

worlds. We know that conversions took place because there are reports of them and because rabbinic law contains a very detailed set of procedures for accepting converts. Still, there is no evidence of any active mission to convert gentiles.

Perhaps it was the need to live as members of a minority, as guests in foreign nations, that dampened the Jewish urge to proselytize, since any effort to convert the children of the host country would surely have been seen as hostile. Indeed, proselytizing activity in medieval Christian and Islamic lands was punishable by death. In such a climate, active missionary work was necessarily curtailed. Nevertheless, Jews since ancient times have been willing to receive converts who truly desire to join the Jewish people.

Rabbinic Judaism came to specify three conditions for conversion: male circumcision, ritual immersion (or baptism), and acceptance of the commandments. There are many stories of conversion in the rabbinic literature. The rabbis took care to ensure that candidates for conversion were sincere, for insincerity would endanger the community. They verified that converts were willing to cast their lot with this unfortunate and endangered people. With a 'yes' answer to all questions, one was accepted. Usually conversions involved a period of training in the specific responsibilities of an adult Jew.

When a male student is ready, the ceremony of circumcision is performed. Even a man who has already been circumcised must undergo a symbolic shedding of blood. Perhaps the difficulties surrounding this operation have contributed to the fact that conversion has been more common among women than men.

The next requirement is baptism by total bodily immersion. Orthodox Jews, who still rely on ritual immersion for a variety of purifying purposes, build special facilities for the purpose. Men and women visit these baths (*mikvehs*) separately at specific times during the week. When converts begin their new life, the first ritual immersion they

undergo symbolizes the purification required for the transition from gentile to Jewish life. Every *mikveh* must contain a certain amount of 'living water' from streams or rainfall.

When a convert enters a *mikveh*, a court of three rabbis is usually convened at the site. The rabbis question the candidate, from behind a curtain if she is a woman. They ask about the convert's willingness to perform Jewish rites and responsibilities. They also allow the convert to demonstrate the knowledge he or she has learned from instruction. Then the candidate submerges him- or herself completely in the *mikveh* several times and on coming up is a Jew in every respect. Converts are named as the son or daughter of Abraham and are given complete Jewish names, indistinguishable from those of other Jews.

Once one has joined the people Israel—whether by birth or by conversion—it is impossible to leave. Jews may reject Judaism or convert to a different faith, but they can never change their Jewish identity.

✿ INTERACTION AND ADAPTATION

Judaism and Modernity

Both the Sabbatian movement and Hasidism may be seen as reform movements within Judaism that emerged in the early modern era. Another early move towards reform may be seen in the writings of the seventeenth-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Living in the Netherlands, where Jews had achieved a relatively free and equal life under the tolerant Dutch regime, Spinoza challenged many of the traditional tenets of both Judaism and Christianity.

A more far-reaching desire to reform Judaism, however, developed as Jews came into closer contact with European life. For Jews, the real

opportunity to join European society began in the Napoleonic period (1799–1815), when the ideals of the French Revolution—*liberté, égalité, fraternité*—spread throughout Europe. Before this time, Jews in Europe had been living in various degrees of isolation from their host societies, concentrated in enclaves that in some cases were legally separate entities. From the sixteenth century on, such districts came to be known as ‘ghettos’, after the local name of the Jewish quarter in Venice. Now, as the nineteenth century opened, Jews were swept into the political and cultural unrest sparked by the French Revolution, especially in western Europe.

The Reform Movement

Reform Judaism arose with the belief that Jewish life should parallel that of modern Europe. Many Jews who left the ghetto simply disappeared into European society and converted to Christianity. Others, however, wanted to reform Judaism in such a way that it could have a continuing part in modern European life. This movement reached its most significant form in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The first and most influential reformer, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), whose ideas preceded the French Revolution, may be seen as the father of modern Orthodoxy as well as Reform Judaism, because his formula for the relationship between Jewish identity and European nationality became the model almost everywhere. Mendelssohn was born in a ghetto in Dessau, Germany, and educated in traditional Judaism both at home and in Berlin. While in Berlin, however, he also studied German language and philosophy, and he brought those skills to the translation of the Pentateuch and *Psalms*. He also attracted the attention and friendship of many prominent German intellectuals, including Gotthold Lessing; the character Nathan in Lessing’s play *Nathan the Wise* is widely believed to be based on Mendelssohn.

In his treatise *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn argued that the Jews of Germany should absorb as much as possible of German culture, and should enjoy

the same kind of intellectual freedoms that other Germans did. This would in no way affect the essence of Judaism, which Mendelssohn argued was a religion of reason combined with a revealed law. Separating his Jewishness from his personhood, he argued that Judaism was a religion, not a nationality or an ethnicity, and that Jews could be Germans in exactly the same way that Protestants and Catholics were Germans. That argument, of course, depended on the host country’s acquiescence. Progress towards toleration and equal rights for German Jews took roughly a century, sometimes helped and sometimes hindered by the lack of a single German political state. And in the twentieth century, Jewish participation in German nationality was rescinded by Hitler, who decided that German nationality should reflect his own misguided racial theories.

There was also a nagging question within the Jewish community: did Jews really want to give up their rights as a semi-autonomous people within Europe? A great many rabbis rightly suspected that emancipation—full participation in German society—would pose a new threat to Jewish survival. In 1807 Napoleon called for an assembly of Jewish rabbis and laymen, modeled on the ancient Sanhedrin, to determine whether the Jews of France were truly committed to French citizenship. The delegates’ answers suggested that they wanted the privileges of French nationality, which was what the French state wanted as well. But, as the rabbis had feared, growing freedom brought both increasing dilution of Jewish life and growing numbers of defections to Christianity.

One response to these threats was to pursue religious reform. Mendelssohn himself, in the previous generation, had remained a traditional Jew in all his household observances while conducting himself in public no differently from any other German. But the prospect of such a double life did not appeal to the next generation. Mendelssohn’s son Abraham converted to Christianity before his own son Felix Mendelssohn, the great Romantic pianist and composer, reached adulthood.

The Reform movement, which was centred in Germany, sought to minimize the temptations of conversion by creating a new kind of Jewish religious life, more in tune with the times, that came to be known as Reform or (in Britain) Liberal Judaism. They reformed synagogue services to resemble church services, introducing Western musical instruments as well as vernacular prayers and sermons, and cut out numerous repetitions. They even experimented with changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, though most Reform congregations eventually went back to the traditional Friday night and Saturday morning Sabbath observance. Reformers adopted Western dress, and treated traditional Jewish dietary and

purity observances as personal or congregational decisions rather than immutable laws.

Taken to North America by German Jews who settled there in the mid-nineteenth century, Reform Judaism continued to modernize and imbibe the intellectual assumptions of the time. The emphasis on freedom of religion and equality of opportunity in North America, however imperfectly those principles were put into practice, served as a great support for reforming Judaism. Inherent in Reform Judaism and characteristic of North America especially is a philosophical preference for ethics over ritual. Emphasizing the moral value of the commandments, it sees ethical behaviour as the essence of Judaism and tends to regard

From American Reform Platforms, 1885 and 1937

For Reform Judaism, reformation is a continuous process. Therefore Reform Jews periodically meet to consider whether their positions and practices need adjusting to meet new needs. The following 'Platforms'—short statements of current positions—show the evolution of Reform beliefs and practices in the United States between 1885 and 1937. Of course, in keeping with the Reform ethos, they are suggestions rather than dictates.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1885

We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite One, and in every mode, source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended amid continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

Columbus, Ohio, 1937

In view of the changes that have taken place in the modern world and the consequent need of stating anew the teaching of Reform Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis makes the following declaration of principles. It presents them not as a fixed creed but as a guide for the progressive elements of Jewry.

Judaism is the historical religious experience of the Jewish people [and] . . . its message is universal, aiming at the union and perfection of mankind under the sovereignty of God. Reform Judaism recognizes . . . progressive development in religion and consciously applies this principle to spiritual as well as to cultural and social life. . . (Alexander 1984: 137, 138).

hunting, angry spirits,
phenomena, animals

male

phy, mystics

Krishna, Amida,

various traditions, customs, and ceremonies as non-essential artifacts of a particular historic context, not necessarily eternally valid.

The Reform movement's emphasis on the present rather than the past was clearly in the principles set out at a meeting of American Reform rabbis in Pittsburgh in 1885:

- The Bible reflects primitive ideas of its own age, clothing conceptions of divine Providence in miraculous narratives.
- The laws regulating diet, priestly purity, and dress do not conduce to holiness and obstruct modern spiritual elevation.
- We are no longer a nation but a spiritual community and therefore expect no return to Palestine.

Conservative Judaism

Another approach to reform Judaism called itself the *Jüdische Wissenschaft* ('science of Judaism'). It was founded in Germany in 1819 by Leopold Zunz and enlisted scholars like Abraham Geiger and Zecharias Frankel. Instead of actively promoting change, these men preferred to look at the tradition in question to see if its retention could be justified. Frankel, for instance, argued that there were legal and aesthetic grounds for retaining some of the ancient rituals. Unlike some of his colleagues, he was not embarrassed by them.

These scholars were in the forefront of the movement that came to be known in North America as Conservative Judaism. At first the two reform movements were separated primarily by taste and style, but in 1889 the reformers met in Cincinnati at a banquet where the menu included shrimp, which was biblically forbidden to Jews. Those who stayed and ate became identified with the American Reform movement, while those who refused coalesced into the American Conservative movement.

Conservative Judaism takes an intermediate position between Reform and Orthodoxy. If a particular custom can be shown to be fairly recent

or secondary, then there is a precedent for further changing or even eliminating it. Since the black caftans worn by Hasidic Jews did not become customary until the fifteenth century or later, they are not obligatory. On the other hand, the order of prayers in the Jewish service goes back at least as far as the first-century Temple service and therefore is seen as firmly established by Jewish law. Hence most Conservative synagogues pray largely, though not entirely, in Hebrew and keep the traditional order of Jewish service.

Nevertheless, some aspects of the liturgy have been modified in response to changing social realities. Thus many expressions that reflect patriarchal assumptions have been changed or eliminated, and most Conservative congregations in the United States and Canada now seat men and women together, allow women to participate in the services as freely as men, and train women to lead worship as cantors and rabbis (as the Reform movement has been doing for decades). Although most Conservative Jews are similar to Reform Jews in their practice, a small minority choose to live a life much closer to Orthodoxy.

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Judaism emphasizes the preservation of Jewish tradition. Although many Orthodox Jews in North America have adopted modern styles of dress, they still conduct services in Hebrew, observe Sabbath obligations based on the ancient rules found in the *Talmud*, insist on kosher meals, and maintain traditional distinctions in gender roles, reserving the leadership roles in worship and ritual exclusively for males.

At the same time the Orthodox have to live in the modern world. While they have rejected reform programs and the Conservative *Jüdische Wissenschaft* as betrayals of authentic Judaism, they have tried to find a modern idiom for the preservation of their traditions. Among the most effective spokespersons for this perspective in the nineteenth century was Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. Instead of merely condemning the

From S.R. Hirsch, 'The Dangers of Updating Judaism'

But, above all, what kind of Judaism would that be, if we were allowed to bring it up to date? If the Jew were actually permitted at any given time to bring his Judaism up to date, then he would no longer have any need for it; it would no longer be worthwhile speaking of Judaism. We would take Judaism and throw it out among the other ancient products of delusion and absurdity, and say no more about Judaism and the Jewish religion!

If the Bible is to be for me the word of God, and Judaism and the Jewish law the revealed will of God, am I to be allowed to take my stand on the highway of the ages and the lands and ask every mortal pilgrim on earth for his opinions, born as they are between dream and waking, between error and truth, in order to submit the word of the living God to his approval, in order to mould it to suit his passing whim? And am I to say: 'See here modern, purified Judaism! Here we have the word of the living God, refined, approved and purified by men!' (Grunfeld 1956, 2: 215-6).

reformers, he outlined a positive program for modern Orthodoxy. Essentially he gave credence to the modern world as well as the traditional sources of Jewish identity, calling for both Torah (in the sense of 'Jewish religious truth') and *Derekh Eretz* (literally 'the way of the land'; in this context, European life).

Living in a separate community in the German city of Frankfurt-am-Main, Hirsch maintained that Jews should enjoy many of the advantages of modern European life, but that some separation from that was necessary for Jewish survival. The traditional rituals and observances were the tried-and-true ways of educating a person who is both a good person and a good Jew—a *Yisroel Mensch* ('a humane member of Israel'), as he expressed it. His balanced view of the role of tradition and modernity in a general way set the pattern for the modern Orthodox movement as a whole.

Politically, Israel today is a modern, Western-style democracy. Yet its religious life is officially Orthodox. Even though the principal political parties are secular in their ideology, none of them has been able to hold power for long without the help of one or more of the small ultra-traditionalist religious parties. As the price of its vote, each

religious party demands that it be the only spokesperson for Judaism in Israel, and each makes a number of religious demands on the national life of the country. Thus matters such as marriage and divorce are controlled exclusively by the Orthodox communities. This arrangement continues the practice of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which ruled Jerusalem for four centuries, from 1517 to 1917, and gave each religio-ethnic community some jurisdiction over personal law.

In North America many individual members of the Reform and Conservative communities are virtually indistinguishable from one another in terms of practice. Where these movements differ is not so much in doctrinal belief as in their attitudes towards accommodation to the host culture. The most significant indicators of a North American congregation's orientation are usually its prayer book, service, and the particular national organization to which it sends its congregational dues.

Twentieth-Century Theology

Historically, periods of acculturation and assimilation have tended to stimulate Jewish theological and philosophical inquiry. In the twentieth century,

as in the heyday of Arab-Jewish co-operation in Muslim Spain, Judaism once again entered a period of rich theological expression.

The life of Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) is a good example of the kinds of forces that helped to promote Jewish philosophical speculation in Europe and North America. His family—cultured, affluent, and assimilated, without any deep religious commitments—wanted Rosenzweig to become a physician. Instead he embarked on a career in philosophy, and at a crucial point decided that he could be the kind of liberal Christian described by the philosopher G.W.F. Hegel. His path took a new direction, however, following a conversation with a distant relative who had already converted. Rosenzweig decided that if he were going to convert, he should do so ‘not as a pagan but a Jew’. To that end he set out to deepen his understanding of Judaism. After attending a Yom Kippur service in a small Orthodox synagogue in Berlin, he decided that Judaism was preferable to Christianity because Jews were already with ‘the Father’ and therefore had no need to apply to ‘the Son’ for mediation.

Drafted into the German army in the First World War, he wrote his first and most systematic work, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (‘The Star of Redemption’) on postcards to his mother. In it he maintains an incipiently existentialist stance, declaring all truth to be subjective. Arguing that both Judaism and Christianity are true in the subjective sense, he maintains that each has a particular role to play in the world. By constantly projecting the purposes of God into the world, the politically powerful countries of Christendom are constantly helping to convert and transform it. Jews, on the other hand, he characterizes as politically powerless but clear-sighted in their ritual and liturgical concerns. They are in eternal communication with God through the eternally repeated rituals of Judaism and the *halakha*, the Jewish law. (Like many Europeans of the early twentieth century, Rosenzweig left Islam out of the equation because the Ottoman regime was perceived to be politically

powerless. Nor did he ever systematically address the great Asian faiths.)

For Rosenzweig, the Jew’s covenant with God is eternal and timeless because the rules governing Jewish life have served to insulate Judaism and prevent the dilution of its spiritual power. Christianity, by contrast, has had the job of bringing the word of God to other nations. It enjoys the benefits of its engagement with world, but also risks the diminution and dilution that Judaism has avoided.

Tragically, Rosenzweig developed amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease) in the early 1920s and for several years before his death was completely paralyzed, able to communicate only through his wife. A circle of admirers formed a prayer group around him. His personal courage and his understanding of the value of traditional Judaism from the perspective of modern liberal, secular thought attracted a following across the broad spectrum of modern Judaism. On the other hand, his concept of Judaism as standing outside of history, one with the Father eternally, can no longer be sustained in a literal sense: since the Holocaust and the formation of the modern state of Israel, Jews have fully re-entered history.

Rosenzweig’s emphasis on his own personal experience and his exclusive focus on Judaism and Christianity have limited the relevance of his work. A more influential religious existentialist, whose theological work has been more significant to religious people everywhere, Jewish and otherwise, is Martin Buber (1878–1965).

Buber was a student of Wilhelm Dilthey and Georg Simmel, two important nineteenth-century German intellectuals, but he also felt the influence of Hasidism through his family and especially his grandfather, Solomon Buber, who was a famous scholar of *midrash*. Buber and Rosenzweig were associates in *Das jüdische Lehrhaus* (‘The Jewish School’) in Frankfurt, co-translators of a German translation of the Bible, and close personal friends.

Buber published his most famous work, *Ich und Du* (translated as *I and Thou*), in 1923. Scrutinized,

admired, and critiqued by generations of religiously concerned thinkers within Judaism and outside it, this work is as much a poem as a treatise. In it Buber suggests that all human beings have two ways of relating to the world. Most of our interactions are functional, aimed at manipulation and control; these Buber describes as 'I-It experiences'. But there are also moments of epiphany, or 'I-Thou experiences', in which the divine presence and dialogue with God are felt.

Both kinds of experience can be had with either objects or persons. But for Buber, behind every I-Thou experience is the presence of God, the Eternal Thou, seeking dialogue. Thus the Bible (like any spiritual book) may record I-Thou experiences, but it cannot produce them in its readers: however carefully we study it, we are just as likely to have an I-Thou experience when examining a piece of mica as when studying the prophet Micah. In this respect Buber disagrees strongly with Rosenzweig, for whom the Bible was a unique source of religious truth. Buber's refusal to grant the Bible any special status as revelation has angered traditional Jews as much as it has pleased other intellectuals and scholars of Western religion.

Buber, unlike Rosenzweig, was forced to come to terms with the Holocaust, but because he was so close to its horrors he did not wish to dwell on them. Instead he proposed that God could sometimes hide his face—enter an eclipse, as he phrased it.

An ardent Zionist, Buber moved to Palestine in 1938, but his advocacy of a binational state, for Jews and Arabs equally, was widely criticized as overly idealistic. On the other hand, his mystical notion of dialogue as a spiritual exercise resonated in the Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist worlds. Non-Jewish thinkers with different conceptions of mystical experience sometimes object that he does not provide adequate support for his ideas, but Buber never seems to feel that such critiques were as significant as the recognition that the I-Thou experience exists, and that the divine can be found in the details of everyday life.

In the 1930s, a former Conservative rabbi named Mordecai Kaplan founded a movement known as Reconstructionism. Kaplan attempted to define Judaism as a religious civilization or, in today's terms, a religious culture. He felt that belief in God was important to the people's self-understanding, but was not in fact essential to the definition of the group. He thus translated references to the terms 'God' and 'Lord' with terms such as 'The Eternal'.

For many years, Reconstructionism was a kind of ideological position that attracted followers across the spectrum of North American Judaism. It became a separate entity only in the 1960s, with the founding of a Reconstructionist rabbinical seminary in Philadelphia. Today there are several Reconstructionist synagogues in North America, but they still represent only a very small segment of the community. Ideologically, many Jews who think of themselves as an ethnic group espouse Reconstructionist ideals but remain within a Reform or Conservative synagogue.

Zionism

It was in the mid-nineteenth century, when nationalism became a powerful cultural and political force in Europe, that Jews first began to explore the idea of leaving Europe and returning to their ancient homeland in the Near East. The idea of return was hardly new: medieval Jewish literature frequently evoked the sense of absence from the land of Israel; Yehuda Ha-Levi wrote poetically of his sadness to be in the West (Spain) when his heart was in the East; and the words of the Passover seder, 'next year in Jerusalem', attest to an ongoing spiritual longing for return, either now or in the messianic age. But the nineteenth century introduced several other currents that flowed together to give modern Zionism its impetus.

In the Bible, Zion is the name of a ridgetop in Jerusalem that is said to be God's dwelling place. Today, however, that place is known as the Temple Mount and what tourist guides call Mount Zion is

a hill just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. Even in antiquity the name Zion had broader connotations, including the land surrounding Jerusalem, the people, and their religio-political institutions. The modern movement to return to the ancient land of Israel, to found a nation there on the model of modern European nationalism, is called Zionism.

A significant factor in the emergence of Zionism was the revival of the Hebrew language. In the age of emerging nation-states, the importance of a common language was widely recognized by nationalist theorists. Many Ashkenazic Jews in central Europe spoke Yiddish, but it was not spoken by Jews everywhere and at the time was not considered to have a classical literature. The only language that all Jews had in common was Hebrew, which was still used extensively in prayer and for literary and intellectual purposes but otherwise rarely spoken.

One of the advocates of a Hebrew revival was a Lithuanian named Peretz Smolenskin, who settled in Vienna in 1868 but found himself out of step with the assimilationist spirit there. In *'Am 'Olam* ('Eternal People'), which he published in Hebrew in 1883, he argued that to remain a people, the Jews would have to develop practical as well as spiritual ties to Palestine. One immediate step they could take, which would at the same time serve to bind them to one another and to their tradition, was to speak Hebrew. Eliezer Ben Yehudah took on himself the job of creating a modern Hebrew vocabulary. His seventeen-volume dictionary of modern Hebrew was not completed until 1959—nearly forty years after his death.

Another common nineteenth-century current was the desire for political experimentation. Moses Hess was an early socialist thinker whose ideas had an influence on the thought of Karl Marx. In 1862, in his book *Rom und Jerusalem* ('Rome and Jerusalem'), he argued that the Jews as a people needed statehood and called on them to create a polity that would be a model of socialist principles for the world. In the first half of the twentieth

century, the collective agricultural settlement known as the *kibbutz* would become a hallmark of Zionist settlement in Palestine.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the desire for a haven from persecution was frequently expressed, but perhaps no more dramatically than by Leo Pinsker. Born in 1821 in the Russian part of Poland, Pinsker became a physician in the Ukrainian port of Odessa, where he took an active role in Jewish cultural affairs; in the 1860s he strongly advocated the translation of the Bible and the Jewish prayers into Russian. The pogrom (state-supported massacre of Jews) of 1871 challenged his faith in cultural assimilation, however, and in 1881 a more severe pogrom galvanized him into writing an anonymous pamphlet in German, *Auto-Emancipation* ('Self-Emancipation') addressed to Jews who lived to the west. Incisively, Pinsker contended that the Jews were not safe in the countries in which they lived as minorities. Cultural assimilation was not enough: the only safeguard of Jewish security and dignity would be a separate homeland.

The haven-from-persecution theme has been central to the modern Zionist movement. The principal founder of the movement was Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), a Viennese journalist who became committed to the goal of Jewish statehood in response to the Dreyfus Affair: the French political scandal in which a Jewish army officer named Alfred Dreyfus was convicted of treason in 1894 and two years later was found to have been framed. Although Herzl himself had grown up in an assimilated home, he came to believe that anti-Semitism was so entrenched in European society that the only way for Jews to have normal existence would be as a people in their own land and that they would have to have a political state or something approximating it. His Zionist ambitions were entirely secular and nationalistic; for a time Herzl and Pinsker even contemplated the idea of a Jewish national homeland somewhere other than in the land of biblical Israel.

In the twentieth century, although the Zionist movement coalesced around Herzl's leadership,

a number of alternative visions of Zionism were proposed. Asher Ginsberg, a Russian intellectual who wrote under the name Ahad Ha-'Am ('one of the people'), suggested that a Jewish national

homeland could be a spiritual centre not only for the Jewish people but for the world. For him, Jewish nationalism meant pride in the moral virtues that the Jewish people had always valued.

From Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (1896)

Herzl believed that anti-Semitism could not be eliminated: to be free of it, therefore, Jews needed a state of their own.

No one can deny the gravity of the situation of the Jews. Wherever they live in perceptible numbers, they are more or less persecuted. . . . Everything tends, in fact, to one and the same conclusion, which is clearly enunciated in that classic Berlin phrase: 'Juden Raus!' (Out with the Jews!)

I shall now put the Question in the briefest possible form: are we to 'get out' now and where to? . . . Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation; the rest we shall manage for ourselves.

The creation of a new State is neither ridiculous nor impossible. We have in our day witnessed the process in connection with nations which were not largely members of the middle class, but poorer, less educated, and consequently weaker than ourselves. The Governments of all countries scourged by Anti-Semitism will be keenly interested in assisting us to obtain the sovereignty we want. . . .

Argentina is one of the most fertile countries in the world, extends over a vast area, has a sparse population and a mild climate. The Argentine Republic would derive considerable profit from the cession of a portion of its territory to us. The present infiltration of Jews has certainly produced some discontent, and it would be necessary to enlighten the Republic on the intrinsic difference of our new movement.

Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvellous potency. If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finances of Turkey. We should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. We should as a neutral State remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence. The sanctuaries of Christendom would be safeguarded by assigning to them an extra-territorial status such as is well-known to the law of nations. We should form a guard of honor about these sanctuaries, answering for the fulfillment of this duty with our existence. This guard of honor would be the great symbol of the solution of the Jewish Question after eighteen centuries of Jewish suffering. . . .

It might further be said that we ought not to create new distinctions between people; we ought not to raise fresh barriers, we should rather make the old disappear. But men who think in this way are amiable visionaries; and the idea of a native land will still flourish when the dust of their bones will have vanished tracelessly in the winds. Universal brotherhood is not even a beautiful dream. Antagonism is essential to man's greatest efforts. But the Jews, once settled in their own State, would probably have no more enemies (Herzl 1946: 91-3, 95-6, 153).

He pointedly defined his concept of Jewish life against the concept of the *Übermensch* ('superior being') formulated by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Although Ahad Ha-'Am was not religious in the traditional sense of the word, he was spiritually attached to the people Israel in a romantic, nationalistic way.

Meanwhile, some Orthodox Jews believed that in the absence of the messiah, the Jews' return to Zion could not be legitimate. They refused to work for the creation of a modern state and, after it

came into being in 1948, they refused to acknowledge its existence. Many settled in Israel anyway because it housed many of the important sites of Jewish history and was the only asylum available to them after the Second World War. Even today there are some Orthodox Jews in Israel who live as if the state did not exist, although they accept its subsidies for household life and education.

Of course there are also religious Zionists who fully support the existence of a Jewish state. This movement has accounted for most of the

From Ahad Ha-'Am, 'The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem' (1897)

Ahad Ha-'Am felt that Jews should have their own place to live, but he was not as committed as Herzl to the creation of a Jewish state. Rather, he hoped to see the creation of a 'spiritual centre' from which Jewish culture and values could spread to the rest of the world.

The stream of modern culture, when it mingles with Judaism, destroys Judaism's defences from within, so that Judaism can no longer remain isolated and live a life apart. The spirit of our people strives for further development; it wants to absorb the basic elements of general culture which reach it from the outside world, to digest them and make them part of itself, as it has done in the past at different periods of our history. But the conditions of its life in exile are not conducive to this. In our time culture everywhere clothes itself in the national spirit of each people, and any alien who wants to participate in that culture must annihilate his individuality and be swallowed up by the dominant ethos. Hence Judaism in exile cannot develop its individuality in its own way. When it leaves the ghetto walls, it is in danger of losing its own essential life, or, at the very least, its national unity, of being split up into many kinds of Judaism, each with its different character and life, as there are countries where the Jews are dispersed. . . .

Judaism can, for the present, be content with little. It does not need an independent State, but only the creation in its native land of conditions favourable to its development: a fair-sized settlement of Jews working without hindrance in every branch of culture, from farming and handicrafts to science and literature. . . .

To sum up: Hibbat Ziyon [love of Zion], no less than 'Zionism', wants a Jewish State and believes in the possibility of founding a Jewish State in the future. But while 'Zionism' looks to the Jewish State to provide a remedy for poverty, as well as complete tranquility and national glory, Hibbat Ziyon knows that our State will not give us these things until 'universal righteousness sits enthroned and holds sway in the life of nations and states'. Hibbat Ziyon looks to a Jewish State to provide a 'secure refuge' for Judaism and a cultural bond to unite our nation. 'Zionism', therefore, begins its work with political propaganda; but Hibbat Ziyon begins with a national culture, because only through that culture and for its sake can a Jewish State be established in a way that will be acceptable and beneficial to the spirit of the Jewish people (Ahad Ha'am 1962: 89).

immigration to Israel from North America in recent decades, and religiously motivated Zionists are represented by several political parties in contemporary Israel.

But religion is by no means essential to the notion of Jewish peoplehood. Many Jews without any religious commitments still feel ethnically or nationally attached to Israel and consider its continued existence important to their Jewish identity.

Furthermore, many Reform Jews in Europe or North America who initially felt somewhat estranged from Zionism because they were completely at home in their own societies eventually came to accept many Zionist premises. Many North American Jews developed strong feelings for Israel at the time of the Six-Day War in 1967, for instance, perceiving it to be surrounded by hostile nations, and those feelings were strengthened in 1973, when the country was attacked on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Pro-Israel sentiment was somewhat weakened, however, following Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and opinion regarding its current policies in the West Bank and Gaza is sharply divided.

Judaism in the Americas

Assimilation and acculturation are two distinct social processes that help to account for the differences among Jews in their understanding of their Jewish identity. Assimilation assumes that incorporation into the mainstream necessarily entails a loss of previous identity. Acculturation, by contrast, assumes many possible outcomes of the encounter between two cultures, including the eventual rejection of parts or all of the new culture by the host society. Jews from different European countries have quite different understandings of their Jewish identities. The first wave of Jewish immigration to the Americas—mainly to South America, the Caribbean islands, and the United

assimilated long ago. The only traces of their presence are a few Jews with Spanish names like Costas and Seixas (some of whom are descendants of later Sephardic immigrants who had previously settled in places like England or the Netherlands) and a few synagogues, notably the famous Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, and the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue in Manhattan. German Jewish immigration began in the 1840s after the failure of liberal political reforms in Germany. It brought a number of Reform-influenced Jews who considered themselves Germans of the Mosaic persuasion—that is, German nationals who happened to be Jewish in religion. They settled mostly in the United States, often in the same areas where other German immigrants settled, especially the midwest. Unlike the latter, however, the Jewish immigrants tended to be pedlars and shopkeepers rather than farmers.

It was this wave of Jewish settlement in the Americas that produced the great German Jewish mercantile families of the late nineteenth century—families such as the Bambergers (who owned the Macy's department store, among others, and helped to found the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton) and the Guggenheims (American mining entrepreneurs who founded the Guggenheim Museum and the Guggenheim Fellowship). They brought with them many German customs, including what we know as the Christmas tree (*Tannenbaum*, 'fir tree'—a term with no religious connotation in German). Such customs were associated with nationality rather than religion in Germany because they were based on ancient pre-Christian traditions.

The next and largest wave of Jewish immigration to America arrived from eastern Europe, some from the *shtetlach* (or *shtetls*—Yiddish for 'little towns') and some from the Jewish quarters of the major cities. The 3 million Jews living in

immigration to Israel from North America in recent decades, and religiously motivated Zionists are represented by several political parties in contemporary Israel.

But religion is by no means essential to the notion of Jewish peoplehood. Many Jews without any religious commitments still feel ethnically or nationally attached to Israel and consider its continued existence important to their Jewish identity.

Furthermore, many Reform Jews in Europe or North America who initially felt somewhat estranged from Zionism because they were completely at home in their own societies eventually came to accept many Zionist premises. Many North American Jews developed strong feelings for Israel at the time of the Six-Day War in 1967, for instance, perceiving it to be surrounded by hostile nations, and those feelings were strengthened in 1973, when the country was attacked on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Pro-Israel sentiment was somewhat weakened, however, following Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and opinion regarding its current policies in the West Bank and Gaza is sharply divided.

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assimilated long ago. The only traces of their presence are a few Jews with Spanish names like Costas and Seixas (some of whom are descendants of later Sephardic immigrants who had previously settled in places like England or the Netherlands) and a few synagogues, notably the famous Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, and the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue in Manhattan. German Jewish immigration began in the 1840s after the failure of liberal political reforms in Germany. It brought a number of Reform-influenced Jews who considered themselves Germans of the Mosaic persuasion—that is, German nationals who happened to be Jewish in religion. They settled mostly in the United States, often in the same areas where other German immigrants settled, especially the midwest. Unlike the latter, however, the Jewish immigrants tended to be pedlars and shopkeepers rather than farmers.

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The next and largest wave of Jewish immigration to America arrived from eastern Europe, some from the *shtetlach* (or *shtetls*—Yiddish for 'little towns') and some from the Jewish quarters of the major cities. The 3 million Jews living in areas controlled by Russia had not benefitted from the social changes that allowed for Jewish liberation in western Europe and the Americas. Although a cultural reform movement known as the

Haskalah ('Enlightenment') had flourished during the relatively benign rule of Czar Alexander II (r. 1855–81), his successor, Alexander III (r. 1881–94), openly encouraged pogroms, massacres, and deportations of Jews.

Alexander III's policies were directly responsible for the enormous wave of Jewish immigration that landed mostly on the eastern coasts of Canada and the United States. At first most of the new arrivals went to New York. The German Jews donated massively to help the indigent *Ostjuden* ('eastern Jews'), but were not particularly friendly towards them. Not literate in either German or English, the eastern European immigrants found jobs in the tobacco and clothing sweatshops of the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

In Russia each ethnic group was treated as a separate nationality, and until very recently the passports of Russian Jews continued to identify their nationality as 'Jewish'. Thus Jews arriving from eastern Europe have tended to think of themselves as Jewish by nationality as well as religion. Ironically, some thought they were sacrificing their religion in crossing the Atlantic, because Orthodox rabbis in Europe warned against North America as a place of non-kosher iniquity.

In 1922, new immigration quotas stopped the flow of Jewish immigration to the United States, but Jews continued to arrive in Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and South America. In Canada, Jews settled primarily in urban Quebec and Ontario, but also in Winnipeg. French-speaking Jews from North Africa and the French possessions tended to favour the Montreal area because of its French environment. Some English-speakers also settled in Montreal, while others headed for Ontario and the West.

The doors of the United States remained largely shut to Jews fleeing from Nazi oppression in the 1930s, and Canada too refused most Jewish refugees during the Second World War. Most of the Jews who arrived in North America after 1945 were concentration-camp survivors. They had undergone enormous sacrifices to reach the New World, having survived horrifying deprivation and

the near-extirmination of their people. Consequently, their feelings about the necessity for Jewish survival—whether in North America or in the new state of Israel—were much more urgent and intense than those of earlier arrivals.

The Holocaust

No event since the destruction of the second Temple and the expulsion from Spain has so affected the Jewish people as the Holocaust. Adolf Hitler, whose National Socialist ('Nazi') party came to power in 1933, was able to convince many Germans that their country's economic woes should be blamed not on the worldwide depression, or on government policy, or on the punishing reparations that it was required to pay after the First World War, but on the nation's Jews.

The Nazis, fearing that the Jewish presence among them would sully their 'racial' superiority, passed a series of laws that were ever more cruel to Jews. They stripped Jews of German nationality. They looted Jewish stores and prevented Jews from practising their livelihoods. They sent Jews to concentration camps to work as slaves. Finally, they erected gas chambers and crematoria to kill the Jews, a program the Nazis called *die Entlösung* ('the Final Solution' to the 'Jewish problem').

A major factor in the success of Hitler's campaign, of course, was European Christianity's long tradition of vilifying the Jews as 'Christ killers'. Those wishing to foment hatred against the Jews for their own purposes could find ample ammunition in the New Testament, whose editors painted Jews in an extremely bad light for their own theological reasons.

It can be argued that Hitler's war against the Jews was the most successful of all his endeavours. For whatever reasons, the Allies did not strike back strongly enough even when they clearly understood what he was doing. There were no Allied raids on the railway tracks that took tens of thousands of Jews to their deaths every day. Worse still, in eastern Europe, especially in Poland, Hitler found some ready accomplices for his work.

In the terrible nightmare of Nazi oppression, to help Jews meant almost certain death. Yet there were many individual Christians who took that risk in order to hide Jews or help them escape, and of those who were found out, many suffered the same fate as the Jews they had tried to help. The 6 million Jewish deaths in the Second World War amounted to between one-quarter and one-third of the total death toll in Europe, sometimes estimated at 22 million. The Holocaust killed roughly a third of all the world's Jews—men, women, and children—in the space of a few years.

Jews shuddered when the enormity of the crime became known. The Jews had always assumed that, even though they might sin, the eternity of the people Israel was a sign of God's continuing favour. How Hitler had come so close to exterminating a whole people—how God could have allowed the wholesale killing of so many innocent, non-combatant men, women, and children—demanded a special answer. In fact, those questions may never be satisfactorily answered. For most Jews the only possible response is to continue interpreting historical events as the unfolding of God's design, in which their people have a special role.

Among those who have tried to formulate answers is the world-famous author Elie Wiesel (b. 1928). Wiesel was a traditional *yeshiva* student in the town of Sighet in Romania when the Nazis arrived. His first novel, *Night*, chronicles the murder of his family and his own survival of the extermination camps. Since then, he has written movingly in fiction and non-fiction of the predicament of modern Jews. The faith he has articulated is ambivalent and often tentative, but in combining doubt with a solid affirmation of Jewish and human values, he seems to speak to the complex feelings shared by many Jews and gentiles alike in contemplating the horrors of the modern world.

'Jews must continue to live so as not to grant to Hitler a posthumous victory,' wrote Emil Fackenheim (1916–2003), a German rabbi and professor

who emigrated to Canada in 1938 and to Israel after 1981. In this regard, Fackenheim spoke for a wide spectrum of Jews who feel that Hitler's project to exterminate an entire people must be remembered and must never be repeated, anywhere in the world. The Holocaust has materially changed the significance of Jewish identity in the world. In Fackenheim's view, it is no longer acceptable for Jews to accept martyrdom (which had been considered honourable since the Hellenistic era), no matter how good the cause, because the people Israel must look to its own survival. To the traditional 613 commandments spoken by God to the Jewish people, Fackenheim posited that the Holocaust had added a 614th: from now on, Jews are commanded to live as Jews in the modern world, so that Judaism and Jewishness can never be exterminated as Hitler tried to do.

The State of Israel

For most Jews, the founding of the state of Israel is closely associated with the terrible tragedy of the Holocaust. In no sense did Israel compensate for the lives that were lost—but it did represent the promise of a place in the world where Jews might at last be safe. The Zionist campaign for a haven from persecution succeeded in attracting support not just from Jews but from non-Jewish leaders around the world in the years following the Second World War. The United Nations voted to partition Palestine and create two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The creation of Israel did a great deal to resolve the problem of Jewish refugees in Europe.

For many years, the neighbouring Arab states of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon vied with each other as well as Israel for control of all the area. But they were unable to defeat Israel militarily, and eventually ceded to Palestinians—though not to Israelis—the right to control their own territory. The Palestinians, however, have not been able to agree on a policy to deal with Israel's occupation of the lands gained either in the 1948 or the 1967 war. Many seem willing to negotiate a state

in the land of Israel and Palestine. Others refuse to negotiate and have taken up arms against civilians in the Israeli state. Israel, claiming its own need to defend its citizens, has imposed very strenuous controls on the civilian population, to try to prevent bombings, suicide actions, and rocket launches. More than six decades after its creation, Israel still has not managed to resolve some problems fundamental to accommodating an emerging Palestinian nationality. The question of sovereignty and control over the old city of Jerusalem, for example, has been a constant and so far insoluble difficulty.

One can hope that peace negotiations will eventually resume, after all hostilities have shown themselves to be pointless. But it does not lie in the hands of Israel alone to bring this about.

North America

For many years American culture has assumed that assimilation should be the goal of every immigrant, and that all ethnic groups should blend together in one great 'melting pot'. Yet the range of immigrants that the American pot has succeeded in blending is actually quite small, consisting mainly of a few northern European groups (English, Irish, Scottish, Scandinavian). Other European groups have remained largely separate, as have 'visible minorities' such as Blacks and Asians.

One could argue that Jews have much to gain by staying out of the melting pot. Jewish leaders have traditionally railed against intermarriage. And for two generations, most American Jews did marry within their own community. Since 1985, however, roughly 55 per cent of all American Jews have married non-Jewish partners. If enough non-Jewish spouses were to convert, that would help to stabilize the Jewish population. However, some predict that within a few generations the Jewish community will consist only of those most resistant to intermarriage: the Orthodox.

The situation in Canada is slightly different. Like the United States, Canada is a country built

on immigration, but Canadians tend to describe their society as a mosaic rather than a melting pot. From earliest times, Canada has contained at least two distinct cultural communities, French and English, and the nation itself was founded on the idea that the different communities have the right to live their own lives. Even before 'multiculturalism'—a type of cultural pluralism—became official policy in the 1970s, new Canadians of other ethnic backgrounds may have experienced somewhat less pressure to assimilate than their counterparts in the US.

Canada's formula has none of the imperatives implicit in the American melting-pot model. In Canada, the concepts of national identity and group rights are different from those in the United States. Moreover, the Canadian Jewish community is younger in that it arrived in great numbers only after the doors of immigration were closed in the United States. For these reasons, the Jewish community is less assimilated in Canada than it is in the United States. But the cultural and social processes that affect Canada and the United States are so similar that one can easily foresee similar outcomes for the Jewish communities in both countries.

Judaism in the Modern World

Modernity has transformed Judaism, allowing it to develop many different denominational groups, for the same reason that denominations developed in the Hellenistic period: to provide Jews with intelligent choices about how to live their lives Jewishly. The modern world, like the Hellenistic one, offers many different ways of living, which appeal to Jews in different ways and demand different ways of being Jewish. Creative Jewish minds have therefore found ways to accommodate these lifestyles with Judaism. A major difference between North American Judaism and Israeli Judaism is often overlooked. North American Jews are part of the democratic life of North America. Having been nurtured in adversity while working for equality, most accept the notion that Jews should not only be good citizens of the state in which they reside and should participate fully in its political and

social life, but should also work for the continued cultural pluralism of North America.

Of course there are exceptions to this rule, notably in the more self-contained Orthodox and Hasidic communities. There is also a small but growing minority of Jews who have entirely given up on the idea of accommodation with modern life. These Jews, who call themselves *haredim* ('tremblers', after a verse in *Isaiah* that describes the true worshippers of God), refuse all contact with the modern world. In a sense they are the fundamentalists of the Jewish tradition, and they have steadily been gaining political power under conservative governments. On the whole, however, North American Jews are willing to accept the threat that assimilation poses for Jewish survival because of the undeniable benefits of modern Western democratic life. North American Jews' identity is thus a blend of ethnicity and religion.

A different concept of Judaism has emerged in Israel. For most Israeli Jews—except for the *haredim*—Judaism is a nationality. The majority of Israeli Jews observe the Sabbath because it is the national day of rest, the Jewish holidays because they are national holidays.

But the majority of Israelis do not observe Sabbath regulations in the traditional sense. The beaches of Tel Aviv are just as busy as the beaches of Long Island in New York on a warm sunny Saturday. Although most modern Israelis are willing to give the Orthodox parties the powers necessary to govern, they are unwilling to live their lives by Orthodox standards. Loyalty to Israel may be a religious duty for Jews living in the Diaspora, but for people actually living in the state it is a political and military matter.

So there is another kind of acculturation underway in Israel. Most Israelis, while living in a state that is predominantly Jewish, are in the process of formulating an entirely new way to live Jewishly, a transformation just as sweeping as the one that is taking place among North American Jews.

It is by no means clear whether these different Jewish communities still really understand each

other. Israelis see a threatening future for Jewry in American street violence and anti-Semitism, whereas North American Jews see threats in Israel's ethnic polarization and confrontation with the Palestinians. In the mid-1990s, despite moves towards peace with neighbouring Arab states, conflict between Jews and Arabs living under Israeli jurisdiction continued, and the divisions among Jews were deepened by the assassination in 1995 of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. Though fragile, the peace process with the Palestine Liberation Organization made remarkable progress towards recognizing the rights of both communities. But no formal agreement was reached with the other major Palestinian national organization, Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement). It is doubtful that any agreement will be reached in the foreseeable future because Hamas seems uncompromisingly committed to the destruction of the state of Israel. The administration of George W. Bush (2000–8), despite protestations of support for peace and even a so-called 'road-map' to achieve it, brought nothing in the way of formal agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis. And even if a formal agreement were reached, the success of any peace process would ultimately depend on the ability of two peoples who have been bitter adversaries for more than a century to develop mutual trust. Thus the prognosis for the future of Judaism is clouded, regardless of the contributions of the North American Jewish community and the fortitude or diplomatic skills of the Israelis. If there is a Jewish people, it will be because a religious understanding of their history has made it possible for them to survive as Jews.

Hope for the Future: A Jewish Wedding

A more optimistic vision of the future can be seen at any wedding where both the bride and the groom are Jewish, whether by birth or by conversion. Weddings may be performed in homes

or synagogues, hotels or catering halls. Whatever the setting, what they have in common is the *huppah*: a tent-like canopy under which the marriage ceremony is conducted. Often the bride and groom are escorted to the *huppah* by their parents, but the bride may also enter in a procession reminiscent of a standard church wedding. In the Orthodox ritual she will circle the groom seven times before the ceremony begins with the bride and groom drinking from a consecrated cup of wine.

The wedding is first of all a legal agreement in which the husband and wife pledge mutual

support and aid. The groom declares, 'Be consecrated unto me as my wife according to the laws and traditions of Moses and Israel.' This in itself is enough to complete his legal obligation. But it is quite common in North America to add more promises: 'I will love, honour, and cherish you. I will protect and support you, and I will faithfully care for your needs, as prescribed by Jewish law and tradition.'

The bride often now makes a similar declaration: 'In accepting the wedding ring, I pledge you all my love and devotion, and I take upon myself the fulfillment of all the duties incumbent upon a

Jewish wife.' Then the groom will usually give a ring to the bride (or the two will exchange rings). The ring is conventional in the West, but it may be replaced by any gift of sufficient worth to formalize the legal transaction.

After the legal formalities are concluded, seven blessings are recited over a second cup of wine. The blessings recall the creation and the joy of ancient Judah in the celebration of marriages. In fulfillment of the last blessing, which prays for the sound of joy in Judah and Israel, the wedding usually concludes with an enormous feast.

In many ways the Jewish wedding ceremony encapsulates the community's hopes for survival. In consecrating the union of two young Jewish lives, the community thanks God for creation and sustenance, remembers its past, pledges its responsibilities publicly, and prays for its continuation. These themes are particularly poignant today, in the face of an uncertain future.

In ancient times the prophet Hosea likened the covenant between Israel and its God to a wedding. Just as the wedding, in uniting two people, commits them to play their part in the life of their



A bride and groom stand under the *huppah* (David Furst/AFP/Getty Images).

community, so the covenant between God and Israel continues to commit all Jews to play their part in the fulfillment of the Jewish people's special purpose in the world.

Sites

Mount Sinai The place where *Exodus* 20–31 says the children of Israel received the Ten Commandments and the subsequent Book of the Covenant. The mountain called Mount Sinai today may or may not be the same one.

Jerusalem A fortress of the Jebusites that was conquered by David around the year 1000 BCE (2 *Samuel* 5: 5–10); also known as 'The City of David'.

Samaria The capital city of the Northern Kingdom.

Alexandria A city in Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great, which became the home of an important Greek-speaking Jewish community.

Masada The mountain fortress where Jewish Zealots made their last stand against the Romans in 73 CE, three years after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Yavne (also known as Jamnia). A small town west of Jerusalem, where the early rabbinic movement fled for safety during the revolt against Rome (70 CE).

Okop, Podolia A small village in the Polish Russian pale of settlement where the founder of the Hasidic movement, Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov, was born in 1698.

Cincinnati, Ohio The capital of the Reform movement in the United States and the location of the principal Reform seminary.

New York City The home of the largest Jewish population in the Americas and headquarters of the (Conservative) Jewish Theological Seminary.

Glossary

aggadah Anecdotal or narrative material in the *Talmud*; see also *halakha*.

apocalypse From the Greek for 'unveiling' (the Latin equivalent is 'revelation'); the final battle between the forces of darkness and light expected at the end of time. Apocalyptic literature flourished in the Hellenistic era.

Ashkenazim Jews of northern and eastern Europe, as distinguished from the Mediterranean Sephardim.

Bar Mitzvah 'Son of the commandments'; the title given to a thirteen-year-old boy when he is initiated into adult ritual responsibilities; some branches of Judaism also celebrate a Bat Mitzvah for girls.

berith Hebrew term for covenant, the special relationship between God and the Jewish people.

cantor The liturgical specialist who leads the musical chants in synagogue services.

Diaspora 'Dispersal', the Jewish world outside the land of ancient Israel; it began with the Babylonian Exile, from which not all Jews returned.

Documentary Hypothesis The theory (1894) that the Pentateuch was not written by one person (Moses) but compiled over a long period of time from multiple sources.

eschatology Doctrine concerning the end of the age, from the Greek for 'study of the end'.

Exile The deportation of Jewish leaders from Jerusalem to Mesopotamia by the conquering Babylonians in 586 BCE; disrupting local Israelite political, ritual, and agricultural institutions, it marked the transition from Israelite religion to Judaism.

Exodus The migration of Hebrews from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, understood in later Hebrew thought as marking the birth of the Israelite nation.

gaon Title of a senior rabbinical authority in Mesopotamia under Persian and Muslim rule.

Gemarah The body of Aramaic commentary attached to the Hebrew text of the *Mishnah*, which together with it makes up the *Talmud* (both the *Jerusalem Talmud* and the *Babylonian Talmud*).

Haggadah The liturgy for the ritual Passover supper.

halakha Material in the *Talmud* of a legal nature; see also *aggadah*.

Hasidim 'Pious ones'; applied to two unrelated groups of loyal or pious Jews: those who resisted Hellenism militarily in second-century BCE Palestine, and the mystically inclined followers of the Baal Shem Tov in eighteenth-century Poland and their descendants today.

hesed Hebrew term for the loyal conduct, sometimes translated as 'mercy' or 'loving-kindness', incumbent on God and on humans as parties to the covenant relationship.

Holocaust 'Burnt offering' or 'burnt sacrifice'; one of the ancient sacrifices mandated in the Hebrew Bible. The term has more recently been applied to the persecution and murder of 6 million European Jews by the Nazis before and during the Second World War (1939–45).

Humash The first five biblical books, the Pentateuch, when bound in book form for private study; in synagogue worship the same text is read from a scroll (see *Sefer Torah*).

Kabbalah The medieval Jewish mystical tradition; its central text is a commentary on scripture called the *Zohar*, compiled by Moses ben Shemtov of León (d. 1305) but attributed to *Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*, a famous second-century rabbinic mystic and wonder-worker.

Karaites 'Scripturalists', an eighth-century anti-rabbinic movement that rejected the *Talmud* and post-biblical festivals such as Hanukkah, taking only the Bible as authoritative.

kippah 'Dome' or 'cap'; the Hebrew word for skullcap or *yarmulke*.

kosher Term for food that is ritually acceptable, indicating that all rabbinic regulations regarding animal slaughter and the like have been observed in its preparation.

logos 'Word'; a kind of divine intelligence thought to mediate between God and humanity and carry out God's intentions on earth.

Masada The fortress whose Jewish defenders are said to have committed suicide rather than surrender to Rome.

menorah The seven-branched candlestick, a Jewish symbol since ancient times, well before the widespread adoption of the six-pointed star; the nine-branched menorah used at Hanukkah is sometimes called a *hanukiah*.

midrash Commentary on scripture.

minyan The quorum of ten required for a prayer service in the synagogue.

Mishnah The Hebrew summary of the oral law—inherited from Pharisaism and ascribed to Moses—arranged by topic; edited by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi before 220 CE, it has an authority paralleling that of the written Torah.

Mishneh Torah A topically arranged code of Jewish law written in the twelfth century by Moses Maimonides.

mitzvah A commandment; in the Roman era, the rabbinic movement identified exactly 613 specific commandments contained within the Torah.

Passover The major spring festival of agricultural rebirth and renewal, given a historical dimension by association with the hasty departure of the Israelites from Egypt under Moses' leadership.

patriarchs and matriarchs Ancestors of the Israelite nation in the Hebrew Bible's narratives of origins; 'patriarch' was also a title given to the head of the Jewish community in early rabbinic times.

Pentateuch The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, ascribed by tradition to Moses but regarded by modern scholars as the product of several centuries of later literary activity.

phylacteries The usual English term for *tefillin*.

rabbi A teacher, in Roman times an expert on the interpretation of Torah; since priestly sacrifices ceased with the destruction of the Temple, the rabbi has been the scholarly and spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation.

rabbinic movement The legal teachers and leaders, initially Pharisees, who became the dominant voices in Judaism after the destruction of the Temple and eventually became the rabbis as we know them.

responsa literature From the Latin for 'answers' (singular, *responsum*); accumulated correspondence by medieval and recent rabbinical authorities, consisting of rulings on issues of legal interpretation; also known as *Teshuvot* (singular, *teshuvah*).

Rosh Hashanah The new year festival, generally occurring in September.

Sabbath The seventh day of the week, observed by Jews since ancient times as a day of rest from ordinary activity.

seder 'Order'; the term used for the ritual Passover supper celebrated in the home; the six divisions of the *Mishnah* are also called orders or *seders*.

Sefer Torah 'Book of the law'; a special copy of the first five books of Moses, hand-lettered on parchment for use in synagogue rituals (see also *Humash*).

Sephardim The Jews of the premodern Mediterranean and Middle East, as opposed to the Ashkenazim of northern and eastern Europe.

Septuagint The Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, made in Alexandria in Hellenistic times.

Shekhinah The divine presence or 'dwelling', often described in visionary terms by ancient commentators on *Ezekiel* and by medieval mystics.

Sukkot The festival of 'Tabernacles', named for the temporary booths or shelters originally constructed by farmers in autumn to protect their ripening crops and given a historical interpretation recalling the migration experience of the Exodus.

synagogue The local place of assembly for congregational worship, which became central to the tradition after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

takkanah 'Remediation'; a principle (attributed to Hillel) that facilitated borrowing by allowing the court to take over farmers' debts in years when their fields were fallow.

tallith A shawl worn for prayer, usually white with blue stripes and with fringes at the corners.

Tanakh The entire Hebrew Bible, consisting of Torah (or law), *Nevi'im* (or

prophets), and *Ketuvim* (or sacred writings), and named as an acronym of these three terms.

Tannaim The rabbinic authorities whose opinions are recorded in the *Mishnah*, as distinguished from the rabbis (*Amoraim*) whose opinions appear in the *Gemarah* material of the *Talmud*.

tefillin Small black leather boxes, also termed phylacteries, containing words of scripture, tied to the forehead and forearm by leather thongs.

Torah A word meaning 'teaching' or 'instruction'; applied most specifically to the Law of Moses (the Pentateuch) but may also refer to the entire scripture, including commentaries, and even the entire spiritual thrust of Jewish religion.

yarmulke The Yiddish word for the *kip-pah* or skullcap worn by Orthodox Jewish males.

yeshiva A traditional school for the study of the scriptures and Jewish law.

Yiddish The language spoken by many central and eastern European Jews in recent centuries; though it is written in Hebrew characters and contains some words derived from Hebrew, it is essentially German in its basic structure and vocabulary.

Yom Kippur The day of atonement, ten days after Rosh Hashanah; the day for the most solemn reflection and examination of one's conduct.

zaddik 'Righteous person', a title conveying the Hasidic ideal for a teacher or spiritual leader.

Zion In biblical times, the hill in Jerusalem where the Temple stood as God's dwelling place; by extension, the land of the Israelites as the place of God's favour; in modern times, the goal of Jewish migration and nation-state settlement.