznic, Boris, 733  
 Rosh Hashanah, 513, 629  
 Rosowsky, Solomon, 212, 213  
 Ross, Tamar, 406  
 Rosten, Leo, 195, 198  
 Roth, Cecil, 934  
 Roth, Henry, 236, 595  
 Roth, Laurence, 429  
 Roth, Philip, 244–247, 249, 709, 839  
 Roth, Sid, 1164  
 Rothko, Mark, 1031  
 Rothkowitz, Marcus, 1031  
 Rothschild, 825, 835  
 Rothstein, Marshall, 550  
 Rottberger, Felix, 1080  
 Rottberger, Olga, 1080  
 Rottenberg, Dan, 292  
 Rotwelsch, perspective on, 187–191  
 Rowe, Leo Stants, 665  
 Roxas, Manuel A., 1234, 1245  
 Rozanov, Yosif, 961, 966  
 Rozier, Gilles, 839  
 Rubenson, Moritz, 1052, 1089  
 Rubinstein, Rabbi, 1048  
 Rubinstein, William D., 112  
 Rubio, Pascual Ortiz, 674  
 Rudolf II, King, 969  
 Ruhr, Hans, 732–733  
 Rusape, Zimbabwe, 451  
 Russia, 75, 102–103, 938–942, 992–997  
   anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and community existential problems, 996–997  
   contemporary overview, 995–997  
   culture, 939  
   demographic movement and emigration, 997  
   economic conditions, 939–940  
   general population, 938, 992  
   Great Choral Synagogue (St. Petersburg), 995  
   historical overview, 992–994  
   humanities, 939  
   Jewish education, religious denominations, and communal and political institutions, 995–996  
   Jewish immigration from, 494–495  
   Jewish population in, 938, 992  
   languages spoken, 992  
   migration route and ethnic backgrounds, 992  
   relationship between Habad Hasidism and, 998–1001  
 Russian Jews  
   in Beijing, China, 1180–1181  
   contemporary migration patterns to Germany, 386–391  
 Russian rule in Central Asia, 1125–1126  
 Rustamids, 456  
 Ryazanovskii, A., 1134  
 Ryvel, 512  
  
 S. Jacobs Pty Ltd, East Africa, 476  
 Sa'ada, 798, 799  
 Sa'adia Gaon, 25, 154, 450, 464, 786, 821, 1130  
 Saadian Dynasty, 482  
 Saana (probably Yemen), 450  
 Saatchi, Charles, 360  
 Saatchi, Maurice, 360  
 Sabbatai Zevi, 32, 41, 83, 129, 627, 781, 794, 855, 943, 957, 980, 1063  
  
 Sabbatean movement, in Ottoman Empire, 779–785  
 Sabbath, 65, 67, 69, 146  
 Sabriel, 1101, 1102  
 Sabzanov, Yahiel, 1144  
 Sachs, Albie, 502  
 Sachs, Maurice, 839  
 Sachs, Nelly, 1055, 1090  
 Sachs, Solly, 496  
 Sachses family, 1090  
 Sacks, Jonathan, 430, 927, 935  
 Sa'd al Davla ibn Hibbat Allah ibn Munsab Ebheri, 768  
 Sadowitz, Jerry, 897  
 Sadrian, Hans, 808  
 Safed, 776  
 Safed, Israel, 34  
 Safra, Edmond, 789, 919  
 Saint Croix, Jews in, 661–662  
 Saint Eustatius, 657, 665, 668  
   Jews in, 656  
 Saint Louis, Haiti, 660  
 Saint Maarten, 655  
 Saint Martin, Jews in, 657  
 Saint Thomas, Jews in United States, 661–662  
 Sakuua, 755  
 Saleh, Shalom, 775  
 Salih, Yahya, 797  
 Salisbury, 518, 519  
 Salmon, Alexander, 352  
 Salome (daughter of Herod the Great), 1112  
 Salomon, Augustin, 671  
 Salomon, Moses, 1088  
 Salonica, 860–864  
 Salonika, 776  
 Salvador, Brazil, 720  
 Salvador, Luis, Prince, 903  
 Salzman, Pnina, 1116  
 Samaritans, 754  
 Samaritan Diaspora, 87–89  
 Sambation, 453–454  
 Saminsky, Lazare, 212, 213  
 Sammons, Jeffrey, 49  
 Samoilvich, Rudolph L., 354  
 Samson, 79  
 Samuel, Edwin, 937  
 Samuel, Herbert, 926  
 Samuel, Howard, 932  
 Samuel, Lord of Wych Cross, 932  
 Samuel, Marcus, 1199  
 Samuel the Nagid of Andalusia, 313–314  
 Samuilov, Viktor, 967  
 San, Aung, 1242  
 Sana'a, 799  
 Sananes, Moisés, 746  
 Sandler, Adam, 244  
 San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 669  
 San Salvador, 668  
 Santa Clara, Cuba, 664  
 Santana, Pedro, 665  
 Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, 664  
 Santiago de la Vega, Jamaica, 658

- Santilhano, F. Dias, 1238, 1239  
 Santo Antao, 460  
 Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 666  
 Santos, Brazil, 720  
 Santos, Silvio, 721  
 São Paulo, Brazil, 720  
 São Tiago, 460  
 São Tomé, 460  
 São Vicente, 460  
 Saphiere (Zirinsky), Joan, 1189  
 Saphir, Jacob, 527, 1233, 1236, 1237  
 Sapire, Stanley, 452  
 Šapur I, 763  
 Sarah, 18, 1100  
 Sarfaty, Sassone, 730  
 Sargon II, King, 3, 81  
 Sarmad, Sa'id, 1214–1215  
 Sartre, Jean-Paul, 837  
 Sason, Sheikh, 1186  
 Sasson, Aaron, 771  
 Sassoon, Abdullah, 1226  
 Sassoon, David, 355, 356, 527, 1186, 1187, 1208, 1225, 1226  
 Sassoon, Elias, 355, 1186  
 Sassoon, Jacob Elias David, 1226  
 Sassoon, Rachel, 1172  
 Sassoon, Solomon, 1226  
 Sassoon, Victor, 357, 1172  
 Sassoon family, 1187, 1207, 1224, 1226, 1247  
 Satamkar, Moses Samuel Reuben, 1229  
 Sater, Ana Lya, 704  
 Satire in Judeo-Spanish song, 220–222  
 Satmar Hasidic sect, 795  
 Sats, Natalya, 1135  
 Satz, Mario, 698  
 Saul, King, 79, 80, 1230  
 Savanna, Jewish, 652  
 Savanna la Mar, Jamaica, 658  
 Sayagh, Joseph, 885  
 Sberro, Bernard, 512  
 Scandinavia, 1050–1057  
   anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and community existential problems, 1056  
   attitudes toward intermarriage, 1058–1059  
   child-rearing, 1060  
   contemporary overview, 1054–1056  
   culture, science, and the humanities, 1054–1055  
   demographic movement and emigration, 1056  
   Denmark, 1062–1070  
   Finland, 1071–1076  
   general population, 1050  
   historical overview, 1050–1054  
   Iceland, 1077–1082  
   industries, trades, and professions, 1054  
   intermarriage, 1057–1061  
   Jewish education, religious denominations, and communal and political institutions, 1055–1056  
   Jewish population in, 1050  
   languages spoken, 1050  
   marriage patterns, 1058  
   migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 1050  
   Norway, 1082–1087  
   Sweden, 1087–1092  
   weinuke, 1060–1061  
 Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman, 405, 406, 625, 628  
 Schaeffer, Shepsal, 635  
 Schalit, Heinrich, 213  
 Schally, Andrew, 1037  
 Schauder, Adolf, 496  
 Scheer, Eva, 1085  
 Schenirer, Sarah, 272  
 Scherbacovsky, Elías, 709  
 Scherman, Nosson, 611  
 Schiff, David Tevele, 933, 934  
 Schiff, Jacob A., 638, 1198, 1199, 1200  
 Schiller, Shlomo, 347  
 Schindel, Robert, 47  
 Schlesin, Sonia, 496  
 Schneerson, Levi Yitzhak, 1133  
 Schneerson, Menachem Mendel, 430–445, 607, 1000  
 Schneerson, Shalom Dob Ber, 602–607  
 Schneerson, Yosef Yitzchak, 602, 624–625, 993, 998, 999, 1000  
 Schneider, Elia, 748  
 Schneiderman, David, 707  
 Schneier, Arthur, 1166  
 Schnirer, Sarah, 261  
 Schnitzler, Arthur, 45  
 Scholem, Gerschom, 42  
 Schönberg, Arnold, 301  
 School-based kollels, 428  
 Schorr, Baruch, 212  
 Schorsch, Ismar, 645  
 Schotz, Benno, 897  
 Schoyer, Raphael, 1197  
 Schrift, Shirley, 242  
 Schroder, Gerhard, 1158  
 Schück, Henrik, 1055, 1090  
 Schück, Heyman, 1090  
 Schudrich, Michael, 986, 987  
 Schwartz, Samuel, 222  
 Schwartz, Zeev, 429  
 Schwarz, Joseph, 1245  
 Schwarz-Bart, André, 838  
 Schwimmer, Rosika, 262  
 Schyfter, Guita, 701  
 Science of Judaism, 44, 230  
 Scliar, Moacyr, 696, 697, 707, 709, 721  
 Scotland, 895–900  
 Scotus, Duns, 100  
 Second aliyah, 328  
 Second Barbary Wars, 456  
 Second Council of Nicea, 136  
 Second Crusade, 129  
 Second Palestinian Intifada, 514  
 Second Temple, 21, 81, 126, 206  
 Sedek, Kehillat Shaare, 615–616  
 Seeds of Peace, 627  
 Seeger, Pete, 226  
 Seeligmann, E. J. (Vaandrig), 1238  
 Sefrou, 484  
 Sefwi Sui, Ghana, 451  
 Sefwi Wiawso, Ghana, 451  
 Segel, Binjamin, 58  
 Seghers, Anna, 47  
 Seinfeld, Jerry, 244  
 Selassie, Haile, 469, 470  
 Self-revitalization of Diaspora Life, 402–407  
 Seliar, Moacyr, 707  
 Seligmann, Rafael, 47  
 Seligson, Esther, 708  
 Selznick, David O., 239, 240  
 Semah, Joseph, 1205, 1207  
 Semah, Najema, 355  
 Seminario Rabínico, Buenos Aires, 693  
 Sender, Anne, 1085  
 Seneca the Younger, 66  
 Senna, 768  
 Señor de Castro, David, 729  
 Sepharadi Museum, 747  
 Sephardi, 487–490  
   in Australia, 526–530  
   biblical cantillation, 215–216  
   broken societal conventions, 255  
   choral singing, 217  
   concept in German-Jewish and German anti-Semitic thought, 48–52  
   destruction of families, 255  
   exile and Diaspora concepts, 31–34  
   history, 215  
   Iberian Peninsula, 160  
   influences on Karaites, 92–93  
   influencing Syrian Jews, 218  
   insights into intellectual history, 315–320  
   Jewish music, 208, 209  
   Judeo-Spanish, 180  
   lauding biblical figures, 209  
   liturgical music, 214–218  
   in Middle East, 560–563  
   music, 228  
   network of communities, 215  
   songs of Spanish history and tradition, 210  
   tradition variants, 26–27  
   in United States, 560–563  
   westward migration routes of, 361–364  
   women, marriage, and family (16th–17th centuries), 255–260

- Sephardi, Oriental, and Ashkenazi ethnicities and culture  
 beginnings of Hasidism in Eastern Europe, 325–327  
 history of religious leadership of Oriental Jewry, 309–315  
 insights into Sephardic intellectual history, 315–320  
 Jewish Enlightenment and impact on Diaspora, 320–324  
 Jews under Muslim rule, 305–309
- Sephardi Association of Victoria, Sydney, Australia, 530
- Sephardic Angel Fund, 617
- Sephardic Bikur Holim, 617
- Sephardic Community Federation, 618
- Sephardic kabbalists, 31–33
- Sephardim, 452
- Sephardim Society of Israelite Benevolence, 729
- Sephardi Shevet Ahim, Cuba, 664
- Sephardi Synagogue, Sydney, Australia, 529
- Sepher Torah, 527
- Septuagint, 453
- Serfaty, Rosalinda, 748
- Serour, Mordecia, 454
- Set, Shimon, 954
- Setif, 457
- Setton, David, 619, 711
- Seutonium (second century CE), 68–69
- Sfez, Leila, 512
- Sforim, Mendele Moykher, 178, 195, 1043
- Sforza, Francesco, II, 871
- Shabazi, Mori Shalom, 794, 798
- Shah, Nadir, 1095, 1115
- Shah Abbas, 768
- Shaham, Nathan, 646–647
- Shahn, Ben, 1037
- Shakespeare, William, 110, 923
- Shalev, Meir, 648
- Shalit, Gilad, 342
- Shalmaneser V, King, 81
- Shalom, Eric, 672
- Shalom, Rabbi, 955
- Shalom, Sylvan, 512
- Shalom, Yitzhak, 616
- Shalomi, Zalman Schachter, 721
- Shalom Institute, Sydney, Australia, 525
- Shamir, Yitzhak, 950
- Shanghai, China, 1172–1176
- Shapira, Avraham, 429
- Shapira, Nathan, 36
- Shapiro, J., 720
- Shapiro, Meyer, 595
- Shapiro, Sydney, 1170
- Shaposhnikova, Polina, 1106
- Shapür II, King, 1108
- Sharansky, Natan (Anatoly Shcharansky), 120, 994
- Sharett, Moshe, 1234, 1242, 1246, 1253
- Sharon, Ariel, 119, 120, 332
- Shatz, Boris, 966
- Shayo, Ezra, 791
- Shazar, Zalman, 950
- Shchokin, G., 1015
- Shearith Israel, New York, 554, 560, 561
- Shearit Israel, 213
- Sheba, 468
- Shein, Benzion, 1237
- Shekhter, Boris, 1148
- Shemsn, Eitan, 380
- Shenzhen, China, 1181
- Sher, Anthony, 502
- Sherif, Ibrahim, 478
- Sheshbazzar, 2
- Sheshet, Isaac b., 909
- Sheshet, Rav, 765
- Shevardnadze, Eduard, 1122
- Shifrin, David, 604
- Shikne, Lauruska Mischa, 1038
- Shils, Edward, 586
- Shimon, Rabbi, 1159, 1180
- Shining Path, 731, 737
- Shinwell, Emmanuel (Manny), 897
- Shiraz, 768
- Shmelkes, Yitzchak, 423
- Shmuskevich, Yacov, 1038
- Sholem Aleichem, Melbourne, Australia, 525
- Shooker, Flora, 1249
- Shoua, Farag, 507
- Shrimski, Samuel, 542
- Shteyngart, Gary, 249
- Shúa, Ana María, 698, 699, 707
- Shubert, J.J., 237
- Shubert, Lee, 237
- Shubert, Sam, 237
- Shukoh, Dara, 1214
- Shulhan Arukh, 790
- Shulman, Kalman, 1047
- Shwartz, Eddi, 967
- Shwartz, Eddy, 966
- Shwartz, Moni, 967
- Siboni, Haim Refael, 506
- Sicily, 312–314
- Siddur, Vadim, 231
- Sidon, Karol, 970
- Siegfried, Count, 883
- Sigismund II, King, 1034
- Sigismund III, King, 1035
- Silas, Simon, 529
- Silases family, 1189
- Silberhaft, Moshe, 492
- Silivri, Turkey, 664
- Silva, Antônio José da, 696, 700
- Silver, Abba Hillel, 600, 639
- Silver, Joan Micklin, 248
- Silverstein, Alisa, 1180
- Silverstone, Mark, 542–543
- Simelovitz, Kopel, 816, 819–820
- Simintov, Zablón, 1131
- Simke, Ernest E., 1246
- Simmel, Georg, 44
- Simon, Gauleiter Gustav, 884
- Simon, Neil, 238
- Simon, tribe of, 79, 82
- Simon Magus, 88
- Simpson, R' Eli, 605
- Simpson, W. E., 668
- Sim Shalom* (periodical), 654
- Singapore, 1247–1250
- Singer, Alvy, 246
- Singer, Andre, 722
- Singer, I. J., 234
- Singer, Isaac Bashevis, 178, 195, 234, 235, 709, 965
- Singer, Isaac Merritt, 1139
- Singer, Isadore, 311, 322
- Singer, Paul, 846
- Sippar, 756, 759
- Siridhorn, Maha Chakri, 1235, 1254
- Sirota, Beate, 1199
- Sirota, Leo, 1199, 1203
- Sium Hashas*, 610
- Six-Day War (1967), 480, 511, 523, 586, 587, 590, 630, 634, 639, 642, 749
- Sixth aliyah, 329
- Siyum Hashas*, 612
- Sklare, Marshall, 609, 613
- Skwy, 755–756
- Slavic Yiddish, 186
- Slavo-Turks, 185
- Slovakia, 1001–1004
- Slovenia, 1004–1007
- Slovo, Joe (Yossel Mashel Slovo), 502, 1038
- Smith, John, 554
- Smith, Joseph, 632–633
- Smolenskin, Peretz, 1044
- Snyder, A. Cecil, 665
- Sobel, David, 1252
- Sobel, Henry, 721
- Soccer Australia, 524
- Socialist Party, 592–593, 596
- Social psychology and Jewish self-hatred, 59–60
- Sociedad de Beneficencia Alianza Monte Sinai, Mexico, 674
- Sociedad de Beneficencia–Hilfsverein, Guatemala, 667
- Sociedad de Beneficencia Israelita, 729
- Sociedad Hebraica, Argentina, 712
- Sociedad Israelita Ash-kenazit de Caracas, 746
- Sociedad Israelita de Guatemala–Beth El Reform, 667
- Society of Jewish Intelligentsia, Iran, 769
- Society of Jewish Women, 769
- Society on Studying of Hebrew, 768
- Sociodemographic background and integration, 389
- Sofer, Chatam, 1003

- Sofer, Moses, 976  
 Sojnut, Mexico, 681  
 Solbena Company, 462  
 Solomon, 79, 414, 468, 793, 1137, 1204, 1206, 1213  
 Solomon, Abraham, 1247  
 Solomon, Anna Freudenthal, 564  
 Solomon, Bertha, 496  
 Solomon, Dr., 1221  
 Solomon, Saul, 496  
 Solomon family, 1187  
 Solovetchik, Joseph, 52–54, 130, 272  
 Somalia, 451  
 Somen, Israel, 476  
 Somen, Vera, 476–477  
 Sondheim, Stephen, 238  
 Songhai empire, 451, 454  
 Sonnemann, Leopold, 846  
 Sorbs, 185  
 Sosnowski, Saúl, 699  
 Sosua, Dominican Republic, 666  
 South Africa, 492, 493–503  
   historical overview of, 494–497  
   Jews in, 451–452, 493–503  
 South Africa Campaign, 491  
 South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), 498, 500  
 South African Zionist Federation, 498  
 South Australian Board of Deputies, 528  
 South Australia Zionist Federation, 528  
 Southeast Asia, 1232–1235  
   general population, 1232  
   historical overview, 1232–1235  
   Indonesia, 1235–1239  
   Jewish population in, 1232  
   languages spoken, 1232  
   Malaysia, 1240  
   migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 1232  
   Myanmar, 1240–1242  
   Philippines, 1243–1246  
   Singapore, 1247–1250  
   Southeast Asia, 1232–1235  
   Thailand, 1250–1254  
 Southern Rhodesia, 516, 518  
 South Pacific Pictures, 544  
 Soutine, Chaim, 827, 829, 836, 949  
 Soviet Jewry, 523  
 Soviet Union, 229  
   in Central Asia, 1126–1128  
   rule in Baltic countries, 1021, 1022–1024  
 Sowden, Lewis, 502  
 Spain, 450, 900–904  
   *See also* Medieval Spain  
   contemporary overview, 902–904  
   culture, science, and the humanities, 902  
   demographic movement and migration, 903–904  
   general population, 900  
   historical overview, 901–902  
   Jewish education and communal institutions, 902–903  
   Jewish population in, 900  
   languages spoken, 900  
   migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 900  
   religious denominations, 902  
 Spanish Inquisition, 100–101, 180  
 Spanish-Moroccan war (1859–1860), 460  
 Spanish-Portuguese Jews, 650  
 Speightstown, Barbados, 657  
 Spicker, Irene, 816  
 Spigelman, James, 524  
 Spilliaert, Leon, 818  
 Spinoza, Baruch, 888  
 Spinoza, Benedict, 165, 233, 298, 302  
 Spire, André, 835–836  
 Sports Center, 685  
 Srole, Leo, 609  
 SS camps, artists at work in, 816–820  
 Stagnaro, Juan Bautista, 702  
 Stanislas, Duke, 823  
 Stark, Edward, 213  
 Starobinski, Jean, 919  
 Stavans, Ilan, 698, 709  
 Stefánsson, Stefán, 1079  
 Steimberg, Alicia, 698, 699  
 Stein, Marc Aurel, 354  
 Steincke, K. K., 1070  
 Steinem, Gloria, 621  
 Stephen, Kapu, 1219  
 Stephen, Saint, 971  
 Stereotypes, 60, 106–107, 246–247  
 Stern, Fritz, 51  
 Stern, Irma, 502  
 Stern, Malcolm, 292–293  
 Stern, Moritz Abraham, 844  
 Sternberg, Leo, 354  
 Sternberg, Peter, 520  
 Sternberg, Robert, 520  
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 352  
 Stewart, Commodore, 849  
 Stone, Michael E., 1112  
 Strabo, 65, 72, 1110  
 Strashun, Matityahu, 1047  
 Strassfeld, Michael, 405  
 Straus, Adolph Delisle, 669  
 Straus, Joost, 1238  
 Straus, Oscar S., 354  
 Straus, Sarah Lavenburg, 354  
 Strauss, Herman, 476  
 Streisand, Barbra, 228, 248  
 Struensee, Johann, 1051, 1066  
 Stuyvesant, Peter, 558, 654  
 Suasso de Lima, Joseph, 496  
 Sub-Saharan Africa, migrations into, 454  
 Sudan, Jewish community in, 503–505, 505–509  
 Suetonius, 68–69  
 Suez, Perla, 697  
 Suez Canal, 789  
 Suez Crisis, 528  
 Sufism, 153  
 Sufott, Ze'ev, 1165  
 Suichmezov, Assen, 960  
 Sukkoth, 22  
 Sulaiman, Moulay, 488  
 Süleyman II, Sultan (the Magnificent), 464, 880  
 Sulzer, Salomon, 143, 212  
 Sum Samuel, 1220  
 Sunni Islam, 152  
 Sunnism, 456  
 Sun Yat-sen, 1156, 1168, 1173  
 Sura, 752  
 Suriname, 652  
   Jews in, 653–654, 738–740  
 Surkis, G., 1014  
 Surozhon, Sultana, 966  
 Susenyos (1607–1632), 468  
 Susiana, 768  
 Susman, Elie, 516–517  
 Susman, Harry, 516–517  
 Sustana, 752  
 Sutovsky, Emil, 1117  
 Sutskever, Abraham, 1048  
 Suva, Fiji, 532  
 Suzman, Helen, 499  
 Suzman, Janet, 502  
 Suzman, Moses, 502  
 Sviatopolk, Prince, 1008  
 Swakopmund, Namibia, 491  
 Swaything, Lord, 931  
 Swaziland, Jews in, 452  
 Sweden, 1087–1092  
 Switzerland, 918–922  
 Sydney, Australia, 528  
   conversion to Judaism in, 531  
 Sydney Jewish Museum, Sydney, Australia, 524  
 Symbols of Diaspora, 17–23  
 Symmachus, 133, 134  
 Synagogue Council of America, 599  
 Synagogues, 432–433  
   exteriors, 129  
   inscriptions found in, 13–14  
   Jewish communities, 23–24  
   symbolizing grief, suffering, and decline, 70  
   Western Christian lands, 127  
   women in positions of leadership, 252  
 Syria, 774  
   history of Jews in, 786–792  
 Syrian Jews, 65  
   liturgy and music of, 218–220  
   in New York, 615–620  
 Syrkin, Nachman, 595  
 Szemanski, Jacob, 237  
 Szenes, Hannah, 974  
 Szychman, Mario, 697  
 Szilard, Leo, 975

- Szold, Henrietta, 635, 637, 639  
(photo)
- Szold, Robert, 665
- T. Daniel, 1220–1221
- Tabachnik, I., 1013
- Taboury, Binyamin, 427
- Tacitus, 67–68, 104, 108
- Tacitus, Cornelius, 1111
- Tadger, Avram, 958
- Tagawa, Ken, 1201
- Tahert, 455
- Taieb, Hai, 513
- Taiwan, 1193–1195
- Ta'iz, 799
- Tajer, Yehuda, 775
- Tajikistan, 1142–1146
- Takahashi, Korekiyo, 1196–1200
- Takhalov, Suleyman, 1153
- Takkanah, 619
- Talmud, 11, 20, 97, 796
- Talmudic background, 296
- Talmudic thought, 4–7
- Talmud Torah education, 618
- Talmud Torah system, reforms in, 478
- Talmud Tora Teodoro Herzl, Cuba, 664
- Tam, Rabbenu, 822
- Tam David Yahia, Jaakov, 980
- Tangier, Morocco, 460, 489–490
- Tanzania, Jews in, 452
- Tarica, Hizkiah Shemuel, 859
- Tarica, Yedidiah Shemuel, 859
- Tarjih, 799
- Tarras, Dave, 228
- Tarsa, Hayyim, 859
- Tarshish, 453
- Tasmania, Australia, 521
- Tata family, 1224
- Taub, Isaac, 976
- Taubman, Craig, 227
- Taylor, James, 226
- Tay-Sachs disease (TSD), 285–286
- Teatro Hebraica, 733
- Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 669
- Teheran, 768, 769
- Teheran Charity Center, 769
- Teichtal, Yehuda, 388 (photo)
- Teitelbaum, Joel, 336
- Teixeira, Bento, 696
- Teixeira, Samuel, 1064
- Tela, Honduras, 669
- Tel Aviv, 514, 759
- Teller, Edward, 975
- Telo, Antoni6 José, 893
- Teman*, 793
- Temkin, Shlomo, 1249
- Tenekedjieva, Dessi, 967
- Tetouan, Morocco, 483, 485
- Tetuan, Morocco, 487, 488, 489, 490
- Tewodros II, 469
- Thailand, 1250–1254
- Thalweg, Irving, 240
- Thalwitzer, Maximilian, 496
- Thangruma, H., 1221
- Thatcher, Margaret, 360
- Theodor Herzl Club, Melbourne, Australia, 524
- Theodotion, 134
- Theological anti-Semitism, 105
- Therapeutic community, 252
- Thessaloniki, population transfer on Jews of, 364–369
- Thies, Harmen, 231
- Third aliyah, 328
- Third Crusade, 129
- Thomas, Saint, 671
- Thomas the Apostle and Abbanes, 1204, 1206
- Thurloe, John, 652
- Tian, Ai, 1156
- Tiberius, Emperor, 68–70
- Tibullus (ca. 54–ca. 18 BCE), 65
- Tiempo, César, 697, 708
- Tiglath-Pileser the 3rd, 767
- Tigran II, King (Tigran the Great), 1104, 1109, 1110, 1111
- Tigran IV, King, 1111
- Tigran V, King, 1111, 1112
- Tigran VI, King, 1111, 1112
- Tijuana, Mexico, 675
- Tillich, Paul, 132
- Timaru, New Zealand, 535
- Timbuktu, 451, 454
- Timmerman, Jacobo, 698, 712
- Timur, 1123
- Tintner, Georg, 544
- Tisha B'Av, 21–22
- Titus, 69, 71
- Tiv, 493
- Tlemcen, 455
- Tobago, 652
- Jews in, 662
- Toledo, Alejandro, 734
- Tolerance, 142
- Toller, Ernst, 847
- Torah, 417
- international network of religious Zionist kollels, 427–429
- public reading of, 207–208
- Torah Umesorah, 609
- Torarica, Suriname, 653
- Toronto, Canada, 549, 551, 552
- Torquemada, Tomás de, 901, 980
- Torsion dystonia, 286
- Toueg family, 357
- Tounsa, split between Grana and, 513
- Touyier, Paul, 830
- Tov, Baal Shem, 1009
- Tov, Yoav Siman, 1131
- Tov Nahmias, Shem, 877
- Tozaj, Neshat, 945
- Trades. *See* Industries, trades, and professions
- Traditional music, 207–209
- Trahtemberg, León, 729, 731
- Transvaal, Southern Africa, 450, 494, 519
- Trdat I, 1111
- Treason Trial (1956–1961), 499
- Trebitsch, Arthur, 58
- Tribuna Israelita, Mexico, 675, 679
- Trier, Herman, 1069
- Trigano, Shmuel, 839
- Trilling, Diana, 595
- Trilling, Lionel, 595
- Trimberg, Süsskind von, 43
- Trinidad, Jews in, 662
- Trink, Isak, 943
- Tristán, Flora, 735–736
- Trogus, Pompey, 1110
- Troki, Solomon ben Aaron, 93
- Trotsky, Leon, 335, 920
- Trotto, Marcelo, 701
- Truman, Harry, 1234, 1245
- Trumpeldor, Yosef, 1200
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, 499
- Tsaban, Yair, 471
- Tsadikov, Mois, 958
- Tsegaya, Mekuria, 469
- Tseydman, Boris, 1153
- Tucacas, Venezuela, 655, 745
- Tucker, Sophie (Sophie Kalish), 243
- Tunis, 514
- Tunisia, 453
- Jews in, 509–514
- Tunisian Hafsids, 456
- Turkish social context and Judeo-Spanish, 180–184
- Turkmenistan, 1146–1149
- Turnovsky, Frederick, 544
- Tuvim, Judith, 242
- Twersky, Moise, 836
- Tzedaka Foundation, 714
- Tzedaka Umarpe, 684
- Tzedek, Shaarei, 656
- Uasin Gishu plateau, Kenya, 475
- Uganda, 451, 475
- Jews in, 515
- Ukraine, 1007–1016
- anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and community existential problems, 1015
- contemporary overview, 1013–1015
- culture, science, and the humanities, 1013–1014
- demographic movement and emigration, 1015
- economic conditions, 1014
- general population, 1007
- historical overview, 1007–1013
- industries, trades, and professions, 1013
- Jewish education, religious denominations, and communal and political institutions, 1014–1015

- Jewish population in, 1007  
 languages spoken, 1007  
 migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 1007
- Ultra-Orthodox communities, 179
- Umbral, 679
- Umerdekar, Gershon Solomon, 1228
- Umerdekar, Rahamim Solomon, 1228
- Umerdekar, Sheeoolabai Solomon, 1228
- Umerdekar, Solomon David, 1228
- Unión Israelita de Caracas, Venezuela, 746, 748
- Unión Israelita de Perú (Israeli Confederation of Peru), 729
- Unión Macabi Universal, 733
- Union of Jewish Women, 499
- Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 561
- Union of Sephardic Congregations, 562
- Union of South Africa, 494
- Union Sionista de Cuba, 664
- United Company of East Indies, 554
- United Hebrew Trades, 594
- United Israel Appeal, 643
- United Jewish Appeal (UJA), 643
- United Jewish Communities (UJC), 643
- United Jewish Communities  
 Argentinean Jewish Relief, 714
- United Kingdom, 922–930  
 anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and community existential problems, 928–929  
 contemporary overview, 927–929  
 culture, science, and the humanities, 927  
 demographic movement and emigration, 929  
 demography, 927  
 general population, 922  
 historical overview, 922–927  
 industries, trades, and professions, 927  
 Jewish education, religious denominations, and communal and political institutions, 927–929  
 Jewish population in, 922  
 languages spoken, 922  
 migration routes and ethnic backgrounds, 922
- United Nations (UN), 118–119  
 High Commission for Refugees, 120  
 Special Committee on Palestine, 667
- United Sisterhood of the Progressive Jewish movement, 499
- United States. *See also* America  
 American Judaism, women, and egalitarianism, 271–274  
 contemporary Jewish music in, 225–229  
 history of Habad movement in, 602–607  
 immigration quotas, 113  
 Jewish music, 213–214  
 native racism, 238  
 plans for rescuing Jews, 114  
 Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jews in, 560–563  
 War Refugee Board in, 115
- University-based kollels, 428
- Urban II, 841
- Urhobo, 493
- Uris, Leon, 242
- Urofsky, Melvin, 636
- Uruguay, Jews in, 690, 691, 741–745
- Usher's syndrome (US), 286
- Usque, Abraão, 876, 877
- Usque, Samuel, 875, 876, 877
- Uzan, Rafael, 512
- Uzbekistan, 84, 1149–1154
- Uziel, Benzion, 423
- Vaad ha-Hatzala, 599
- Vaàdiyaevs family, 1126
- Vagenstein, Anjel, 961, 966
- Vagenstein, Grisha, 966
- Vagenstein, Roni, 966
- Vaiphei, Khaikhopau, 1219
- Vaisberg, Abraham, 733
- Vaksberg, Tatiana, 967
- Valensi, Lucette, 513
- Valentin, Hugo, 1055, 1090
- Valerius Maximus, 66
- Valobra, Lelio Vittorio, 1005
- Vancouver, Canada, 549, 551
- Van Creveld, S. J., 1237
- Van Geldern, Simon, 352
- Vanni, Sam, 1074
- Van Praagh, Joe, 520
- Van Staveren, Hermann, 537, 544
- Varaskin, Amnepodist, 1139
- Varman, Bhaskara Ravi, 1205, 1206
- Varoprakar, Devawongse, 1233, 1253
- Varzhapetian, Rimma, 1106
- Vatican II, 634
- Veil, Simone, 830
- Venclova, Tomas, 1049
- Venezuela, Jews in, 690, 694, 745–750
- Venizelos, Greek Premier, 366–367
- Verbitsky, Bernardo, 697–698
- Verbitsky, Horacio, 698
- Vernadsky, G., 1098
- Versano, Simon, 967
- Veseli, Refik, 945
- Vespucci, Amerigo, 352
- Vichy government, France, 455, 483
- Victoria, Australia, 521
- Victoria, British Columbia, 549
- Vidal, Leon, 367
- Vienna, Austria, 98, 301–302  
 overrepresentation of Jews in Gymnasien, 809–811
- Vigodski, Dr., 1048
- Vilhjalmsson, Dr., 1081
- Vilnius (Lithuania) as Jewish city, 1046–1049
- Viñas, David, 699
- Virgin Islands  
 Danish, 671  
 Jews in, 661–662
- Vital, Hayyim, 35, 317, 776
- Vitautas, Grand Duke, 946, 1008
- Vladigerov, Pancho, 966
- Vogel, Julius, 535, 536, 542
- Vogt, Carl, 51
- Voice of Jacob*, 527
- Voinovich, Vladimir, 1144
- Voldarsky, Alexander, 1138
- Volitzer, Eva, 964, 967
- Vologeses I, King, 1111
- Volozhin, Chaim, 947
- Voltaire, 96, 105
- Voluntarias Judeo Mexicanas, 679
- Volunteering in Diaspora, 342–343
- Von Arnstein, Fanny, 262
- Votes-for-Women-Club, San Francisco, CA, 564
- Vytautas, Prince, 1034
- Wad Madani, Sudan, 506
- Wagner, Richard, 60, 105–106
- Wahl, Shaul, 947
- Wahnon de Carvalho Veiga, Carlos Alberto, 459
- Waisman, David, 734
- Waithayakorn, Wan, 1234, 1253
- Waksman, Selman, 300
- Wald, Salomon, 1167
- Waldman, Marilyn R., 151
- Waldmann, Alex, 137
- Wallenberg, Raoul, 601, 974
- Wansbrough, John, 152, 153
- Ward, Vincent, 544
- Wardi, Rafael, 1074
- Warner, Harry, 240
- Warner, Jack, 240
- Warner, W. Lloyd, 609
- War Refugee Board, 601
- Washington, George, 198
- Waskow, Arthur, 405, 406, 626
- Wassermann, Jakob, 45
- Wasserstein, Bernard, 112
- Wasserstrom, Steven, 153
- Watchtower Tract Society, 633
- Waten, Judah, 524
- Wattadis, 482

- Webe, Debtera Beroo, 469  
 Weber, Max, 930  
 Wedemeyer, Albert C., 1170  
 Weh-Ardašir, 764  
 Wei, Qu, 1185  
 Weidman, Jerome, 246  
 Weiler, Moses Cyrus, 498  
 Weill, Rosie, 1189  
 Weinberger, Moses, 608  
 Weiner, Lazar, 213  
 Weininger, Otto, 58–59, 107  
 Weinreich, Max, 193, 1043, 1048  
 Weinreich, Uriel, 1038  
 Weinstein, Garri, 1117  
 Weinueke (Scandinavia), 1060–1061  
 Weinzierl, Erica, 808  
 Weisenfreund, Muni, 213, 242  
 Weiss, Ruth, 1169  
 Weisskopf, F. C., 970  
 Weissmandel, Michael Dov, 115  
 Weiss-Rosmarin, Trude, 622  
 Weizmann, Chaim, 344, 637, 638, 919, 925, 937, 950, 1234  
 Welensky, Roy, 517, 519  
 Wellington, New Zealand, 535, 538–539, 541  
 Wellington Fire Brigade, New Zealand, 537  
 Wellington Jewish Social Club, New Zealand, 537  
 Wenceslas, Emperor, 968  
 Werfel, Franz, 45, 970  
 Wergeland, Henrik, 1083  
 Wessely, Naphtali Herz, 322  
 West Africa, migrations of Jews into, 453–454  
 Western democracies and Holocaust, 112–115  
 Western Diaspora, 11–16  
 Western Europe  
 Austria, 805–808  
 Belgium, 812–815  
 British chief rabbinate, 933–936  
 Europe, 801–804  
 France, 820–832  
 Germany, 840–848  
 Gibraltar, 848–855  
 Greece, 855–857  
 Holocaust Art in Belgium, 815–820  
 influence of British Jewry on world Jewry, 936–937  
 Italy, 865–870  
 Jewish commerce in Salonica, 860–864  
 Jewish day school education in French-speaking Europe, 832–834  
 Jewish identity in French literature and society in the 20th century, 835–840  
 Jewish wealth in Britain, 930–933  
 Jews and Jewish communities in medieval Spain, 905–913  
 Jews and Muslims in medieval Spain, 913–916  
 Jews of Island of Rhodes, 857–860  
 Luxembourg, 883–886  
 Malta, 886–887  
 Milan (1535–1597), 870–874  
 Minorca (18th century), 916–918  
 Netherlands, 887–892  
 Portugal, 892–895  
 Portuguese Jews: Italy and beyond, 875–883  
 Scotland, 895–900  
 Spain, 900–904  
 Switzerland, 918–922  
 United Kingdom, 922–930  
 Vienna's Gymnasien, 809–811  
 Western literature, 110  
 Western Sephardi migration routes, 361–364  
 West India Company, 553  
 Wex, Michael, 198  
 White, Charles W., 1162  
 White, Thomas W., 522  
 White, William Charles, 1156  
 Wicht, Luang, 1251  
 Wiesel, Elie, 247, 838  
 Wieviorka, Annette, 838  
 Wieviorka, Wolf, 836, 838  
 Wigner, Eugene, 975  
 Wilder, Gene, 246  
 Willemstad, 654  
 William of Norwich, 923  
 William of Rubruck, 1095  
 Williams, Thomas, 540  
 William the Martyr, St., 96  
 Willoughby, Francis Lord, 653  
 Willoughby, Henry, 652  
 Wilowsky, Jacob David, 608  
 Wilson, Woodrow, 338  
 Winder, Ludwig, 970  
 Windhoek, Namibia, 491  
 Windsor Proclamation, 658  
 Winestone, Belle Fligelman, 564  
 Winnipeg, Canada, 549, 552  
 Winter, Jean Pierre, 165  
 Winter, Mendel, 732  
 Winter, Samuel, 732  
 Winters, Shelley, 242  
 Wise, Isaac Mayer, 334–335, 568  
 Wise, Stephen S., 597–598, 600  
 Wise, Steven, 344  
*Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 630  
 Wissmann, H. von, 799  
 Witold the Great, 1041  
 Witsen, Nicolaas, 1095  
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 42, 301  
 Wohltach, Helmut, 1238  
 Wolf, Adolph Grant, 665  
 Wolf, Lucien, 337  
 Wolfenson, Alex, 734  
 Wolfenson, Moisés, 731, 734  
 Wolff, A. A., 1068  
 Wolff, Egon, 557  
 Wolff, Freida, 557  
 Wolff, Joseph, 1125, 1146, 1149  
 Wolffsohn, Solly, 668  
 Wolfgang Rosenberg, 543  
 Wolfskehl, Karl, 46, 47, 543  
 Wolfsohn, David, 1038  
 Wolfson, Harry, 595  
 Wolfson, Isaac, Sir, 932  
 Wolsey, Louis, 339  
 Women  
 in Central and Western Europe, 254  
 in Central Europe, 260–263  
 in early American West, 563–565  
 in Imperial Germany, 264–267  
 role of, 251–255  
 Sephardi, 255–260  
 in Yemen, 267–271  
 Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), 476, 525, 540, 641, 664, 668, 669, 672, 679, 681, 749  
 Workingmen's Circle, 594  
 Workmen's Circle, 593, 594  
 World Jewish College, 749  
 World Jewish Congress, 120 (photo), 483–484, 706  
 World Jewish population, by official language (1931–2005), 397 (table)  
 World Jewry, influence of British Jewry on, 936–937  
 World ORT, 714  
 World Sephardic Federation, 505  
 World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), 501  
 World War II  
 Jews in Algeria in, 457  
 Tunisia and, 511  
 World Zionist Organization, 636  
 Wortman, Daniella Azria, 512  
 Wouk, Herman, 246  
 Wulfsohn, Harry, 517  
 Wunderbar, Reuben, 1029  
 Wurttemberg, Duke of, 841  
 Wyman, David S., 112  
 Wynberg synagogue (Cape Town), bombing of, 501  
 Xerxes, 767  
 Xiangru, Zhao, 1158  
 Xorenac'i, Movses, 1104, 1108, 1109, 1110, 1111, 1112  
 Yaacov Ibn Haviv, 776  
 Yaavets, Yosef, 317  
 Yaffo, Libya, 481  
 Yagiello, Alexander, 1034  
 Yagodeev, Abraham, 1152  
 Yahudu, 759–760  
 Yahya Kafih, 798  
 Yaker, Moico, 733

- Yakoviyim, 781  
 Yarim, 799  
 Yavani, Moshe, 955  
 Yazid, Muley, 483, 488, 490  
 Yehiel, Asher b., 905, 909  
 Yehizqiyahu, King, 1100  
 Yehudah Israel, Hayyim, 858  
 Yehudah Israel, Rahamim Hayyim, 858  
 Yemen, Jews in, 267–271, 793–799  
 Ye'or, Bat, 115  
 Yeshiva, 620  
 Yeshiva College, 530, 608  
 Yeshiva Naveh Shalom-Ozar Hatorah, Tripoli, 480  
 Yeshua, 137–138, 146–148  
 Yew, Lee Kuan, 1249  
 Yeziarska, Anzia, 236  
 Yibir (or Hebrew) tribe, 451  
 Yiddish, 129, 167–170, 172, 190  
   abandoning in Germany, 192  
   Ashkenasi songs, 210–211  
   bilingual Germano-Slavic southeast Germany, 189  
   Diaspora language and its future, 193–197  
   distinctive from Gentile forms of language, 173  
   as distinctive language, 176  
   geographically separated from German, 176  
   grammar and phonology, 186  
   Hasidim, 196  
   High German origin, 186  
   integration into English, 197–199  
   Jewish culture and, 177  
   Judeo-French and Judeo-Italian components, 188  
   Judeo-Romance components, 188  
   literature, 178  
   modern Hebrew based on, 201  
   official language of Diamond exchange, 813  
   perspective on, 187–191  
   predicting lexical elements used, 186  
   relexification, 184  
   Saul Bellow and, 245  
   Slavicization of, 186  
   songs in, 227  
   southwestern German dialects, 186  
   special metaphysical status, 176  
   standardizing, 192  
   two-tiered relexification in, 184–187  
 Yiddishe Shule, 684  
 Yiddish-German irony, 191–193  
 Yiddish-language materials, 235–236  
 Yisha, Wang, 1158  
 Yishuv, 774  
 Yisroel, Adass, 530  
 Yisroel, Adath, 529–530  
 Yitzhak, Menguistu, 469  
 Yitzhak, Yosef, 430, 436, 442  
 Yitzhak Shalom zt'l, 616  
 Yitzhak the Blind, 316  
 Yoelson, Asa, 1037  
 Yohannes I, 469  
 Yom Kippur, 551  
 Yom Kippur War (1973), 477, 630, 749  
 Yom Tov Semach, 797  
 Yoruba, 451  
 Yosef, Ovadiah, 470  
 Yosef ben Shlomo, 464  
 Youde, Fu, 1159, 1182  
 Young Judea, Puerto Rico, 665  
 Young Men's Hebrew Association, 671  
 Young Turks, 786, 789, 790  
 Youth Aliyah, 599, 638  
 Youth movements in Diaspora, 341–342  
 Ysrael de Piza, Abram, 556  
 Yudakov, Suleiman, 1144  
 Yukiévich, Saúl, 709  
 Yushchenko, Viktor, 1015  
 Yutar, Percy, 499  
  
 Zable, Arnold, 524  
 Zacker, John, 137  
 Zacuto, Abraham ben Samuel, 352, 495–496  
 Zadkine, Ossip, 836  
 Zaharia, Mayer, 733  
 Zai-Ul-Hak, 1229  
 Zaks, Offer, 748  
 Zalman, R'Shneur, 998  
 Zalman, Shneur, 604, 947, 1043  
 Zambia, Jews in, 516–517  
 Zamra, David ibn, 35  
 Zangwill, Israel, 238  
 Zaphenath-paneah. *See* Joseph  
 Zebulun, tribe of, 79, 82, 84  
 Zecharia, Isaac, 527–528  
 Zechariah, 2  
 Zechariah al-Dahir, 798  
 Zedekiah, 4  
 Zedong, Mao, 1182  
 Zeldovich, Yakov, 949  
 Zera, 7  
 Zera Israel, 471  
 Zerner, Elizabeth, 1252  
 Zerubbabel, 2  
 Zhijun, Wang, 1184  
 Zhirinovskiy, Vladimir, 994  
 Zhitlowsky, Chaim, 335, 595  
 Zidowski, 167  
 Zilkha family, 356  
 Zimbabwe, Jews in, 518–520  
 Zimbabwe African National Union, 519  
 Zimbabwe African People's Union, 519  
 Zimbabwe Jewish Board of Deputies, 519, 520  
 Zimmels, H.J., 26  
 Zimmerman, Professor, 348  
 Zion, 379–381  
 Zion, Amde, 468  
 Zionism, 45, 479, 484, 486, 664, 741, 753–754, 771–774, 773  
   in Australia, 522  
   Christian attitudes toward, 130–131  
   growth of, 75  
   Israeli presence in Thailand, 1253–1254  
   opposition to, 333–340  
   Philippines and ties with Israel, 1246  
   in the 20th century, 384  
   UN resolution equating with racism, 119  
   youth movements in, 499  
 Zionist Council, 518  
 Zionist Federation of Australia, 522, 523, 525  
 Zionist kollels, international network of, 427–429  
 Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), 636–637, 641  
 Zipes, Jack, 44  
 Zirads, 456  
 Zisels, J., 1013  
 Zlotowitz, Meir, 611  
 Znaimer, Moses, 550  
 Zog I, King, 943, 944  
 Zohn, Rabbi, 1252  
 Zola, Emile, 826  
 Zöllner, Louis, 1078  
 Zorin, Shalom, 948  
 Zuckerman, C., 1098  
 Zuckor, Adolph, 239  
 Zukas, Simon, 517  
 Zunz, Leopold, 25, 50, 230  
 Zuwa, Juwa, 454  
 Zuwa Alayman, 454  
 Zviagils'kyi, E., 1013  
 Zweig, Arnold, 43, 45, 47  
 Zweig, Stephan, 45–47  
 Zwiebach, Barton, 733  
 Zwillich, Herman, 733, 736  
 Zygmunt I, King, 983, 1008  
 Zygmunt III, King, 1009  
 Zyskowicz, Ben, 1073, 1074



# About the Editor

**M. Avrum Ehrlich** is a full professor of Judaic studies at the School of Philosophy and Sociology, the Department of Religion, and the Centre of Judaic and Inter-Religious Studies of Shandong University, a government-funded national center for interreligious research in Jinan, the People's Republic of China.

Ehrlich is a theologian, social philosopher, and scholar of classic Jewish texts who is also involved in training Chinese scholars to understand and translate Jewish concepts and classics into Chinese. He teaches text-based courses, including Philosophy of the Hebrew Scriptures, Introductory Studies in Halakha and Talmud, and Readings in Jewish Mysticism.

Ehrlich's research interests include Jewish leadership and transgenerational transfer of authority and ideas, the governing mechanics of religions, and messianism in Judaism and Christianity. His interest in sectarian Jewish and Judaizing groups extends to Chinese thought and religion. He is author of a number of books, including *The Jewish Chinese Nexus* (Routledge, 2008), *Jews and Judaism in Modern China* (Routledge, 2008), and *Negotiating Minority Religious Identities in Asia* (to be published by Brill in 2009). In addition, his earlier works include two books on Hasidic leadership, as well as articles on Jewish mysticism and religious sectarianism, biblical commentaries, and works on ethics and politics.

Born in Sydney, Australia, Ehrlich moved to Israel at age 16 to pursue Talmudic studies in a variety of yeshivas, including Yeshivat Ezion in Alon Shvut, Yehivat Nir in Kiryat Arba, and Yeshivat Tomchei Temimim and Lubavitch at Kfar Chabad, where he was ordained a rabbi. He also studied at the Hartman Institute for Advanced Talmudics in Jerusalem and began his studies in *dayanut* at the Rumpler Beit Midrash (associated with Satmar Hasidism) and other institutes of focused theological and Talmudic study.

Ehrlich read Jewish philosophy and political science at Bar Ilan University and completed his doctorate on leadership strategies of Hasidic masters at the University of Sydney. He was awarded a Krytman scholarship to conduct research at the Cambridge-based Centre of Jewish-Christian Relations and was awarded a Chevening and British Commonwealth Scholarship to undertake research on religion, law, and government at the University of Cambridge's Department of Social and Political Sciences and later at the Centre for Advanced Religious and Theological Studies. He was a visiting fellow at Clare Hall Cambridge and remains a life member.

Ehrlich is an honorary vice president for special projects at Shandong Yingcai University, Shandong Province, China, and an honorary professor in the Department of Hebrew, Biblical, and Jewish Studies in the School of Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, Sydney University, Australia. He shares his time between China, Australia, and Israel and travels the United States and Europe on lecture tours and conferences.