11. Reframing Time to Save the Nation
The Jewish Historian as Cultural Trickster

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Introduction

The call for papers that brought us together and led to the present volume emphasised the problematics of periodisation (*Periodisierung*), the historiographic process of chopping up the temporal continuum by assigning start and end points to eras and then, most important, assigning hierarchical (often teleological) values to each era.* The conference call associated this practice especially with the rhetoric of the nation state and described categories drawn from European experience imposed onto other societies in relationships characterised by colonial dominance and radical power imbalance. Jack Goody had famously decried the West's *Theft of History*: not only had it imposed Eurocentric, Christian-derived, conceptions of time and space upon the rest of the world through military and economic power. It had also come to believe that western periodisations were not socially constructed but necessary, and that western patterns of development were not contingent but of its essence. The West had "monopolized" historical periods, insisting that everyone else had "gotten it wrong."[1] It was the ambition of the conference organisers to go beyond such "nation-bound" and

* My thanks to the editors of this volume as well as to Professors Benjamin Gampel, Steven Zipperstein, Adam Teller and the members of the Jewish Studies seminar at Brown University, who have all provided provocative comments. Special thanks to Professor Jonathan Karp who went above and beyond the call of friendship, saving me from glaring errors and suggesting many further lines of inquiry. Regrettably, I have not always been able to follow up on these suggestions, and all errors and infelicities remain, of course, my own.

1 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Goody's treatment, a somewhat impressionistic survey of highlights of western historical approaches to broad themes salted with his own experiences as an anthropologist (rather than an in-depth analysis of any specific local historiographical systems) is very much in tune with scholarly calls for caution after the initial enthusiasm for global or world history. See for example W. H. McNeill, "The Rise of the West after Twenty-Five Years," *Journal of World History* 1, no. 1 (1990): 1–21. On the issue with particular regard to Jewish history see my "Global History & Jewish Studies: Paradoxical Agendas, Contradictory Implications,"

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Eurocentric interpretive patterns and to treat the confrontation between periodisations as a synecdoche for negotiations between cultural constructs and hierarchical systems.

In this chapter I would like to rethink Goody's image of the violent imposition of one society's values on those of another by focusing rather on the individuals who cross over and back between the worlds of the colonised and the coloniser, the hegemonic and the subaltern. These figures—we may call them go-betweens or, in recognition of their agile balancing act, cultural tricksters—carry messages back and forth in both directions.[2] They must constantly sell their claims of original authenticity to one, and of new knowledge to the other. These are the translators and converts and students and teachers who themselves undergo the disorienting experience of transition, who constantly shape and reshape the truths they bear to fit the context and audience of the moment, and who re-present themselves as the situation demands. Such figures may be rare pioneers, explorers, and travelers in foreign lands or everyday migrants in a mobile world.[3] Viewed through the lens of their experience, the "theft of history" becomes an ongoing negotiation, a social and psychological process of narration and intellectualisation which is never complete.

European Jews provide an interesting case study through which to explore the dynamics of such cultural negotiation, for the purpose of this chapter focusing specifically on their changing constructions of historical time. For centuries Jews had lived in the gradually Christianizing European West. They participated in, and depended upon, Christian European culture while locked always in a more or less intense competition with it. Because they formed only a small minority in Christian lands, Jews had had no choice but to familiarise themselves with their neighbours' calendars, even while stubbornly maintaining their own separate calendrical system. There were inevitable conflicts—and workarounds—when Jews sought to avoid

Giornale di storia (2015): accessed June 13, 2016, https://www.giornaledistoria.net/monografica/saggi/global-history-jewish-studies

2 Isaac Bashevis Singer portrayed the Jewish go-between as literally a tight-rope walker balancing on a rope stretched between traditional Jewish, and outside gentile, societies in his *The Magician of Lublin* (New York: 1960; Yiddish: *Der Kuntsnmakher fun Lublin,* 1971). This book, with its probing analysis of the cultural nuances of shifting Jewish cultures, deserves far more attention than it has received so far. On the use of the term "trickster" here, see below note 69.

3 I cannot resist mentioning, even if only in passing in a footnote, my conversations with Maurice Weiss, the photographer, on the first two days of our Berlin conference. Mr. Weiss asked me about the topic of our deliberations. When I told him, he laughed and spoke about his own sense of chronological dislocation, having grown up in a tiny village in southern France near Perpignan where the rhythms of rural life seemed timeless. All of this had changed for him when he moved to Berlin where, as he put it, the food was horrible, and the air smelled bad. Weiss' family had come to the Catalan village in the first place because his own father had fled there from Gdansk (I assume at the start of World War II), yet a further temporal dislocation. We make a mistake, it seems to me, if we restrict our discussions of chronology to elitist and intellectualist theories and forget the biographical realities in which they are grounded.

desecrating their own holy days or, what was more challenging, when they sought to avoid any appearance of participating in the holy days of their neighbours.[4] The conflict became especially fraught when each community sought to give meaning to the flow of time by identifying and interpreting major turning points in human history. Both agreed that the Jewish present was a period of exile and punishment, but they differed fundamentally over the reasons for that situation. For Christians who divided human history around the birth, career, and crucifixion of Jesus, the Jews were being punished because they had rejected Jesus' message and played a major role in his death. Jews, on the other hand, saw their condition as rooted in dissension and animosity within their own community. Their decline had begun with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (they believed, in 68 CE) and it would end only when they were able to earn God's forgiveness through religious self-perfection.[5] In the modern era, these medieval debates, with their emphasis on religious categories of chosenness, perfidy, and repentance, would give way to a totally new rhetoric. As we shall see, citizenship in the nation state demanded new legal categories that in turn implied a new periodisation of Jewish history. The flow of time would have to change its direction to include the possibility of Jewish progress and improvement.

4 On this see the commentary of the Tosafists to BT, *Avoda Zara,* f. 2a, s. v. "Asur la-Set" and Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1961), 27–36.

5 Elisheva Carlebach, *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). We get a sense of how early modern Jews remembered time from *Yad She'arim* (published by Samuel Tsarfati in Rome, 1546–1547). A Hebrew perpetual calendar and a guide for Jews to the Christian calendar, the book ends with a timeline of Jewish history structured around a list of the biblical "kings of Israel and kings of Judah." The chronology takes on an elegiac tone as it locates the present in the flow of time and pinpoints the current year within the ordered course of astronomical cycles, literary works, and Jewish disasters:

> The year 5307 since the Creation is the sixth year…of the 280th (lesser) lunar cycle, the fifteenth of the 190th (greater) solar cycle, 3358 years since the birth of Abraham our Father, …1832 years according to the count of contracts [*li-shtarot*] and the end of prophecy, 1681 years since the beginning of the Hasmonean kingdom, 1388 since the completion of the Mishna, 1042 since the completion of the Babylonian Talmud, 371 since the completion of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah,* 152 years since the expulsion of the Jews from France, fifty-five since the expulsion from Spain, 953 according to the Muslim calendar, 1547…according to the Christian calendar, thirty-two [years] since the plundering of the Kingdom of Naples, six years since the second expulsion from Naples, and 1479 since the destruction of the Second Temple, may it be rebuilt soon in our days, Amen.

On this book and its publishing context see Bernard D. Cooperman, "Organizing Knowledge for the Jewish Market: an Editor/Printer in Sixteenth-Century Rome," in *Perspectives on the Hebraic Book: The Myron M. Weinstein Memorial Lectures at the Library of Congress,* ed. Peggy Pearlstein (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2012), 78–129, 103–106.

This new periodisation of the Jewish past begins to be voiced at the end of the eighteenth century, but even at the risk of confusing the reader by taking things out of order, I would like to begin my exploration with an article published in 1928 that would describe this historiographical equation of modernity with progress only to reject it. It was in that year that Salo Baron, a young Galician-born and Vienna-educated historian just beginning his career in New York City published "Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?"[6] The article's title was in the interrogative, but Baron's own position was boldly assertive. He rejected the positive view of modernisation and especially of the political integration of Jews into the nation state that had been a central assumption of western Jewish cultural life over the previous century and a half. Rather than attributing it to liberal doctrines of tolerance Baron argued that Jewish emancipation derived from the state's insistence on, and need for, uniform control over all its subjects. He called for an end to the "lachrymose" view of Jewish history that had emphasised the persecutions Jews had suffered in the pre-modern period. Neither had modernity been an unalloyed improvement for Jews. To the contrary, emancipation had come at a great cost for it had meant that Jews lost their long-established right of autonomous self-direction.

Baron's short essay would prove foundational to the developing field of Jewish Studies; indeed, it is difficult to overstate its impact. The article is frequently referenced and debated even today, almost a century after its initial appearance.[7] For Baron himself it was the starting point of the magnificent scholarly project to which he devoted his

6 *The Menorah Journal* 14 (June, 1928): 515–526.

7 Recent attempts to reconsider the article and its thesis include *From Ghetto to Emancipation: Historical and Contemporary Reconsiderations of the Jewish Community*, ed. David N. Myers and William V. Rowe (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1997); David Engel, "Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History," *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 243–264; Elsa Marmursztein, "La raison dans l'histoire de la persécution: Observations sur l'historiographie des relations entre juifs et chrétiens sous l'angle des baptêmes forcés," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 67 (2012/1): 7–40; and Adam Teller, "Revisiting Baron's 'Lachrymose Conception': The Meanings of Violence in Jewish History," *AJS Review* 38, no. 2 (November 2014): 431–439. Ismar Schorsch precisely reconstructed the historiographical context in which the phrase appeared in "The Lachrymose Conception of Jewish History," in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover/London: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 376–388. The shooting of congregants in Pittsburgh's Congregation Tree of Life in October 2018 prompted Professor Zachary Braiterman of Syracuse University to post a lengthy consideration of Baron's article (https://jewishphilosophyplace.com/2018/12/26/anti-lachrymose-jewish-history-a-lachrymose-theological-reactionary-object-salo-baron/). Accessed July 31, 2022. Citing Engel and Teller extensively, Braiterman announces he was always "a little confused" by Baron's article, and takes what he calls its "howlers" as an indication that "Jewish Studies and the study of Jewish History in America [are] begin[ning] to show their age. The older they get the weirder they look in retrospect."

life. In 1937 he published the first edition of his *Social and Religious History*[8] where we can see many of the themes of the original article fleshed out and documented. In 1942 his multi-volume history of *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*[9] continued the celebration of Jewish autonomy. And of course there were the eighteen volumes of the expanded edition of the *Social and Religious History*, a work that remained incomplete at the author's death but that succeeded in bringing together a vast bibliography to back up the Baronian approach at least down to the end of the Early Modern era.[10]

"Ghetto and Emancipation" was never intended to be a detailed survey of Jewish history in every place and at every time. Its eleven pages were a programmatic statement by a young man giving voice to a vision of his own mission as a Jewish historian. There is little point in challenging this almost century-old article for what we may now see as Baron's overstatements about Jewish self-governance or for what he omitted concerning the Jewish historical experience generally. What remains fascinating was the task he set for the academic study of Jewish history, only then about to enter the American secular academy and gain its imprimatur of institutionalised legitimacy. For Baron it was important to highlight Jewish group agency, arguing that this had been especially evident in the past and had been largely lost in the transition to modernity. We can speculate on possible links between this emphasis on community agency and Baron's own Zionist views.[11] Even more important, I suspect, was Baron's personal drive to carve out a field of discourse appropriate to teaching and research in a university history department.

The research plan Baron laid out was built upon a radically reframed periodisation of Jewish history. To do so, he took the term "ghetto"—a restricted space of Jewish residence, especially in Italy—and turned it into a universal category of Jewish time. The 'ghetto era' became a capacious designation for that period when, Baron insisted, Jewish community life had flourished. On the other hand, 'emancipation' was the term with which

8 Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*. 3 vols., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937).

9 Salo Baron, T*he Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*, 3 vols., (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society).

10 Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews,* 2.nd edition, 18 vols.*,* (New York: Columbia University Press and Jewish Publication Society, 1952–1983). At his death, Baron had managed to complete only eighteen of the twenty-two announced volumes of the project. From all accounts Baron dominated the world of Jewish historical scholarship in New York City and by extension in the United States for many decades. His position at Columbia University gave his opinion considerable weight, as did his prolific output. Sadly, his attempt at bibliographical comprehensiveness and his style of writing have been overtaken especially by new information technologies, and his multi-volume history-*cum*-bibliography has today lost much of its academic influence.

11 Marsha L. Rozenblit, "A Zionist Who Spoke Hebrew: Salo Baron in Vienna," in *The Enduring Legacy,* ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Edward Dąbrowa (Cracow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2017), 99–114.

he would label 'modernity.' In light of his own doctorate in law from the University of Vienna, we need not be surprised that he used Jews' legal status to label his periods. But more important, in doing so Baron was rejecting other, well-established periodisation schemes that had been offered by earlier scholars. He would not limit himself to the study of persecutions and rabbis (*Leidens- und Gelehrtengeschichte*). He would not, as had Isaac M. Jost a century earlier, date 'modernity' to the accession of Frederick the Great onto the throne of Prussia (1740) on the grounds that that monarch's enlightenment would eventually lead to greater tolerance. Nor would Baron accept Heinrich Graetz' framework which had emphasised the role of the enlightened Jewish individual (for example, Moses Mendelssohn) as the mark of that Modernity.[12] Modernity, Baron insisted, was that period when Jews became citizens but lost control of their own collective destiny. And if Modernity was legal emancipation, it followed that pre-Modernity was the ghetto. During the 'ghetto era,' Baron insisted, Jewish community life had flourished. On the other hand, because Modernity was shaped by the logic of the nation state Jews had been granted citizenship but at the price of losing collective autonomy.[13]

In writing as he did Baron was reacting to the view of Jewish history that had been regnant for over a hundred years. From the later part of the eighteenth century European Jews had begun to cope culturally with the possibility, and then the realities, of 'emancipation'—that is, their legal and political integration into the nation state.[14] The enthusiasm with which at least some Jews had greeted their changed political status cannot be overstated. When the French National Assembly granted his coreligionists citizenship in 1791, the Nancy tobacco manufacturer and activist, Berr Isaac Berr, declared that a new era had begun in Jewish history: "At length the day has come when the veil, by which

12 Still useful is the historiographical overview by Michael A. Meyer, "When Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?" *Judaism* 24, no. 3 (1975): 329–338.

13 On the history of the ghetto as an institution and as a historiographical category in Jewish history see Bernard D. Cooperman, "The Early Modern Ghetto: A Study in Urban Real Estate," in *The Ghetto in Global History,* ed. Wendy Goldman and Joe Trotter (Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 57–73 and Cooperman, "Suppose the Ghetto Had Never Been Constructed…. Putting a Term into Its Contexts," in *What Ifs of Jewish History*, ed. Gavriel Rosenfeld (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 81–102.

14 The term "emancipation" is used in Jewish historiography not to indicate that Jews were previously enslaved and were now free, but in parallel to the terminology used about the legal enfranchisement of Catholics in England. Jacob Katz, "The Term 'Emancipation': its Origin and Historical Impact," in Studies in *Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History,* ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 1–25, reprinted in Katz' *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History* (Farnborough: Westmead Gregg, 1972), 21–45. On the process from a comparative point of view, see Rainer Liedtke and Stephan Wendehorst, eds., *The Emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the Nation-State in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Michael Brenner, Vicki Caron, and Uri R. Kaufmann, eds., *Jewish Emancipation Reconsidered: The French and German Models* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

we were kept in a state of humiliation, is rent; at length we recover those rights which have been taken from us more than eighteen centuries ago. How can we not recognise in this moment the marvelous mercy of the God of our ancestors!" So, in a single sentence, Berr reformulated the traditional Jewish concept of *galut* or exile, transferring the term (and the unfolding of divine providence) from the ethereal sphere of religious discourse to the down-to-earth realities of contemporary French politics and law.[15]

Berr's radical reevaluation of the Jewish present in the wake of political emancipation is typical of the cultural challenges that face 'post-colonials' and other recently emancipated populations generally. If it seems strange nowadays to see that Berr and his contemporaries were so eager to bind themselves to existing nationalist periodisations and to abandon the chronologies of their own "imagined community," we should remember that for them the nation state appeared a liberal and intellectual endeavor, a remarkable and positive organisational development that, by exchanging local identities for centralizing loyalties, would harness the energies of millions of citizens to huge projects for the improvement of society on a scale that had never before been possible. For more than two centuries, the idea of the nation would continue to inspire hope, give a sense of shared humanity, and hold out the promise of social progress to those otherwise excluded. As scholars and citizens, we are nowadays painfully aware of the fictive artifice of national historical constructions, of the fragility of the national promise, and of nationalism's potential for cruel exclusion and even genocidal elimination of the 'Other.' Since at least the horrors of the First World War, nationalism has fallen into disrepute, especially in academic and liberal discourse, and we live in an era when nationalist

15 A copy of Berr's *Lettre d'un citoyen, membre de la ci-devant communauté des juifs de Lorraine (B.-I. Berr), à ses confrères, à l'occasion du droit de citoyen actif rendu aux Juifs par le décret du 28 septembre 1791* (Nancy: H. Haener, 1791) is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb30093284c (last modified August 28, 1996). It was reprinted by Diogène (Isaac) Tama in *Collection des actes de l'Assemblée des Israélites de France et du Royaume d'Italie* (Paris: 1807), 21–39, https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=zUNDAAAAcAAJ&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP1, accessed July 31, 2022, from where it was translated as "Letter of M. Berr-Isaac-Berr to his Brethren" in *Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin or Acts of the Assembly of Israelitish Deputies of France and Italy, Convoked at Paris by an Imperial and Royal Decree, Dated May 30, 1806,* (London: 1807), 11–29, https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=hOp9llmImsoC&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA8. I have emended that English translation slightly in order to recapture the confrontation of religious and secular terminologies in the French original. That both Berr and Tama had strong Hebrew/rabbinic educations is relevant to the argument made in this paper about the intellectual who transitions back and forth between multiple cultural spheres. For some details about Berr, his education and family, see "Berr-Isaac Berr (1744–1828)," https://data.bnf.fr/fr/12524489/berr-isaac_berr/; and "Lettre de M. Berr-Isaac-Berr: A ses frères, en 1791, à l'occasion du droit de Citoyen actif accordé aux Juifs", accessed September 30, 2020. See also http://judaisme.sdv.fr/histoire/document/ecoles/beer/beer.htm. On Tama see Valérie Assan, "Isaac, alias Diogène, Tama, rabbin, négociant, armateur, (Hébron, vers 1758—Alger, 12 juillet 1842)," *Archives juives* 39, no. 2 (2006): 128–132.

rhetoric is often marked by populist, racist, militarist, and imperialist overtones.[16] But none of this should blind us to the genuine, optimistic, and generous spirit implicit in the nation's rhetoric of origin, and it was to this promise that Jews were attracted.[17]

But first Jews would have to overcome a major cultural hurdle. To join the nation, they would have to redefine themselves and their culture in terms of the dominant society. Paradoxically emancipation had made such self-definition far more difficult since it had taken away a long-established defense mechanism. In the past, when the Jewish religion was attacked and Jews' history reviled, they had had a quick response. If Christians labeled Jews as blind to the true interpretation of Scripture, and willfully ignorant of the obvious logic of history (that is, to Christian supersession) Jews had been able to respond forcefully *in the same religious registers*. They had argued in apologetic and polemic works for the ongoing validity, and primacy, of their own textual tradition and religious interpretations. But now, insofar as the Enlightenment had marginalised institutionalised religion and weakened its role in directing state policy, it simultaneously undercut the very basis of Jews' religious self-defense.[18] Calls for Jewish civic rights like the famous letter by Christian Wilhelm [von] Dohm, began with the assumption of Jewish cultural and moral inferiority but argued that good treatment might lead to the "civic improvement" of the Jews.[19] Thus the same hand that offered membership in the national community also tore down the traditional Jewish claims to religious legitimacy. As was the case for other 'post-colonials,' therefore, the Jews' sense of themselves and their past was now challenged by the opportunity (and demand) that

16 The role of the European Enlightenment's claim to rationalism as the justification for imperialism is central to much work in colonial studies. See, among many other works, Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) and *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

17 Even a brief overview of the vast literature on nationalism (for example, Peter Alter, *Nationalism* [1989; 1994]) quickly reveals the shifting meanings and connotations of nationalism, a term that changes its valence depending on political context, writers' perspective, and disciplinary terminologies. I do not, of course, intend to dismiss important questions of conservative and liberal, constitutional theory, and ethnic or economic justice that have led us to challenge the primacy of the nation state. My intent is only to remind the reader that past advocates of various forms of national identity (including the Jews who will be my subject) did in fact believe that they were advocating for a better world for all.

18 Admittedly, the once widely accepted view of the European Enlightenment as exclusively secular has now been substantially revised by a range of scholars; for an overview, see David Sorkin's "Introduction" to his *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). Even so, the Enlightenment unquestionably challenged traditional Jewish identity by legitimising a common human identity based on a universal set of rational categories.

19 Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (Berlin and Stettin: 1781). The deplorable present condition of the Jews and their religion was attributed to the persecution they had suffered at Christian hands, but it was never questioned.

they join the nation around them and adopt its self-image as their own. "To the Jews as a nation," famously thundered the Count de Clermont-Tonnère before the French National Assembly in 1791, "nothing. To the Jews as individuals, everything."[20] The opportunity to define themselves as citizens was enormously attractive, though at least some of the community were hesitant about its practical implications. But the cultural fallout of becoming 'modern' would continue to confound Jews to the present day.

Among Jewish intellectuals, there were some who seemed especially eager to internalise the European sense of the modern as crucial to their own construction of self. These *maskilim* (the Hebrew has the double connotation of 'enlightened ones' and 'enlighteners') understood the future as that golden age when Jews would have acquired western knowledge and thus earned their place as worthy members of society. The past, by contrast, was an era of darkness when Jews had abandoned the sciences and lost their appreciation for aesthetic concerns such as linguistic purity and literary form. To achieve the desired future, the *maskilim* advocated educational reform through a curriculum for Jewish youth that would train them to be "human" and acceptable to their fellow man even before they were introduced to the divine obligations that were the particular mark of being a Jew. The best-known statement of this agenda is the pamphlet, *Words of Peace and Truth*, by Naphthali Herz Wessely or Weisel (1725–1805).[21] Wessely called for training in academic subjects (arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy) and the natural sciences (biology, geology, chemistry, anatomy and medicine). He also advocated the study of history and geography, a point to

20 Achille-Edmond Halphen, ed., *Recueil des lois: décrets, ordonnances, avis du conseil d'état, arrêtés et règlements concernant les israélites depuis la Révolution de 1789* (Paris: Bureaux des archives israélites, 1851), 185, partially translated in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 124.

21 The Hebrew pamphlet, *Divre Shalom ve-Emet,* written in response to the famous *Toleranzpatent* issued by Austrian Emperor Joseph II, immediately became the focus of a firestorm within the Jewish community. Over the next several years Wessely would defend his positions in a series of four pamphlets (1782–85), and the entire collection was subsequently republished several times over the next century with various added texts (Vienna: 1827; Warsaw: 1886). Translations quickly appeared into Italian (*Traduzione di Elia Morpurgo de' Discorsi ebraici di tolleranza e felicità diretti de Naftali Herz Weisel agli ebrei dimoranti ne' domini dell'Augustissimo Imperadore Giuseppe II, il Giusto* [Gorizia: 1783]), German (by David Friedländer), and Dutch. The French translation, it may come as no surprise, was by Berr Isaac Berr, the same activist whom we mentioned already (see note 15). The French Bibliothèque Nationale holds, and has digitised, the second, augmented edition: "Instruction salutaire adressée aux communautés juives de l'Empire, par le célèbre Hartwic Weisly, juif de Berlin, traduite en françois en l'année 1782: Nouvelle édition augmentée de notes, d'une lettre à M. l'abbé Maury, député à l'Assemblée nationale, par l'éditeur, et de la réponse de M. l'abbé Maury," (Berlin: 1790), https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k72916r/. A complete annotated English translation remains a scholarly desideratum; a brief excerpt is available in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World,* 74–77.

which we shall return below. But he began his list by demanding that young Jews be trained in the norms of polite, civil life—ethics, manners and correct speech. Wessely was unhesitant in his advocacy of what we today would label as 'Eurocentric' norms of behavior; it was these that would make Jews tolerable to other people.[22]

Not surprisingly Wessely's pedagogic program met with strong opposition in many quarters of the Jewish community. Although he himself insisted that the knowledge of ritual law (what he called *torat ha-elohim* or divine teachings) was the ultimate level of perfection incumbent upon Jews, his emphasis on rational and universally accessible knowledge (*torat ha-adam*; human teachings) was nevertheless seen as an heretical abandonment of Jewish traditional learning. This polarised, black-and-white characterization of Wessely's program has made its way into much later historiography. Haskalah has been presented as an abandonment of Jewish 'authenticity,' an internalization of 'alien wisdom,' and ultimately a succumbing to the age-old effort by Christians to eliminate Jewish civilisation, carried out now in the name of secularisation rather than religious conversion.[23] But is this a fair criticism of Haskalah?

I would argue that such a characterisation is far too simplistic. Wessely and his fellows were in fact continuing a long-standing Jewish program of participating in the elite cultures of surrounding societies through constant hermeneutic, translation, and reinterpretation of *both* Jewish and non-Jewish bodies of knowledge.[24] True, the emerging nation-state and the contemporary expansion of the capitalist economy

22 Wessely uses the term *nimosiyot* [from Greek *nomos*] to describe these social norms. The term is used in rabbinic literature to refer specifically to non-Jewish laws, while in medieval philosophical literature it takes on the added sense of norms which are specifically human and conventional as opposed to divine in origin. Cf. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Milon ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit* (Berlin: 1908) as well as Jacob Klatzkin, *Otzar ha-Munahim ha-Pilosofiyim* III (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1968), s. v. In modern Hebrew, the term has come to refer to "politeness" *tout court*, indicating perhaps the success of Wessely's ambition to naturalise European bourgeois mores among Jews.

23 Isaac Eisenstein-Barzilay articulated the long-standing view of radical opposition between modernisers and traditionalists in "The Treatment of the Jewish Religion in the Literature of the Berlin Haskalah," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* [*PAAJR*] 24 (1955): 39–68 and Eisenstein-Barzilay, "The Ideology of the Berlin Haskalah," *PAAJR* 25 (1956): 1–37, especially from page 33. For a recent overview of the broader process see Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2011 [Hebrew original 2010]). On the literary circles of the modernisers see the important contributions in Shmuel Feiner, Zohar Shavit, Natalie Naimark-Goldberg, and Tal Kogman, eds., *The Library of the Haskalah: The Creation of a Modern Republic of Letters in Jewish Society in the German-Speaking Sphere* [Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2014).

24 I intentionally restrict my comments to interaction with "elite" culture, knowing full well that my statement begs all sorts of important questions about broader contacts with what is often called "popular" culture. For that matter, it is also difficult to define what we might mean by "elite" in this comparative context since for Jews, a relatively small and widely dispersed group without powerful institutions of church and state, we cannot use the usual, institution-based, definitions. I use the term here to refer to those highly literate strata among Jews and non-Jews—we might

were now offering new social opportunities to individual Jews, and these in turn threatened to destabilise the existing structures and internal norms of the traditional Jewish community. But such sociological considerations are a separate matter. In and of itself, Wessely's maskilic educational program was neither new nor especially radical. Rather it was very much part of that long tradition stretching back to the Jews of the Hellenised era in Palestine and Egypt, the medieval philosophers in Arabic- and Latin-speaking countries, and early modern Jewish writers in Italy. Wessely himself was deeply embedded in that tradition and identified with it. No more striking proof is needed than the language of his pamphlet. Not only did he write it in Hebrew rather than German; he used that register of the Hebrew language developed by and for the medieval philosophical writers.[25] His title and phrasing come from biblical and rabbinic literature. Even his seemingly radical suggestion of two Torahs—that of God and that of man—with emphasis on the latter—was a well-established trope that had appeared, for example, in the popular ethical work, *Sefer ha-Hayim* by Rabbi Hayim ben Bezalel of Friedburg.[26] Approaching Haskalah as a radical break from Jewish tradition misses the movement's decisive emphasis on continuity and its intensive involvement with repurposing the Jewish intellectual legacy.

call them intellectuals—whose discourse sometimes intersected over sets of common vocabularies, texts, objectives and standards.

25 See note 22 for one specific example. The development of Hebrew language usage in the early modern period can serve as an important—and so far underexplored—key to Jewish intellectualism not only of maskilim in central Europe but also in the Sephardic diaspora stretching from Palestine to Amsterdam and beyond. See, for example, my comments on the language of Raphael Meldola of Livorno in Bernard D. Cooperman, "Defining Deviance, Negotiating Norms: Raphael Meldola in Livorno, Pisa, and Bayonne," in *Religious Communities and Cultural Transformations in the Early Modern Western Sephardic Communities*, ed. Joseph Kaplan, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 157–194 and especially 167.

26 Rabbi Hayim ben Bezalel (1520–1588), often referred to as simply the brother of the more famous MaHaRaL (Rabbi Loew of Prague), was a distinguished scholar in his own right. His moralistic *Sefer ha-Hayim,* (written in 1573 but first published in Cracow, 1592–93; reprinted in Amsterdam, 1712–13), also opted for the Torah of Man over the elitist Torah of God. Of course, the sixteenth-century rabbi was using the terms quite differently than was Wessely, understanding the Torah of Man as the rules of daily conduct incumbent on the pious Jew while reserving the Torah of God for more abstract, theological, concepts contained in kabbala and philosophy. One might imagine Wessely picking up this phrase from pietistic discourse with a bit of a twinkle in his eye. Nevertheless, what is significant is that the phrase was well established in rabbinic literature as was its implicit hierarchical division of Jewish education and practice. Wessely was intentionally building on firm foundations. The phrase "torat ha-adam" occurs biblically in 2 Samuel 7; its meaning there is not at all clear and is debated among the classical commentators. The phrase recurs as part of the Jewish discussions about curriculum and the relative weight of gentile and Jewish knowledge systems; see for example the commentary to Proverbs 1 in Rabbi Hayim ben Atar, *Rishon le-Tsiyon* (Istanbul: 1750; fol. 132a; expanded reprint ed. Moses Schwarz, Bnei Brak: 2018, III, 160).

The Ambivalence of Traditional Jewish Periodisation

These Jewish intellectuals of the eighteenth century and later could draw upon well-established building blocks as they began to construct (or reconstruct) the Jewish past in modern terms. To use the terminology of our book: there were already traditional *chronologics* upon which they could draw to divide and rank periods of past Jewish time, thus to anchor their conception of the 'modern' present. These inherited Jewish periodisations had been expressed in religious terminologies. History was structured around crucial turning points in the relation between God and the Jewish people.[27] Biblical events such as the revelation at Sinai, the entry into the Land of Israel, the establishment of the First Temple, the First Exile and Return, the Second Temple and the Second Exile were selected out and woven into a narrative whose significance was the evolving binding authority of the Law. The political changes that lie at the heart of much of the biblical narrative—the shift from tribal confederation to centralised monarchy, from dual kingdoms to a single surviving Jewish state based in Jerusalem, and then eventually to a theocracy under foreign imperial surveillance—these shifts in government structure were less important to the emerging rabbinic leadership as it gradually shaped the Jewish historical narrative. The rabbis had few, if any, political institutions to defend. Rather, their periodisation schemes were aimed at projecting themselves back into the past as legal interpreters and normative arbiters; they anachronistically leveled differences and minimised change so as to foreground their own historical role.[28]

The rabbis went carefully about the task of establishing their own claim to an unbroken chain of tradition and authority, framing a hierarchical chronology of more or less formal institutions that had promulgated religious norms. They subsumed any element of deviance or innovation within this single continuous line of homogenous, received tradition (*kabbala*). The succession of eras stretched from Sinai to the end of the Second Temple period: "Moses received the Torah at Sinai and passed it on to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets, and the prophets gave it to

27 I take here as a given the generally accepted Jewish "rabbinic calendar" that was stabilised by the tenth century CE, and dated the world as created in 3761 BCE. There were other Jewish solar and lunar calendar systems. For their relation to other calendars of the surrounding societies see Mark E. Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2018). For a convenient overview of Jewish calendars see Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, Second Century BCE—Tenth Century CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

28 On the concern for history and historical periodisation in the literature of the classical rabbis see M. D. Herr, "The Conception of History among the Sages," in *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* IIII (Jerusalem: 1977), 129–142; Chaim Milikowsky, ed. and trans., *Seder Olam* (Ph. D. thesis, Yale University, 1981).

the Men of the Great Assembly ...."[29] Subsequent eras were ordered chronologically, named after a series of authoritative books such as the Mishna and its subsequent expansion, the Gemara, or simply listed in order (*Rishonim* or Early Ones; *Aharonim* or Later Ones). And here we encounter a crucial challenge: Judaism, like other revealed religions, saw each subsequent generation as further removed from the original inspiration and therefore necessarily less authoritative within the tradition. "If the earlier ones were as angels, then we are as men," intoned the Babylonian Talmud. "And if the earlier ones were as men, then we are as asses."[30] But how then to accommodate change or adjust to the needs of a new era? Unlike Christian and Muslim communities that could legitimise change through the authority of religious institutions supported by powerful mechanisms of state, Jews had difficulty in articulating theories through which to justify, much less promote, new ideas and spiritual innovations. [31] The solution they found is expressed in the aphorisms with which they neutralised any challenge to the authority of hegemonic discourse—for example, in the metaphor that we are "dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants [who can therefore] see more and farther than our predecessors." It is not surprising that these useful maxims were shared widely among medieval and early modern Christian, Muslim and Jewish writers. The metaphor of dwarfs and giants, for example, is attributed to Bernard of Chartres.[32]

But however much they had to explain away its implications, the concept of spiritual decline was itself extremely useful to the rabbis. For the Jewish minority, under constant cultural challenge from its surroundings and without strong institutional

29 This is the opening statement of tractate *Avot*, part of the Third-Century legal summary known as the Mishna which has served as the basis of Jewish practice down through the ages.

30 BT, *Sabbath,* 112b.

31 The legitimacy of successive interpretation, innovation, and legislation is the focus of much complex discussion in rabbinic literature, and it has become even more prominent in recent times when the fundamentalist claims of an ever-growing *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) rabbinate compete for authority against other systems of Jewish knowledge in and out of Israel. On the institutional power of the medieval *geonic* academies in the Middle East and the twelfth-century Maimonidean arguments against that authority, see G. J. Blidstein, "The License to Teach and its Social Implications in Maimonides" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 51 (5742): 577–587, reprinted in *Likutei Tarbiz V: Mikra'a be-Heker ha-RaMBaM* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 416–426. In general, however, the conditions of the diaspora have not easily tolerated any all-encompassing claim to authority within the Jewish world.

32 The issue arose most acutely when whole bodies of "foreign" or "alien" knowledge were imported together with their own timelines of authority. In such cases, not only specific concepts but the entire structure of received wisdom was challenged. For the Islamic world, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society (2nd–4th / 8th–10th Centuries)* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). For Jewish texts, see Abraham Melamed, *On the Shoulders of Giants: The Debate between Moderns and Ancients in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Thought* [Hebrew] (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2004). See also Robert Merton, *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1985).

support for its intellectual, literary and religious autonomy, spiritual decline could itself justify innovation within the formal tradition. For example, one of rabbinic Judaism's core ideas was that Revelation was actually binate: a written Torah dictated to Moses and remaining unchanged over time, and an 'oral' Torah which was to be passed on carefully from generation to generation but never committed to writing. This Oral Law was to remain unwritten specifically in order to provide a measure of flexibility in response to changing needs. And yet, it *had* been committed to writing in the various texts associated with the Mishna and Talmud! How to explain this forbidden change? The rabbis found an answer: there had been a crisis generated by times of trouble and the people had begun to forget. Innovation had been permitted *because* of decline; writing down the 'oral law' was actually a way of preserving rather than changing. As further effort produced ever more texts—whether explanatory, codificatory, or even legislative—these were again justified as necessary by the fact that we are never quite equal to our ancestors. Exactly the same logic was applied when mystical works, theoretically the esoteric prerogative of only a few *cognoscenti*, began to appear in public during the High Middle Ages and even more so when these books were printed in the sixteenth century. The break with tradition was 'allowed' on the grounds that in the present sad state of affairs, one could no longer be sure the works would be preserved. Jewish traditionalism thus argued consistently that any innovation was in fact not an innovation at all but rather a necessary compromise with orality and practice in the face of the looming danger of even greater decline and loss. The claim to unbroken tradition could be defended even in the face of acknowledged change.

At least as central—and as multivalent—as the notion of decline was the concept of exile [Hebrew: *galut*]: specifically, the Jewish exile from the Land of Israel.[33] Modern historians have pointed out that the term 'exile' can be applied only conditionally to the two moments that Jewish tradition famously labeled as such. The First Exile, dated 586 BCE, is actually made up of several events stretching over decades, and according to various biblical sources, it seems to have affected only a small part of the elite population of Judea. The Second Exile, associated with the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, is actually a misnomer. First, at that point the majority of Jews already lived outside the Land of Israel in a diaspora that stretched from Persia to Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean basin.[34] Second, Jewish life

33 For a still useful overview of this concept in the Jewish narration of the vicissitudes of historical experience, see Jizchak Fritz Baer, *Galut* (Berlin: 1936); English (New York: Schocken Library, 1947). The book was written as a response to German Jewry's despair over the rise of Nazi anti-Semitism and was reprinted as a survey of the Jewish "Zionist" response to history throughout the ages. Written in a different tone but using a similar framework is David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken, 1986).

34 Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

continued to flourish in what would come to be called Palestine for centuries to come. But if therefore the term 'exile' is inaccurate when applied to the Jewish diasporas of the First Century, C. E., it was nevertheless central to the rabbinic narrative. *Galut* became the label, the cause, and the very definition of that era when Jews could only partially fulfill their religious obligations. As Jews declared regularly in their synagogue liturgy:

> On account of our sins, we were exiled from our country and driven away from our land, and we are not able to go up [on pilgrimage to Jerusalem] and [perform the commandment] to appear [in the Temple] and to bow down before You, nor to perform our obligatory [sacrifices] in the house that You chose, that great and sacred house named for You….[35]

The exile was a punishment even if, as the years and centuries went by, the original sin that had merited such ongoing suffering was not easy to define.[36] With time, mystics gave the exile further importance. The divine presence itself was in exile, accompanying the Jews on their enforced wanderings. Indeed, it was the task of the Jewish people, through proper observance of the commandments, to redeem the Holy One and lead it back to its home.

Just as we saw with the concept of decline, however, the *chronotope* of exile could become a powerful tool with which to explain, and neutralise, cultural threats from the surrounding societies.[37] In the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era, Jewish scholars could attribute any perceived sense of intellectual or cultural inferiority to the sufferings of exile. They could, moreover, use exile to justify the acceptance and internalisation of what were clearly borrowings from surrounding societies. Generation after generation of Jewish philosophers and scientists made the claim that "alien wisdom" was in fact originally Jewish and had been taught to the gentiles by the greatest past sages of Judaism. Jews had lost this knowledge only because of exile, and it was now permissible to "reacquire" these teachings and skills.

35 This phrasing, taken from the additional service for the festivals, is echoed over and over in many parts of the Jewish liturgy.

36 Christians—who called themselves the "true Israel" and claimed supersession for the New Testament and Church vis-à-vis the "old covenant"—could associate the Jewish punishment with the great crime of deicide. For their part, Jews told a rather cumbersome tale of a mis-directed dinner invitation to demonstrate that the punishment was over a lack of brotherly love and common courtesy among Jews. They similarly rejected the Muslim doctrine of *tahrif* which argued that the Koran was the truest and purest version of Scripture and that Jews had falsified their scriptures.

37 I take the term 'chronotope' (time-space) from Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982). On its use to define "invokable chunks of history that organize the indexical order of discourse," see Jan Blommaert, "Chronotopes, Scales, and Complexity in the Study of Language in Society," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44 (2015): 105–116.

Let me illustrate this with just one example taken from seventeenth-century Venice. Rabbi Leone Modena was well versed in critical historical reasoning and in the methods of textual dating and analysis that characterised humanist historiography in his day. His *The Lion Roars (Ari Nohem)*, a devastating attack on kabbalistic claims to religious authority, remains a fine piece of critical scholarship comparable, I think, to Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine.[38] Still, when trying to make the case for the permissibility of introducing contemporary (non-Jewish) styles of polyphonic music into the synagogue service, Modena asserted without hesitation that this was in fact the type of music sung by the Levites in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Jews, he argued, had forgotten it only because of the sufferings of the exile. For all his fine historical and critical sensitivity, in other words, Leone Modena chose to resort to the same powerful and well-established argument that Jewish philosophers had used for centuries in order to validate imitation of the outside, no matter how revolutionary, on the grounds that this was actually "ours" in the first place.[39] So also in the eighteenth century, these tried and true ideas served Wessely and his contemporaries well. The *maskilim* could, as before, blame Jewish backwardness on persecution, and they could use images of dwarfs on giants' shoulders to justify however tentatively absorbing new knowledge.[40]

But something had changed in the cultural challenge, and the *maskilim* knew it. The Renaissance, as its name implied, had sought a 'rebirth'—that is, a reacquisition of a glorious past, and the Jews had responded accordingly by evoking (and inventing) their own glorious past. The Enlightenment, on the other hand, sought to shape new ideas

38 On Modena see Howard Adelman, "Success and Failure in the Seventeenth century Ghetto of Venice: The Life and Thought of Leon Modena (1571–1648)" (Brandeis University, Ph. D. thesis, 1985); *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena's Life of Judah*, translated and edited by Mark R. Cohen (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). On his criticism of Jewish tradition generally see Talya Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Exile: 'Voice of a Fool,' an Early Modern Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997). On Modena's acute criticism specifically of kabbalistic claims to historical authenticity see Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah. Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. 2011). In my review of that work (*Religion and Literature* 47, no. 3 [Spring, 2014]), I suggested that the substantive, anti-kabbalistic thrust of Modena's work was even more aggressive than Dweck had proposed.

39 It may be helpful to add here that this argument was accompanied by a parallel claim to the value of independent reason and a proud assertion of each man's ability to know the truth. Jewish philosophers often justified "borrowing" foreign wisdom on the grounds that "one must [or may] accept the truth from whomever speaks it," implying that there are standards for truth that stand outside the received tradition. Moses ben Maimon, for example, uses this argument to justify citing the works of the non-Jewish philosophers.

40 On the use of this image by two east European reformers of the Haskalah era see Hillel Levine, "Dwarfs on the Shoulders of Giants": A Case Study in the Impact of Modernization on the Social Epistemology of Judaism," *Jewish Social Studies* 40, no. 1 (Winter, 1978): 63–72.

and foster new discoveries. It was progress, and not mere recovery, that would be the mark of all things desirable. This was an era of discovery and invention. The assertion that human history was a record of decline seemed palpably nonsensical. Jews' sufferings in exile had not merely resulted in a loss of knowledge; it had eroded their cognitive skills. The new age demanded that Jews change themselves in order to keep up. Truth was no longer contained within a fixed body of knowledge, revealed or known already in the distant past. It was therefore no longer enough for maskilim to lay out a claim that those unchanging ancient verities had originally been Jewish. It was now necessary for Jews actively to take part in the excitement of scientific and moral progress. There was a growing sense of shame at Jews' failure to keep up with this dynamic present—not only with regard to the natural sciences but even with regard to religion itself.

We can hear this change in the angry tones of the Berlin banker and *maskilic* leader, David Friedländer, in a letter to his friend, Meir Eiger in 1792. Friedländer pictures contemporary Christians engaged in a mission to inspect their faith, to purify its moral message, and to separate out the wheat from the chaff. Jewish rabbis, on the other hand, were still preoccupied with trivial rules. Citing recent books by leading rabbis in Altona and Prague, Friedländer cries out against their dismissive treatment of reason and rails against their assertion that translating the Bible into the vernacular had been a tragedy for the Jewish people that had brought darkness to the world.[41] A few years later (1799), Friedländer followed up with an open letter (*Sendschreiben*) to the prominent Berlin Protestant leader, Wilhelm Teller. In it, he reiterated his assumption of progressive change in Christian circles and even envisioned some form of ultimate accommodation between the two religious denominations. Perhaps to his surprise, Friedländer discovered almost immediately that he had seriously misjudged the extent of change and flexibility in contemporary Christian circles—at least when it came to basic dogmas like the divinity of Christ or a willingness to recognise equal status for Judaism. A flurry of rejectionist pamphlets came from Christian writers. Jewish writers were even more vociferous in their condemnations, dismissing the proposal as a request for "dry baptism" and the author himself as a "dummy."[42] We need not go so

41 Joseph Meisl, "David Friedländer's Letters," *Historishe Shriftn* II (Vilna: 1937), 390–412, 403–406. The abbreviated translation of Friedländer's letter provided in Reinharz and Mendes-Flohr, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 96–97, misunderstands several passages and does not, I think, give a full sense of the author's concerns. Friedländer's criticism is directed at R. Raphael Cohen, *Marpe Lashon* (Altona: 1790) and Ezekiel Landau, *Ziyon le-Nefesh Haya* (Prague: 1783). The tradition that translating the Torah into Greek (the legendary account of the origin of the Septuagint) had been a source of tragedy and mourning is mentioned, for example, in Joseph Caro's authoritative code of Jewish law, *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim,* § 580.5.

42 Friedländer has been the subject of several recent studies; see especially Uta Lohmann, *David Friedländer: Reformpolitik im Zeichen von Aufklärung und Emanzipation. Kontexte des preußischen Judenedikts vom 11. März 1812* (Hannover: Wierhahn Verlag, 2013). For criticism by Jewish authors see for example Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Fourth period, chap. 4: "Die Measfim

far. Though stillborn, Friedländer's proposal is a fascinating exploration of the possibilities for toleration based not on secularisation or a radical division of church and state but on conscious and principled religious syncretism. In the present context, what is most significant is the author's implicit challenge to the traditional Jewish *chronotope* and its emphasis on the immutable glory of the past. Jews, he believed, would have to internalise the new teleology: the past was antiquated and the present was modern.

And it is specifically here that we catch the characteristic, and in a sense paradoxical, result of the new *maskilic* periodisation. We might have expected Friedländer simply to abandon the Jewish past. He did not. Rather, like his fellow maskilim, he committed himself to its preservation and re-interpretation. What was needed first was a reform of education. The rabbis' obsession with trivia had led to a situation in which most Jews could no longer articulate the meaning of their faith, their God, or their truth. If the inner truth of Judaism were to be protected and promoted, Jews had to gain access to it through a new kind of Jewish school and new textbooks. Jewish youth, he had complained to Eiger, would no longer undertake the rigors of traditional learning and they could no longer read the Hebrew texts. Friedländer therefore founded and directed a new kind of Jewish community school. He continued Mendelssohn's work of translating the Bible into German. He composed a textbook for his students. Equally striking, he and his fellow *maskilim* slowly began the work of redefining Jewish knowledge, shifting it from memorisation of biblical and rabbinic texts to appreciation of their historical context. It was this historical approach, he believed, that would give Jewish doctrines renewed significance.[43]

The Call for a Turn to History

We are so used to thinking of the Enlightenment as a future-directed call for progress that it is startling to realise how central in the Haskalah's response to crisis was its call for a turn to the past, and to the study of history. From the very start, Wessely and his fellows included history in their agenda for curricular change. Already in *Nahal Besor*, the 1783 prospectus for their new periodical, *Ha-Measef*, they announced their intention to publish

und der judenchristliche Salon," http://www.zeno.org/nid/20002745224, accessed July 31, 2022: "Wenn der Verfasser nicht ein solcher Flachkopf gewesen wäre, hätte man das *Sendschreiben* für eine Satire auf das lieblose Christentum halten können."

43 "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Modern Judaism" has been explored and emphasised for the nineteenth century by Ismar Schorsch, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1983): 413–437, reprinted in Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 177–204. See more recently Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History* (Portland, OR: Littman Library, 2002).

> biographies of great men of Israel (*Biografie der Grossen undzer Natzion*), rabbis and great scholars of the land, leaders and those famous for knowledge, from among the honored merchants and the wealthy among the people who maintain the house of Israel with pediments of silver, and who stand before kings to speak well of their people. [We will relate] the place and date of their birth and the events that befell them, and the good they did among their brethren. The enlightened reader will understand the great value of this to enlightened youth over and above the pleasure one gets from [learning about] what happened to famous people as times change and events evolve.[44]

Apparently, such an interest in human history was totally novel, so much so that the publishers were worried that their interest in it might not be understood. They found it necessary to transliterate the German phrase (which I have tried to spell out here) and insert it parenthetically into their Hebrew call for biographical treatments to make sure readers would grasp an idea so innovative in Hebrew circles. They assured their readers that these reports about great men who helped their people would not be trivial obituaries like those in the popular press. In the first issue of their journal they even took pains to include what they represented to be a letter from an anonymous subscriber applauding their proposal and reiterating the value of historical accounts.

The call for Jewish historical knowledge was not entirely innovative. Obviously, much of biblical literature was historical, but it has been generally asserted that medieval Jews had abandoned the writing of history. Scholars have pointed, for example, to Maimonides who famously dismissed chronicles as a waste of precious time.[45] It is nevertheless clear that individual Jews had certainly continued to pen historical

44 The prospectus as well as 130 issues of the periodical *Ha-Meassef* (Königsberg and elsewhere: 1783–1811) are available through the National Library of Israel online collection of historical Jewish newspapers at jpress.org.il; unfortunately, it is difficult to direct the non-Hebrew reader to the URL for a specific page. On the site, the prospectus is included with the first issue of the journal (1783 though the title page refers to 1784); the call for historical content appears on fol. 2–3 of the prospectus. The anonymous letter is on pages 9–10 of the first issue, October 2, 1783. The literary history of biography and autobiography in Hebrew literature is itself quite complicated; see Marcus Moseley, *Being for Myself Alone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Alan Mintz, *'Banished from Their Father's Table': Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

45 See Salo Baron, "The Historical Outlook of Maimonides," in *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 113–114; Kenneth Seeskin, "Maimonides' Sense of History," *Jewish History* 18 (2004): 129–145. The idea that medieval Jews abandoned the study of history, emphasised by Yosef H. Yerushalmi in his influential *Zakhor* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), depends very much, of course, on a rather narrow definition of what constitutes 'history.' As a portrayal of pre-modern Jewish historiography this approach has been increasingly rejected by historians.

accounts of greater or narrower focus. They had written chronicles, they had thought it important to recount their people's fate, and they had even grappled with the radical implications of Renaissance humanist historicism.[46] This trend will now be picked up in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

What must be stressed is that the Haskalah did not aim at familiarising Jews with the "secular" past shared with the surrounding society. By calling for historical study, it meant, both implicitly and explicitly, the "scientific" or secular study of Jewish texts and Jewish history as a way of reframing the Jewish historical narrative, arriving at a better understanding of Judaism, and reconceptualising the Jewish group experience. This interest in the Jewish past and in its textual and linguistic tradition was not, as has sometimes been suggested, merely an initial moderation that would soon be abandoned in favor of more radical positions. It would remain central to the intellectual and cultural effort that called for a return to the basic forms of textual study that had long characterised Jewish knowledge, albeit with new critical and comparative tools.[47] The demand to learn *about* the outside society was also a call to learn *from* it, to use its rapidly developing historiographical tools to retrieve lost texts and fashion a new, internal Jewish narrative. Jewish historical studies would soon multiply, aiming at various markets: school textbooks,[48] the popular reader, and a growing group of scholarly historians who would gradually come together to shape the academic field of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) and its contemporary articulation in academic Jewish Studies.[49] As each author selected the events, persona, or texts

46 See for example Azariah de' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes,* translated and annotated by Joanna Weinberg (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

47 See, for example, Charles Manekin "Steinschneider's 'Decent Burial': A Reappraisal," in ed. Howard Kreisel, *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, I (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2006), 239–251; Reimund Licht, "Moritz Steinschneider's Concept of a History of Jewish Literature," in *Studies on Steinschneider: Moritz Steinschneider and the Emergence of the Science of Judaism in Nineteenth-Century Germany,* ed. Reimund Leicht and Gad Freudenthal (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 151–174.

48 For example, in 1808 David Fränkel, director of the Jewish school in Dessau, published *Geschichte der Juden von ihrer Rückkehr aus der babylonischen Gefangenschaft bis zur Zerstörung des zweyten Tempels: nach Flavius Josephus. Zunächst für die jüdische Jugend bearbeitet und mit erläuternden Anmerkungen begleitet* (Vienna: Carl Ferdinand Beck). For more on Jewish textbooks, see Annegret Völpel and Zohar Shavit, *Deutsch-jüdische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Ein literaturgeschichtlicher Grundriß* (Stuttgart: 2002).

49 The fascinating story of this intellectual movement that would grow from the studies of individuals to Jewishly funded academies specialising in the training of rabbis, Jewish teachers, and other communal functionaries, is gradually being told. See, for example, David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman, eds., *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and Andrew Bush, *Jewish Studies: A Theoretical Introduction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.) For a participant's view of the American transition to, and professionalisation of, Jewish Studies, see Michael Meyer's plenary address to the Association for Jewish Studies (2013), published in that organisation's bulletin, *Perspectives on Jewish History*

through which to mark off successive eras, through which to construct his periodisation of Jewish history, he inevitably kept one eye on the demands of the challenge from external, 'non-Jewish' conceptions of knowledge while trying to reconstruct the 'authentic' Jewish experience. Discovering the Jewish past was not just, as one author put it, a substitute "faith of fallen Jews."[50] But the Jewish past was now being constructed in a negotiated space.

An interest in history and in the categorisation of time was, I am arguing, essential to the modernising project itself, and modernising Jews took it up from the start. Indeed, for Jews recovery of their past has been an especially crucial undertaking, one that was, and remains to this day, also highly fraught and freighted with consequences though these may vary with time and place.[51] The claims to having a history and to not being a historical 'fossil' return over and over.[52] At the end of the nineteenth century the polyhistor Simon Dubnow would declare the Jews "the historical nation

(Spring 2014). Meyer emphasised the plural form used in the Association's name as an intentional choice reflecting the growing multiplicity of approaches within the field.

50 In *Zakhor* (see note 45), Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi famously defined the function of historical study as "the faith of fallen Jews." David N. Myers and Alexander Kaye used the phrase to title the collection of Yerushalmi's essays they edited (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2014). Yerushalmi's book had, and continues to have, an impact far beyond what the author could have expected from a brief set of semi-popular lectures, a point that itself deserves further research. Suffice it to say here that the book and its periodisation of Jewish historiography was itself very much a product of its own time and of the particular circumstances of the author's career. I hope to deal with this further in another context.

51 As just one example of the close interplay between academic, political, and personal views of the Jewish historical narrative, see Anita Shapira, "The Jewish People Deniers," *The Journal of Israeli History* 28, no.1 (March 2009): 63–71, her lengthy review of Shlomo Sand's Hebrew *When and How Was the Jewish People Invented* (Tel-Aviv: Resling, 2008), pre-printed by the Israeli Democracy Institute, an Israeli "non-partisan think-and-do tank" that "works to bolster the values and institutions of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state," accessed May 20, 2009, https://en.idi.org.il/articles/11776. Rejecting Sand's French model of the nation, Shapira puts the emphasis on the fact that Jews everywhere "retained t*he common consciousness of a community with a shared destiny, which found expression in moments of crisis* such as the ransom of hostages or the Damascus Blood Libel." [Emphasis my own—BDC]. Jewish feelings of community are assumed to be tied to the possibility of political action, and the centrality of anti-Semitism as the target of national identity is for her a given.

52 The reference is to Arnold Toynbee's controversial label of present-day Jews. For a Jewish response, see Maurice Samuel, *The Professor and the Fossil: Confusion, Prejudices, and Anti-Intellectual Distortions in Arnold J. Toynbee's A Study of History* (New York: Knopf, 1956). Toynbee's references to the Jews as fossil are brought up in an interesting 1961 debate between Yaakov Herzog (then Israeli Ambassador to Canada) and Professor Toynbee over morality in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle: https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/archival-recordings/fbr-462_4461/herzog-toynbee-debate-yaakov-herzog-arnold-toynbee, accessed July 31, 2022.

of all times"—indeed "the most historical" nation, *historicissimus*.[53] Some decades later Salo Baron, of whom we have already spoken, would begin his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, by arguing for the uniqueness of the Jews' historical experience lived "in spite of nature," and "emancipated from state and territory."[54] Following the Holocaust, the philosopher Emil L. Fackenheim would write of the Jewish Return *into* History[55] giving existential significance to the Zionist insistence on an activist "Return to History."[56] In different contexts and with different connotations, these authors and many others sought to fashion a modern history for Jews and to claim magisterial significance for the chronological description of the Jews' past.[57]

Benedict Anderson famously pointed out that co-optation of the past is a central aspect of the self-definition of modern nation states. For Jews, we might say the process worked in the opposite direction. Acquiring a past led to the demand for national identity. Historical narrative was intended to demonstrate that Jews belonged in the modern world. This vision would be popularised across denominational, political, and geographical lines and it would in turn become basic to Zionist political rhetoric where it would be instrumentalised for a wide variety of social, political, and even military purposes. But politicised or not, the call for chronologically ordered study of the Jewish past was, and remains, the fundamental Jewish cultural response to the challenge of the Jews' metaphoric equivalent to decolonisation—an attempt to restore to Jewish individuals a sense of inner dignity by demonstrating Jewish agency, aesthetic sophistication, and participation in the shared values of the dominant society.

53 The phrases are taken from Simon Dubnow's "Jewish History: Essay in the Philosophy of History," (1893; translated into English in 1903 and reprinted in *Nationalism and History,* ed. Koppel S. Pinson [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1958], 251–324, here at 259). Note the stridency of Dubnow's insistence on historical status and significance.

54 Salo Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (above nn. 8 and 10). Baron's opening chapter, largely unchanged between the two editions, goes into great detail about the defining nature of history for Jews and for Judaism.

55 Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem* (New York: Schocken, 1980).

56 See David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

57 To put this in context, none of these writers expected an 'end to history,' whether in traditional messianic terms or in the Hegelian sense. For them, history was and would be a constant and presumably never-ending struggle of good and evil. Their speculations centered in one way or another around the Jews' participation in that process, and thus around Jews' historical agency. This is linked to their conception of the nation as the agent of history and thus to their understanding of Jewish national identity.

Translatio Scientiae as Biography

Jews' turn to historical thinking was more than an abstract intellectual exercise. It was shaped by the real-world experiences of individuals who were seeking to make their way into the new contexts of cultural activity and professionalisation that the modern era gradually offered. The rhetoric of history and the terminology of periodisation, they discovered, was the "coin of the realm" with which they could buy status—both in the surrounding world and within their own communities. To forget this very personal and biographical aspect of historical periodisation is to miss an important aspect of the periodisation process.[58]

I would argue that when cultural worlds interact, confrontation and compromise are experienced not just in the abstract but on a very personal level by the people involved. *Translatio scientiae* involves the translation—literally, the relocation—of not just ideas but also of intellectuals who move from one culture to another, from one system of associations and hierarchies of significance to another. Personal disruption and disorder are inherent and inevitable in such border crossing, and stories of failure deserve as much attention and prestige as the few extraordinary success stories to whom their coreligionists proudly point as "the Jewish contribution to civilization."[59] Cultural middle men, by default often what we today call "public intellectuals," are tasked with carrying ideas back and forth. To accomplish their task, they must be able to claim status for themselves in both worlds, a status which in each case paradoxically relies on their self-presentation as representative of the "Other." To the outside society they must represent the 'authenticity' of their roots; but to their community of origin, should they decide to return, they may seem suspect and contaminated unless they can demonstrate the power of the new knowledge. The challenge, to phrase the matter in a modern terminology, is how to refashion their 'image' in order to 'sell' themselves and the knowledge they bring with them in each environment. How do they create their own identity and the identity of the world(s) they represent? There is inevitably personal instability. And the search for a new balance point, if it does not overwhelm them, can become a remarkable source of ongoing anxiety as well as creativity.

The trauma of dislocation is not unique to modernity nor are the maskilim the first Jewish cultural middlemen to suffer its anxieties. It is hard to imagine a more desperate statement of intellectual isolation than the letter of the early fourteenth-century Provençal Jewish philosopher and translator Kalonymos ben Kalonymos who had left his family behind for years of study of the Arabic language and philosophy in

58 Compare note 3.

59 On the history of this 'keyword' in Jewish history see Jeremy Cohen and Richard I. Cohen, eds., *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization: Reassessing an Idea* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008).

Catalonia and then went on to a position as a philosophical translator at the court of Robert of Anjou in Naples. In a letter to his young son back in Provence this itinerant intellectual bemoans his personal and cultural isolation:

> My heart is hollow within me when I remember you, and my body will not rest easy until I am with you .... Would that I could leave this land and these places. There is not one of our [Jewish] people here. The city is full of people crossing [literally: sanctifying] themselves and occupying themselves constantly with their religion. On every street they erect tapestried altars[60] for themselves. There are male statues [that is, representations of Christ] and forms of men and women [the Christian saints]. You can see nothing but people bowing down and genuflecting. May God extract me from this confusion into which I have fallen. I will not rest nor sleep, my food will have no taste, until I am among Jews, may it happen quickly and soon.[61]

Certainly the most detailed Jewish narrative of personal isolation and shame associated with being an outsider is the famous *Lebensgeschichte* of Salomon Maimon, the brilliant eighteenth-century Jewish intellectual who went from the poverty of a Lithuanian Jewish village to the worlds of German and German-Jewish high culture and ended living off the patronage of a Silesian minor noble.[62] Maimon has been declared the most important Jewish philosopher of the Haskalah era; Immanuel Kant called him "one of my sharpest critics." But what is significant to us is the enthusiasm with which Maimon told self-deprecatory stories about himself and his mis-adventures as a beggar and thief, a social misfit and the object of derision even within the Jewish community.

60 The reference to Ezekiel 16:16 is bitterly disparaging since the biblical phrase refers to platforms covered by multi-colored cloths that are beds used by prostitutes, and this interpretation of the somewhat unclear text is adopted by all the medieval Hebrew commentators.

61 The quote comes at the very end of Kalonymos' *Ethical Epistle (Igeret Musar)* published by Isaiah Sonne in *Kovets al Yad*, n. s. 1 (XI), (Jerusalem: 1936): 92–110. See also Joseph Shatzmiller, "Minor Epistle of Apology of Rabbi Kalonymos ben Kalonymos" [Hebrew], *Sefunot: Studies and Sources on the History of the Jewish Communities in the East* 10 (1966): 7–52. For another perspective on the alienation of this fascinating medieval Jewish intellectual see Tova Rosen, "Circumcised Cinderella: The Fantasies of a Fourteenth-Century Jewish Author," *Prooftexts* 20 (2000): 87–110. For a recent review of his contributions as well as the editing and dating of his work see Theodor Dunkelgrün, "Dating the *Even Bohan* of Qalonymos ben Qalonymos of Arles: a Microhistory of Scholarship," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 7, no.1 (2013): 39–72.

62 Volume one of Maimon's *Gesammelte Werke* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1965–76) edited by Valerio Verra is the most recent edition of the German text. The most recent (and only complete) translation into English is by Paul Reitter, *The Autobiography of Solomon Maimon: The Complete Translation,* ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Abraham Socher (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

That he sought to present himself as a modern-day Maimonides is well known.[63] But it is important to note as well how his memoir inverted the call to a history of great men that was so essential to the Haskalah. In his work, rabbis are ignorant or fools who can be manipulated, rich men are boors who don't appreciate genius, and even the leading maskilim are too "established" to accommodate the needs of a truly enlightened seeker after truth. Only Maimon himself stands outside the daily fray, and he, of course, keeps reminding the reader that, in the eyes of most of his Jewish contemporaries, he was a failure.

Maimon modeled his *Lebensgeschichte* (1792) on Rousseau's *Confessions*, the highly original autobiographical account of the search for individual identity that had appeared a decade before. But to read Maimon's account as a forward-moving tale of self-discovery like Rousseau's is to miss his purpose. Maimon's narrative is best understood, rather, if we compare it to the parodic self-presentations that these days we associate with some of our most successful ethnic comedians—entertainers and writers who serve the delicate role of apparently mocking themselves and their community of origin in order to humanise it in the eyes of the host society and moderate some of the overt hostility directed towards the former by the latter. Paradoxically, by emphasising the differences, the comic legitimises the shared humanity of the two sides. By giving humorous voice to stereotypes, the comic mutes intolerance. And by telling tales of origin, the comic gives comfort to other immigrants like himself who live in the threatening isolation of a new world. To be a comedian is of course not the only professional role available to such intermediary figures. They can serve as interlocutors and go-betweens bridging the two worlds as translators, negotiators, or tourist guides.[64] If they have the ability, they can use the ostensibly more elevated new language to demand recognition for the values of their heritage. In his wonderful short story "Odessa," for example, the Soviet-Jewish writer Isaac Babel highlighted the universal significance of the Jews of that Black Sea Port (and thus legitimated writing about them in Russian) on the ironic grounds that "they murder the Russian language there."[65] The middleman may become a story-teller, accepting the responsibility to preserve and retell the cultural patrimony.[66] But such a story-teller inevitably

63 Born Solomon ben Joshua, the author adopted the surname Maimon when he was close to thirty years old in an attempt to identify with Moses Maimonides, the medieval hero of rationalist Jews. On this and his sense of how he must appear to his readers, see Reitter, *Autobiography,* especially xv and 123–128.

64 Compare the opening remarks of Peter Burke, "Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe," in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe,* ed. Peter Burke and R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7–38, 7.

65 Isaac Babel, "Odessa," in *You Must Know Everything: Stories 1915–1937,* trans. Max Hayward (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 26–30.

66 This, I would argue, is clearly the agenda of Paulina Wengerova in writing her *Memoiren einer Grossmutter: Bilder aus der Kulturgeschichte der Juden Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1913–1919).

recasts the tradition in new terms, reformulating its essence and its implications to appeal to a new audience.[67] The middleman may eventually break under the strain of a constantly negotiated identity, and even try to return home in search of the elusive safety of childhood memories. There he can claim some authority for his acquired knowledge.[68] But wherever the middleman ends up, he takes on the attributes of the trickster, constantly utilising sleight of hand to fascinate audiences and thus redefine old social norms.[69] All of these elements, I would suggest, help us understand the modern Jewish historian who reframes his people's history in the context of the modern academy.

See "A Life Unresolved," my afterword to Pauline Wengeroff, *Rememberings: The World of a Russian-Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* tr. Henny Epstein (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 2000).

67 American Jewish writers have often equated their literary vocation with a moral or religious duty to recount and elevate the Jewish every-day, even if only in order to challenge its values. Thus, for example, the young American Jewish writer and poet Delmore Schwartz commissioned himself on reaching metaphoric adulthood to tell the agonising tales of his own Jewish family while, prophet-like, he announces the coming doom. Schwartz took this sense of mission, as well as the title of his first and greatest story, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" (1935), from the epigraph to William Butler Yeats' *Responsibilities* (1914), itself a lyrical retelling of Irish tales. A generation later, Philip Roth would reframe Judaism into a social mission by imagining his character Noel Klugman (sic!) fulfilling the holy duties of the Jewish New Year not by praying in the synagogue but by working in a library that serves the needs of Newark, New Jersey's indigent black population; "Goodbye Columbus" the title story of *Goodbye Columbus* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 97.

68 Whether it is possible to return is another matter. The gloomy forebodings of the American southern novelist Thomas Wolfe that *You Can't Go Home Again* (1940) are already to be found clearly expressed in the stories of the American Jewish journalist, activist, and novelist Abraham Cahan. See, for example his "The Imported Bridegroom" (1898).

69 I use the term "trickster" in the sense adopted by Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006). The model of the protean cultural trickster is taken from the world of Native American mythologies described by anthropologists including Franz Boas and Paul Radin, and then taken up by psychologists like Carl Jung. For a summary see Mac Linscott Ricketts, *The Structure and Religious Significance of the Trickster-Transformer-Culture Hero in the Mythology of the North American Indians* (Ph. D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1964), summarised in "The North American Indian Trickster," *History of Religions* 5 (1966): 327–350. Jung's short essay, "On the Psychology of the Trickster-Figure" is available in English, among other places, in his *Four Archetypes* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 135–152. Jung reminds us of analogies to the medieval carnival with its reversal of hierarchical order and to the alchemical figure of Mercurius. The trickster as daring subverter of social norms has also been found in Spanish Golden Age drama (e.g., Tirso de Molina, "El burlador de Sevilla y el convidado de piedra," [1630]). More recently, the trickster has become an important tool for literary scholars interested in examining the heroic roles of subaltern characters. For its importance in the interpretation of African American culture, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). It is my argument that the topos can be usefully applied also to Jewish historians operating in the language and framework of western universities.

The Ghetto as Jewish Time: Inventing the Ghetto to Create an Audience

With all this in mind, let us now return to Salo Baron and his article on "Ghetto and Emancipation," an article which I suggested intentionally reframed the periodisation of Jewish history by challenging the narrative of progress that had been regnant for over a century. That long-established narrative had seen the present and future in positive terms. It had rooted Jewish progress in political liberalism and equated it with the admission of the Jews into the body politic of various nation states. Baron had argued instead that the modern era had cost the Jews their communal autonomy and cultural creativity. In this last section of this paper I would like to suggest that one way for us to appreciate and understand Baron's argument is to view him as a cultural middle-man who, caught in his own personal dislocation, seeks to carry a message back and forth between multiple worlds. In order to flesh out this claim let me try then, albeit briefly, to give you a sense of the journalistic and personal context of the article and thus to outline the role of cultural go-between that its author was playing.

Baron's article had appeared in *The Menorah Journal*, a magazine that has been called "one of the most exciting episodes in the history of the American-Jewish intellectual community."[70] This journal was the brainchild of an undergraduate student organisation, The Menorah Society, established at Harvard University in 1906 and dedicated to fostering a humanistic interpretation of Judaism appropriate to the academic environment in which these first-generation American Jewish students found themselves. The Society soon found a ready audience among Jewish students on other American campuses. By 1913 chapters at various universities were loosely linked into the Intercollegiate Menorah Association, itself the institutionalised expression of what the founders proudly declared as "The Menorah Movement." In 1915, there would be some thirty-five chapters, and this would eventually increase to eighty. And by 1915 the organisation had also begun publishing *The Menorah Journal*, a vehicle "For the Study and Advancement of Jewish Culture and Ideals." The journal was intended to "supply important material for study and discussion, as well as stimulate thinking and active effort in behalf of Menorah ideals…the advancement of American Jewry and the spread of Hebraic culture." The authors aspired to a general audience and dedicated themselves "to be absolutely non-partisan, an expression of all that is best in Judaism and not merely of some particular sect or school or locality or group of special interests… harking back to the past that we may deal more wisely with the present and the future."[71] In his "Greetings" published in the first issue of the journal,

70 Robert Alter, "Epitaph for a Jewish Magazine: Notes on the Menorah Journal," *Commentary* 39, no. 5 (1965): 51–55.

71 "Editorial Statement" opening the first issue of *The Menorah Journal* (January 1915): 1–2.

the prominent educator Cyrus Adler made it clear that he saw the Association and the journal as a way of continuing the high tradition of Jewish learning and combating the ignorance of the three million American Jews who might otherwise be lost to Judaism or "maintain a Judaism ignorant of its language, its literature or its traditions." He warned that "conditions abroad" might soon relocate the center of gravity of Judaism and the Jewish people to the American continent and saw the Association as part of the effort to create an American generation of leadership equal to the coming task.[72] Louis Brandeis, in the same issue, wrote of the first Menorah Society as "a landmark in the Jewish Renaissance" which he confidently linked to the great promise of American brotherhood—something which itself "became the Jews' fundamental law more than twenty-five hundred years ago."[73] In a separate article, Brandeis idealised "the educated Jew."[74] But the most telling remark, for our purposes, came from Stephen Wise, then rabbi of New York's Free Synagogue. Wise quoted the goal articulated by Theodore Herzl (a "truly great Jew") to transform "arme Judenjungen" [poor Jew boys] into "stolze junge Juden" [proud young Jews]. He hoped the Menorah Association marked a "sea-change" from the self-pitying Jewish youth of the past into self-knowing, self-revering, and self-respecting Jews who no longer judged themselves by the opinions of others.[75] "No Jew can be truly cultured who Jewishly uproots himself," Wise declared. "The man who rejects the birthright of inheritance of the traditions of the earliest and virilest of the cultured peoples of earth is impoverishing his very being."[76] From the very start, in other words, the publishers of *The Menorah Journal* and their supporters saw the task of Jewish education as more than merely pedagogy; it was a cultural war to preserve tradition *and* to create an aggressively self-confident generation of Jews comfortable in their own identity. The journal would prepare them to take on the challenge of participating in the world around them *as Jews*.

Though there are significant differences in content and context, it is not irrelevant to notice the similarities between the activities and publications of the Menorah Society and those of another Jewish association of university students and recent graduates, the *Verein für Cultur and Wissenschaft der Juden* established in Berlin in 1819.[77] Like that organisation, the young activists in Boston sought to find a place for Jewish topics in

72 Cyrus Adler, "Greetings" opening the first issue of *The Menorah Journal (*January 1915): 3–4

73 Louis D. Brandeis, "Greetings" opening the first issue of *The Menorah Journal* (January 1915): 4

74 Louis D. Brandeis, "A Call to the Educated Jew," *The Menorah Journal* (January, 1915), 13–19.

75 Theodore Herzl, *Gesammelte zionistische Werke,* V, 463 as cited by Michael Brenner, *Geschichte des Zionismus*, 2nd edition (Munich: CH Beck, 2005), 33. Wise's greetings are on p. 12 of the first issue of the *Journal.*

76 Stephen Wise "Greetings" opening the first issue of *The Menorah Journal* (January 1915): 12.

77 On this organisation, its program and its publications see Ismar Schorsch, "Breakthrough into the Past: The *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden,"* reprinted from *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1988) in the author's *From Text to Context*, 205–232.

the university curriculum and to redefine Jewish knowledge to fit academic categories. Just like the young German scholars (who included the poet Heinrich Heine, the legal historian Edouard Gans, and the brilliant Hebraist Leopold Zunz), "the founders of the [Menorah Society] embarked on a bold project to remake Jewish life by fashioning Jewish culture in the image of the scholarly world they had come to admire."[78] Both associations were made up of first-generation university students who sought to establish a place for themselves and their learning in the Jewish world of their origins. Indeed, they were claiming the right to lead the Jewish world by teaching it to see itself properly. And in both cases, the young men armed themselves specifically with the tools of historical study. By publishing his paper in *The Menorah Journal* Baron was declaring himself part of this project to create a culturally sophisticated American Jewish youth—a project which, moreover, had a distinguished pedigree in the annals of Jewish scholarship. But unlike his German predecessors who wished to use history to overcome particularism and discover the universalist essence of Judaism, Baron made the remarkable and revolutionary argument that it was exactly in the particularist life of the Jewish group in pre-modern times that its significance and power was concentrated. The reason for the change is not hard to find. The German scholars were reacting to a society that still restricted Jewish membership in both political society and the academy, and the young intellectuals were seeking a way to formulate their identity in terms that would overcome their isolation. Baron and *The Menorah Journal*, on the other hand, were writing for an already emancipated, American Jewish society. They therefore had the luxury to look back on isolation in positive terms. That is why Baron could totally reverse the direction of the Jewish historical narrative and describe modernity and emancipation as defining a period of loss. He idealised pre-modern isolation in an effort to 'create a market' for what he had to sell.

But Baron was not the first to use *The Menorah Journal* to spread a vision of the difference between pre-modern and modern Jewish history, nor was he the first to base his distinction on a revised image of the ghetto. Cecil Roth's essay, "In the Italian Ghetto," had already appeared there two years earlier.[79] Roth's paper was an odd combination of high vocabulary and sly jokes about cross-religious sexual dalliance. He presented the Italian Jewish ghetto through the eyes of an imagined American tourist, an eighteenth-century well-off American Christian making the Grand Tour of Italy. This outsider's vantage point allowed Roth (who was himself British) to address his audience of young American Jewish readers—college-age and perhaps a little

78 Daniel Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 4. Greene argues that the Americans were consciously modelling themselves on the German *Verein;* see especially chapter 4.

79 Cecil Roth, "In the Italian Ghetto," *The Menorah Journal* 12, no. 6 (December, 1926): 577–588. Roth had actually written the article in 1925, as he notes in "The Origin of *ghetto:* a final word," *Romania* 60 (1934): 67–76, 68, n. 2, https://doi.org/10.3406/roma.1934.4174

older—with a wink and a smile. He could show off his own erudition and serve up considerable historical knowledge without appearing pedantic. He could adopt the enthusiastic astonishment of the tourist—the 'shaking of the head' that had made Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* so delightful to read.

Roth was well aware of the negative aspects of ghetto life, but he went out of his way to minimise these. The Jews of Italy were not, he insisted, foreigners in their country. Indeed, they looked so much like Italians that a special badge had been necessary to identify them, a badge which Roth assures the readers Jews accepted as a sign of their own proud separateness. The Jewish synagogue had been endlessly fascinating, and non-Jewish elites came regularly to hear stimulating Jewish preachers. Crowding meant that ghetto houses became very tall, and Roth emphasised that overcrowding was allayed by internal Jewish legislation that protected poor Jews from rapacious landlords in the manner of contemporary New York City rent control. Jewish culture was rich and varied, shared in the Italian appreciation for music and art, and was even sprinkled with a degree of religious skepticism.

Roth's goal was necessarily a mixed message: he decried the invention of the restrictive ghetto institution while denying its worst possible implications. The result was a rather awkward periodisation; he twists himself into a rather odd chronological pretzel, making the Renaissance the birthplace of the Jewish Dark Ages, but only because Renaissance humanism was followed by Protestant Reform which in turn led to Catholic Counter-Reform that had oppressed the Jews. His desire to assure his readers of joyous Jewish participation in Renaissance Italy may explain also why Roth makes the rather odd mistake of assuming that the ghetto in Rome was the model for the one in Venice when in fact the opposite was true.[80] Although at various points the article seems to suggest that he was aware of the truth, in general he needed the ghetto to be the invention of Paul IV's fanaticism.

It is of course quite easy to point out the illogical self-contradictions, inaccuracies and elisions in Roth's view of Italian Jewish history. And we can forgive him. The young man was, after all, only 27, and although he had completed a Ph. D. on the history of Florence, he was still a relative tyro when it came to the Jews. But no matter how tendentious, Roth's effort here deserves our attention. Roth was using this particular publishing platform to legitimise the study of Jewish history for a young American audience, an audience which he felt was woefully undereducated in matters Jewish. He was shaping an alternative vision of the Jewish past, if you will a 'usable' Jewish past

80 "… At the middle of the sixteenth century, Italy, the ancient paradise of Jewish life in Europe, began for the first time to teach the lessons of persecution; and the Popes, hitherto the patrons and protectors of the Jew, entered upon the role of oppressor." Roth begins the process with Paul IV and the bull *Cum nimis absurdum*. "Venice followed suit early in order to vindicate her disputed orthodoxy." In fact, the ghetto in Venice dates from 1515/16; the one in Rome only from 1555.

for them, by focusing on Italian Jewry in specific contrast to the eastern European, Ashkenazi communities from which his readers or their parents hailed.[81] We can hear this clearly in the exhortation with which he ends the article. He calls on his readers to "turn back…and to study, not without some sense of pride, how the storm-tossed Jewish soul could evolve its own characteristic life even at the darkest hour and adapt itself, indomitably and successfully, to the most adverse circumstances in its history."[82]

There can be little doubt that Baron had Roth's essay before him as he sat down to write "Ghetto and Emancipation." Like Roth, he used the Italian ghetto to represent the Jewish past and insisted on turning that much vilified institution into a locus of positive Jewish identity and communal life. Indeed, he even followed Roth's error in stating that the ghetto began in papal Rome, thus blaming segregation of Jews on the Catholic Reformation. There may well have been a measure of personal rivalry or resentment between the two men. Baron had been appointed to his position at the Jewish Institute of Religion after Roth had tried out and been rejected for it.[83] Although the details are not completely clear, the incident left Roth angry and dismissive of the institution, the emerging field of Jewish history in America, and of Baron himself. In his programmatic article, "Jewish History for Our Own Needs," published in *The Menorah Journal* in May of 1928, that is one month before Baron's "Ghetto and Emancipation," Roth complained about the low quality of academic Jewish historical studies, especially in Jewish-sponsored institutions:

> Under Jewish patronage the right hand of Clio knoweth not what the left is doing. Works in English, French and above all German come to the general knowledge of the world of Jewish scholarship; those in other languages, or on more out-of-the-way subjects, generally do not.…A recent German monograph by the newly-appointed Professor of History in one of the New York theological seminaries upon the Jewish Question at the Congress of Vienna failed to take account of a detailed study of the same question which appeared in the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society![84]

81 Roth would maintain and develop this approach further in semi-popular books like *The Jews in the Italian Renaissance* and *History of the Jews of Italy.* For a critique see Robert Bonfil, "How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?" *History and Theory,* Beiheft 27: *Essays in Jewish Historiography* (1988): 78–102; for a defense see David B. Ruderman, "Cecil Roth: Historian of Italian Jewry: A Reassessment," in *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians,* ed. David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 128–142.

82 Cecil Roth "In the Italian Ghetto" *The Menorah Journal* 12, no. 6 (December, 1926): 577–588, here at 588.

83 See Frederic Krome, "Creating 'Jewish History for Our Own Needs:' The Evolution of Cecil Roth's Historical Vision, 1925–1935," *Modern Judaism* 21, no. 3 (October, 2001): 216–237.

84 Cecil Roth "Jewish History for Our Own Needs," *The Menorah Journal* 14, no. 5 (May, 1928), 419–434.

Roth was referring to Baron's dissertation, published in Vienna and Berlin in 1920, where he had not cited the slightly earlier study on the same topic by Maxwell Kohler.[85]

Whatever their personal animosities, Roth and Baron had adopted very similar tactics in their periodisation of Jewish time. The reason, I would suggest, is because both faced the same challenge: to tell the story of the Jews in a manner that would attract the interest of their American students and would earn them legitimacy in the newly opening secular university. Each man stood at the beginning of his career nervously trying to define himself as a scholar.[86] Both were anxious also about their American students who lacked traditional training and seemed to demand a different kind of pedagogy, a new historical narrative.[87] Like all cultural go-betweens, these Jewish historians had to create their audience(s) and their subject at the same time. They needed to develop an appropriate terminology, construct a convincing narrative, and disseminate a new teleology—in short, they had to popularise a new periodisation of Jewish history. They were, as is often true for such 'cultural tricksters,' simultaneously trying to reinvent their (multiple) audiences, to redefine their subjects, and to reimagine themselves. I know how they felt because, as a professor of Jewish Studies in American universities, I have faced the challenge my entire academic life.

85 In his review of Baron's work in *JQR* n. s. 11, no. 3 (January 1921): 405–408, Kohler himself was more generous, assuming Baron had not seen his publication because of the war.

86 Baron's appointment to the Miller Chair in Jewish History at Columbia University in 1930 is often noted as the first such professorship at a secular western university; e.g. Michael Stanislawski, "Salo Wittmayer Baron: Demystifying Jewish History," *Columbia University Alumni Magazine*, Winter 2005, https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/salo-wittmayer-baron-demystifying-jewish-history. Of course, Harvard similarly claims the honor of primogeniture: "Harvard was the first university in America to establish a Chair in Jewish Studies, the Nathan Littauer Professorship of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy (1925)," from the web site of the University's Center for Jewish Studies, https://cjs.fas.harvard.edu/history/, accessed October 2, 2020. The debate is more about semantics than reality since Jews already held such positions in departments of Orientalist/Semitic Studies decades earlier. Nevertheless, the repeated assertion reflects both an awareness of disciplinary shift and a claim to status within the academy, points that deserve further investigation.

87 See Frederic Krome, "Between the Diaspora and Zion: Cecil Roth and his American Friends," *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 283–297.