Preface


For example, the Jewish diaspora Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), xi.


For any given topic On whether or not ancient Jewish history can ever be framed as definitive, see e.g., Edwin N. Yamauchi, “The Reconstruction of Jewish Communities during the Persian Empire,” Journal of the Historical Society 4, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 1–25.

An obvious shortcoming of my method is that it can potentially create a context of moral relativity that puts communal convictions on the same ground with judicious academic scholarship and substandard research. I thank Fred Astren for raising this important issue with me early on in the writing of this book.

To paraphrase a number of scholars Others who have explained how within their single book are a number of different books include Shaye J. D. Cohen, From the Maccabees to the Mishnah (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), xi; Arthur Green, Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992), x; and James Kugel, How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now (New York: Free Press, 2007), xvi.

Introduction

Many of us have a basic human need On the shaping of identities, see Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, “A War of Words: Muslims, Jews, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on American University Campuses,” in Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, and Complexities, ed. Reza Aslan and Aaron J. Hahn Tapper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 71.


In all of these ways Throughout this book I use the abbreviation BCE (Before the Common Era) instead of BC (Before Christ), and CE (Common Era) instead of AD (Anno Domini, Latin for “year of our Lord” or “year of the Lord”).

This book is based on the idea Who or what is a Jew: It is not overly important to me whether to use the interrogative pronoun who or what when approaching the identity of a Jew (as in “who is a Jew?” or “what is a Jew?”). However, because using the pronoun what when referring to a group can be interpreted as a form of objectification and dehumanization, I have chosen to use who in throughout the book.

We can speak in similarly plural terms The population figures for Christians and Muslims are based on fig. 0.1, which posits a total world population baseline of seven billion individuals.

From the perspective of this book On expressions of Jew- ishness generated by self-identified non-Jews, see, e.g., Ruth Ellen Gruber, Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Jérôme de Missolz and Frédéric Brenner, Tykocin (2003) [film].

Is there any substantial link Classification: There is a great deal of debate regarding what each one of the catego-
ries discussed in this paragraph means. For example, refer to www.merriam-webster.com and www.oxforddictionaries.com to see how some of these seemingly distinct categories are defined with reference to another category.


Ethnicity: This category includes subforms such as “cultural ethnicity,” “structural ethnicity,” and “cognitive ethnicity”; see, e.g., Kenneth D. Wald and Bryan D. Williams, “American Jews and Israel: The Sources of Politicized Ethnic Identity,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12 (2006): 212–214.


Classifying Jews in more than one of these categories: To quote twentieth-century philosopher Martin Buber, “Israel is a people like no other, for it is the only people in the world which, from its earliest beginning, has been both a nation and a religious community” (Martin Buber, “Nationalism and Zion,” in *idem, Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crises* [Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997], 248). This isn’t to say, of course, that the meanings of any of the categories presented in this paragraph are self-evident, nor do I mean to imply that power doesn’t undergird the construction of these groupings. For more on this last idea, see Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 18.

One of the most common ways For the etymology of the word *religion*, see www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion; www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/161944.

One interesting explanation of religion as a concept is that it is “a language made up of symbols and metaphors that allow people to communicate, to themselves and to others, the ineffable experience of faith” (Reza Aslan, “Praying for Common Ground at the Christmas-Dinner Table,” *New York Times Magazine*, December 19, 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/magazine/praying-for-common-ground-at-the-christmas-dinner-table.html). However, this, too, falls short in some respects, as not all religious identities are linked to faith.

On whether there is a core set of textually based principles underpinning “the” Jewish tradition, see Jonathan Boyarin, *Thinking in Jewish* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).


At the same time that many rabbinic authorities hold that ritual practice is more important than particular beliefs, some Jews reject this. For example, according to various interpretations of one of the most oft-cited texts of Moses Ben Maimon (Maimonides), one of the more authoritative Jewish jurists of the twelfth century, a Jew is obligated to believe in thirteen basic principles in order to stay part of the Jewish community (Kellner, *Must a Jew Believe Anything?*, 52–60).


Disobeying Jewish law does not disqualify someone from being a Jew: As Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen write in *The Jew Within*, American Jews—most of whom do not consider themselves religiously observant—largely identify as Jews based on personal attitudes and behaviors rather than communal ones, a process the authors refer to as the “sovereign self.” Such Jews turn inward in their search for meaning rather than toward the Jewish collective. See Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomingon: Indiana University Press, 2000), 1–42.


That said, even if someone maintains Some people use the terms ethnicity and culture synonymously. Some dictionaries, moreover, explain each of these terms by using the other. According to Merriam-Webster and the Oxford Dictionaries, culture is the beliefs (i.e., ways of thinking, behaving, or working), arts, and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement of a particular society, group, place, or time. As for the word’s history, the term culture was used in the medieval period—in English, French, and Latin—to mean a cultivated piece of land (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture and www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/culture). These same dictionaries define ethnicity as “the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.” The word ethnic was used in medieval English to denote an individual who was not Christian or Jewish, linked to the Greek ethnikes and Latin ethnicus, meaning heathen (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnic and www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ethnicity). For more on the similarities between “culture” and “ethnicity,” see chapter 7.


In the twenty-first century, the idea Race: According to Oxford Dictionaries, “race” is a type of category into which humankind divides itself largely based on “distinct physical characteristics.” It is also defined as “a group of people sharing the same culture, history, language, etc.; an ethnic group” (www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/race).


Sometimes problems internal to the Jewish community The decision to require the DNA test was made by the Israeli consulate in St. Petersburg. Because the test was quite costly, this decision was also socioeconomically discriminatory (“Teen Told She Can’t Join Birthright without DNA Text,” Times of Israel, July 28, 2013, www.timesofisrael.com/teen-told-she-cant-join-birthright-without-dna-test). See also Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, 2007, available at www.acbp.net/pdf/pdfs-research-and-publications/Beyond_Distancing.pdf.

logical-Judaism. The David Ellenson quote is from Cohen, “Ties That Bind.”

**Others, such as scholar**  Steven Cohen quote: Cohen, “Ties That Bind.”

**Even if one challenges**  Steven M. Cohen and Jack Wertheimer, “Whatever Happened to the Jewish People?,” *Commentary Magazine* 121, no. 6 (June 2006): 34.

**There are, of course, other notions**  The closest American equivalence of a British school that is “government funded” is an American “public school.” In contrast to the public school system in the United States, there are approximately 7,000 publicly financed religious schools in Great Britain, representing Judaism as well as the Church of England, Catholicism and Islam, among others. Under a 2006 law, the schools can in busy years give preference to applicants within their own faiths, using criteria laid down by a designated religious authority” (Lyall, “Who Is a Jew?”).

Student’s mother’s conversion: Some sources say that she was converted under the auspices of the London Progressive movement (e.g., Lyall, “Who Is a Jew?”), whereas others say her conversion was conducted by the Masorti (Conservative) authorities (e.g., Steven J. Riekes, “Who Is a Jew? Reflections of an American Jewish Lawyer on the British Supreme Court Ruling Invalidating Jewish Religious Law,” in *Who Is a Jew: Reflections on History, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Leonard J. Greenspoon [Omaha, NE: Purdue University Press, 2014], 61).

What is important for our purposes is that the conversion was authorized by a non-Orthodox denominational movement and, on these grounds, was rejected by an Orthodox authority.

**Over the last half-century**  Story about female rabbis being the norm: This anecdote was relayed to me by Rabbi Chai Levy, guest lecturer for a course titled “Social Justice, Activism, and Jews,” University of San Francisco, October 5, 2010.


**Siddur Sha’ar Zahav**  Michael Tyler and Leslie Kane, eds., *Siddur Sha’ar Zahav* (San Francisco: Congregation Sha’ar Zahav, 2009), viii.

**Ultimately, this book seeks to question**  Regarding definitive explanations of Jewish history: This is not to say that this book does not also fall into this trap to some degree. To paraphrase one scholar, one cannot talk about the problematic nature of the dominant Jewish narrative without simultaneously re-creating a new narrative to replace it (Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Racial Diasporism* [Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007], 19). Perhaps it can be said that if this book does do this, it is with the awareness and explicit acknowledgment that doing so is problematic. Or, to paraphrase scholar R. Laurence Moore, my goal is not to discuss every single Jewish subcommunity that has ever existed (R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1986], xiv–xv). For starters, only a rare few readers would have the patience for such a tome. Instead, I aim to mainstream some marginalized Jewish subgroups while raising the larger issue of historical marginalization.

**This objective echoes**  Shira Stutman, “Night 8: WTF? The Beauty of Many Voices,” www.8for8.net/day-8.


**Chapter 1. Narratives**

**From as far back as I could remember**  In the context of this introductory vignette, it is not important that the body of water that Moses and the Israelites crossed, as depicted in Exod. 13–15 and called Yam Suf (Sea of Reeds), is probably not the Red Sea. Here we are talking about biblical imagery (i.e., “truth”) and not necessarily “fact.” “Truth” and “fact” are discussed later in this chapter.


**To better understand the phenomena**  This book’s basic distinction between “truth” and “fact” is a discursive mechanism used to explain how the Jewish community—like all communities—has dominant narratives that it relays to itself and others, collective stories that favor certain subnarratives over others, sometimes ignoring alternative ones altogether. Existential philosophical thought regarding “truth” in relation to ultimate reality is beyond the scope of this book. Note that the distinction I am making here is similar to, though not the same as, Hayden White’s argument in *Metahistory:*


For other communities that put themselves at the center of their maps, see, for example, Brett Zongker, “1602 Map Unveiled, Shows China at Center of World,” January 12, 2010, www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/12/1602-map-unveiled-.html.

On maps’ ability to teach political ideas as well as spatial locations, see Jeremy Black, Maps and History: Constructing Images of the Past (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).


It is also clear that America’s history  On racial categorization in Brazil, see, e.g., Stanley R. Bailey, Legacies of Race: Identities, Attitudes, and Politics in Brazil (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

We can make the same points  On racial categorization of Chinese and Japanese Americans, see Gloria Heyung Chun, Of Orphans and Warriors: Inventing Chinese American Culture and Identity (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000); and Frank Wu, Yellow: Race in America beyond Black and White (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

In other words, identities are imposed  On twenty-first-century American constructs related to gender and sex, see, respectively, National Center for Transgender Equality, www.transequity.org/issues, and Advocates for Informed Choice, http://aiclegal.org/who-we-are/faqs.


Truth and fact also manifest  On dominant literary canons in the United States, see Harold Bloom, The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages (New York: Riverhead Trade, 1995).


More challenging is that a community’s dominant narratives The process of constructing dominant and subordinated narratives is similar to Michel Foucault’s “power-knowledge” construct. See Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).


Others say that the exclusion On the American government’s repeated choice not to save countries in need of support, see Samantha Power, “A Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007).


Ashkenazi Jews in Israel and the United States: More precisely, male, heterosexual, Ashkenazi Jews. We could also accurately add the Jewish American community’s dominant denominational affiliation (Reform), socioeconomic class (middle and upper middle class), geographical location (California and New York), and other identity categories to the description of what social identities prevail in relation to dominant Jewish narratives. The specific homogenization of Ashkenazi identities is discussed later in this chapter.

Ashkenazi: Some define “Ashkenaz” as the area surrounding what are now Germany and Poland, countries whose borders have changed a number of times over the last thousand years and have historically overlapped with modern countries that were part of the Soviet Union, such as Russia. Many Jews from this region eventually migrated west, toward England and France; thus, some Ashkenazi Jews today also trace themselves back to Western Europe more broadly. The term Ashkenaz is found in the Torah as a proper noun rather than an adjective. Ashkenaz was Noah’s great-grandson (Genesis 10:3). In the Prophets, it is the name of a kingdom to the north of the Land of Israel (Jeremiah 51:27). For more on the Torah and Prophets, see chapter 2. See also “Ashke- nazi” in Encyclopaedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/topic /Ashkenazi.

Although being a majority member Population studies and definitions: All population studies necessitate a definition of the group being counted. Although this book’s central argument is that there are multiple ways that Jews (and non-Jews) define what it means to be a Jew, in the case of these population figures I am utilizing definitions provided by other scholars. Put another way, given that much of this book explores the complex question “Who is a Jew?,” for the moment I am accepting certain assumptions about Jewish identities in terms of Jews’ population size. I am aware that there continue to be debates regarding the number of Jews in the United States and worldwide. Nonetheless, as the general narrative among American Jews, for example, is that there are six million Jews in the United States, I am working with that figure.


In the United States, Ashkenazi Jews have not always outnumbered other Jewish subgroups. Many scholars maintain that the population of Ashkenazi Jewish Americans began to exceed Sephardi Jewish Americans only during the eighteenth century. See, for example, Laura Arnold Lehman, Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitch-

**Figure 1.3** The data presented in this image are based on sources found in the Notes to the Introduction and Chapter 1.

In 1500 CE, however On the increase in the Ashkenazi population and decreasing size of other Jewish communities, see Sammy Smooha, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 51. Some claim that the only way the Ashkenazi population could have increased to this degree was through mass conversion of non-Jews. For instance, according to scholar Eran Elhaik, most early-twentieth-century European Jews were the descendants of Khazars, a group originating in Turkey that converted to Judaism en masse during the eighth century and migrated to Eastern Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; see also Rita Rubin, “‘Jews a Race’: Genetic Theory Comes under Fierce Attack by DNA Expert,” *Jewish Daily Forward*, May 7, 2013, http://forward.com/articles/175912/jews-a-race-genetic-theory-comes-under-fierce-atta.


Overall shift of the Ashkenazi subnarrative toward dominance: Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnick, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., vol. 6 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 381–400.


Lest one think that intra-Ashkenazi schisms were limited to Germans and Poles or Northern California, the following anecdote underscores the tension between Austrian and German Jews in metropolitan New York during the first half of the twentieth century: One evening at a party in New Jersey, a Jewish student from Princeton University mentioned to someone that he knew Albert Einstein. An Austrian community leader standing nearby turned to the student and said, “Tell me, is Einstein as conceited as the rest of the German Jews?” (related in Ernest Stock, *Washington Heights ‘Fourth Reich,’” in *Commentary on the American Scene: Portraits of Jewish Life in America*, ed. Elliot E. Cohen [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953], 224–242). See also Henry L. Feingold, *A Midrash on American Jewish History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982).


As for the founding of the Jewish State On Ashkenazi hegemony in Israel, see Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 19. Such an argument does not take into account the distinctions between pre-state Ashkenazi Jews and those Ashkenazi immigrants who arrived in the State of Israel in 1948 and thereafter.


On the idea that no group can be understood without respect to an “other,” see René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

Ashkenazi ascendancy in Israel and the United States Currently, the Israeli government’s Central Bureau of Statistics does not use the Ashkenazi/non-Ashkenazi binary to describe Jewish Israelis. Instead they use categories based on “continent of origin”: Asia, Africa, Europe, and America. See Sergio DellaPergola, “‘Sephardic and Oriental’ Jews in Israel and Western Countries: Migration, Social Change, and Iden-
If we look at Israel in particular  The Israeli government officially designates only two chief rabbis to adjudicate all Jewish “religious affairs” for the country, one Sephardi and one Ashkenazi. Although there are a few minor government-sanctioned chief rabbis for other Jewish subcommunities, such as the Ethiopian community, ultimately the non-Ashkenazi and non-Sephardi chief community rabbis answer to one or the other of the two chief rabbis. In January 2014, however, a bill was introduced in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) to have a single chief rabbi for the country, “independent of his ethnic origins”; if passed, it will not be implemented until 2023. See Moshe Behar, “What’s in a Name? Socio-terminological Formations and the Case for ‘Arabized-Jews,’” Social Identities 15, no. 6 (November 2009): 747–771; and Khazzoom, Shifting Boundaries, 3.

On Jewish-specific terms used to distinguish Ashkenazi Jews from non-Ashkenazi Jews following the founding of Israel, see Khazzoom, Shifting Boundaries, 7.

Scholar Aziza Khazzoom  On economic disparities between various Jewish subcommunities in Israel, especially those linked to patterns that emerged shortly after the state was established in 1948, see Khazzoom, Shifting Boundaries, 3. As of 2004 these economic disparities were not nearly as skewed as they were in the 1950s and 1960s (DellaPergola, “‘Sephardic and Oriental,’” 23–27).


Intentionality and agency aside  In this context, “agency” refers to the group that has shaped the terms of the conversation itself. This is briefly touched on elsewhere in this chapter, as in the section titled “Sephardi, Mizraḥi, or non-Ashkenazi?”


For example, take the case  Jews in Morocco since the Babylonian Exile of 586 BCE, when Jews were expelled from Jerusalem and its surrounding areas: See Michael M. Laskier and Eliezer Bashan, “Morocco,” in Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times, ed. Reeva S. Simon, Michael M. Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 471. The Babylonian Exile is explained in more depth in chapter 3.


Russian Jews arriving in Morocco during the nineteenth century: Laskier and Bashan, “Morocco.”


It has been historically problematic The case of Ashkenazi hegemony among Jewish Americans is different from that of Jewish Israelis. Although the Jewish American community has developed a similar binary—Ashkenazi/Sephardi—hegemony among Jewish Americans is different from that of Jewish Israelis. Although the Jewish American community has developed a similar binary—Ashkenazi/Sephardi—in the American context as it depoliticizes ethnicity and relegates it to folklore and tradition” (Yehouda Shenhav, The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006], 193).

Aziza Khazzoom, email to author, July 22, 2011. I am indebted to Khazzoom for elaborating on her thesis from Shifting Boundaries.

Upon reaching the core eating part In 2014 I had a French Jewish university student of Algerian descent in one of my university classes. When we read this section of the book, she shared that she had never heard of matzah ball soup or many of the other foods on this list, and was confused by this description. In other words, among the Jews in the community in which she grew up, these Ashkenazi-dominant foods are marginal or nonexistent.

To an outsider On ritual being perceived as “strange,” see, e.g., Horace Miner, “Body Ritual among the Nacirema,” American Anthropologist 58, no. 3 (June 1956): 503–507.

There isn’t anything intrinsically problematic As Beverly Daniel Tatum writes, “The truth is that the dominants do not really know what the experience of the subordinates is. In contrast, the subordinates are very well informed about the dominant. Even when firsthand experience is limited by social segregation, the number of variety of images of the dominant group available through television, magazines, books, and newspapers provide subordinates with plenty of information about the dominants. The dominant worldview has saturated the culture for all to learn” (Tatum, “The Complexity of Identity: Who Am I?,” in Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, 2nd ed., ed. Maurianne Adams, Warren J. Blumenfeld, Carmelita Castaneda, Heather W. Hackman, Madeline L. Peters, and Ximena Zuniga [New York: Routledge, 2010], 7).

Ethiopian Jews On Ethiopian ritual, see Adeena Sussman, “Ethiopia: The Other Exodus,” Jewish Daily Forward, April 15, 2005, www.forward.com/articles/3310/ethiopia-the-other-exodus. The Bible verses related to “possessing” such foods are Exod. 12:15, 19, 20; Exod. 13:3; and Deut. 16:3–4.

Jews from Cochin, India On this Cochin Indian ritual, see Nathan Katz and Ellen S. Goldberg, “Ritual to an outsider On ritual being perceived as “strange,” see, e.g., Horace Miner, “Body Ritual among the Nacirema,” American Anthropologist 58, no. 3 (June 1956): 503–507.

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As for what word should be used Some suggest that the labels Sephardi and Mizrahi gradually became synonyms, even though there were and are a number of differences between and within each of these groups (Goldberg, “From Sephardi to Mizrahi,” 165-188). Additionally, some scholars trace the ancestors of the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century (i.e., Sephardi Jews) to Middle Eastern Jewry (i.e., Mizrahi Jews). As Smooha (Israel, 53), explains, “The Sephardim and Orientals have had much in common. They share the same religious style and follow the Shulhan Arukh, the religious corpus juris compiled by the Sephardic Rabbi Caro in Palestine in the sixteenth century. The resemblance between Orientals and Near Eastern Sephardim is much greater. Both were under the rule of the decaying Ottoman Empire. This meant cultural, economic and political stagnation, and late exposure to modern ideas. In physiognomy, demography and culture, they were like their Middle Eastern non-Jewish neighbours.”

Edot: Some argue that the word edot (communities or units), found in the term Edot ha-Mizrah, has played a “constraining effect in the Israeli context as it depoliticizes ethnicity and relegates it to folklore and tradition” (Yehouda Shenhav, The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006], 193).

Aziza Khazzoom, email to author, July 22, 2011. I am indebted to Khazzoom for elaborating on her thesis from Shifting Boundaries.

Union soldiers’ brick: Noam Zion and David Dishon, A Different Night: The Family Participation Hagaddah (Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 1997), 113, cited in Golinkin, “Pesaḥ Potpourri.”

Moroccan Jews  An explanation of this Moroccan ritual is offered in Mordechai Lubelsky, “At a Seder in Casablanca,” 5711): 6, cited in Golinkin, “Pesaḥ Potpourri.”


Libyan ritual: Lewinsky, Sefer Hamoadim, 401, cited in Golinkin, “Pesaḥ Potpourri.”

Moroccan ritual: Lewinsky, Sefer Hamoadim, 397, cited in Golinkin, “Pesaḥ Potpourri.”

One ultra-Orthodox sect  On Gerrer ritual, see Akiva Ben Ezra, Minhagey Hagim (Jerusalem, 1962), 245, cited in Golinkin, “Pesaḥ Potpourri.”

Although there are countless Pesaḥ rituals  In August 2011, the dishes found in an article titled “Passover Recipes: Delicious Dishes for You and Your Family This Passover” at one of the most reputable on-line web resources regarding Judaism, MyJewishLearning.com, came largely from the Ashkenazi community only. By November 1, 2015, although an Ashkenazi dominance in terms of dishes remained, the article of the same name now included many more non-Ashkenazi recipes than previously (www.myjewishlearning.com/article/passover-recipes).

Of course, Ashkenazi hegemony  The ritual of a Seder plate is described in the Talmud. Aside from the addition of an orange, other contemporary modifications are found in fig. 1.6.

Figure 1.6  The three more traditional items on this Seder plate include haroset (below left of orange; here seemingly prepared according to a customary Ashkenazi recipe that uses apples, walnuts, honey or sugar, and/or grape juice or wine), symbolizing the mortar the Hebrew slaves used in building; maror, or bitter herbs (above left of orange in the form of a horseradish root; also the purple mixture at far right, a mixture of horseradish root and beets), symbolizing the bitterness the Hebrew slaves experienced; and karpas (a green vegetable, here in the form of parsley), symbolizing spring, the season when Passover is celebrated. Different foods are used for some of these symbolic representations, and many of these symbols have other interpretations.

Sometime thereafter, however, she learned  Susannah Heschel originally came up with this idea after being introduced to an early feminist Haggadah at an American college, which suggested adding a piece of bread to the Seder plate to symbolize solidarity with Jewish lesbians. For Heschel, however, using as a symbol a food that was expressly prohibited on Passover (i.e., not kosher-for-Pesah) would convey just the opposite message, symbolizing instead how Jewish lesbians and gay men violate Jewish law, just as do those who eat bread on Pesaḥ (Tamara Cohen, “Orange on the Seder Plate,” www.ritualwell.org/ritual/orange-seder-plate; and Deborah Eisenbach-Budner and Alex Borns-Weil, “The Background to the Background of the Orange on the Seder Plate and the Ritual of Inclusion,” www.ritualwell.org/ritual/background-background-orange-seder-plate-and-ritual-inclusion). See also Alexandra Silver, “The Orange on the Seder Plate,” Time Magazine, April 18, 2011, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article.o,28804,2065531_2065534_2065733,00.html.

The Tribe  www.moxieinstitute.org/tribe. Technically, whereas Tribe is a short film, Diaspora is a photo-based art project made into multiple different forms. One of the more popular ways this project is shown is via a “Diaporama,” a 20-minute slide show of approximately sixty of his photos.
accompanied by an audio commentary narrated by Brenner himself. This is the project to which I am referring, though if we take all of his photos from Diaspora into account my argument is only strengthened.

**The background music is largely Klezmer**  
Klezmer is an Ashkenazi musical form characterized by rapid melodies and slow, sobbing sounds.

**Almost all of the photos**  
A single photo shows a Jewish Yemenite grandfather and grandson, amid a sea of photos depicting Ashkenazi Jews. Interestingly, this photo is from Frédéric Brenner's *Diaspora* project (see below).

**A list of historically violent episodes**  
Some of the exceptions focus on the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, which certainly involved Sephardi Jews, and the medieval Crusades, which affected Middle Eastern Jews as well as European Jews.

**Even the way that biblical characters**  
One possible exception is the depiction of one of Jacob's twelve sons with kinkier hair than his siblings, which may be interpreted as resembling a hair style not stereotypical of Ashkenazi Jews.

**This is not to say that 20 percent**  
One of the Jews presented in the film’s nine-box frame (à la *The Brady Bunch*), Vanessa Hidary—who delivers a slam poem at the end of the video—identifies as Syrian American and Sephardi, among other things (e.g., Ashkenazi). See www.hebrewmamita.com /about and Bridget Kevane, “Passing,” *Tablet*, January 25, 2012, www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/theater -and-dance/89197/passing. In addition, in a sequence from *The Tribe* that uses Barbie dolls to illustrate how “sometimes [Jews] marry outside their tribe,” a number of dark-skinned dolls are shown with light-skinned dolls. Given that elsewhere in the movie Barbie dolls are almost entirely light-skinned, especially when depicting Jews, it is unclear whether the filmmaker, in this sequence only, intends the non-white Barbie dolls to represent Jews and the white Barbies to represent non-Jews. Contextually, much more probable is the opposite scenario.

**Not all artists focusing**  

**What do all these people**  

**By presenting us with images of Jews**  
On Scattered Among the Nations and their projects, see www.scatteredamongthenations.org.

**As the evening concluded**  
“Noted some of the minor discomfort”: Many *Haggadah* contain a passage asking God to enact vengeance on “those who do not know You [i.e., God]”—something with which I have personal difficulty, especially in light of how it may be interpreted by non-Jews attending a Seder. For more, see Aaron J. Tapper, “Towards a Jewish Theology of Nonviolence,” *Tikkun* 20, no. 2 (March/April 2005): 56–58, available at http://abrahamic-

**Chapter 2. Sinai**

**Often called Jabal Mūsā**  
According to one tradition, the mountain upon which Moses received divinely sanctioned laws from God, such as the Ten Commandments, is called Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:20, 24:16, 31:18, and 34:2). Another tradition calls this same place Mount Ḥoreb (Deut. 4:10, 4:15, 5:2, 9:8, 18:16, and 28:69). According to rabbinic texts, Mount Sinai and Mount Ḥoreb are two names for the same mountain, a place also referred to as Mount Elohim (BT Shab. 89a–b; Joseph Jacobs, M. Seligsohn, and Wilhelm Bacher, “Sinai, Mount,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1906), www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13766-sinai-mount.

Biblical passage where Moses sees God “face to face”: Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:4. Technically, according to the Torah only Moses ever sees God “face to face,” no other people are given this opportunity, including the mass of Israelites surrounding Mount Sinai. In the text I am using “face to face” metaphorically in terms of the Torah describing an event where hundreds of thousands of people together experience a divine revelation.

**For my friend and me**  
There were many reasons we weren’t sure that this was Mount Sinai. For instance, as former *yeshivah* (seminary) students, both of us remembered a prominent rabbinic tradition that Mount Sinai was small and “modest,” rather than one of the highest mountains in the area.

Total number of Israelites: Several times the Torah says that “about 600,000 men on foot” left Egypt, a number that does not include women or children (Exod. 12:37, 38:26; Num. 11:21, 26:51). According to Numbers 1:45–46, at Mount Sinai there were 603,550 men over twenty who were able to “go to war in Israel.” (This figure is slightly different from that found in Num. 26:51, 601,730, which reflects the number of men over twenty who were present after a plague struck the community and were thus able to “go to war in Israel.”) If you take women and children into account when calculating the community’s population, most estimates are that there were at least one million people present at the time of the Sinai revelation. As for the claim that this is the only massive group of people to encounter God at the same time, as opposed to God appearing before a single individual, the only suggestion of this event is the description found in the Torah. In other words, the Torah contains the only textual proof that the Torah was given to a large group of people.


**Whereas most Jews probably aren’t**  
For Jews, the importance of Mount Sinai

On the Torah as a totem, to quote Durkheim: “But although the totemic principle has its chief residence in a specific [object], it cannot possibly be localized there. Sacredness is highly contagious, and it spreads from the totemic being to everything that directly or remotely has to do with it. . . . Little by little, sub-totems attached themselves to totems” (Durkheim, Elementary Forms, 224).

Using a Durkheimian framework

Durkheim, Elementary Forms, 191, 208.

The Torah’s “truth”

In the words of scholar James Kugel, “From very early times, sages and scholars in ancient Israel had made a practice of looking deeply into the meaning of these sacred writings, and, with each new generation, their insights and interpretations were passed on alongside the texts themselves. As a result, as each new age inherited what were to become the Bible’s various books from the previous age, it also inherited a body of traditions about what those texts meant” (James Kugel, The Bible as It Was [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001], ix).

Adam and his new partner, Eve: Another issue altogether is that a common way to read the narrative surrounding Adam and Eve—in particular Eve’s “birth”—is that there are two different stories presented as a single thread (i.e., Gen. 1:27 vs. 2:21–22). This is not an uncommon literary pattern in the Five Books of Moses, as will be briefly mentioned in the section Literary Criticism.

Adam’s eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:16–17): Some say that Eve was also present when God gave the instruction not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because, if read linearly, Eve is created in Gen. 1:27 and the tree is eaten from thereafter. Others, however, read the first narrative of Eve’s “birth” (Gen. 1:27) as a general description of the creation of Adam and Eve, and the second narrative, when Eve is created from Adam’s side (Gen. 2:21–22), as a specific description, presented after the tree is eaten from (and thus Eve was not there yet).

Pri, “fruit” (Gen. 3:6): Literally, the Hebrew in this verse is மிபிரையோ, or “from its fruit,” where “it” refers to the tree discussed in the previous verses.

To some degree it doesn’t matter

Biblical source: Song of Songs 2:7.

Paradise Lost: 9.585. Although many of the interpretations mentioned in this paragraph were made by Christians or emerged out of Christian-majority societies, such interpretations have deeply influenced Jews who have lived in these communities.

The factuality of the matter was replaced

On depictions of biblical figures, see, e.g., Roland Boer, Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door: The Bible and Popular Culture (New York: Routledge, 1999); and Sara Lipton, Images of Intolerance: The Representa tion of Jews and Judaism in the Bible (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Figure 2.1 The painting is currently housed in the Museo Nacional del Prado, in Madrid, Spain. In the on-line description of the painting, the fruit is referred to as an apple (www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/online-gallery/online-galley/obra/adam-and-eve).

This same process applies

Jon D. Levenson, Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1985), 17–18.

The Bible is among the oldest


Most relevant for us is the “Hebrew Bible”

The Old Testament is also called the First Testament; see Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., The Canon Debate (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).

Special Topic 2.1 Torah: Aside from serving as a synonym for the Five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), and often referring to its form as a scroll, the Hebrew word torah can be translated as “teaching” or “instruction.” (For example, years ago I was at a synagogue celebrating the Jewish holiday Simhat Torah; the rabbi leading the night’s rituals mentioned a biblical figure and said, “Now about him, I have so many torahs.”) There is evidence that both before and after the Five Books of Moses were canonized, the word torah had a much more expansive meaning than that of a scroll containing the five books alone. For a detailed discussion of the various meanings of the term torah, see Jacob Neusner, Torah: From Scroll to Symbol in Formative Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

Five Books of Moses: The Torah is sometimes referred to as the Five Books of Moses or the Hasmash, the former term pointing to Moses’s attributed authorship or, perhaps, his status as the most important figure in four of the five books (he isn’t mentioned in Genesis), and the latter an abbreviation for the Hebrew Ḥamishah Hamsheh (Five Books of Torah).

Tanakh: The tripartite division of the Bible may have been established by the Mishnaic and Talmudic rabbis. See Davies, “Jewish Scriptural Canon,” 51; and Julio C. Trebolle Barrera, “Origins of a Tripartite Old Testament Canon,” ibid., 128–145.

Prophets and Writings: The books of the Prophets are as follows: Joshua, Judges, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The books of the Writings are as follows: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I Chronicles, and II Chronicles. Some Hebrew Bibles are made up of twenty-four rather than thirty-nine books; in such cases, the last twelve prophets, sometimes referred to as the Minor Prophets, are grouped together and presented as a single book. In addition, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, and I and II Chronicles are each combined to form one book each, as

Masoretic text: Passed down to us by a group of scholars and scribes called the Masoretes, who lived between the sixth and tenth centuries CE in the Land of Israel. See Benjamin E. Arin, “Modern Methods of Bible Study,” in Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary, ed. David L. Lieber (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1999), 1499.

Septuagint: Various explanations exist for the name Septuagint, Latin for seventy. One story, perpetuated by Philo (first century BCE to first century CE), Josephus (first century CE), and Augustine of Hippo (fourth century to fifth century CE), among others, is that the Greek King Ptolemy II gathered together seventy (or seventy-two) Jewish scholars to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek. Although each worked in a separate room and were unable to communicate with one another, the translations were miraculously identical. Another tradition is that the name refers to the seventy elders mentioned in Exod. 24:1, 9. There are also various opinions as to when this version began to be called the Septuagint; see, e.g., Albert C. Sundberg, Jr., “The Septuagint: The Bible of Hellenistic Judaism,” in McDonald and Sanders (eds.), Canon Debate, 68–72.

Septuagint—Different versions of the same verse: Scollin, “Modern Methods,” 1499–1500. Other Greek translations of the Bible from this period exist in fragmentary form; see Sundberg, “Septuagint,” 68–90.


Before getting into the specifics The word canon, like the Greek kanon, is derived from the Semitic word kaneh, meaning measuring rod or stick (McDonald and Sanders, “Introduction,” in Canon Debate, 11; Eugene Ulrich, “The Notion and Definition of Canon,” ibid., 22). We do not know definitively when the notion of the canonization of texts emerged or where it originated (Davies, “Jewish Scriptural Canon,” 37).

Nevertheless, more often than not On the immutable perception of canons, see Jonathan Z. Smith, Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 36–52, in particular 44, 48. This book’s definition of a canon is generally unique relative to that of scholars who study ancient texts and have narrower definitions of this concept. See McDonald and Sanders (eds.), Canon Debate.

Since scholars began applying On the Bible being written in stages, see McDonald and Sanders, “Introduction,” 4.


We don’t know who canonized On intra-Judean conflict regarding interpretation, see Cohen, From the Maccabees to the Mishnah, 133–134. Many scholars assume that these distinct Judean subcommunities all used the same canonized biblical text (ibid., 228–231).

The unearthing of such texts Other important ancient Middle Eastern texts that did not make it into the biblical canon include 1 Esdras, 1 and 2 Maccabees, 1 Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Testament of Moses, and the Wisdom of Solomon. Some theorize that these books were understood by their ancient readers as closer to history than to revealed truth and so were kept separate. See, e.g., James C. VanderKam, An Introduction to Early Judaism (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001).


Bibles written in Aramaic: Cohen, From the Maccabees to the Mishnah, 210–211. The earliest extensive list of the biblical canon linked to the Jewish community is referred to in the Babylonian Talmud, which is dated to somewhere between the third and eighth centuries CE.

Not only do we not know On the speculated ages of these texts, see Richard Elliott Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible? (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1987); and James Kugel, How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now (New York: Free Press, 2007), 5.

In an attempt to reconcile biblical stories A number of historians of the ancient Middle East maintain that the Bible, in terms of serving as a historical document, especially as related to premonarchical Israel, is “worthless.” This is in part because a great deal of archeological evidence disputes the biblical account. See, e.g., Alfred J. Andrea and Carolyn Neel, eds., “Israelite Cities,” in World History Encyclopedia, vol. 5 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 47–49; Stanley Isser, “Chronology,” in Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., vol. 4, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 704–707; Hershel Shanks, William G. Dever, Baruch Halpern, and P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., The Rise


In the end, as with many other questions Regarding the unknown origins of the Bible, as Kugel (How to Read the Bible, 46) writes: “People used to think X about this or that biblical figure or story or law or prophecy, but now modern scholars claim that Y is actually the case.” He goes on to add that today’s Y may well be replaced by tomorrow’s Z.


Perhaps the biggest question of all On the irreconcilability of these two ends of the spectrum, see Kugel, How to Read the Bible, 681. For a critique of this position, including an argument that Kugel actually reconciles these two seemingly disparate perspectives in his own scholarship, see Benjamin D. Sommer, “Two Introductions to Scripture: James Kugel and the Possibility of Biblical Theology,” Jewish Quarterly Review 100, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 153–182.

Among those who believe the Bible God gave the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai, word for word: According to one of the last verses of the Torah: “Moses wrote down this teaching and gave it to the priests, sons of Levi, who carried the Ark of God’s covenant, and to all the elders of Israel” (Deut. 31:9). If one understands “this teaching” to mean the Torah, Ark of God’s covenant, and to all the elders of Israel” (Deut. 31:9). Among the various traditional explanations for this discrepancy, two threads prevail: one is that God told Moses about his impending death in advance; so he was able to transcribe his death before it happened; another is that Moses’s successor, Joshua, wrote the last few verses down (BT Baba Batra 15a; JT Peah 17a).


Talmudic authorities and the fictionality of specific books found in the Writings: BT Baba Batra 15a.

For those who believe in the Torah’s divine nature On human error vs. divine infallibility, see Kugel, How to Read the Bible, 14–16.

Those who maintain Of course, there are people who believe the Torah is both sacred (if not necessarily divine) and human-made. Some even argue that seeming inconsistencies and repetitions in the text were inserted purposely by the author(s) to reflect a more multivalent message. See, e.g., Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

Today’s biblical scholars often echo On eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars who challenged the divinity of the Bible publicly, see Jacob Milgrom, “The Nature of Revelation and Mosaic Origins,” in Etz Hayim, 1,405–1407.

This challenge to the divine One eleventh-century biblical commentator of note was Isaac ibn Yashush, who lived in the Iberian Peninsula (today’s Spain); see Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible?, 18–19.


Putting aside lone voices Kugel, How to Read the Bible, 664; see also 663–668.

In other words, modern biblical criticism Scholars of biblical criticism today often credit their nineteenth-century European predecessors for their initial findings, despite having starkly different core assumptions (i.e., today’s scholars commonly start with the assumption that humans wrote the Torah). As one contemporary scholar explains, “Despite the current trend to disqualify the pioneering work of Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) on ideological or philosophical grounds, his classic formulation of the documentary hypothesis remains the point of departure for any investigation of the literary development of the Pentateuch. . . . Current scholarship on the Pentateuch sees the origin of the literary complex no longer in four sources woven together by a redactor. Rather its origins lay in several smaller individual narratives as well as in the legal material” (Anselm C. Hagedorn, “Taking the Pentateuch to the Twenty-first Century,” Expository Times: International Journal of Biblical Studies, Theology and Ministry 119, no. 2 [November 2007]: 53–58).

Another way to frame this discussion On analyzing the Bible as if it were any other text, see Scollnic, “Modern Methods,” 1,499–1,503.


Although the editing process On the Bible as a text of “national history,” see Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible?, 230–233; Rosenberg, “Bible,” 36.

Making the Torah more understandable to those living at


According to Jacob Neusner, the earliest source stating that the Mishnah is part of the Oral Torah is the Jerusalem Talmud; see Neusner, Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 133. This is explored in more detail in chapter 5.


During daily morning prayers: Figures 2.2 and 5.3 aside, according to the rabbinic authorities at the seminary where I studied at the time, females in their women’s-affiliate school were prohibited from wearing tefillin, despite Orthodox halakhic [acc. to Jewish law] interpretations to the contrary. A side note is that all Jews are halakhically prohibited from wearing tefillin on the Jewish Sabbath, Shabbat.

Torah verses: Exod. 13:9, 16; Deut. 6:8, 11:18.


Talmudic claim that the Mishnah is the Oral Torah: Neusner, Judaism and Christianity, 135–137; idem, Torah, 17–19. That said, there are passages in the Mishnah claiming that the laws described are definitive because, according to the Prophets, Moses received the explanation for them on Mount Sinai and passed these traditions on to future generations (M. Pe’ah 2:6).


Revelation as ongoing: For example, as explained by twentieth-century Modern Orthodox Rabbi David Hartman: “When Jews built their civilization around a sacred text, they viewed the text not as a closed and final word, but as a starting point for creative interpretation” (David Hartman, A Living Covenant [Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997], 222, quoted in Danielle Celermajer, The Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apologies [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 102). In support of this idea, some also cite a centuries-old prayer said before one recites from a Torah scroll, “Blessed be God who gives us the Torah,” pointing to the present tense of the verb rather than past (Celermajer, Sins of the Nation, 82).


Solomon Schechter: This is one reading of Solomon Schechter’s position; see Allen Selis, “Jewish Denominations on Revelation: From Sinai to Schism,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-denominations-on-revelation.


Whatever position one takes The Hebrew term for the Children—or Sons—of Israel is bnei yisra’el. In Gen. 3:10, Jacob’s name is changed to Israel. Hence, the biblical Isra-
elites are the descendants of Jacob’s twelve sons. (Jacob’s daughter, Dinah, is excluded.)

On Moses and the Israelites, see Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible?, 35–36; Levenson, Sinai and Zion, 15–86. Although the Torah often refers to Moses, a member of the Israelite tribe of Levi, as a Hebrew, there is also a reference to one of Moses’s forefathers having been an Aramean who went down to Egypt (Num. 26:5). Sometimes this is interpreted as referring to Abraham’s grandson Jacob, which has led some to speculate that Abraham was Aramean as well. More definitively, we are told that Jacob’s mother, Rebekah, was of Aramean descent through her father, Beuel (Gen. 25:20, 28:5). Other times Moses’s Aramean ancestry is linked to Abraham only, who goes down to Egypt in Gen. 26:1–4.

As for the second and third sections On categorizing the Bible, see Kugel, How to Read the Bible, 5–7.

Another way to organize Holtz, Back to the Sources, 11–127.

Two of the many ways The word mitzvot (sing. mitzvah) is also commonly translated as “commandments,” as in the Ten Commandments, or (inaccurately) “good deeds.”


The Talmud cites only one individual Rabbi Simlai (BT Makkot 23b).

On the 613 mitzvot as “common knowledge”: BT Nedarim 25a; BT Shebuoth 29a.

In fact, the same passage On different accountings of the mitzvot, see BT Makkot 24a.

Over time Jewish authorities Some divide the mitzvot into those laws that are ethical and those that are ritualistic. Others delineate between those observances carried out between humans and those between humans and God. Still others frame them in terms of being either casuistic or apodictic, with the former manifesting in terms of “if/when . . . then” statements, legal formulae quite similar to those from other ancient Middle East textual traditions (and usually including punishment/reward), and the latter seen as directives—“you shall/shall not do such and such”—something unique among other ancient Middle East communities (and usually framed using the second person pronoun with no mention about punishment or reward). See Levenson, Sinai and Zion, 46–48, 50–56.

On 613 becoming the dominant understanding of the number of mitzvot, see Louis Jacobs, “Classical Understandings of Mitzvot and Their Reasons,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/classical-understandings-of-mitzvot-and-their-reasons.

For Jews, the Torah is the core On the Prophets and Writings as containing the first interpretations of the Torah, see James Kugel, lecture, “Early Biblical Interpretation,” Harvard University, February 8, 2000.

Some Jews even maintain Torah as “blueprint for creation”: BT Nedarim 39b; BT Pesachim 54a.


Many Jews across the globe According to the dominant rabbinic interpretation of the Torah, the halakhic calendar year is a combination of a solar and a lunar cycle. This ensures that Jewish holidays always land in the same general time of year. For more on this unique system, see “Jewish Calendar: Solar and Lunar,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-calendar-solar-and-lunar.

Annual cyclical reading of the Torah: Whereas many Jewish communities that engage in regular Torah study read one section of the Five Books of Moses every week (with fifty-four sections, this requires that during two weeks of the year a double section be read), some communities read one-third of each section every week, which means it takes them three years to complete the entire text. Both traditions are found in the Talmud. See Joseph Jacobs, “Triennial Cycle,” Jewish Encyclopedia (1906), www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14508-triennial-cycle; Strack and Stemberger, Introduction, 241–243. Some scholars, however, maintain that there were communities in the Land of Israel that read through the Torah not over the course of one or three years, but rather three and a half or four years; see Strack and Stemberger, Introduction, 241.

Torah made from animal skin: Robinson, Essential Torah, 9–21.

Making the Torah ink: BT Baba Batra 14b.

FIGURE 2.2 Minyan: See chapter 8 for different denominational interpretations of the composition of a minyan.


FIGURE 2.3 Jen Taylor Friedman also designed figure 2.2, Minyan of Tefillin Barbie.

Jewish law states Transmission of Oral Torah from Moses to the Mishnaic rabbis: M. Avot 1:1.

If one’s first visit to a synagogue Third Commandment/Directive: Exod. 20:4–5.

This is but one example  One example of logos as the word of God is the Christian Bible’s book of John.

Another way to understand the observance  Although the Torah begins with the creation of the world, it also states that for the first month of the Hebrew calendar year is Nissan (Exod. 12:1–2), the month in which the biblical Israelites fled Pharaoh and his soldiers by escaping into the Sinai desert, as well as the month in which Pesah is observed. By the time of the Mishnah, however, rabbinic authorities claimed that the start of the Jewish calendar year, which begins with the annual holiday Rosh Hashanah, is Tishrei, not Nissan—even though the Torah describes Tishrei as the seventh month (M. Rosh Hashanah 1:1). To make matters slightly more complicated, the rabbis of the Mishnah explain this seeming contradiction by noting that there are four possible times to start a new year in the Jewish calendar, two each falling in Tishrei and Nissan (BT Rosh Hashanah 2a–4b).


Annually reenacting events in the Torah  On ritual as a return to an original event, see Robert A. Segal, *Theorizing about Myth* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 22. Note that this isn’t to say that a religious tradition cannot have rituals that are both historical and ahistorical simultaneously (Eliade, *Myth of Eternal Return*, 104–105).

The Torah’s dominant narrative  Aside from the descriptions found in the Bible, we know that other societies mentioned therein were also patriarchal. See, e.g., Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “The Bible and Women’s Studies,” in *Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies*, ed. Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 16–39, who points to various contemporary methods of reading the Bible that are nonpatriarchal (24–31). Even if one argues that there were female-inclusive or even female-centric understandings of the Torah prior to the latter half of the twentieth century, such as those found in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Torah commentary *Tz’e’nah U’r’enah*, it was not until the last few decades that these texts emerged as part of a new genre of Jewish writing (Robinson, *Essential Torah*, 194–195).

Only since the 1990s: Some of the scholars referred to here are addressed in detail in chapter 5.

It is well accepted  Tamar Ross, in Robinson, *Essential Torah*, 210.

Of course, male dominance  The first study mentioned analyzed 250 children’s books, whereas the second looked at 3,500; see Motoko Rich, “For Young Latino Readers, an Image Is Missing,” *New York Times*, December 5, 2012.


A great deal of Jewish life  Prophets referencing characters in the Torah: E.g., Mal. 1:2.


Talmudic interpretation of Isaiah referencing the mitzvot: BT Makkot 23b–24a, Sanhedrin 8ta.


While some might say  As stated in one ancient Jewish text, “One who translates a verse literally is a liar; one who adds to it is a blasphemer” (BT Kid. 49, based on Daniel C. Matt, trans., *The Zohar*, Pritzker ed., vol. 1 [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004], xviii).

Over the years, Jews have developed  Homiletical: A homily is a short talk on a religious or moral topic, commonly rooted in biblical texts, such as a sermon delivered by a rabbi.

These four methods of interpretation: According to scholar A. van der Heide, although there are general understandings of the terms pshat, drash, remez, and sōd today, it is difficult to accurately define them decisively over time (A. van der Heide, “PARDES: Methodological Reflections on the Theory of the Four Senses,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 34, no. 2 [1983]: 156). Scholar Zvi Zohar agrees, noting that Maimonides, for instance, contests the translation of pshat as “literal,” pointing out that the biblical description of God having an “outstretched arm” cannot be understood literally but only has a metaphorical meaning, “with great power” (Zvi Zohar, email message to author, February 2, 2015).

In its form as an acronym for peshat, remez, drash, and sōd, many today incorrectly attribute the term PARDES to the Talmud, where the word appears in the context of a story told about four individuals who “go into pardes,” which some understand to mean an orchard (BT Hag. 14b). Although the Talmud introduces the general notion that verses of Torah can be interpreted in multiple ways (i.e., BT Sanhedrin 3a), based on Jer. 23:29 and Num Rab. 13:15, which states that there are seventy ways of interpreting the Torah), it does not introduce these four ways in particular.

As for theories on the origins of these four methods of interpretation, some maintain that Christians and/or Muslims should be credited as the originators. See, e.g., Frederick E. Greenspahn, “The Significance of Hebrew Philology for the Development of a Literal and Historical Jewish Bible Interpretation,” in *Hebrew Bible Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, part 2, ed. Magne Saebø (Göttingen, Ger.: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2000), 56–57; Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, “Anti-Christian Polemic in Medieval Bible...
Applying these methods to verses  For example, Everett Fox integrates this interpretation into his translation (i.e., that Cain and Abel are twins), but the JPS and HarperCollins translations do not. See also Sarna (trans. and ed.), JPS Torah Commentary, 32, note for “his brother.”

As for a drash understanding  Midrash of Cain being born a twin (who was not Abel) and Abel being born a triplet: Gen. Rab. 22.1–4.

As for an interpretive approach  Source of this sōd reading of the Torah: Zohar 2:216b–2:216a, in Daniel C. Matt, trans. and comm., The Zohar, Pritzker ed., vol. 5 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 472–473. This tradition is also based on a passage from BT Shabb. 146a. See also special topic 6.3.


Daly quote: Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), in Heschel (ed.), On Being a Jewish Feminist, xxii.

Torah referring to God using male terms: Hebrew is a gendered language such that nouns and verbs are always feminine or masculine. Only one time in the Torah is God not referred to using a male pronoun: in the book of Genesis, when it says that humans are created in God’s image, the text uses the first person plural pronoun we (Gen. 1:27).

Languages where masculine terms are the norm: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroad, 1998), xix. Or take the following: “The Jewish theology we so uncritically accept as ‘Jewish’ was written by men for men. Yet it is never referred to as ‘male theology.’ On the other hand, when women write theology that takes into account their experiences, their needs, the impact of male theology on their lives, their work is labeled ‘feminist theology’” (Donna Berman, “Major Trends in Feminist Theology: The Work of Rachel Adler, Judith Plaskow, and Rebecca Alpert,” in New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future, ed. Elyse Goldstein [Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2009], 12).

In other words, the fact that  This statement by Plaskow continues as follows: “The long-suppressed femaleness of God, acknowledged in the mystical tradition, but even here shaped and articulated by men, must be recovered and reexplored and reintegrated into the Godhead” (Plaskow, “The Right Is Theological,” 231–232). Going still further, Plaskow calls for an acknowledgment of “the profound injustice of Torah itself” (Plaskow, Standing Again, 226). See also chapter 5 for more on Plaskow and her understanding of male hegemony in terms of halakhah.


Aside from God  Seth’s birth: Gen. 4:25.

In the narrative about Jacob  Jacob’s name change to Israel: Gen. 32:29. See also M. Avot 5:2–3.

The “mixed multitude”: Exod. 12:37–38. One scholar argues that evidence points to no more than 75,000 Israelites living in thirteenth-century BCE Land of Israel; see Shanks et al., Rise of Ancient Israel, 43.


It is easy to grasp  Contextualized within the rest of the Torah narrative, a reader might easily assume that God chose Abraham because he was an extraordinary person with one-of-a-kind kindness. Abraham’s uniqueness is also discussed below, in the section titled “Chosenness as Choosing Different Things.”

The idea of the Israelites’ uniqueness  Repeated elsewhere in the Torah: Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, 26:18.


Becoming tainted with impurity: Halevi, The Kuzari, 92.

Texts focusing on the unique humility of Jews: “[The verse] ‘It was not because you were greater than any people that the Lord set His love upon you and chose you, but because...
you were ‘the humblest of all peoples’ (Deut. 7:7) means that the Holy One said to Israel: I love you because even when I shower greatness upon you, you humble yourselves before me” (BT Hul. 89a, in Bialik and Ravnitzky [eds.], Book of Legends, 335).

Medieval scholars who echoed similar ideas: Cohn-Sherbok, Judaism, 427.

In contrast, a number of contemporary Jews


The following statement, made by scholar Levenson, Sinai and Zion, 10–11.

All of this said, such voices On Abraham’s rational path to monotheism, see Jospe, “The Concept of the Chosen People.”

Another thread in this school The idea that God came to the Jews after all other nations (Sifrei, Deut. 343) is a midrash (see chapter 5) on a phrase from Exod. 24:7 that also appears in Exod. 19:8. See Bialik and Ravnitzky, Book of Legends, 78–79.

Israelites choosing God’s laws rather than God choosing them: This tradition usually builds on the biblical phrase ‘am segulah (Deut. 7:6), often translated as “a treasured nation.” See, e.g., Samson Raphael Hirsch’s commentary on Exod. 19 and Deut. 7, 14 in Collected Writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Nanuel, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 1997). Some also cite the phrase or la-goyim, “a light unto the nations,” though this term does not appear in the Hebrew Bible. The closest biblical rendering, which appears in Isa. 42:6 and 49:6, is le-or ha-goyim, or “a light of the nations” (Jospe, “The Concept and the Chosen People”).

According to yet another trend God picked up Mount Sinai: BT Shabbat 88a, in Bialik and Ravnitzky (eds.), The Book of Legends, 79.

All of these positions are founded A biblical source that all Jewish souls were present at mount sinai: Deut. 29:13–14. Rabbinic sources: Midrash Tanchuma, Nitzavim 3; Rashi and Sforno on Deut. 29:14.


Perhaps the greatest challenge Tension between an unchanging text and ever-changing interpretations: As scholar Judith Plaskow writes, “Revelation may surprise us and destroy our preconceptions, but it must compete with language already in place” (Plaskow, Standing Again, 20).


Chapter 3. Zion

This chapter addresses contemporary notions of Zionism, reborn and popularized toward the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, only in a cursory fashion. Instead, its focus is the idea of “Zion” and not the various ideologies called Zionism. Distinct understandings of contemporary Zionism are explored in chapter 10.

I was in one of the oldest synagogues For the history of the founding of Congregation Sherith Israel, see Fred Rosenbaum, Cosmopolitans: A Social and Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 16–17.

Founded by Orthodox Jews: As explained in chapter 8, the synagogue’s founders may not have identified as Orthodox, per se. Either way, retroactively, their ritual practices fall into contemporary understandings of the movement called Orthodoxy.

One way that Jews have been able On Jews’ “portable identity,” see Frédéric Brenner, Diaspora (2003) [DVD].

Another way lies in This is to say nothing about the way that Zion replaced, or perhaps displaced, Sinai. See, e.g., Hershel Shanks, William G. Dever, Baruch Halpern, and P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., The Rise of Ancient Israel (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), 128.


In this stained glass picture Di Goldene Medina: Some transliterate this phrase as di Goldene Medine.

On the connection between this Yiddish phrase and the notions of freedom, justice, and opportunity, see Rosen-
San Francisco as the new Jerusalem: As scholar Marc Dollinger explains, “This really was the promised land. The first Jews in San Francisco considered their city to be the new Jerusalem” (Emma Silvers, “California Dreaming” Exhibit Celebrates Pioneering Jewish Spirit of the West, November 10, 2011, www.jweekly.com/article/full/63439/exhibit-celebrates-pioneering-jewish-spirit-of-the-west). Similarly, a great deal of evidence suggests that many American Jews considered the United States to be Zion. Take the following statement, made by a Jewish American in 1949: “For Americans, America is Zion; but for Jews even the achievement of a Jewish state does not make Zion attained” (Daniel J. Boorstin, “A Dialogue of Two Histories: Jewish Contributions to America in a New Light,” Commentary, October 1949, 313). See also Alice A. Butler-Smith, “Diaspora Nationality vs. Diaspora Nationalism: American Jewish Identity and Zionism after the Jewish State,” Israel Affairs 15, no. 2 (April 2009): 164–165.

Although the concept of Zion As is discussed later in this chapter, Israel and Zion are often used synonymously. On Jefferson’s idea of putting Israel on the seal of the United States of America, see Edward Alexander, “Where Is Zion?,” in Israel and Zion in American Judaism: The Zionist Fulfillment, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 13; Ava Fran Kahn and Ellen Eisenberg, “Western Reality: Jewish Diversity during the ‘German’ Period,” American Jewish History 92, no. 4 (December 2004): 455–479.


Technically, starfish (referred to by marine scientists as sea stars) require at least part of the central disk to be intact in order to regenerate; see National Geographic, “Starfish [Sea Star],” http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/starfish.


Take, for example, some of the evidence Charles London, Far from Zion: In Search of a Global Jewish Community (New York: William Morrow, 2009), 142, 154–155.

London observed this same phenomenon As London notes about Ugandan Jews, Nabugoye Hill was “their own version of the promised land” (London, Far from Zion, 172). In the words of one man: “We are Ugandans and we are Jews. But for us, this, Nabugoye, is like our Jerusalem” (ibid., 184–185).

Iran as Jerusalem, Zion, or Promised Land: Consider the following statements, made by Jews in Iran: “The Muslims of Iran have their city of Qom. The Jews [of Iran] have Shiraq. It is our Jerusalem” (London, Far from Zion, 217); “Would you ever move to Israel?” we asked him. ‘Me?’ he scratched his head and laughed. ‘No. I like it there; it’s okay. But this is my home, here in Iran. This is where I am comfortable. You have heard the old saying about this city? “Esfehan is half the world”’” (ibid., 219).

Cuba as Jerusalem, Zion, or Promised Land: As one Cuban Jew told London, “I love Israel, but Cuba is my home. I love it here . . . it is where I am most comfortable. It’s a special place. There is nowhere in the world like Cuba. Or like Israel. They are similar in that way” (London, Far from Zion, 248).

Of course, these countries For example, Vilna, Lithuania, was known for centuries as “Jerusalem” or the “Jerusalem of Lithuania.”

Brenner references: Frédéric Brenner, email to author, February 12, 2013.


Saying “Next Year in Jerusalem” even when one is in Jerusalem itself points to physical and metaphysical understandings of Jerusalem.


London’s book reinforces the notion London’s reinforcement of the notion of Israel as Zion and of Zion as lying outside the Land of Israel is reflected in the title of his final chapter, “Zion,” which discusses Jews in Israel, as well as in passages such as the following: “[Cuban] Jews who moved to Israel were not seen as abandoning the revolution but as returning to their national homeland” (London, Far from Zion, 237). Elsewhere London uses the term diaspora when referring to geographical locations outside the State of Israel (ibid., 126, 199) and Zion in lieu of the State of Israel, as in “a return to Zion,” or Promised Land (ibid., 186–187).


One of the most common ways Jonathan Z. Smith, To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 109. For Catherine Bell, a scholar of ritual studies, Smith’s ideas regarding ritual are correct. In
her seminal work, *Ritual*, Bell asserts that “talk about ritual may reveal more about the speakers than about the spoken.” She continues: “The theoretical construction of ritual becomes a reflection of the theorist’s method and the motor of discourse in which the concerns of the theorist take center stage.” Thus, similar to Smith, Bell argues that rituals do not surround ontologically sacred events or actions, but rather make those events or actions sacred (Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], xi, 81).

**As an example of how an object** Marcel Vogel and Masaru Emoto have conducted research to determine whether the molecular structure of water that has and has not been blessed differs. The 2006 documentary *Water: The Great Mystery*, by Saida Medvedeva and Vasily Anisimov, includes some of Emoto’s research on this topic. I thank Gabe Goldman and Andrew Ramer for bringing this research to my attention.

As Smith elaborates, “A ritual object or action becomes sacred by having attention focused on it in a highly marked way. From such a point of view, there is nothing that is inherently sacred or profane. These are not substantive categories, but rather situational ones. Sacrality is, above all, a category of emplacement” (Smith, *To Place, 104*).

**For the Jewish community, Zion** King David’s taking of Zion from the Jebusites is told in 2 Sam. 5:6–10. Although the prebiblical meanings of the word *zion* are uncertain, suggestions include a rock, stronghold, dry place, and run. The 2nd ed., vol. 21 (Detroit: Macmillan, 2007), 538.


1000 BCE: Shanks et al., *Rise of Ancient Israel*, 7. This date is not universally accepted, however (ibid., 90–91). There is a multiplicity of opinion as to the accuracy of the Bible’s dating system.

**From this point forward, Zion** Synonymity of Zion and Jerusalem: Isa. 1:27.

Synonymity of Zion and Jerusalem via the terms *Temple or Temple Mount*; Joel 4:17, 21; Ps. 2–3.

“Dwelling place of God”: Ps. 76:3.

“Mountain of God”: Isa. 2:3, Ps. 2:6, 48:11. That said, in one passage, 1 Kings 8:1, when Solomon brings the ark from Zion to the Temple, the text suggests that, at least at times, Zion and the Temple were two distinct locations; see W. R. F. Browning, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); also Berenbaum and Skolnick, “Zion.”

Zion as Land of Israel at large, during the Assyrian exile: Isa. 51: 3, 57:13; Ps. 137; Lam. 1:1, 17. Other times Jerusalem refers to the larger area of land that the tribe of Judah controls, also known as the southern kingdom, which includes Jerusalem; thus, Zion comes to symbolize this as well. Synonymity of “God’s people” and Zion: Isa. 51:16; Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 137.


Zion’s eclipsing of Sinai: Isa. 8:18, 14:32. See also Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 91.

**Not only is David the first** Building God a “house to dwell in”: 2 Sam. 7:5.

Solomon, not David, built the Temple: Despite paintings and other visual depictions to the contrary, the building that Solomon built—the Temple—was probably not particularly large; it was only about 90 feet long and 30 feet wide, smaller than even Solomon’s own palace (Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?,* 42–43).

God, not Solomon, built the Temple: Ps. 78:69.

Tabernacle and Ark housed in Shiloh: Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?,* 47.

Temple in Shiloh before David was born: 1 Sam. 3:3, in Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 96.


**Although neither David nor Solomon** From this point forward when I write “the Temple” I am referring to the temple built, and later rebuilt, in Jerusalem, an area commonly called *Har Habayit* (Mount of the House) by Jews and *Al-Haram al-Sharif* (the Noble Sanctuary) by Muslims. In these instances I capitalize the term *Temple*, whereas when referring to other sacred sites (other temples) I do not. This is a normative practice in scholarship surrounding this ancient period and the perceived hierarchy of these places.


Entire world created from Zion: BT Yoma 54b.

Mount Zion foundation stone as epicenter of creation and Zion as the world’s belly button: Tan. Kedoshim 10, in Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 118.

**To backtrack for a moment** God’s promise that Abraham’s descendants will inherit land: Gen. 15:18–21. Different boundaries of this area are expressed in Num. 34:1–15, in addition to Deut. 11:24. See also Josh. 1:4; Ezek. 47:13–20. Jacob’s name changed to Israel: Gen. 35:10.

For centuries, both prior to David’s reign


Northern tribes: Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 188.

Lost tribes: When people speak about the Lost Tribes of Israel, usually counted as ten in number, they commonly date their beginnings to the exile caused by the Assyrians. But some maintain that the post-Solomon dispersed kingdom of Israel was made up of only nine tribes: Reuben, Manasheh, Ephraim, Gad, Asher, Dan, Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar. In this counting, the other three tribes—Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin—were located in the south, and eventually the latter two were absorbed into Judah. See Eric Maroney, *The Other Zions: The Lost Histories of Jewish Nations* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 2009), 12.

According to a number of ancient nonbiblical sources


Dan and Bethel as centers of power: Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 46.

Multiple hubs: The division of the Israelite tribes into two regions, Israel and Judah, existed prior to the ninth century BCE. According to the Bible, David was the first king who was able to unite the tribes living in the Land of Israel, followed by his son, Solomon. Therefore, the tribes were never united again.

1 and 2 Chronicles and Jerusalem as the central Israelite city: Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 439.

A great deal of theory

On the idea of the latest event replacing all previous ones, see Doron Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature* (Tübingen, Ger.: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987).

Putting aside multiple different population centers

On Canaanites, Philistines, and Israelites as a “composite culture,” see Shanks et al., *Rise of Ancient Israel*, 52–64; also 27–60, 149.

Others disagree with these claims

On Asherah as Yahweh or El’s consort, see Shanks et al., *Rise of Ancient Israel*, 137.

Prohibitions of marrying non-Israelites: Exod. 34:15–16; Deut. 7:3–4.

At the time when the northern and southern kingdoms


According to scholar Shaye Cohen


“Jew” vs. “Israelite” vs. “Hebrew”: As recently as 1900, the U.S. government officially referred to Jews as part of the “Hebrew race” when calculating immigration statistics; see Butler-Smith, “Diaspora Nationality,” 161.

Even by the period of Roman rule


Hasmoneans: See chapter 7.


In the eighth century

Some date the Assyrian Exile to 733 BCE rather than 722; see, e.g., Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 422–434, 481.

Assyrian Empire: Many scholars of the ancient Middle East refer to these eighth-century BCE conquerors as “Neo-Assyrians” rather than “Assyrians.” For simplicity, throughout this book I use the perhaps less precise but more common label “Assyrian.”

Those permitted to stay: Isa. 7:8; Ezra 4:2, 10; Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 434.


Northern kingdom subgroup fled to Judah: Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 49.


Dispersion from city of Samaria: It was during this exile that many of the biblical prophets cut their teeth, so to speak, voicing their grief and misery at having been exiled from their homeland by the Assyrians.

In the decades after


Approximately 125 years later

Technically, between the Assyrians and the Babylonians, the Egyptians also ruled over the Judeans, and, depending on where you draw the Judean border, even the Chaldeans reigned for a spell (Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 385–415).
Perhaps the preeminence of the year 586 BCE. Although Babylonians had conquered the area prior, and they damaged the Temple before 586 BCE, only in this year, goes the argument, was the Temple thoroughly destroyed and the Judeans prohibited from rebuilding it. Another reason for focusing on 586 rather than 722 BCE as the beginning of the Jewish diaspora might be that in the 700s, under the Assyrians, the northern tribes that were forcibly relocated allegedly disappeared altogether (the so-called lost tribes of Israel). One problem with this theory is that many sources claim these Israelites were in fact dispersed by the Assyrians to Mesopotamia, where they thrived (i.e., they weren’t “lost”). Others contend that those exiled at the hands of the Babylonians (c. 586 BCE) were sent to similar places as those exiled by Assyrians in 722 BCE; these sources cannot be verified, however, especially those that include precise numbers of Israelites relocated. See Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 480–488.

Lack of evidence that a majority of Judeans were exiled: Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 470–479.

A little less than fifty years after. Some scholars discredit ancient sources that paint Cyrus in a positive light because they are both incomplete and overly detailed; in the latter case, these texts credit Cyrus with giving precise measurements for the Temple to be rebuilt, something no Persian king would have been so keen on pointing out because it was a non-Persian structure. Putting aside whether Cyrus actually decreed Judeans could return to Jerusalem under the blanket of what today would be framed as a form of “freedom of religion,” many hold that the period when Judeans lived under Persian rule was far from ideal. Some archeologists point to ancient sites as evidence that Judean communities were involved in major military actions against the Persians, suggesting power struggles between the two communities.

Even events that have textual support, such as those described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, are highly debatable. For starters, the chronological order laid out in these two biblical books is problematic. For example, the latter book says that Nehemiah was given permission by the Persian king (not Cyrus, apparently, but Artaxerxes) to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but Ezra, who is supposed to have preceded Nehemiah, finds the walls already built upon his arrival. See Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 498–509.


Parts of Torah had been lost: See 2 Kings 22:7 for another example of a proto-Jewish communal leader, a high priest, who found a lost text, called “the book of the Law,” and returned it to the people.

Once the Temple was rebuilt. According to some, following the Babylonian Exile—particularly after the reconstruction of the Temple—one lineage from the tribe of Levi, the Zadokites, gained disproportionate power within the priestly class, which lasted through the second century BCE. Others go further, maintaining that regardless of which lineage controlled the priestly caste, corruption and struggles over political power ruled the day. Such theories focus more on the political ramifications of these intra/proto-Jewish tensions than whether or not the Temple was the “dwelling place of God.” See, e.g., Gabriele Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 43–209.

Earthly nexus: For some, there is a sharp contradiction between God’s ability to be accessible only in a specific, finite place juxtaposed to God’s omnipresence. It seems that for the proto-Jews this was not a problem. See Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 138–139.


Whatever actually happened. On the idea that Egyptian Judeans stayed put, see Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 488.

Returning or moving “back”: The use of the word back, as in “back to Zion,” presumes that Egyptian Judeans ever lived in Jerusalem in the first place. Even though some Egyptian Judeans may have relocated to Egypt from Jerusalem, some surely lived in other locations in the Land of Israel prior to their relocation. Then there is the question of when these subgroups may have arrived in Egypt in the first place: perhaps in the eighth century BCE, perhaps the sixth, perhaps another time altogether.


Some Babylonian Judeans. On living in Babylon being akin to living in Israel, Rabbi Judah cites Zech. 2:11 as evidence, a biblical verse that can be translated as “Escape, oh Zion, who dwells with the daughters of Bavel” (BT Ketuvot 110b–111a). Some argue, however, that this statement reflects the fear that some of Babylon’s most important Jewish leaders and intellectuals would leave for Jerusalem, thus depriving the Babylonian Jewish community of central communal figures; see, e.g., Judah M. Eisenberg, “American Jews and Israel: Two Views,” in Neusner (ed.), *Israel and Zion in American Judaism*, 30–35.

If the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The number of peo-
ple who moved to the Land of Israel at this time is thought to be small. According to one scholar, the estimated population of Jerusalem at the time was, at best, 3,000, in contrast to what is written in the book of Ezra, which states that 40,000 individuals returned to Judah. See Shawn Aster, “Ezra and Nehemiah,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ezra-nehemiah; Charles Carter, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period, quoted in Betlyon, “A People Transformed,” 7.

Scholar Shaye Cohen notes that following the exiles of 722 and 586 BCE, the tribal system of Israelites was destroyed “beyond repair,” with families returning either individually or as part of slightly larger collectives or clans, but no longer as tribes. (Maccabees to the Mishnah, 115–116). Such a theory complicates the ability to reconstruct any statistical figures from this era.

Many maintain that before the Second Temple “At least four other sites”: Some contend that a fifth temple existed during this era in Arad, a town located in what is today the State of Israel, which may even have been patterned after the Jerusalem Temple. See, e.g., Stone, Scriptures, Sects, and Visions, 77-78.

The first two temples were in Egypt Some argue that the Tobid temple was a palace, not a temple, built under the direction of a priestly family evicted from Jerusalem by Nehemiah. For more information, see Boccaccini, Roots of Rabbinic Judaism, 86–87; Hayes and Miller, Israelite and Judean History, 550; Vanderkam, Introduction to Early Judaism, 14–15; Edwin M. Yamauchi, “The Reconstruction of Jewish Communities during the Persian Empire,” Journal of the Historical Society 4, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 1-27.


Nonetheless, a dominant trend Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 106; Vanderkam, Introduction to Early Judaism, 203. The Second Temple garnered more attention and was more important to the Judean community than the First Temple, despite the fact that the first had been authenticated by God (i.e., in a pillar of smoke, as described in the book of Chronicles) and was built by a Judean king rather than a king widely accepted as not fully Judean (Herod). See Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 131.


The difficulty of establishing On the Elephantine and Oniad temples, see Jacob J. Petuchowski, “Diaspora Judaism—An Abnormality? The Testimony of History,” in Neusner (ed.), Israel and Zion in American Judaism, 125–136. It should also be noted that Philo doesn’t mention anything about the various messianic figures from first-century CE Palestine, either, yet scholars are largely in agreement that Jesus, among others, was present at the time (see Notes, chapter 4, “Whatever the reasons”).

Third is the Tobid temple The legitimacy of this temple remains under dispute. Some scholars speculate that it was an unfinished castle, not a temple. Others say that the name Tobiah or Tobias was the Jewish name of another person altogether, Hycanus, who lived during the Hasmonian period. For more information, see Boccaccini, Roots of Rabbinic Judaism, 86–87; Hayes and Miller, Israelite and Judean History, 550; Vanderkam, Introduction to Early Judaism, 14–15; Yamauchi, “Reconstruction.”

Torah mentioning Mount Gerizim and not Zion: In From the Maccabees to the Mishnah (160), Cohen argues that the temple on Mount Gerizim was not in competition with the Jerusalem Temple, even for Samaritans. Others cite archeological evidence to contend that there was a sacred center on Mount Gerizim prior to there being one in Jerusalem. At any rate, we cannot say with certainty whether this temple was Samaritan, Israelite, and/or Canaanite (Fred Astern, email to author, June 7, 2012; see also Nathan Schur, History of the Samaritans [New York: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989], 17–33). Some scholars maintain that the oldest evidence pointing to a distinct community living on Mount Gerizim dates to the sixth century BCE (e.g., Ingrid Hjelm, “What Do Samaritans and Jews Have in Common? Recent Trends in Samaritan Studies,” Currents in Biblical Research 3, no. 1 [October 2004]: 9–59). To make matters even more complicated, the familial relationship between the Samaritans and the Judeans is far from clear, as is discussed further in chapter 11. See also Yairah Amit, “The Samaritans—Biblical Positions in the Service of Modern Politics,” in Samaritans: Past and Present, ed. Menachem Mor and Friedrich V. Reiterer (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 247–266.

By the time the Romans defeated the Greeks From this point forward I will be using the signifier “Jew,” as opposed to proto-Jew, Judean, or similar terms.

Jews who lived in Greek and Roman Palestine: The Jewish subcommunities living in first-century Palestine are explored in chapters 4, 7, and 8. As for using the name Pales-
A major claim to return to Jerusalem: Gordis, Judaism for the Modern Age.

Identification as part of the same macrocommunity: According to a third-century CE Roman historian, Babylonian Jews provided aid to Palestinian Jews who were fighting the Romans, pointing to a communal identification among Jews; see Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 26.

Setting aside the lack of uniformity - It is commonly held that the Jerusalem Temple was the primary site where Judeans performed animal sacrifices, especially on particular holidays; see Vanderkam, Introduction to Early Judaism, 204–208. Scholar Jacob Milgrom argues that “no single theory can encompass the sacrificial system of any society,” whether the ancient Israelites or another group (Jacob Milgrom, ed., Leviticus: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, vol. 3 [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 440–442, cited in Danielle Celermajer, The Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apologies [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 74.n.20).

Verbal prayer: We aren’t sure when verbal prayer became a dominant form of Jewish ritual worship, especially once it included the practice of saying specific prayers at set times of day; see, e.g., Vanderkam, Introduction to Early Judaism, 209–211.

Some believe that only after On the existence of synagogues pre-70 CE, see Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 109–116, 222–22; Vanderkam, Introduction to Early Judaism, 212–213; Yamauchi, “Reconstruction,” 2.

Just how one defines a synagogue One could argue, of course, that although synagogues existed prior to the destruction of the Second Temple they only began to spread across the Jewish world post-70 CE.

Synagogue architecture reflecting Temple architecture: Since the seventeenth century CE, American synagogues have largely been designed to mirror the architecture of the inner sections of the Temple. See Laura Arnold Leibman, Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012), 57–82.

Another important shift in post-70 CE Jewish practice - Tal-

Because in contemporary scholarship the Pharisees On the fabrication of this Talmudic story, see Daniel Boyarin, Border Lines: The Partition of Judaism-Christianity (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 151–201; Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 157–158; Jacob Neusner, Develop-ments of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions Concerning Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkaï (Leiden, Neth.: Brill, 1970); idem, Read-

Other things aside from the end of animal sacrifices: Even though he does not support the idea that Ben Zakkai was responsible for launching the post-Temple rabbinic period, Shaye Cohen holds that factionally-attributable labels disappeared from Jewish texts at around this same time, such as Pharisee, Sadducee, and the Houses or Schools of Hillel and Shammai, the latter two names found in the Talmud and used to denote distinct schools of thought. Cohen writes that it is possible the Houses of Hillel and Shammai were actually different subgroups of Pharisees. Perhaps most importantly, though, Cohen disputes the idea that post-Yavneh the Pharisaic community thrived while all other Jewish subgroups in Roman Palestine died off. Instead he asserts that the Yavneh rabbis opened the community up to greater inclusion, instilling the ethos of agreeing to disagree, the idea that divergent opinions can be valid simultaneously. See Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 157–158; idem, “The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Sectarianism,” in Origins of Judaism: The Pharisees and Other Sects, vol. 2, part 1, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 101–127; see also chapter 5.

The destruction of the Second Temple The book of Ezra refers to the Judeans who returned to Jerusalem and its environs from Babylonia as “members of the exile” or “the congregation of the exile.” Thus, the term exile was used by members of the ancient Judean community itself (Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 140).

Whereas some Jews distinguish between exile and dispersion by using two different Hebrew words, galut and golah, I contend that for most American Jews golat has come to mean both. See Howard Wettstein, ed., Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).


Gendered use of term diaspora: Some scholars look at how the ideas of territorial scattering and dissemination of sperm are interrelated, while others look at the ways that metaphors regarding roots, seed, and familial growth are used in both Diaspora Studies and clinical discussions around human procreation. See, e.g., Cohen, Global Diasporas, 177; Stefan Helmreich, “Kinship, Nation, and Paul Gilroy’s Concept of Diaspora,” Diaspora 2, no. 2 (1992): 243–249; Liisa Malkki, “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Ter-ritorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refu-

When a group is forced Emanuel Gamoran, in “Diaspora vs. Exile,” The Reconstructionist 9, no. 8 (May 28, 1943): 12–16, argues that Jews should be much more sensitive when choos-
ing between the terms exile and diaspora. Significantly, this article was published five years prior to the founding of the State of Israel.


**Indeed, historical examples abound** On wanting to return to Poland or Russia rather than immigrating to Israel, see Taylor Spence, “Jeffersonian Jews: The Jewish Agrarian Diaspora and the Assimilative Power of the Western Land, 1882–1930,” *Western Historical Review* 41 (Autumn 2010): 335, and 327–351 generally.


**As scholar Arnold Eisen aptly argues** Some rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud felt that returning to Zion (in this case meaning the Land of Israel) was equivalent to the fulfillment of biblical law; see Eisen, *Galut*, 3–56, 69–90.

**Take, for example, a rabbinic interpretation** On the symbolism of the rock Jacob used as a pillow, see Gen. Rab. 49:4, in Ezrahi, *Booking Passage*, 12–13.


**This idea is also described** In this situation, the Zohar describes God as the Shechinah or Divine Presence. See Arthur Green, “Introduction,” in Daniel C. Matt, trans. and comm., *The Zohar*, Pritzker ed., vol. 1 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), lxvii–lxix; see also chapter 6.

**Because Diaspora and Zion have become** For example, the privileging of Zion over the Diaspora is reflected in the Israeli school system. See, e.g., Tali Tadmor-Shimony, “Yearning for Zion in Israeli Education: Creating a Common National Identity,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 6, no. 1 (January 2013): 1–21.


**Many American Jews have been disturbed** David Ben-Gurion and Jacob Blaustein, “An Exchange of Views,” *American Jewish Year Book* 53 (1952): 564–568.

**Despite such protests** Many authors, scholars and otherwise, accept that the binary of Zion/Diaspora is “true,” stating, for example, that Zion is the “centre of the Jewish people” (Gabriel Sheffer, “Homeland and Diaspora: An Analytical Perspective on Israeli-Jewish Diaspora Relations,” *Ethnopolitics* 9, nos. 3–4 [September–November 2010]: 384; see also 379–399). Meanwhile, Jewish Israeli writer Hillel Halkin, in an attempt to reinforce the idea that Zion and Diaspora are opposites, writes that “Diaspora Jewry is doomed.” He notes, “There is, or at least should be, an unavoidable tension in the relationship between an Israeli and a Diaspora Jew, a relationship which is ideally an adversary one since the Israeli is living in a community of faith which holds that it alone is the natural place for a Jew to live.” As for the idea that the Jewish world can have two centers, Halkin likens it to “a twin star whose two halves circle each other around a gravitational point.” Later, he remarks: “A better comparison might be between two planets, one teeming with new if embattled life, the other atmospherically exhausted, on its way to being dead as the moon” (Hillel Halkin, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend: A Zionist’s Polemic* [New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1977], 42, 18, 31, 71, quoted in Helene Meyers, “On Homelands and Home-Making: Rebecca Goldstein’s Mazel,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 33, no. 3 [Spring 2010]: 132).

Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin “propose a privileging of Diaspora” over Zion, as the diaspora is “a theoretical and historical model to replace national self-determination” (Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity,” *Critical Inquiry* 19 [Summer 1993]: 723, 711). They are also averse to the idea of a Jewish-identified nation-state. In their words, the establishment of Israel is “the subversion of Jewish culture and not its culmination” (ibid., 712).

**Of course, the Jewish genocide or Shoah** Ezrahi, *Booking Passage*, 17, 10.


**In addition, when comparing American and Israeli Jewry** In fact, “whereas two-thirds of adult Canadian Jews and nearly three-quarters of French and Australian Jews have been to Israel, only 35 percent of American Jews have visited even once” (Jack Wertheimer, “The Truth about American Jews and Israel,” *Commentary*, June 1, 2009, avail-
Jews moving from Israel to the United States: Jacob Neusner, *Israel in American Judaism*, xi.


Zion as outside of place and time: Eisen, *Galut*, 175.

**Nonetheless, the Zion/Diaspora dyad** Since the eighteenth century the Reform movement has officially stated that they do not mean the words “ingathering of the exiles” literally; at times, they have removed the language from their prayer books altogether. Most Jews who affiliate with the Reform movement are not aware of such official positions, making this fact somewhat irrelevant to the “truth” of the matter.


**Part of the problem with the Zion/Diaspora framework** In 2005, the Israeli Parliament passed the “Bell Hatfusot Law,” which defines this museum as “the National Center for Jewish communities in Israel and around the world” (Sharon Udasin, “Rebirth of a Tel Aviv Legend,” *Jerusalem Post*, December 24, 2010, www.ipost.com/Magazine/Features/Rebirth-of-a-Tel-Aviv-legend).

If you go to Jerusalem today On the location of “Mount Zion” as southwest of the ancient site of Zion, see Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 92.

And yet Zion does exist Zion as existential exile: Although not explored in this chapter, one idea from the Jewish mystical tradition is that humanity exists in *galut* due to a rupture between the feminine and masculine forms of God. Only once this chasm is healed will humanity become reunified. See Rita M. Gross, “Steps Toward Feminine Imagination,” in *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 234.


As for whether Zion is ever literal Technically, at the point in the biblical narrative where the Israelites find themselves outside of and looking into the Land of Israel (or Zion), the region could also be called Canaan, among other names, instead of the Land of Israel.

**In the twenty-first century** Erich S. Gruen, “Diaspora and Homeland,” in Wettstein (ed.), *Diasporas and Exiles*, 18–46.

Struggle with exile as part of what it means to be a Jew: Howard Wettstein, “Introduction,” in Wettstein (ed.), *Diasporas and Exiles*, xii.


Regarding another important twentieth-century Jew with a potentially similar ideological orientation, Whitfield adds: “Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik of Boston— perhaps justifying his own refusal to live in Israel— desribed *Galut* (Exile) as ‘the essence of the Jewish people,’ with its triggering antecedents in the expulsion from Eden. It may not be accidental that his writings are pervaded by references to homelessness and loneliness” (ibid.).

**Chapter 4. Messiahs**


For me, the most striking thing Although not all members of the Lubavitch movement believed Schneerson was the messiah when he was alive, many, if not most, did. Since Schneerson’s death the question of whether he could or should be referred to as the messiah has continued to be debated within Chabad. Some seem to have accepted that he was not the messiah, among other reasons because he did not bring about the building of the Third Temple in Jerusalem. Others within Chabad circles, however, still call him the messiah. A subdivision within this latter group commonly speak about Schneerson in the present tense, as if he were still alive. Each year a few full-page advertisements appear in international newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, to this effect.

As one Chabad rabbi, Shlomo Ezagui, said in a 2012 interview, almost eighteen years after the Rebbe’s death:
I believe that the Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Schneerson, is the mashiach (messiah), though I realize that there is a controversy about this within Chabad. The Talmud says that if the mashiach is alive, it will be Rabbi Yehuda, but if he’s chosen among the dead, it will be someone like the prophet Daniel. This shows us that the mashiach can come from the dead and in fact, there are many different classic sources that talk about the mashiach as rising from the dead. It’s not that extraordinary: one of the 13 principles of faith is belief in the resurrection of the dead. I just feel, hope, and pray that it happens soon. Even within Chabad, there are a lot of people who have doubts, and when the rebbe died, I also had many questions. The rebbe’s death shook up a lot of people, and not everyone was able to resolve their questions and move on with greater faith. (Daphna Berman, Sarah Bregor et al., “What Does the Concept of Messiah Mean Today?” Moment Magazine, March/April 2012, www.momentmag.com/what-does-the-concept-of-the-messiah-mean-today)

Despite having many positive things to say

Norman Lamm is quoted in Sue Fishkoff, The Rebbe’s Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 263. He was formerly the president of Yeshiva University (see chapter 8).

Putting aside some contemporary Jewish discomfort

This chapter tangentially explores nuances between the notions of “messiah,” “messianic idea,” “messianic age,” and “messianic movement.” For example, Moshe Idel (Messianic Mystics [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998], 262–265) asserts that scholars are too eager to describe an isolated example of a Jewish messiah as a full-on “messianic movement.” Although these distinctions are important, this book addresses these signifiers in a basic manner only. See also Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, “Messianic Movements,” in Encyclopaedia Judaica, second ed., vol. 14., ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 115–122; Jerry Rabow, 50 Jewish Messiahs (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing HOUSE, 2002).

Along with the belief in the messiah


Some might argue that the messianic idea


Anointing a person rather than a ritual object: For example, Gen. 31:13.

Moses’s anointing of Aaron: Exod. 28:41. See also, e.g., Exod. 29:21, 30:30, 40:13; Lev. 8:12. The first time Moses anoints Aaron there is no mention of oil (i.e., Moses is simply instructed to anoint Aaron, without a precise procedure outlined). In examples thereafter, however, the verb anoint is accompanied with the directive to use “anointing oil.”

Other priests anointed in the Torah: For example, a verse from the third book of the Torah, Leviticus, describes a seemingly related ritual whereby the Israelite community’s high priest, unnamed, is anointed; see Lev. 4:3, 5, 16, 6:15, 32, 21:10.

After the Five Books of Moses

God tells the prophet Samuel that Saul and David need to be anointed prior to their becoming kings: For example, 1 Sam. 15:1–2, 24:6, 26:11 (Saul); 1 Sam. 16:3, 2 Sam. 2:4, 5:3 (David). The term mashiach is also used to describe a ruler or prince, as in mashiach nagid (the messiah prince), exemplified in 1 Sam. 9:16 and Dan. 9:25, among other places.

It then appears in the Bible only a handful of other times: For example, 1 Kings 19:15 (King Hazael); 2 Kings 9:3 (Yehu); Isa. 45:1 (Cyrus), 61:1 (Isaiah). There are also a number of references in the Psalms and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

According to one counting, the term mashiach appears 39 times in the Bible, once in reference to Cyrus and 38 times in relation to Israelite and Judean kings or priests, with about 30 of these referring to kings only; see Leo Landman, ed., Messianism in the Talmudic Era (New York: KTav Publishing House, Inc., 1979), xii. Other calculations are similar; e.g., William Scott Green, “Introduction: Messiah in Judaism,” in Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era, ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2. Some think that new understandings of the word mashiach emerged as a result of Israelite and Judean contact with Persian Zoroastrians (Landman [ed.], Messianism, xiii–xiv).

It’s important to note that Cyrus is not the only non-Judean (or non-Jew) to be called “messiah” by Jews; see, e.g.,

That said, the word mashiah appears in the Hebrew Bible in other linguistic forms, such as mashah (v.— to rub, smear, paint, anoint a liquid, such as oil, or consecrate): Exod. 29:36, 30:26, 40:9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 15; Lev. 7:36, 8:10, 11, 12, 16:32; Num. 7:1, 1, 84, 88, 35:25; Judg. 9:8, 9, 15; 1 Sam. 9:16, 101, 15:17; 16:12, 13, 2 Sam. 2:7, 3:39, 5:17, 12:7, 19:11; 1 Kings 1:34, 39, 45; 2 Kings 9:6, 12, 11:12, 23:30; Isa. 21:5, 61:1; Amos 6:6; Ps. 89:21; Dan. 9:24; 1 Chron. 11:3, 14, 8, 29:22; 2 Chron. 22:7, 23:11; mishbah (n., adj.— a consecrated amount of ointment, such as oil): Exod. 29:2, 7, 31:11, 35:8, 37:29, 39:38, 40:9; Lev. 2:4, 7:12, 8:10, 12; Num. 3:3, 6:15; and mishlih, mishlu, mishlaiy, and mishlihi (v., adj.— God’s anointed one): 1 Sam. 2:10, 2:35, 24:6; 2 Sam. 22:51, 23:1; Isa. 45:17, 1 Chron. 16:22. Once, in Jer. 22:14, it is used to mean something seemingly different, i.e., to have been painted or to have been smeared.

Anointing someone as a signification of taking on a new role, whether high priest, king, or prophet: See, e.g., 1 Kings 19:16.

Other ancient Middle Eastern texts Although it can be argued that most other Middle Eastern texts that touch on the messianic idea don’t describe a messiah per se, these non-canonical texts remind us that the Bible is not the only book from this period to allude to messianism. As for those non-biblical texts often dated to first-century CE Palestine, the book of Enoch echoes the notion of the messiah, understood as a judge of the wicked, as do passages in 4 Ezra. See, e.g., James Drummond, The Jewish Messiah (London: Longmans, Green, 1877); Michael E. Stone, “The Anointing of the Twelve Patriarchs; see Joseph Jacobs and Moses Buttenwieser, “Messiah,” Jewish Encyclopedia (1906), www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10729-messiah; Michael A. Knibb, Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Jewish Texts and Traditions (Boston: Brill, 2009), 307–312. Other texts mentioning the messiah and messianic age from the same general era, but commonly dated to the first and second centuries BCE and not CE and which don’t use the Hebrew word mashiah, include Ben Sira, 2 Baruch, 2 Esdras, Sirach, and Tobit (Drummond, The Jewish Messiah) and a number of passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls (Raymond E. Brown, “The Messianism of Qumran,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 19 [1957]: 53–82). The Sibylline Oracles and the “blessed man”: Andrew Chester, Messiah and Exaltation (Tübingen, Ger.: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 397–406 and 471–496, esp. 479–488. Assyrian, Babylonian, or Persian origins: Hugo Gressman, “The Sources of Israel’s Messianic Hope,” in Landman (ed.), Messianism, 19–23.


As for different ways to become anointed On Elijah anointing Elisha, see, e.g., 1 Sam. 24:6.

Being anointed as protection by God: 1 Kings 19:16.

The communal functions these anointed figures serve God communicates the prophecy of someone from the “seed” of David “build[ing] a house” in God’s name to Natan, who shares it with David (2 Sam. 7:12–13); David then repeats it back to God (2 Sam. 22:51). See also Jer. 23:5, 33:15; Amos 9:11. Thereafter, prophets refer to the messiah not just as descending from David but by the name David (Hosea 3:5; Joseph Klausner, “The Source and Beginnings of the Messianic Idea,” in Landman (ed.), Messianism, 33).


According to scholar Harris Lenowitz, these biblical passages underscore two major features of a messiah: (1) the figure needed to be related to David or, more precisely, as it says in Isaiah, his father, Jesse, and (2) perhaps counter-intuitively, there is no directive to anoint this figure with oil. In Lenowitz’s words, this allows the messianic figure to empty himself out, “discarding his former self in order to become an object of holy ritual service. In other words, the transformative power that previously resided in the oil used to anoint the messiah is now embodied in the messiah himself, allowing him to be ‘reborn’ ” (Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 13). This gave postbiblical messiahs the maneuverability to reinvent themselves in different ways, while simultaneously maintaining certain baseline characteristics (ibid., 9–14, esp. 12).

Additional books of prophets Christians rely on passages from the book of Daniel to support their descriptions of the messiah much more than do Jews; see Drummond, Jewish Messiah; also Zech. 3:8, 6:12.

Passage in book of Haggai: See, e.g., Hag. 2:9. Prophecy that Zerubbabel will finish God’s house: See e.g., Zech. 4:14. There is also a tradition that Zerubbabel didn’t die but disappeared, a concept linked to his messianic potential (Ben-Sasson, “Messianic Movements,” 17–118). Note that for some, there is a connection between Zerubbabel and a messianic age but not him and an individual messiah.

A number of scholars argue The messianic idea as not a strictly postbiblical phenomenon: Johan Lust, Messianism and the Septuagint: Collected Essays, ed. Kate Hauspie (Leuven, Bel.: Leuven University Press, 2004), 9 (also yn.2, for a list of other scholars who support this argument).


Over time the messianic idea changed further Idel, Messianic Mystics, 39–47.

Prior to the Talmud Jacob Neusner, “Mishnah and Messiah,” in Neusner et al. (eds.), Judaisms and Their Messiahs, 226...
Jonathan A. Goldstein, “Biblical Promises and 1 and 2 Maccabees” in Neusner et al. (eds.), Messianism, 457–458. Zeitlin says that this concept emerged from a specific first-century CE Palestinian Jewish group, whom he refers to as “Apocalyptic Pharisees” (ibid., 459). See chapter 8 for more on the Pharisees.

Mishnah’s two explicit references to the messiah: Landman (ed.), Messiahism, xxxii; Neusner, “Messiah and Messiah,” in Neusner et al. (eds.), Judaisms and Their Messiahs, 270, 275–276. The messiah is also mentioned in texts called beraita (sing. beraita), non-Mishnaic traditions that were incorporated into the Mishnah (chapter 5).


As for why the meaning of the messiah “The emergence of the Messianic idea as viable and vital was not evolutionary and developmental. It was mutational. It did not follow as an imminent necessity from biblical Judaism. It was not spawned directly by the visions of Israel’s prophets. It emerged spontaneously as a solution to a series of problems that Judaism had to face in the Graeco-Roman world, problems for which there were no direct solutions in the Pentateuch” (Ellis Rivkin, “The Meaning of Messiah in Jewish Thought,” Union Seminary Quarterly Review 26, no. 4 [Summer 1971]: 384).

Some argue that eschatology (belief in the end of days) connected to the messianic idea emerged during the Maccabean era, in the second and first centuries BCE, even though the term mashiah doesn’t appear in 1 and 2 Maccabees. See, e.g., John J. Collins, “Messianism in the Maccabean Period,” in Neusner et al. (eds.), Judaisms and Their Messiahs, 97–109; Jonathan A. Goldstein, “Biblical Promises and 1 and 2 Maccabees,” ibid., 69–96). Some hold that these ideas became central to the Jewish Palestinian community at the same time that they emerged among non-Jews, often emerging from those communities who ruled over the Jewish minority (Jacobs and Buttenwieser, “Messianism”).

Messianic idea reemerging during times of intra-communal conflict: See, e.g., Jacob Neusner, “Power,” in Landman (ed.), Messiahism, 397–424. Neusner goes so far as to say, “In the background of every Jewish act of political or religious violence lies the Messianic expectation” (ibid., 423). Responding to those who challenge this theory, scholar Rachel Elio argues that the Lubavitch belief that their Rebbe, Schneerson, was the messiah was a reaction to the Shoah of World War II; see Rachel Elio, “The Lubavitch Messianic Resurgence,” in Toward the Millennium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco, ed. Peter Schafer and Mark R. Cohen (Leiden, Neth.: Brill, 1998), 385.

Weakness of argument that the messianic idea reemerges during times of struggle: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 8.

Whatever the reasons Quote about dominant approaches to the messiah: Lust, Messianism, 10.

It is worth mentioning that the renowned Alexandrian Jew Philo (first century BCE to first century CE) does not discuss the messiah in any of his writings. Although two of the most prominent twentieth-century scholars of Philo, Harry Wolfson and Erwin Goodenough, argue that Philo writes in a number of instances about a messianic age—not an individual messiah—scholar Richard Hecht challenges their arguments, contending that “both made the error of creating their portrayal of Philo’s Messiah from ideas broken from their textual and social contexts” (Richard D. Hecht, “Philo and Messiah,” in Neusner et al. [eds.], Judaisms and Their Messiahs, 162).

A number of texts from the Talmud Unless otherwise noted, all of the references from this paragraph come from BT San. 97a–99a.


One opinion is found in a diary entry of writer Franz Kafka, dated December 4, 1917: “The Messiah will come only when he is no longer necessary; he will come only on the day after his arrival; he will come, not on the last day, but on the very last” (Franz Kafka, Parables and Paradoxes [New York: Schocken Books, 1971], 81, quoted in Elliot R. Wolfson, Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson [New York: Columbia University Press, 2009], 268; also in Idel, Messianic Mystics, 324).

Some said the messiah would be a king, others a rabbi: Neusner, Messiah in Context, 90–98, 130, 188–191.

Hillel’s disbelief that the messiah will ever come: BT San. 98b–99a. According to Hillel, there will be no messiah because he already came. Some interpret Hillel quite differently, however, as in: “There is no Messiah for Israel because they ate him up in the days of Hezekiah,” perhaps best understood as a “mocking reference to the [Christian idea of the] eucharist” (Morton Smith, “Messianas: Robbers, Jurists, Prophets, and Magicians,” in Saperstein [ed.], Essential Papers in Messianic Movements, 74).

Some say that the messiah’s coming According to one source, for example, the Jewish community can hasten the messiah if all together they observe a single Sabbath properly (JT Ta. 13b; Ex. Rab. 25:121). According to another, they need to follow two consecutive Sabbaths in order for the world to be redeemed (BT Sab. 118b).

Jews coming “back to Israel”: The use of the word back, as
in Jews worldwide going “back to the Land of Israel,” pre\
sumes not a literal traveling of Jews to the Land or State of
Israel, but a metaphorical return as most Jews today have
never even been to Israel, let alone lived there and left at
some point. The “return” in this sense is in relation to today’s
Jews being descendants of Jews (or proto-Jews) who once
lived there; hence, it would be as if the Jewish family, as such,
is returning.

“Ingathering of the exiles”: According to Gershom Scho-
lem, the idea that during the messianic era Jews would
“return” to the Land of Israel emerged during the medieval
period. In his words, “The Messianic ideal of the prophets
of the Bible and other classical Jewish sources provided no prec-
edent for this view” (Gershom Scholem, “The Messianic Idea
in Kabbalism,” in The Messianic Idea in Judaism [New York:
Schocken Books, 1974], 37).

Messiah’s name: BT Pesahim 54a; BT Nedarim 39b; Derekh
Eretz Zuta, Pereq Hashalom.

One of the individuals that Talmudic rabbis describe as the
messiah, Bar Kokhba: JT Taanit 4:3; Lam. Rab. II, 2, no. 4. Rabbi Akiba may have called him by the name Bar Kokhba rather than Bar Kosiba based on a verse from the Torah that he interpreted to allude to the messiah, which is explained in the Talmud: “A star [kokhav] has come out of Jacob, and a staff will arise from Israel that will destroy the Aramaic word for star. Many maintain that the Talmudic passage explaining why Akiba believed Bar Kokhba was
the messiah was written after Bar Kokhba died. Later rabbinic
traditions sometimes refer to him as Bar Koziba instead of Bar
Kosiba, loosely translated as son of the lie or liar; see Richard A. Horsley, “Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of
Jesus: Their Principal Features and Social Origins,” Journal
in Saperstein ed., Essential Papers in Messianic Movements,
104. Bar Kokhba himself apparently never claimed to be
the messiah; see Leo Mildenberg, “Bar Kokhba Coins and
311–335.

More to the point Messiah’s uncanny smelling ability: BT
San. 93b. Using a linguistic wordplay based on a passage from
Isa. 11:2–3, one tradition is that the messiah will have the
ability to judge others based on his extraordinary abilities, in
this case not simply having the ability to judge others based
on what he sees or hears but what he smells.

Yochanan ben Zakkai quote: Avot D’Rabbi Nathan, 31b
(version B), in Anthony J. Saldarini, trans. and comm., The
Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan—Abot De Rabbi Nathan,
Version B (Leiden, Neth.: E. J. Brill, 1975), 182.

Around this same time Some hold that a text from the
Dead Sea Scrolls may be the earliest evidence of the tradition
of a second messiah, specifically an Aramaic translation and
paraphrasing, of targum, of the Song of Songs dated to the
first century CE. (As the Dead Sea Scrolls are dated from 200
BCE through 200 CE, it is difficult to assess precisely when
this text was written.) This text says, “Your two deliverers,
who are destined to set you free, messiah son of David and
messiah son of Ephraim, are like Moses and Aaron” (Tg. Shir
Hashirim 4:3). The latter messiah mentioned is more com-
monly referred to as the messiah son of Joseph; as explained
in Genesis, Ephraim’s father was Joseph. See Israel Knohl,
The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea
Scrolls, trans. David Maisel (Berkeley: University of California
Press, 2000); Byron L. Sherwin, “Who Do You Say That
I Am?” (Mark 8:29): A New Jewish View of Jesus,” Journal
of Ecumenical Studies 31, no. 3–4 (Summer-Fall 1994): 255–267,
esp. 255; Geza Vermes, The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English

Messiah son of Joseph: See, e.g., BT Sukkah 52a.

Justifying Rabbi Akiba’s mistake: The reasons and timing
behind the tradition of the messiah son of Joseph are irre-
levant for our purposes. Much more important is the fact that
this new layer regarding the messianic idea was added to the
previously existing canon. See Richard Gottheil and Samuel
Krauss, “Bar Kokba and Bar Kokba War,” Jewish Encyclope-
dia (1906), www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2471-bar-
kokba-and-bar-kokba-war; Joseph Heinemann, “The Mes-
iah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of
Klausner, “Jewish and Christian Messiah”, David C. Mitch-
ell, “Messiah Ben Joseph: A Sacrifice of Atonement for Israel,”
Torrey, “The Messiah Son of Ephraim,” Journal of Biblical Lit-

Tradition that messiah son of Joseph emerged in relation

Further development of this theory between the eight
and thirteenth centuries CE: Mitchell, “Messiah Ben Joseph”;
Torrey, “Messiah Son of Ephraim.”

Of those who either claimed See John Dominic Crossan, The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediter-
anean Peasant (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); Steven L.
Jacobs, “A Jewish Response to Byron L. Sherwin’s ‘A New
Jewish View of Jesus,’” Journal of Ecumenical Studies 32, no. 2
(Spring 1995): 263–267; Bernard Martin, “Do We Need a New
Jewish View of Jesus?,” The Reconstructionist, March 20, 1964,
7–13; Sherwin, “Who Do You Say That I Am?”

Messiahs in Israel after Bar Kokhba: Following Bar Kokhba,
the next messianic figure to arise in the Land of Israel
emerged well over one thousand years later, in the sixteenth
century; Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 33.

Talmudic passages that dismiss both Bar Kokhba and Jesus:
Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 32–33. In tandem with the rise and
spread of Christianity as a separate religion from Judaism, a
number of texts emerged within the Jewish community that
explicitly dismissed Jesus as not just a failed or false messiah
but as a heretical figure altogether (see ibid., 48–49).

Accusing Jews of killing the messiah: See, e.g., Elizabeth
Dilling, The Plot against Christianity (Lincoln, NE: Elizabeth
Dilling Foundation, 1964); David Duke, My Awakening (Cov-
The belief that Jesus was the messiah

On calling Jesus the messiah postmortem, see Rivkin, “Meaning of Messiah,” 383.

Christian Jews: See chapters 5 and 8.


Messiah resurrected postmortem: Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiahs*, 32–35. This said, two messiahs before Jesus had similar mysteries connected to the end to their physical lives, with Elijah going up to “heaven” and Zerubbabel disappearing (ibid., 47).

It is critical to point out


In other words, in relation to Jesus

One group, for example, called Meinei or Nazarenes, was condemned by the Pharisaic Jews as well as the Nicene rulers of the Church (those involved in the Council of Nicea, where a number of Christian ideas and beliefs were decided upon) as being neither Jewish nor Christian (Jerome, *Correspondence*, ed. Isidorus Hilberg [Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996], 55:381–382, in Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, 15–19).

On “proselytes, God-fearers, and gerim,” see Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, 23, citing Craig C. Hill, “The Jerusalem Church,” in Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts, ed. Matt Jackson-McCab (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 50. Boyarin continues: “The ‘proselytes’ were non-Jews who completely threw their lot in with the Jewish people and became Jews, while the ‘God-fearers’ remained identified as Greeks and pagans but adhered to the God of Israel and the synagogue because they admired the religion of the one God. The *gerim*, sojourners or resident aliens, were Gentiles who lived among Jews in ‘their’ land” (ibid.).

Boyarin also argues

It isn’t clear that the main thing separating Christian Jews from non-Christian Jews was the belief in Jesus as the messiah. In Boyarin’s words, “Jews who didn’t accept Jesus of Nazareth shared many ideas with Jews who did, including ideas that today mark off any absolute difference between two religions, Judaism and Christianity. Some of these ideas were very close, if not identical, to the ideas of the Father and the Son and even the reincarnation” (Boyarin, *Jewish Gospels*, 24).
Eleventh-century Morocco: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs,
65–66.
Eleventh-century Syria or Egypt: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 67–68.
Thirteenth-century figure: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 94–96.
Fifteenth-century Yemen: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 229–231.
Sixteenth-century Austria: In spite of today’s Ashkenazi hegemony, it wasn’t until the sixteenth century, with Asher莱姆林，that an Ashkenazi Jew was added to the canon of Jewish messiahs (Ben-Sasson, “Messianic Movements”; Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs).
Sixteenth-century Spain and Portugal: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 97–123.
Eighteenth-century Turkey and Poland: Jacob Frank claimed to be the reincarnation of Sabbatai Tzvi. Like previous figures before him, he was harshly shunned by fellow Jews. According to some, on his deathbed he proclaimed that his daughter, Ewa, was to be his successor. Her following wasn’t as strong as her father’s, and, like her father before her, she was discounted by most Jews and said to have been a phony. See Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 167–197; Rabow, 50 Jewish Messiahs, 123–133.
Nineteenth-century Ukraine: Idel, Messianic Mystics, 244–247; Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 209–214.
Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western Europe: There are a few passages in Theodor Herzl’s diaries where he either claims to be the messiah or says that other Jews consider him to be the messiah. See, e.g., Ariel Feldstein, “Textbooks as Memory-Shapers: Structuring the Image of Theodor Herzl in Textbooks as Part of Israeli Collective Memory in the 1950s,” Israel Affairs 13, no. 1 (January 2007): 87; Theodor Herzl, The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl, vol. 3, 960, in David Vital, The Origins of Zionism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 244; Robert Solomon Wistrich, “Theodor Herzl: Zionist Icon, Myth-Maker, and Social Utopian,” Israel Affairs 1, no. 3 (1993): 1–37. In one instance, the Messiah reveals himself to Herzl in a dream, and says that Herzl needs to tell Jews that the Messiah is coming (Feldstein, “Textbooks as Memory-Shapers,” 84). In another, Herzl tells his grandmother that Elijah appeared to him and said that the soul of the messiah was inside him (ibid., 93n.14).
Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western Europe, Israel, and Palestine: According to his personal diary, between May and September 1915, when he was seventeen years old, Gershom Scholem believed he was the messiah and the young Martin Buber was Nathan of Gaza to his Sabbatai Tzvi’s geographically widespread community: Scholem, “Reappearance of Sabbatai Tzvi’s community,” 123–133.

Some of these figures For characteristics and/or actions attributed to messianic figures, see Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 270–271.
Some of these figures were accompanied Some changed their name: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 267.
According to one scholar, from the time of the destruction of the Second Temple through the seventeenth century and the emergence of Sabbatai Tzvi, rabbinic authorities consistently rejected all of these messianic movements; see Gerson D. Cohen, Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim (Prior to Sabbatai Tzvi), Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture IX (New York, 1967), cited in Gershon Scholem, “The Crisis of Tradition in Jewish Messianism,” in Messianic Idea in Judaism, 56.

Neusner quote: Neusner, Messiah in Context, xi-xiii.

Some challenge the idea  Horsley, “Popular Messianic Movements,” 98.

Comparative analysis of messianic figures: For comparative messianic work focused on Jewish and non-Jewish figures, e.g. between the Christian Jewish movement of the first few centuries CE and the Sabbanian movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see W. D. Davies, “From Schweitzer to Scholem: Reflections on Sabbatai Svi,” in Saperstein (ed.), Essential Papers in Messianic Movements, 335-374.

Certain academics maintain  On the broadening of ideas related to messianic figures, see, e.g., Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 67; Eliezer Schweid, “Jewish Messianism: Metamorphoses of an Idea,” in Saperstein (ed.), Essential Papers in Messianic Movements, 62–64. Maimonides is famous for saying that the messiah will not have to perform “signs and wonders” or “revive the dead. . . . Let no one think that in the days of the Messiah any of the laws of nature will be set aside, or any innovation be introduced into creation” (MT 13:1, in Menachem Kellner, Maimonides on the “Decline of the Generations” and the Nature of Rabbinic Authority [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996], 75). This idea was also expressed some one thousand years prior, in the Babylonian Talmud (BT San. 9b). Maimonides is credited with both elevating the belief in the messiah to a core Jewish belief and proposing that there were all too many false messiahs, both alive during his lifetime and preceding him. He also thought that the messiah would have a long life and then die, akin to an average human lifespan, rather than have supernatural abilities such as immortality. See Ben-Sasson, “Messianic Movements,” 117.

Narrowing of ideas related to messianic figures: During the seventh through centuries CE in the Middle East, for instance, Jewish communities’ understanding of the relationship between the messiah son of Joseph and the messiah son of David stabilized. The former messiah became accepted as the precursor to the latter, an idea originally found in the Talmud. See Sherwin, “Who Do You Say That I Am?” 263n.18.

An important idea that emerged  Sheol: For example, Sheolah—Gen. 37:35, 42:38; Sheol—Deut. 32:22; 2 Sam. 22:6; Isa. 5:14, 14:9, 11; Ps. 18:6, 141:7; Shiol—1 Kings 2:6; Job 17:16.

Sheol akin to a netherworld: One scholar says that within the Bible itself Sheol goes through three incarnations: first as an amoral and eternal place for those who die; then as a place specifically for the wicked; and finally as some sort of intermediate place between the world and a postmortem existence, accommodating those who are righteous or those who are wicked. Two other related ideas also found in the Bible are the resurrection of the dead and the end of time. See Simcha Paull Raphael, Jewish Views of the Afterlife (Northdale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994), 41–64, 74–75, 158–160; also David Charles Kraemer, The Meanings of Death in Judaism (London: Routledge, 2000).


 Some of these Mishnaic and Talmudic discussions  On olam haba as what will happen in this world in its next phase, see Raphael, Jewish Views, 121–162.

 Olam haba and yimei hamashiah as synonyms: There is a debate among scholars as to whether the rabbinic authors used these terms synonymously; see, e.g., Landman (ed.), Messianism, xxxii.


 From the Talmudic era  On changing meanings of the terms olam haba, yimei hamashiah, gehenna, gehennum, and Gan Eden, see Raphael, Jewish Views, 163–402.


 In the medieval period  Scholar Moshe Idel (Messianic Mystics, 265–269) argues that because Jewish mystical thought relies on “sophisticated” and complex doctrines that are most often rooted in sacred texts, messiahs who integrated mystical thought into their ideology were “accessible only to a very small elite.”

66  HAHN TAPPER, JUDAISMS / NOTES TO PAGES 66–67
According to Gershom Scholem, twelfth-, thirteenth-, and fourteenth-century Kabbalists (see chapter 6) were not focused on the “end of days,” but rather on the “primal days of Creation” (Scholem, “Messianic Idea in Kabbalism,” 38–39). It was not until the sixteenth century, following the expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, that Kabbalists began centering their mystical thought on a future messianic age (ibid., 41–42).

One of the earliest medieval mystics Abraham Abulafia offered several new ideas about the messiah, including a few based in a numerical system of interpretation called Gematria. According to this technique, each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is assigned a number (akin to A=1, B=2, etc.); passages from the Bible are then analyzed using this frame of reference. For instance, according to Jewish tradition, the seventh day of creation, Shabbat, symbolizes the time when the world will be redeemed. Accordingly, the sixth day, yom hashishi in Hebrew, is the period of time immediately preceding the redemption. Abulafia pointed out that the Gematria for yom hashishi is 671; so, too, is the Gematria for yeshu hanotzri, Hebrew for Jesus of Nazareth. For more on Abulafia, see Abraham Berger, “The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia: A Tentative Evaluation,” in Saperstein (ed.), Essential Papers in Messianic Movements, 250–255; Idel, Messianic Mystics, 58–100; Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 94–96; Sherwin, “‘Who Do You Say that I Am?’” 263). See also Moshe Idel, The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988).

In contrast, the sixteenth-century mystic On the Lurianic notion of individuals being able to hasten the coming of the messiah, see Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 128; Gershom Scholem, “Abraham Cardosos,” Judaica 1, 120, cited in David Biale, “Gershom Scholem on Jewish Messianism,” in Saperstein (ed.), Essential Papers in Messianic Movements, 530–531; Scholem, “Redemption through Sin,” in Messianic Idea in Judaism, 87. Luria was not the first scholar to bring this idea to the fore. Among others, Maimonides, some four centuries earlier, also wrote about the role that everyday individuals can play in hastening the coming of the messiah; see Schwid, “Jewish Messianism,” 62–64.

For some, a core point of contention is whether the messiah will bring in the messianic age and subsequently give the masses instructions, or whether the masses themselves will activate the coming of the messiah. A number of rabbis have maintained the latter belief, some of whom tied it together with their understanding of Zionism and the need for Jews to “return” to the Land of Israel in order to hasten the messiah’s coming. Among other eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century figures who promoted this point of view were Rabbis Yehuda Alkalai, Hirsch Kalischer, and Abraham Isaac Kook. See, e.g., Raymond Goldwater, Pioneers of Religious Zionism: Rabbis Alkalai, Kalischer, Mohliver, Kook, and Maimon (New York: Urim Publications, 2009); Moshe Idel, “Messianic Scholars: On Early Israeli Scholarship, Politics, and Messianism,” Modern Judaism: A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience 32, no. 1 (2012), 22–53; idem, Messianic Mystics, 324–326; Jacob Katz, “Israel and the Messiah,” in Saperstein (ed.), Essential Papers in Messianic Movements, 475–491; Menachem Kellner, “Messianic Postures in Israel Today,” ibid., 504–518; Shalom Ratzabi, “Religious Thinkers on the Secular State,” Israel Studies 13, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 114–136; Dov Schwartz, Religious Zionism: History and Ideology (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 27–33.

Haim Vital as Luria’s potential successor: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 125–147.

According to the renowned twentieth-century scholar On the spread of messianic thought outside the Land of Israel, see Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi, in Saperstein (ed.), Essential Papers in Messianic Movements. For arguments challenging Scholem’s thesis, see Matt Goldish, The Sabbatean Prophets (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). It is interesting to note that Scholem was among the first scholars to apply a psychiatric or mental health lens to the study of historical messiahs, speculating, in the case of Tzvi, that he suffered from bipolar disorder, as evidenced by his extreme manic and depressive shifts in behavior; see Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 152.


In seventeenth-century Smyrna Scholem notes that if Tzvi didn’t suffer from bipolar disorder and had not, by chance, met Rabbi Nathan of Gaza (John the Baptist to Tzvi’s Jesus), it is unlikely Tzvi’s messianic fervor would ever have reached the masses. See Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 327–324. For more on Nathan of Gaza’s adherence to Lurianic mysticism, see Fine, Physician of the Soul, 3–6.

Rejections of Tzvi: Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 149–165. Interestingly, Tzvi’s devotees referred to themselves as the believers, ma’aminim, and to their opponents as the deniers, kofrim; see Gershom Scholem, “The Crypto-Jewish Sect of the Dönme (Sabbatians) in Turkey,” in Messianic Idea in Judaism, 147.

Spread of Tzvi’s devotees: According to Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Tzvi didn’t have a single devotee until Nathan of Gaza, after which point his movement grew exponentially (Scholem, “Crisis of Tradition in Jewish Messianism,” 60; idem, “Crypto-Jewish Sect,” 144). Some argue that although Tzvi “appealed broadly to Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Christians, he had special appeal for conversos” (Jews living in the Iberian Peninsula during the fourteenth century and onward who pretended to be Catholic while practicing Jewish rituals in secret), especially because some of his ideas were rooted in antinomianism (i.e., “redemption through sin”). See Laura Arnold Leibman, Messiahism, Secrecy, and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life (Portland, OR: Valantine Mitchell, 2012), 11; also Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 303.

Most Jewish authorities On “redemption through sin,” see Shaul Magid, Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Anti-
Beginning in the eighteenth century, some scholars contend that the time he publicly converted to Islam through his death, Tzvi practiced both Islam and Judaism; e.g., Scholem, “Crisis of Tradition in Jewish Messianism,” 63.


**In 1666**, however, some contend that from the time he publicly converted to Islam through his death, Tzvi practiced both Islam and Judaism; e.g., Scholem, “Crisis of Tradition in Jewish Messianism,” 63.


The *eighteenth-century figure Jacob Frank*. Jacob Frank was not the first messianic figure to claim to be the reincarnation of Sabbatai Tzvi; see, e.g., Rabow, *50 Jewish Messiahs*, 116–119.


As one scholar explains, “Scholem’s argument is that although early Hasidism continued to say the usual prayers and repeat the usual formulas, their focus turned inward. Instead of redemption from exile, the goal became redemption in exile, by which they meant the sanctification of the individual soul culminating in *devuket* or union (adhesion), with God. This at least was within the human capability; although they did not deny that redemption could occur on a grand scale, events of this kind are in the hands of God” (Kenneth Seeskin, *Jewish Messianic Thoughts in an Age of Despair* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 52, referring to Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 195).

Other scholars maintain that Hasidism lessened the focus on a single messiah but did not neutralize the ideology altogether (e.g., Lenowitz, *Jewish Messiahs*, 199–201; Raphael Mahler, “Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment,” in *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. Gershon David Hundert [New York: New York University Press, 1991], 416–417; Joseph G. Weiss, “Contemplative Mysticism and ‘Faith’ in Hasidic Piety,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 4, no. 1 [1953]: 21) or that the founders were “very cautious” about incorporating some Sabbathian ideas while distancing themselves from others (Magid, *Hasidism on the Margin*, 201–203). Moshe Idel notes that Sabbathian themes are clearly present in Hasidism and may even have been influential in the development of certain strands of mystical thought; however, he concludes that “as a system [the Sabbatian] influence [on Hasidism] was minimal” (Idel, *Hasidism*, 53).

In contrast to these positions, Isaiah Tishby says that it is possible that the founders of Hasidism were themselves from the Sabbathian movement (Isaia Tishby, “Between Sabbateanism and Hasidism: The Sabbateanism of the Kabbalist R. Ya‘aqov Lifshitz of Miedzyreц,” in *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, ed. Isaiah Tishby [Ramat Gan, 1964], 204–226 [Hebrew], cited in Idel, *Hasidism*, 4, 253; Tishby, “The Messianic Idea and Messianic Trends in the Growth of Hasidism,” *Zion* 32 [1967]: 1–45 [Hebrew]).

**Messianism aside** Before Hasidism, Luria and his followers also utilized the idea of the tzadik in their teachings, though they differed in their understanding of the role this individual had; see Jonathan Garb, “The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 207–208, 226–228.

The *veneration of Hasidic rabbis* On sages in non-Jewish traditions, see Garb, “Cult of Saints.”
Simultaneous tzadikim among Hasidic sects: Some assert that Hasidism also recentralized the idea that every individual has an important role to play in hastening the messianic age (Biale, “Gershom Scholem on Jewish Messianism,” 541). Ironically, while promoting the idea that no single person is the embodiment of God vis-à-vis his own potential messiahship, given there have been many tzadikim alive at the same time, this movement has also reinforced the notion that only certain people (i.e., the tzadikim themselves) have the potential to be the messiah. In Moshe Idel’s own words, “Originally, this Hasidic school sought to moderate acute messianism. . . . Ironically, this once nonmessianic Hasidic approach bears witness to a clear revival of the mythical element of messianism. Thus even within a specific intellectual system, there can be oscillations between different writings and various definitions of messianism, which fluctuate according to historical or personal circumstance, causing the rise of the importance of a notion that earlier had been rejected or marginalized” (Idel, Messianic Mystics, 278).

Multiple simultaneous tzadikim and Zions: Idel, Messianic Mystics, 235–247; see also chapter 3.

One may hold that the messianic idea. On the marginality of the messianic idea vis-à-vis core Jewish texts, see Idel, Messianic Mystics, 262–265.

Word-count wise, the messianic idea is not central to the Bible, Mishnah, or Talmud: Saperstein, “Introduction,” in idem (ed.), Essential Papers in Messianic Movements, 17–18.

Messianic idea as having central significance for Jewish communities: The nineteenth-century German Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen is credited with saying that messianism is the core of Judaism, even more important than monotheism; see Caitlin Yoshiko Kandil, “Jewish Word: Messiah—A Word Fit for a King,” Moment Magazine (March/April 2012), 21; see also Rory Schacter, “Hermann Cohen’s Secular Messianism and Liberal Cosmopolitanism,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, April 24, 2008, http://jcpa.org/article/hermann-cohens-secular-messianism-and-liberal-cosmopolitanism.

It should also be noted that many synagogues, as well as other material forms of culture, especially those found on Caribbean islands, in Western Europe, and in the United States from the seventeenth century to today, are intentionally designed to reflect the Temple. In the words of one scholar, “to call upon the Temple of Jerusalem is to engage in messianic longing,” whether in the form of a messiah figure or a messianic age (Leibman, Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism, 59).

This is evident, for starters. For calculations regarding when the messiah is supposed to appear, see Cohen, “Messianic Postures”; Idel, Messianic Mystics, 158–161; Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs; Rabow, 50 Jewish Messiahs; Joseph Saracek, The Doctrine of the Messiah in Medieval Jewish Literature (New York: Hermon Press, 1968). For an analysis of twentieth-century calculations—and recalculations (i.e., when the messiah doesn’t come at the expected time, people often reexamine their calculations; such situations may either give devotees’ belief in the coming of the messiah new energy or discourage them altogether), see Motti Inbari, “Messianic Movements and Failed Prophecies in Israel: Five Case Studies,” Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions 13, no. 4 (2010): 43–60.

Messian in the Amidah prayer: BT Meg. 17b.

A fourth indicator. On messianism in communism, nationalism, and socialism, see Rory Schacter, “Hermann Cohen’s Secular Messianism”; Schweid, “Jewish Messianism,” 65–70. For a brief analysis of the two primary types of messianism outlined by Gershom Scholem, the “restorative and utopian-catastrophic” (522), see Biale, “Gershom Scholem on Jewish Messianism,” 521–550.


Shoah as symbol of the “end of days”: In scholar David Halperin’s words, “We think of apocalyptic Judaism as having fallen into disuse, but I think it is at the center of modern Judaism. Our catastrophe was the Holocaust, and God’s Kingdom is the State of Israel” (quoted in Berman et al., “What Does the Concept of Messiah Mean Today?,” 31).

To put it simply, many Jews today. According to a 2012 study, 51 percent of Israeli Jews believe in the coming of the messiah; see Arian and Keissar-Sugarmen, “Portrait of Israeli Jews,” 15, 49–51, 97; Nahshoni, “Poll: 80% of Israeli Jews”). We don’t currently have these data for American Jews.


These doctrines were reiterared. “We are called to help bring near the messianic age . . . . “A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism,” adopted at the 1999 Pittsburgh Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, http://
Behind the conjecture A “light unto the nations” in Hebrew is or la-goyim. See Raphael Jospe, “The Concept of the Chosen People,” Judaism 43, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 127–148; also chapter 2.


Well-known Jewish American activist Ruth Messinger explains this idea as follows: “The notion of a messiah is that in a time of troubles—which is what we have now—we are called on to do much more, in partnership with each other and with a world of force, to make things better. It won’t happen because someone drops out of the sky” (quoted in Berman et al., “What Does the Concept of Messiah Mean Today?,” 31).

Framing the issue theologically, Rabbi David Wolpe says, “Today the Messiah must represent an ideal of peace whose fulfillment lies in our own hands. The age of magic formulas or mitzvot flipping the eschatological switch is past. The nobility in the messianic vision is to live so that when the Messiah comes, we will no longer need him. That may prove beyond our powers, in which case, quite literally, God help us” (ibid., 35).


Striving to make the world a better place as a core Jewish value: For an example of a conventional Jewish American leader’s ideas on this, see Irving Greenberg, “Personal Service: A Central Jewish Norm for Our Time,” Contact 4, no. 1 (Autumn 2001): 3–4. There are a number of other articles echoing this same idea. I realize that for some it is inaccurate to intermix the notions of “Israel advocacy” and service, but alone service, social justice, social action, and civil rights. However, I maintain that the intention of those Jews who engage in these issues is integrally related to their working toward a messianic age, implicitly or otherwise.

According to scholar Kenneth Seeskin Seeskin is quoted in Berman et al., “What Does the Concept of Messiah Mean Today?,” 31.


As with the case of Tzvi For an interesting thesis regarding three main stages in the development of the messianic idea, from the time of the Bible through the Talmudic era, see Shemaryahu Talmson, “The Concepts of Masha and Messiahism in Early Judaism,” in Charlesworth (ed.), The Messiah, 80–115, esp. 80–83.


Within the Jewish community On the agenda being “complete change,” see Lenowitz, Jewish Messiahs, 263. Lenowitz goes on to agree, more or less, with Gershon Scholem, saying that the messianic age will come in a time of “desperation.” In contrast, elsewhere Scholem writes that the “end of days” is not an either/or situation; it is going to be a time of great destruction. In his own words, “Jewish Messianism is in its origins and by its nature—this cannot be sufficiently emphasized—a theory of catastrophe” (Scholem, “Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism,” 7).

Amos Oz quote: Quoted in Berman et al., “What Does the Concept of Messiah Mean Today?,” 31. Yeshayahu Leibowitz similarly said: “The Messiah is essentially he who always will come, he is the eternal future” (Leibowitz, “Lishmah and Not-Lishmah”).

Chapter 5. Laws

“Well,” he softly responded With the words “lucky for you . . .” the rabbi was making a derogatory comment about the Reform movement, insofar as part of their doctrine is
that halakhah, though observed by some Reform Jews, is not obligatory; Orthodoxy maintains that it is (see chapter 8).


**As discussed in previous chapters** On the Talmud’s relevance vis-à-vis the Torah, see, e.g., Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman’s Voice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 1; Talaya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). See also fig. 2.4.


**The Talmud is a compilation of texts** Some claim that the first-century CE sect called the Pharisees, discussed further in chapter 8, “transformed” themselves into the rabbis following the destruction of the First Temple, despite the fact that neither the rabbis of the Mishnah nor those of the Talmud claim to be the descendants of the Pharisees. See Shaye J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1989), 226–227.

**The oldest parts of a page of Talmud** The root letters of the Aramaic word *Gemara*, g-m-r, are equivalent to the root letters of the Hebrew word Talmud, l-m-d, both of which mean teaching. In fact, what is called Gemara today was originally called Talmud. See “Gemara: The Essence of Talmud,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/gemara-the-essence-of-the-talmud; Michael Katz and Gershon Schwartz, *Swimming in the Sea of Talmud* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 12.


Hebrew and Aramaic: Historically, there have been numerous dialects of these two languages; see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud*, 101–107.

**There are actually two sets of Talmud** As for who edited—or redacted—either the Jerusalem or the Babylonian Talmud, we don’t know, nor do we know if Judah the Prince (see below), commonly credited with compiling the Mishnah, actually did so. Some say that the version of the Babylonian Talmud that we have today was originally edited and compiled in its entirety in a specific time period. Others hold that the process took place in incremental stages over the course of centuries; see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud*, 194–197, 214–215. For more on the Jerusalem Talmud and Babylonian Talmud, see ibid., 164–189 and 190–224, respectively.


Ilan quote: Tal Ilan, “Introduction,” in *A Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Tal Ilan, Tamara Or, Dorothea M. Salzer, Christiane Steuer, and Irina Wandrey (Tübingen, Ger.: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 15. In making this statement Ilan means to say that because we know there have been different versions of the sets of Talmuds, and we do not know definitively who edited either set of Talmuds or when they were first codified, we cannot say with any historical cer-
tainty that the versions studied today are the versions as they were originally written.

During the proto-Jewish era The use of the terms rabbis and rabbinic period in this book refers to texts produced during the Second Temple period (c. sixth century BCE through first century CE) through the eighth century, the last century usually included in the concretizing of the Babylonian Talmud.

Biblical authorities: According to a literal reading of the Bible, there were no female kings and only one queen, Atalya (2 Kings 11; 2 Chron. 22–23); no female priests; one female judge, Deborah (Judg. 4); and five female prophets: Deborah, Hulda (2 Kings 22; 2 Chron. 34), Miriam (Mic. 6, though this is debatable), Noadiah (Neh. 6), and Isaiah’s unnamed wife, whom he considered a prophet (Isa. 8). The only modification made to the Bible by the Talmudic rabbis in this respect relates to female prophets; they cite seven rather than five: aside from Deborah, Hulda, and Miriam (on the previous list) they also add Abigail, Esther, Hannah, and Sarah (BT Meg. 14a). According to Gen. Rab. (67.9 and 72.6), Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah were all prophets. As for rabbis, the first female rabbi in history wasn’t ordained until the twentieth century (see below; also chapter 8), at least in terms of having this explicit title.


The title rabbi has a much different meaning On rabbis as blacksmiths and brewers, see Katz and Schwartz, Swimming in the Sea, 15.


If you want to become a rabbi today Some date the practice of rabbinic ordination back to Moses, who passed on the mantle of chief authority to Joshua. Although rabbis from the Mishnah and Talmud contend that their authority could be traced directly to Moses in an unbroken line, this is highly debatable. We also know that there were periods of time, such as during the medieval era, when the chain of authority was stopped. In sixteenth-century Safed, for example, rabbinic ordination reemerged as a formalized process, having theretofore ceased. See Lawrence Fine, Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 51–53; Segal, “Jewish Law,” 124–127; Strack and Stemberger, Introduction to the Talmud, 13–14. Some sources note that during the era of Judah the Prince, he had to approve all ordinations before they became official; e.g., Segal, “Jewish Law,” 134–135; JT San. 15:1, 19a.

Modern institutionalization of rabbinic schools: In the United States, the Reform movement did not begin ordaining women as rabbis until 1972 (Sally Priesand), with the Reconstructionist movement following in 1974 (Sandy Eisenberg Sasso), and the Conservative movement in 1985 (Amy Eilberg). The first female Orthodox rabbi—or, depending on one’s interpretation, the closest thing to it—was ordained with the title Maharat in 2009 (Sara Hurwitz), a moniker changed to Rabba in 2010 (fig. 8.5 and special topic 8.4).

As scholar Jacob Neusner writes Neusner says that only once in its sixty-three books does the Mishnah state that it is the written form of the Oral Torah given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Other laws written by mishnaic authorities seem to have been followed by Jews during this same time, though they were excluded from the Mishnah. See Jacob Neusner, Midrash in Context: Exegesis in Formative Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 6–8; Segal, “Jewish Law,” 120–121; Strack and Stemberger, Introduction to the Talmud, 149–163, 177–178, 198–199.

Judah the Prince as editor of the Mishnah: Saul Lieberman (Hellenism in Jewish Palestine [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950], 90–99), among others, contends that Judah the Prince edited various versions of the Mishnah. An earlier Jewish tradition held Scholars contend that during this era halakhic laws had already been written down—i.e., not all had remained oral traditions exclusively. See, e.g., Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine, 84.

Writing down the Oral Torah in order to preserve it: Strack and Stemberger, Introduction to the Talmud, 31–44.


The Talmud, which builds upon the Mishnah Neusner (Midrash in Context, 57) argues that the main reason for the short segments of interpretation is that the Mishnah was a memorized, oral tradition, and it is too difficult to comment on large paragraphs of memorized text (Neusner, Midrash in Context, 57). All in all, the Talmud provides commentary on
thirty-seven out of sixty-three sections of the Mishnah (Ilan, “Introduction,” 14).

Mishnah’s extrapolation of verses from the Torah: Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 430.

To complicate matters On Tosefta and Mishnah, see Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine, 83–99; Neusner, Midrash in Context, 53–69.

There were only versions: For example, according to Saul Lieberman, Rabbi Akiba’s disciples organized different versions of the Mishnah, but Judah the Prince probably edited only one of them. Many of these other texts—such as those Judah the Prince did not include in his final and authoritative edition—eventually were referred to as beraitot. Some made it into the Tosefta, others into the Talmud, and some have been lost to history. After Judah the Prince’s death, additional alterations were made to the Mishnah (Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine, 90–99).


Tosefta written in response to the Mishnah: Judith Hap- man, Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts (Tübingen, Ger.: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). This assertion is one of the main arguments of this book, see, e.g., 15–16, 255–264.

Both Mishnaic and Talmudic texts Some define agaddah as any non-halakhic discussion in the Talmud. However, this is tenuous, as many halakhot are intermixed with agadot such that they cannot justly be separated from one another.


One can learn a number of things According to Lieberman (Hellenism in Jewish Palestine, 84), Mishnah can also con- note the entire body of early Oral Torah, including those passages that did not make it into the set of books referred to as the Mishnah.


Shma The three passages from the Torah that together make up the Shma, along with an additional sentence written by the rabbis, are from Deut. 6:4–9, Deut. 11:13–21, and Num. 15:37–41. One of the verses references saying a prayer when one wakes up and when one goes to sleep (or that is how the rabbis understand it), hence the discussion about how one defines night.


Nazir Num. 6:1–21. See also sections of the Mishnah and Talmud that present other laws connected to a Nazir, such as BT Naz. 1a–3b.

Tumtum “Not clearly meeting conventional, binary-based norms” in terms of how a given society defines a human as solely male or female based on what they consider to be “normal” genitalia. Some define tumtum as a subcategory of intersex. The term tumtum appears 17 times in the Mishnah, 23 times in the Tosefta, 119 times in the Babylonian Talmud, 22 times in the Jerusalem Talmud, and hundreds of times in midrashic (see later in chapter) and halakhtic texts. For example, according to the Talmud the biblical Abraham and Sarah were tumtumim before transitioning to male and female, respectively (BT Yev. 64a). See Elliot Kukla, “A Created Being of Its Own: Toward a Jewish Liberation Theology for Men, Women, and Everyone Else,” 2006, 5, 8, www.transtorah.org/PDFs/How_I_Met_the_Tumtum.pdf. See also, e.g., Intersex Society of North America, “What Is Intersex?”, www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex.

As it says in another mishnah: See M. Bikk. 4:5. My translation is based on Blackman (ed.), Mishnayoth: Order Zera'im, 485–486.

Other halakhically gendered and sexed categories: Aside from tumtum, androgynous (see below), zachar (male), and nekevah (female), the Mishnah discusses two other possible genders and/or sexes, a saris (born male but later develops female traits) and an aylonit (born female but later develops male traits).

Androgynous As it says in another mishnah: See M. Bikk. 4:1, 5. My translation is based on Blackman (ed.), Mishnayoth, Order Zera'im, 486. The term androgynous appears 21 times in the Mishnah, 19 times in the Tosefta, 109 times in the Babylonian Talmud, and countless times in midrashic (see later in chapter) and halakhtic texts. For example, according to one midrash the Torah’s Adam was an androgynous (Gen. Rab. 8). See Kukla, “A Created Being of Its Own,” 5, 8. See also idem, “‘Created by the Hand of Heaven’: Sex, Love, and the Androgynous,” in The Passionate Torah: Sex and Judaism, ed. Danya Ruttenberg (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 193–202.

Both of these mishnayot present Some Jews maintain that a portion of Talmudic aggadic stories actually happened, including some in ultra-Orthodox communities. As believers might argue, there is no way to know for sure. However, most scholars doubt the historical veracity of such passages. See, e.g., Boyarin, Border Lines, 151–201; Charlotte Fonrobert, “When the Rabbi Weeps: On Reading Gender in Talmudic Agadda,” NASHIM: A Journal of Women’s Studies and Gender Issues 4 (2008): 56–83; Goldenberg, “Talmud,” 157–158.

We also know that only certain topics Neusner quote: Jacob Neusner, Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism (Mis- soula, MA: Scholars Press, 1979), 97, in Hapman, “Feminist Perspectives,” 44 (and see 44–50 for a critique of Neusner’s approach). See also Jacob Neusner, A History of the Mishnaic Law of Women, pts. 1–5 (Leiden, Neth.: E. J. Brill, 1980).

Scholar Judith Wegner argues that in Mishnaic texts women are regarded as either humans or “chattel,” a form of property aside from real estate. See Judith Romney Wegner,


**The Talmud focuses** Hillel quote: BT Shab. 32a.

**But the Talmud can also be studied** For example, another binary that the Talmudic rabbis use to categorize halakhot is as tasks relevant to Jews vs. non-Jews. For more on this particular binary, see David Ellenson, After Emancipation: Jewish Responses to Modernity (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2004); Robert Goldenberg, The Nations That Know Thee Not: Ancient Jewish Attitudes to Other Religions (New York: New York University Press, 1998); David Novak, The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 1983); Sacha Stern, Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994).


**SPECIAL TOPIC 5.3** My translation of Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:3 is based on Philip Blackman, ed. and trans., Mishnayoth, vol. 4: Order Nezikin, 2nd ed. (Gateshead, Eng.: Judaica Press, 1983), 254–255. This chapter of Mishnah deals with laws pertaining to capital crimes and the witnesses who testify in these cases. The rabbis refer to a specific verse from Genesis, when Cain murders Abel, to explain the supreme value of a human life.


**In this mishnah, the rabbis** What the rabbis did is not only fascinating but also illustrates a great deal about how they approached the Torah. In English, we don’t have a plural for blood. Like the word fish, blood can have a singular or plural meaning. Such as, “I see a drop of blood on the table” or “I see drops of blood on the table.” In both cases the noun blood is written the same way; the only way to make it a plural is to add an s to the word drop. The Hebrew for blood is דם, pronounced dam (with the a sounding like the a in want). As in many languages, pronouns in Hebrew are combined with nouns (or verbs), such that whereas in English we would say, “your blood,” with two words, in Hebrew we would say “הדם,” which combines the two words into one (your + blood). Similarly, in Hebrew “your brother’s blood” would be דםךأخיך, pronounced dam yachik. דםך, דםך, דמאך, דמאך, דמאך, דماءך, דماءך, דماءך. But if you wanted to say “your brother’s bloods,” it would be דماءךأخיך, דماءךأخיך, דماءךأخיך or דماءךأخיך or דماءךأخיך. Because the verse in the Torah has an extra letter (the last letter of the first word, the letter yud or ג), the verse technically should be translated as bloods and not blood (or whatever the plural of blood is for a given language).

**In this effort, the rabbis explain** Some versions of this mishnah are much more particular than universal, placing the words from Israel after the word soul, as in “a single human was created to teach that if one destroys a single soul from Israel, Scripture charges him as if he had destroyed an entire world, and whoever saves a single soul from Israel, Scripture charges him as if he had saved an entire world.” Many English translations, and even Hebrew versions, of this text note that the original manuscripts left out the word Israel. According to Benedict Roth, the first manuscript that added the word Israel was published in twelfth-century Florence, Italy. One of the earliest mentions of a manuscript that includes “from Israel” is found in Maimonides’s eleventh-century text the Mishneh Torah (see below), where he says that the version he was using was five hundred years old (Strack and Stemberger, Introduction to the Talmud, 209–210).

**Another interesting thing about the Talmud** Converstion between American presidents: Katz and Schwartz, Swimming in the Sea, 26.

Talmudic rabbis from multiple eras: There were roughly five generations of rabbis in the Jerusalem Talmud and seven in the Babylonian Talmud (see Lifshitz, “Age of Talmud,” 181–184).

**Another way to understand law** Sukkot: Lev. 23:33–44. Note that there is an entire tractate of Talmud, called Sukkah, that focuses on the laws around this holiday, in addition to other topics (BT Sukkah).

After learning that none of the students Defining a Christmas tree: David Green, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, October 4, 2012. Green said he learned this analogy from one of his teachers, Rabbi Daniel Landes.

In my university classes “Bind them as a sign on your hand”: Exod. 13:9, 16; Deut. 6:8, 11:18. Though these four verses are not identical, according to the rabbis all four refer to the same ritual object called tefillin.

Why this ritual object: Part of the reason I use this particular ritual object is because of how foreign it looks to those unfamiliar with it. Take the following recent event: In 2010, a young man on a domestic airplane in the United States put on tefillin in order to complete his morning prayers. The black boxes on his arm and head were so strange to other passengers that the plane was grounded; people thought he was a potential terrorist and that his tefillin were potential weapons. See Dave Warner and Larry McShane, “Jewish Teen’s Tefillin Sets off Bomb Scare That Diverts US Airways Flight from LaGuardia Airport,” New York Daily News, January 21, 2010, www.nydailynews.com/news/national/jewish-teen-tefillin-sets-bomb-scare-diverts-airways-flight laguardia-airport-article-1.183107.

For our purposes, it is most critical Blu Greenberg, On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1998), 44–47.

The rabbis were clearly aware  On the factuality of the Talmudic rabbinic court, see Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 107–108; Katz and Schwartz, Swimming in the Sea, 13. Some sources say that there were two smaller courts of twenty-three individuals (M. San.1:2–6; BT San. 88b).

SPECIAL TOPIC 5.4 This is a summary of BT Baba Metzia 59b.

Their is often understood as follows Million-plus community: Num. 11: 16–17. For a story found elsewhere in the Talmud with a similar lesson: BT RH 24b–25a.

Halakhic transmission across generations: For example, see the beginning of M. Avot.

SPECIAL TOPIC 5.5 This is a summary of BT Menaḥot 29b.

To sum up the relationship Consider the following Mishnah, which says the law discussed herein originated on Mount Sinai and was transmitted in an unbroken chain since: “It once happened that Rabbi Simon of Mizpah sowed on Mount Sinai and was transmitted in an unbroken chain. Nahum the Scribe said, ‘I received it from Rabbi Me’yasha who received it from his father who received it from the ‘Pains’ who received it from the Prophets that the halachah of Moses as handed down from Sinai is…’” (M. Pe’ah, 2:6; my translation is based on Blackman [ed.], Mishna/yot: Order Zera'im, 89–90).

Alexander quote: Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, “The Oral-ity of Rabbinic Writing,” in The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42. For texts that support this statement, see, e.g., BT Ber. 5a, Er. 54b; JT Pe’ah ii, 17a, Shek. 6:1, 49d.

Around the same time Although Midrash is thought to have come about as a genre during the rabbinic era, the oldest examples of Midrash are contained in the Bible itself. For example, some argue that 1 and 2 Chronicles are midrashim on 1 and 2 Samuel and Kings. Some scholars also see noncanonical texts, such as Jubilees, in this way. See, e.g., Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Strack and Steenberger, Introduction to the Talmud, 235–236.

Kugel quote: James Kugel, “Two Introductions to Midrash,” Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History 3, no. 2 (May 1983): 131–157. See also Barry W. Holtz, “Midrash,” in Holtz (ed.), Back to the Sources, 187. Kugel notes that the idea of Midrash can be traced to noncanonical texts from the first few centuries BCE, such as the Apocrypha.

Perhaps one of the most interesting, and for some heretical, investigations into early Midrash is John Shelby Spong’s book Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Gospels with Jewish Eyes (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), which contends that one way to understanding the Christian Bible books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is as midrashim about Jesus rather than as historical recordings.

Also focusing on biblical verses On Torah verses relating to verses from the Prophets or Writings, see Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 204–209; Strack and Steenberger, Introduction to the Talmud, 178–179, 199–200, 233–339.

By way of example One could argue that many translations of the Torah (and Bible) incorporate midrashim. Gen. 4:8 can be translated as two separate sentences, the first of which would be a fragment, as in “Cain said to his brother,” and the second of which would be a full sentence, “When they were in the field Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.” A third possible translation, from the Harper Collins Study Bible (see special topic 2.3), is arguably closer to the ancient Septuagint, or Greek, Syriac, and Latin translations, as well as that of the Samaritans, all of which render the sentence as “Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field, etc.’” (Nahum M. Sarna, ed. and trans., The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis [New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 33).


Some ancient midrashim On the Bible’s textual unity, see Kugel, “Two Introductions to Midrash,” 133–134.

Stories about biblical or Talmudic characters: Holtz, “Midrash,” 187–188.


Initially, midrashim were narrative only On midrashim in paintings and poetry, see Holtz, “Midrash,” 177–211.

An artist can also create My translation of Exodus 19:16 is based on Nahum M. Sarna, ed. and trans., The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 106.


But because the Torah text is male-centric Although the pshat (simplistic literal interpretation) of the Torah reveals minor insight into female characters such as Miriam, Moses and Aaron’s sister, unlike Feld’s midrash such passages offer very little understanding of their femaleness. For other midrashic writings expressing female voices, see, e.g., Anita Diamant, The Red Tent (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); Alicia Suskin Ostriker, The Nakedness of the Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Eleanor Wilner, Sarah’s Choice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Jane Sprague Zones, ed., Taking the Fruit: Modern Women’s Tales of the Bible (San Diego: Women’s Institute for Continuing Jewish Education, 1989).

Exod. 19:15: There are, of course, multiple ways to read this text, patriarchically or otherwise; e.g., Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “The Bible and Women’s Studies,” in Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies, 25–26. See also Judith Plaskow, “Women and Revelation,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/women-and-revelation, extracted from The Torah: A Women’s Commentary, ed. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss (New York: URJ Press and Women of Reform Judaism, 2008).
In special topic 5.8  This is certainly not to say that marginalized communities, whether so relegated based on sexual orientation, gender, sex, or something else entirely, are literally “voiceless.” Rather, dominant structures, and the people who uphold them, commonly play a core role in silencing oppressed groups, which often makes it seem as if said groups don’t have the power to represent their own subordinated positions. (This is to say nothing about it is not uncommon for people from said communities to be punished, physically or otherwise, if they “use their voice.”)


Midrashim such as special topics 5.7 and 5.8 For an interesting critique of the use of the term marginality when referring to subordinated groups such as females within the Jewish community—given that use of this term can be understood to reinforce a group’s marginality—see Beth S. Wenger, “Notes from the Second Generation,” in Judaism since Gender, ed. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt (New York: Routledge, 1997), 113–119.

For millennia, Jewish practice On one’s ability to make a judgment regardless of one’s core social identities, consider the July 13, 2009, questioning of then United States Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor during her Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, when she was asked, multiple times, about this issue, especially as related to gender (“Transcript of the Sotomayor Confirmation Hearings,” http://epic.org/privacy/sotomayor/sotomoyor_transcript.pdf).


Chabris and Simons refer to this phenomenon The term “inattentiveness blindness” was originally coined by two other social psychologists, Arien Mack and Irvin Rock (cited in Chabris and Simons, Invisible Gorilla, 238n.9).


To take this one step further In The Invisible Gorilla, Chabris and Simons discuss countless other experiments that illustrate the principle of structural blindness or violence, including related phenomena such as “inattentiveness deafness” and false memories. For more on structural violence, see Kenneth A. Parsons, “Structural Violence and Power,” Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice 19, no. 2 (2007): 173–181; Vern N. Redkop, From Violence to Blessing: How an Understanding of Deep-Rooted Conflict Can Open Paths to Reconciliation (Ottawa: Novalis, 2002), 111–121.


Ilan quote: Tal Ilan, Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine (Tübingen, Ger.: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 1.

The following passage Cynthia Ozick, “Notes Toward Finding the Right Question,” in On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Schocken, 1983), 137–138. Elsewhere in this essay, Ozick refers to this phenomenon as “masculine universalism.”

What may have been a slip of the tongue In fact, passages in the Jerusalem Talmud say that the “words of the Torah should be burned rather than be entrusted to women” and that “women’s wisdom is only in the spindle” (JT Sotah 3:4, 19a); cited in Rachel Keren, “Torah Study,” Jewish Women’s Archive, from Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia, March 20, 2009, http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/torah-study. Similar passages can be found in the Babylonian Talmud. That said, a number of contemporary halakhic arbiters have permitted women’s Torah study, sometimes within precise parameters.

“Though a woman is like a pot of filth”: BT Shab. 15a. For two books that focus on the alleged second-class status of women, who are often perceived only as temptresses, in the Mishnah and Talmud, see Neusner, Method and Meaning; and Wegner, Chattel or Person?

“Women are a separate people”: BT Shab. 62a. Some interpret “separate” to mean “independent.”


Rachel Adler quote: Adler, Engendering Judaism, 28.

Halakhically controlled by men: Wegner, Chattel or Person?

Acknowledgment that there is Of course, for many male and female Jews, male hegemony within the Jewish tradition is not “invisible.” See, e.g., Aviva Cantor, Jewish Women/Jewish Men: The Legacy of Patriarchy in Jewish Life (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

Lack of major structural gender equality: This obviously depends entirely on whether or not one focuses more on the progress still to be made as opposed to the progress that has already been made. For more on the latter position from those within the American Reform movement, see, e.g., Jacqueline Koch Ellenson, “From the Personal to the Communal: How Women Have Changed the Rabbinate,” in New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future, ed. Elyse Goldstein (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2009), 125–132; Barbara Ostfeld, “The Ascent of a Female Cantor: Shiita Hamusalaot,” ibid., 33–143.


constructs of gender and sex are so intertwined, and because this book’s primary focus is not this important intersection, I have decided not to engage this specific issue in depth. Of course, this is not to imply that this distinction is not important.

**Let me be clear here** Adler, *Engendering Judaism*, xiv.


For more on mitzvot, see chapter 2.

Obligation of women to uphold halakhah: According to the Mishnah, this statement holds true except for three specific time-bound mitzvot, all of which deal with halakhot pertaining to family life (at least in the eyes of the rabbis): laws dealing with menstruation (*mikdah*), burning one-tenth of the dough when making *challah* and lighting candles to begin Shabbat (M. Kid. 1:7).


This is not to say, of course, that all of the feminists maintain that there have been enough major changes in these areas since that time. For example, though Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative rabbinical schools have been ordaining women for decades, major gender discrepancies still exist in terms of professional advancement and salary; see, e.g., Steven Cohen and Judith Schor, “Gender Variation in the Careers of Conservative Rabbis: A Survey of Rabbis Ordained Since 1985,” report sponsored by the Rabbinical Assembly, New York, July 14, 2004, available at www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/social_action/gender/gender-study.pdf. At a minimum, these data are supported by lists of the largest salaries in the American Jewish institutional world presented each year by *The Jewish Forward*, which, to date, have always reflected gender inequality.

**Simply put, whether one focuses** Another predominant halakhic focus is related to whether or not one performs an action in a private or public domain.

Male, female, or another category: See Notes, chapter 4, “tumtum” and “androgynous.”

Halakhic challenges related to divorce and adultery: See, e.g., Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, 70–120; Blu Greenberg, “Women Today—An Orthodox View,” in *Frontiers of Jewish Thought*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Washington, DC: B’nai B’rith Books, 1992), 73–102, where she touches on halakhic issues related to male-centric language, witnesses, family law, life-cycle rituals, and more; Haukper, *Rereading the Rabbinic* where she looks at many of these same issues; Sarra Lev, “Sotah,” in Ruttenberg (ed.), *Passionate Torah*, 7–23, where she examines the disproportionate role of the Mishnaic rabbis dedicated to the Torah-based ritual of Sotah, which focuses primarily on a woman who has been suspected of adultery (there is no equivalent ritual if a man is suspected of adultery).

**A second approach that has emerged** As Tal Ilan notes: “The entire corpus [of rabbinic stories in which women play roles that are not prototypically feminine] could easily be bound in a very thin booklet. . . . We have learned that women were present in the house of study, petitioned the judicial system, practiced medicine, engaged in charity and even paid the ransom of captives when they could afford it” (Ilan, *Mine and Yours Are Hers: Retrieving Women’s History from Rabbinic Literature* [New York: Brill, 1997], 277).


Some scholars have taken a third approach Haskel, Rereading the Rabbis, 4. Another scholar, Shulamit Valler, points to overall halakhic differences in regard to women in the Jerusalem Talmud as opposed to the Babylonian Talmud; see Valler, Massekhet Sukkah: Text, Translation, and Commentary (Tübingen, Ger.: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

“Contextualized feminism”: Haskel, Rereading the Rabbis, 11.

Hauptman’s work as “apologetic”: See, e.g., Ilan, Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine, 58.11.

In the final analysis Judith R. Baskin, “Rabbinic Judaism and the Creation of Woman,” in Heschel (ed.), On Being a Jewish Feminist, 130.8.

Citing Neusner, Ross S. Kramer notes that rabbinic sources may refract the social realities of a handful of Jewish communities at best, and at worst only the utopian visions of a relative few Jewish men. The portrait of Jewish women that emerges from these writings, he argues, may then be largely discounted in favor of the more persuasive evidence of epigraphical, archeological, and nonrabbinic writings for Jewish communities both in the Diaspora and in the Land of Israel. See Ross S. Kramer, Her Share of Blessings: Women’s Religions among the Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 93, cited in Ilan, Mine and Yours Are Hers, 25. See also Ilan, Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine; and idem, Integrating Women into Second Temple History (Tübingen, Ger.: J. C. B Mohr, 1999).

“Radical” Jewish Feminism These perspectives are “radical” relative to heteronormative and androcentric norms.

Critics of attempts to recalibrate halakhah On equality meaning women should get to do what men do, see Heschel (ed.), On Being a Jewish Feminist, xvi.

Greenberg quote: Greenberg, On Women and Judaism, 39, quoted in “Gender Theory and Gendered Realities,” 214.

The term peripheral Jews is found in Adler, “The Jew Who Wasn’t There,” 13–14; the expression honorary men is found throughout Adler’s book Engendering Judaism. She also calls children and slaves “peripheral Jews,” but notes that if a child or slave is male, he can grow up and be freed (or leave this category through other means), whereas women cannot. See, e.g., Catherine Hezser, “Passover and Social Equality: Women, Slaves, and Minors in Barli Pesahim,” in Ilan et al. (eds.), A Feminist Commentary, 91–107.

In contrast, a more critical approach One can’t change a centuries-old system quickly: Miriam Peskowitz, “Engendering Jewish Religious History,” in Peskowitz and Levitt (eds.), Judaism Since Gender, 20, 358.11.

Such voices have asserted Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Bantam Books, 1961). See also Plaskow, Standing Again at Sinai, 2–3.


Plaskow’s reflections on “radical feminism” are discussed in “Gender Theory and Gendered Realities,” 207–251.


In the words of Adler Adler, Engendering Judaism, xiv–xv.

Critique of Adler: Interestingly, Plaskow (Standing Again at Sinai, 62–65) charges Adler and others with, at times, focusing on the trees at the expense of the forest.

As Robert Cover explains, laws are always designed within a “universe of meanings, values, and rules . . . a world to inhabit and not a data set” one can master; see Robert Cover, “The Supreme Court 1986 Term—Foreword: Nomos and Narrative,” Harvard Law Review 97, no. 4 (1983): 4–68, quoted in Adler, Engendering Judaism, 33.

Since Jewish history The idea that Jewish history doesn’t reflect women’s realities is discussed in Plaskow, “The Right Question Is Theological,” 230. For Cohen’s view, see Shaye J.D. Cohen, “Are Women in the Covenant?,” in Ilan et al. (eds.), A Feminist Commentary, 25–42.

The latest wave in Jewish feminist thought See, e.g., Notes, chapter 4, “tumtum” and “androgy nous.” See also special topic 5.2.

For recent scholarship in Jewish feminist and queer thought, see, e.g., Noach Dzmera, ed., Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2010); Judith Plaskow, “Calling All Theologians,” in Goldstein (ed.), New Jewish Feminism, 9. See also special topic 0.2.

The word halakhah literally means “These and these . . . ”: BT Er. 13b. Before and after this statement, the Talmud clearly says that although the halakhah should follow the School of Hillel, it is also permissible to follow the law according to the School of Shammas (BT Er. 6b–14a). As for different schools of thought aside from the few mentioned in the Talmud, it isn’t clear how many there were (Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 120–123).

According to Daniel Boyarin, for centuries, even after the attempted consolidation of Christian doctrine at the Council of Nicaea in the fourth century CE, although some Christian Jews rejected Jewish law altogether, many Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews did not, but instead maintained a wide range of halakhic practices. Boyarin claims that there was no single list of observances that either of these two subcommunities practiced, nor, for that matter, should we depict Jews at this time as having been members of clearly identifiable subcommunities. See Daniel Boyarin, The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ (New York: New Press, 2012).

From approximately the tenth century CE onward At a minimum this reflects general halakhic approaches among those in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.

One reason for the narrowing of halakhic opinion Another reason for the narrowing of halakhic opinion may have been the spread of printed texts. In Becoming the People of the Talmud, Talya Fishman notes that it was during this period that the Talmud became better known as a written text—in actual book form—as opposed to an oral tradition. Some say that the concretization of the Babylonian Talmud into book form led directly to the spread of new legal codes such as the Mishneh Torah. See also Barry Scott Wimpfheimer, Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

Jewish authorities beyond the Land of Israel This isn’t to say that prior to this point Jews living in North Africa didn’t already follow the halakhic decisions of their local rabbinic authority. Rather, there is little evidence that major individual rabbinic authorities predated the seventh or eighth centuries.

Collections of halakhot and teshuvot: some contend that these collections were largely extensions of conversations that began in the Talmud. See, e.g., Gideon Libson, “The Age of the Geonim,” in Hecht et al. (eds.), Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law, 204–214.


Although, as scholar Stephen Passamaneck states Stephen M. Passamaneck, “Toward Sunrise in the East 1300–1565,” in Hecht et al. (eds.), Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law, 337.


According to Daniel Boyarin, “It would be no exaggeration to say that Maimonides occupies a place in a specific Jewish literary history and theory analogous to that of Aristotle in the discourse of European literature” (Daniel Boyarin, Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash [Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994], 1).

It is important to briefly mention On halakah practices linked to geographic regions during this era, see Libson, “Age of the Geonim,” 197–250.

Likewise, many of the Ashkenazi Jewish authorities On Rabbi Gershom’s ruling, see Avraham Grossman, “Ashkenazim to 1300,” in Hecht et al. (eds.), Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law, 317–319. Note that in a book by Grossman published a few years later, he writes that it is possible that the halakhic ruling that Rabbi Gershon ben Judah is said to have given may not have been his but may have been attributed to him retroactively some time after he died; idem, Pious and Rebellious: Jewish Women in Medieval Europe (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 70–78.

A third situation Karaite population: See Notes, chapter 11, “In existence for centuries.”


The idea that contemporary halakhic opinions are much less multiplicitous than those found in the Talmud is more relevant to the Babylonian Talmud than to the Jerusalem Talmud, perhaps because there were more Jewish subgroups that agreed with the Jewish High Court decisions in Babylonia than there were in Palestine. In the latter situation, some of the sects asserted that the court had no legal authority. See Ben-Menahem, “Judicial Process,” 428–429.

Halakhah focuses almost exclusively Regarding Christianity’s greater focus on faith over religious practice, see Adam B. Cohen, Joel I. Siegel, and Paul Rozin, “Faith versus Practice: Different Bases for Religiosity Judgments by Jews.


Mishnah and Talmud mention different Jewish beliefs: The belief in a single God (monotheism) is not part of this short list because whereas there is a mitzvah to believe in one God (and if one believes in more than one God, polytheism, one is breaking a biblical directive), there is no mitzvah about the divinity of the Torah, resurrection of the dead, the messiah, or the world-to-come.

At the same time Male God vs. Female God: Jill Hammer, “To Her We Shall Return: Jews Turning to the Goddess, the Goddess Turning to Jews,” in Goldstein (ed.), *New Jewish Feminism*, 22–34.

**Meta-halakhah** I am not using the prefix *meta-* as a pejorative. However, in terms of a strict definition of halakhah that approaches this legal system from within the legal system itself, including its legal rules, “meta-halakhic” practices are not halakhic. See also chapter 8.

“The nineteenth-century emergence”: Despite clear halakhic precedents, nineteenth-century ritual changes caused an uproar among those more resistant to change. Yet these initial adjustments weren’t necessarily new within the context of halakhah. Some of the first proposals were actually based in the Mishnah, such as the recitation of prayers in a local vernacular rather than Hebrew, and the playing of instruments in synagogue during Shabbat (see chapter 8).

This was a time when Jews in Europe and the United States—possibly more than anywhere else—made major changes regarding halakhic practice in an effort to assimilate into the larger non-Jewish milieu. See Laura Arnold Leibman, *Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012), 181–210.

**Yet for customary practices** Custom and law: The relationship between custom and law is also known in Hebrew as *minhaґ yisrael k’halakhah* (lit., the customs of Israel are akin to halakhah). See also Segal, “Jewish Law,” 111. In fact, in the Talmud it even says: “Every halakhah that is unclear in the *Beit Din* [Jewish court] and you do not know its nature, go and see how the community conducts itself and conduct yourself accordingly” (BT Ber. 45a; JT Pe’ah 7:5, in Ronald H. Isaacs, *Every Person’s Guide to Jewish Law* [Northvale, NJ: Vallentine Aronson, 2000], 77).

Eating legumes on Passover: The origins of this ban, which is nonexistent in virtually all non-Ashkenazi communities, are unknown. Some Ashkenazi halakhic authorities have even ruled that Ashkenazi Jews should refrain from following such customs, calling this practice “foolish.” See also Segal, “Jewish Law,” 111. In fact, in the Talmud it even says: “Every halakhah that is unclear in the *Beit Din* [Jewish court] and you do not know its nature, go and see how the community conducts itself and conduct yourself accordingly” (BT Ber. 45a; JT Pe’ah 7:5, in Ronald H. Isaacs, *Every Person’s Guide to Jewish Law* [Northvale, NJ: Vallentine Aronson, 2000], 77).

Cigarette smoking and halakhah: See, e.g., Moshe Feinstein, *Igrot Moshe: Yoreh De’ah*, HB, 49 (1984); “The Prohibition of Smoking in Halacha,” *Va’ad Halacha*, Rabbinical Council of America (June 30, 2006), 1-11. This decision was partially based on a passage from the Babylonian Talmud that says a halakhah cannot be made for people unless most of them will follow it (BT Bab. Bat. 60b).

**Put differently, customs are linked** Community norms and laws: JT Yev. 12:1, in Isaacs, *Every Person’s Guide*, 78.

In other words, meta-halakhic practices are not halakhic from a traditional, non-Reconstructionist perspective. Chapter 8 has a longer discussion of the Reconstructionist movement and its approach to halakhah.

For an innovative understanding of the application of halakhah in the twenty-first century, including such practices as kashrut, something that can be construed as another usage of the term meta-halakhah, see Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *Integral Halakhah: Transcending and Including* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2007).

**From a traditional halakhic** For those who eat out: One could make a halakhic case that if eating at a regular McDonald’s (not the kosher ones in the State of Israel and Argentina), it would be permissible to eat cold salad with plastic utensils. (Why plastic utensils? Because the laws of kashrut include specifics regarding whether or not the utensils you are eating with, or plate you are eating on, have been used previously with nonkosher products.)

**In other words, from a meta-halakhic perspective** Such meta-halakhic self-imposed rituals regarding kashrut exist in connection to halakhic laws across the board. For example, one Jewish family I know has two sets of dishes specifically for Passover, one for dairy products and a second for meat products. In preparation for the holiday, the family’s matzah ensures there is no leavened bread, which is prohibited on Pesah, in the house. However, during the first night of Passover, she serves ham—a nonkosher food by any interpretation—albeit on plates specifically set aside for this holiday (Ryan Bauer, conversation with author, Santa Rosa, CA, July 23, 2013).

**From a meta-halakhic point of view** Meta-halakhah and kashrut: This might be analogous to someone who identifies as a vegetarian who eats chicken or fish, whereas in California this phenomenon is much less common.


**The conversion question** On increased rates of Jews marrying non-Jews, see Calvin Goldscheider, “Are American Jews

Yet some maintain No single transdenominational edict offering a definitive explanation of Jewishness: This is to say that although there may be specific guidelines that all of the groups agree on, there are also many others that they vehemently disagree about.

Chapter 6. Mysticism


**Later we also learned** Because most Moroccan Jews emigrated to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s, most of today’s Jewish pilgrims to Morocco arrive from Israel. In 1973, a replica of the David U-Moshe tomb and synagogue was built in the Galilee town of Safed (in Israel). Nearly a decade earlier, in the southern Israeli town of Ashkelon, another Moroccan Jewish Israeli built a synagogue in homage to David U-Moshe, though not a replica of the pilgrimage site. See Linda Kay Davidson and David Martin Gitlitz, eds., *Pilgrimage: From the Ganges to Graceland—An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 145–147.

**Hillula** David U-Moshe is one of twelve Moroccan Jewish saints whose graves are visited for *hillulot* (sing. *hillula*), ten of whom came to Morocco from the Land of Israel (Ben-Ami, *Saint Veneration*, 42, 93–104). The *hillula* is similar to a Moroccan Muslim ritual referred to as a *museum*, although the two differ in that the latter practice is more jovial and sometimes involves horse racing and the shooting of guns (Goldberg, “The Zohar,” 241n.31).


**There are differences** One basic difference between Moroccan Muslims and Jews is that Muslims are rarely familiar with the Zohar (Goldberg, “The Zohar,” 252), along with the Torah, the central text for Jewish mystics, discussed later in this chapter. Another difference is that Moroccan Muslims more commonly visit living saints, whereas Moroccan Jews usually visit graves of those already dead. Two contemporary exceptions in the Moroccan Jewish community in Israel include veneration of Rabbi Israel Abu-Hatseira (now deceased, but venerated for decades when alive) and his son, Rabbi Baruch Abu-Hatseira, better known as the Baba Sali and Baba Baruch, respectively. Interestingly, Ashkenazi Jews in Israel also commonly made pilgrimages to the homes of these two rabbis, though like Moroccan Muslims, many Ashkenazi Jews visit living saints more often than dead ones (Ben-Ami, *Saint Veneration*, 147–170; Daryn, “Moroccan Hasidism,” 354).

Noah’s Ark, the prophet Daniel, and three of King Solomon’s sons buried in Morocco: Ben-Ami, *Saint Veneration*, 41. Eighty-four of these saints came to Morocco from the Land of Israel.


**In Morocco and elsewhere** See, e.g., Jonathan Garb, “The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 203–229. This phenomenon is akin to pilgrimages made to the alleged tombs of ancient biblical figures, such as Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Leah, Rachel, and Esau (all mentioned in the book of Genesis); Isaiah, Zekharia, Habbakuk (Iran, Israel), and Ezekiel (Iraq) (all mentioned in the Prophets); and Esther and Mordechai (Iran) (found in the Writings). (Unless specified otherwise, these shrines are all located in Israel and the occupied West Bank—the latter area also commonly called Palestine.)
One way to understand mysticism  For more on some of mysticisms’ characteristics, see Fine, “Kabbalistic Texts.”


Despite the use of the word God  For a detailed explanation of the hermeneutics of Jewish mysticisms, see Moshe Idel, Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation (New York, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).


In this chapter the terms Jewish mysticism and Jewish mysticism are used interchangeably.

Important distinctions can be made  Characteristics specific to Jewish mysticism are discussed in Green, Guide to the Zohar, 122–125; Scholem, Major Trends, 15–17.


Experiencing God “face to face”: Jacob—Gen. 32:31; Moses—Exod. 33:11, Deut. 34:10. Though many understand these biblical figures to have been mystics, Scholem (Major Trends, 6) says that it would be “absurd” to consider Moses in this way.

“What saw the sounds of thunder and lightening”: Exod. 20:14.

Jewish mysticism is built upon the Bible  Historically and literally: Aryeh Kaplan, Meditation and the Bible (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1995).

Scholem quote: Scholem, Major Trends, 9.


Scholars debate whether  Some of these ancient texts are called the Hekhalot (Palaces or Realms of God) Books; some use this term interchangeably with Merkavah literature, and some contend the latter is just a name for the fragments of texts that make up the former. See Green, “Introduction”; Kenneth Hanson, Kabbalah: Three Thousand Years of Mystic Tradition (San Francisco: Council Oak Books, 1998); Scholem, Major Trends.


Scholem’s speculation that Merkavah literature appeared alongside the Palestinian Talmud: For example, BT Ber. 7a, Hag. 11b-16a, Hul. 9ib, Meg. 24b, Shab. 80b; JT Hag. 2:1 (77b). In fact, Scholem says both sets of texts were probably written by Palestinian Jews, many of whom were influenced by ideas originally emerging out of the Greek-Egyptian community. Others challenge whether the authors of the Merkavah and Talmudic traditions were familiar with one another at all; see, e.g., Ra’anan Boustan, “Rabbinition and the Making of Early Jewish Mysticism,” Jewish Quarterly Review 101, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 482–501.

Scholem argument that we don’t know: Gershon Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965); idem, Major Trends, 40–79.

By the tenth century  On Scholem’s reversal of his previous position, see Gershon Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and trans. Allan Arkush (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), 7–12.

Medieval mystical texts built upon previous ones: For example, Jacobs, Jewish Mystical Testimonies, 48–55.


German Jewish mystical thought: Green, “Introduction,” xxxvii–xxxviii; Hanson, Kabbalah, 28–49; Scholem, Major Trends, 80–118; idem, On the Kabbalah, 54, 158–204.

These German Jewish mystics  We have written correspondences between thirteenth-century German Jewish mystics and Spanish Jewish mystics, providing evidence that these two groups were in dialogue with one another. See Scholem, Major Trends, 40–18; idem, Origins of the Kabbalah, 18–24, 215–216, 367.

Influence of non-Jewish communities on German and Spanish Jewish mystical schools: From the eighth through fifteenth centuries, parts of the Iberian Peninsula (today’s Spain, Portugal, and Gibraltar) were under the rule of Muslims. From roughly the tenth through fifteenth centuries, Christian rulers worked to regain control over the Peninsula, which they had previously controlled. During this entire time, Jews lived as a minority (under both non-Jewish groups), living through both massacres and periods of peace.
There is a range of opinion regarding Jewish life in this time and place, including, e.g., Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2003).


Understood that being more forthright could lead to a violent backlash: Green, “Introduction,” Ivi–Ix.


**Many date the genesis of Kabbalah** Gereshm Scholem localizes medieval Jewish mysticism in twelfth-century France and in a similar school that emerged shortly thereafter in Spain. It was out of this latter school that most developments in Jewish mystical thought emerged during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 20–21; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 12–18. Some attribute the coinage of the term Kabbalah to the twelfth-century mystic Isaac the Blind; see David A. Cooper, *God Is a Verb: Kabbalah and the Practice of Mystical Judaism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 37, citing *Encyclopædia Judaica* 10:494.

Another important Jewish mystical movement reflecting the overarching umbrella term Jewish mysticism in contrast to the narrower term Kabbalah is found in thirteenth-century pietism. See, e.g., Russ-Fishbane, *Judaism, Sufism, and the Pietists of Medieval Egypt*.


**According to Arthur Green** Green, “Introduction,” xlv.

**Although the Book of Illumination** The Book of Formation or Sefer Yezirah, which some date to the Talmudic era, is also a foundational medieval mystical text. There is evidence that the ninth-century Babylonian Jewish leader Sadian Gaon wrote a commentary it, thus dating it to this era, if not earlier. A number of other commentaries on the Book of Formation appeared during the medieval period as well. For more on Sadian Gaon’s commentary, as well as mention of a few others, see, e.g., Green, “Introduction,” xxxvii; Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yezirah: The Book of Creation in Theory and Practice* (San Francisco: Weiser Books, 1997); Matt, *Essential Kabbalah*, 102–108; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 75–79; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 24–35, 97–98, 228. Scholem argues that the Book of Formation and the Book of Illumination were influential in the development of the idea of the Golem in Prague some three to four centuries later; see Green, “Introduction,” xxxvii–xxxviii; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 80–118; idem, *On the Kabbalah*, 54, 158–204.


**Zohar** on a par with Bible and Talmud: Scholem, *Major Trends*, 156. At one time, Jews in southern Morocco welcomed a new set of Zohar books into their community by means of a ritual, just as they did (and many Jews worldwide continue to do) when welcoming a new Torah scroll. The analogy one scholar makes is that the Zohar is to the Torah as a saint is to God (Goldberg, “The Zohar,” 249–252).

Aside from the Bible, more commentaries on the Zohar than any other text: Matt (trans.), *The Zohar*, xv.

**Sometimes called** On the Zohar as a “mystical novel,” see Green, “Introduction,” lxv–lxxix.

**Aside from marginal naysayers** For decades after Scholem weighed in positively on the question of whether the Zohar was written by one author, scholars basically agreed with him that that was the case—the most notable exception being nineteenth-century scholar Heinrich Graetz, who considered the entire work to be based in superstition. More recent scholarship, however, posits that although De León wrote large sections of the Zohar, he did not write the entire text. Scholars continue to debate this question of authorship; see, e.g., Green, *Guide to the Zohar*, 162–168; idem, “Introduction,” lvi–lvi.

Another reason for dating the Zohar  Like other medieval texts, the Zohar reflects an editorial process that is internal to the text itself, with many of the earliest Zohar manuscripts including overt revisions and reformulations. See Fine, “Kabbalistic Texts,” 309–313; Matt (trans.), The Zohar, xvi; Scholem, Major Trends, 156–204. Scholem (ibid., 164–165) adds that the Zohar’s author was familiar with the Babylonian Talmud but not the Jerusalem.

SPECIAL TOPIC 6.3  Zohar 1:54a–1:54b, in Matt (trans.), The Zohar, 302–306.

The world’s first humans committed a terrible sin: Gen. 2:16–17. Eventually, Cain murdered his younger brother, Abel: As explained in chapter 2, elsewhere the Zohar explains that Eve copulated with the serpent, another reason his evil slime made its way into her and, eventually, her firstborn. See Zohar 2:167b–2:168a, in Matt (trans.), The Zohar, 472–473. This tradition is also based in a passage from BT Shab. 146a.

Daniel Matt’s translation and commentary  Matt (trans.), The Zohar, 320n.1464.

Lawrence Fine argues that what distinguishes Green, “Introduction,” lxxiv.

A core idea in both the Zohar  The Book of Formation discusses the sefirot in a completely different manner than later mystical texts, referring to it instead in relation to primordial numbers, specifically those written by the Greeks (i.e., Pythagoreanism and Neopythagoreanism). Beginning with the Book of Illumination, the sefirot begin to describe God. I thank Lawrence Fine for pointing this out to me.

Sefirot: Although the Book of Illumination explains this notion in great detail, during the medieval period the sefirot received many different explanations in Kabbalistic literature, some of which cite Talmudic passages to prove a given interpretation’s ancient origins. See Green, “Introduction,” xliv; Matt, Essential Kabbalah, 1–11, 74–88. Over time, these multiple traditions developed into a single, unified, cogent system (ibid., s).

Scholem (Major Trends, 197, 213) notes that the author of the Zohar was averse to using the term sefirot. This may have been partly due to the writer’s hesitation to speak casually about esoteric doctrines. Instead of using the term sefirot, one finds the Zohar using the language of deveikut, the mystical idea of becoming closer to or joining with God, a term that first appears in the Torah in a description of Adam “cleaving” to his wife as they “become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Nonetheless, it is clear that the Zohar often speaks of the sefirot, even when not using the term itself. See Green, “Introduction,” lxix–lxx; Scholem, Major Trends, 123; idem, Origins of the Kabbalah, 299–309.

These ten spheres  The ninth-century Babylonian Jewish sageSaadia Gaon also wrote about the infinite nature of God; see Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, 266–267. Ayin or Ein: Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, 357.


David ben Abraham ha-Lavan quote: Matt, “Ayin,” 67–68. Distinction between Ayin and Ein Sof: Some scholars (and mystics) confute elements of the Ayin and Ein Sof, whereas others are firm in disaggregating them, even while connecting them with one another in terms of their respective meanings.


Lowest sefirah, Malkhut: To complicate matters, some Kabbalists identify this sefirah with the active intellect. As one scholar of mysticism, Jeremy Brown, recently explained, “It’s tricky because intellect [in this context] does not mean the same thing as cerebral experience” (email to author, August 24, 2015). In short, Jewish mystical experiences can coexist with, and even emerge from, one’s intellectual experiences.

Clearly there are paradoxes  Fine, “Kabbalistic Texts,” 318–325.

Perhaps unsurprisingly  Ruah, and neshamah: Gen. 2:7, 63.

Nefesh: Lev. 17:11. According to the Talmud, humans are part animal and part angel; their physical body is animalistic, whereas their soul is angelic. See Aryeh Kaplan, Jewish Meditation (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), 134.


Interchangeability of these terms in the Prophets and Writings: For example, Eccles. 12:7, where the word nefesh is used to mean a human soul.


During the medieval era  For additional soul references, see Elior, “Jewish Spirituality.”

The Zohar picks up on the Talmudic tradition  On the hierarchical arrangement of these terms, see Dan Cohn-


Other points of discord Many Kabbalists actually agreed with Maimonides that anthropomorphic understandings of God were overly simplistic. At the same time, many felt that human beings could affect God, the latter premise which Maimonides felt brought God too close to humans in terms of descriptives (Green, “Introduction,” xl–xli).

Yet as we have seen Jewish philosophy and mysticism not oppositional: Scholem, Major Trends, 119–155.


Although they didn’t feel The Guide for the Perplexed as an entryway into Jewish mysticism: Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, 408–413. Some Kabbalists, such as Abraham Abulaafia (discussed earlier in this chapter as well as in chapter 4), even wrote commentaries on Maimonides’s Guide; see Jacobs, Jewish Mystical Testimonies, 5, 35–47, 56–72.

Some reputable halakhic authorities Some maintain that Ramban ensured that Kabbalistic teachings remained cryptic, however, which lends credence to the theory that he was not in favor of popularizing mystical ideas. See, e.g., Fine, Physician of the Soul, 100–101; Jacobs, Jewish Mystical Testimonies, 73–79; Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah, 384–401.

Joseph Karo and Jewish mysticism: Jacobs, Jewish Mystical Testimonies, 98–122.

Following the expulsion Safed is not mentioned in the Bible and is only mentioned in passing in the Talmud. Aside from its status—including nearby locations, such as Mount Meron—as the alleged resting place for a number of Talmudic rabbis, including Shimon Bar Yochai, this town did not become a center of Jewish life until the sixteenth century, even though there is a record of Jews there dating back to the thirteenth century. By the fourteenth century, Safed’s reputation among Jewish mystics had begun to spread, increasing exponentially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in particular in the decades immediately following the Spanish Inquisition. See Fine, “Kabbalistic Texts,” 344–346; idem, Physician of the Soul, 41–47, 65–74.

Another reason why Jews, especially rabbinic figures, moved to the Land of Israel (where Safed is) at this time was that Palestine-based rabbis had a superior reputation relative to rabbis living elsewhere; see Fine, Physician of the Soul, 78–80. Today, more than 150,000 devotees visit Bar Yochai’s grave annually on Lag B’Omer, a holiday that lasts thirty-three days after the second night of Passover (Goldberg, “The Zohar,” 246).


During this era Jewish mysticism was popularized One can also point to ideas found in the Zohar for the popularization of Jewish mysticism, such as the notion of placing positive value on poverty, a state in which many if not most Jews found themselves at the time. See, e.g., Scholem, Major Trends, 234–235. As to why this trend didn’t take hold until the sixteenth century, scholars have offered various theories. One suggests that it was because the Zohar, written largely in Aramaic, a language not understood by the masses, did not start to be translated into Hebrew until then. Green, “Introduction,” lxxiv–lxxxi; Scholem, Major Trends, 233.

But halakhah ensured that mystical ascetics These practices were starkly different from those ascetic rituals performed by German Jewish mystics during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; see Fine, Physician of the Soul, 180–186.

One of the most important figures On Luria’s early years, see Fine, Physician of the Soul, 32–34. As for other famous mystics from the sixteenth century, Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, who lived in Prague, is one of the more renowned. He is said to have used mystical incantations to give life to an inanimate piece of clay called the Golem. Some say this is the foundational story for Mary Shelley’s novel Frankenstein (e.g., Hanson, Kabbalah, 162–170).

Luria stepped into a leadership vacuum: Fine, Physician of the Soul, 353–354.

Although Luria was only in Safed According to Vital’s writings, a number of Jewish women in Damascus experienced auditory revelations; Fine, Physician of the Soul, 80–82, 120–122.

For Luria, the most important mystical text On humans helping God connect with Godself, see Fine, “Kabbalistic Texts,” 327–336. Note that I am using the term Godself rather than Himself or Herself.

Responsibility to heal the world: Fine, Physician of the Soul, 12–15, 134–143.
The spread of Lurianic mysticism: It is likely that Lurianic mysticism spread through one of his disciples, if not a fellow mystic, since even before he died his teachings had made their way to places such as Italy. According to Scholem (Major Trends, 244–286), not Luria or Vital but a man named Israel Sarug was the missionary par excellence for this thread of mystical thought. This theory has since been dismissed; see Cohn-Sherbok, Jewish Mysticism, 32–37; Fine, Physician of the Soul, 1–6, 361n.1). In fact, there is no evidence that Luria, Vital, or any other specific individual disseminated Lurianic Kabbalah. See, e.g., Green, Guide to the Zohar, 178–187; Jacobs, Jewish Mystical Testimonies, 123–135.

In fact, one of the reasons Strict observance of the mitzvot: For example, Luria is said to have studied a set number of verses from the Torah each day of the week. See Fine, Physician of the Soul, 187–219, 259–260.


While Luria did not invent the idea of tikkun olam—indeed, it predated his era by centuries, going back at least as far as the Mishnah—he developed a new and distinct understanding of this concept.

God’s need for humans: Fine, Physician of the Soul, 134–141; Scholem, Major Trends, 244–286.

Another act of major importance Some say that in the idea of ascending the sefirot through prayer, Luria was speaking only of esoteric forms of mystical prayer, thereby limiting the practice to elites.

As for the issue of one’s intention during prayer, for this Luria drew upon a number of sources, including the eleventh-century Spanish text Guide to Duties of the Heart, written by Bahya Ibn Pakuda, which in turn drew a great deal from Islamic philosophy and the work of the renowned ninth-century Babylonian rabbi Saadia Gaon. See Fine, Physician of the Soul, 220–302.


In many ways, the Safed mystics On connections between messianism, Safed mysticism, and the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, see Fine, “Kabbalistic Texts,” 342; Scholem, Major Trends, 244–286.


Sabbatai Tzvi: See chapter 4.

Hasidism as anti-Sabbatian: Some argue that the Hasidic movement was able to attain an incredibly quick mass appeal because it began in the region of Ukraine, where previously Tzvi had a major following. Some even allege that the link between Hasidism and Tzvi is much stronger than merely having a geographical connection, arguing that the founder of Hasidism, Israel ben Eliezer, or the Baal Shem Tov, studied with a devoted rabbi of Tzvi’s. See, e.g., Scholem, Major Trends, 330–333; Isaiah Tishby, “Between Sabbateanism and Hasidism: The Sabbateanism of the Kabbalist R. Ya’aqov Kopel Lifshitz of Miedzyrzec,” in Paths of Faith and Heresy (Ramat Gan: n.p., 1964), 204–226 [Hebrew], cited in Moshe Idel, Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 4. Idel contends that Hasidism’s appeal was more likely due to its integration of a number of normative Jewish strands than a connection to Tzvi (ibid., 18–20).

Saint veneration Garb, “The Cult of the Saints.” Scholem (Major Trends, 333–338) says the Hasidic notion of a tzadik is akin to a “non-messianic messiah.”

Accessibility In contrast, roughly during the same eighteenth-century period in which Hasidism emerged, a Yemenite Jewish mystic moved to Jerusalem and helped launch a new school of mystical thought (that is still in existence). Despite his becoming one of the most famous mystics of his day, his school has only been accessible to an elite few. See Fine, Physician of the Soul, 6; Jacobs, Jewish Mystical Testimonies, 156–169; Scholem, Major Trends, 328–330.

Although much of early Hasidism was accessible to the masses specifically living in eighteenth-century Russia, one obscure Hasidic group moved to Ottoman-controlled Palestine in 1877 and thus did not help spread the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings to the Ukranian, Russian, and Polish masses (Scholem, Major Trends, 330).

**Popularizing movement-based prayer**  This included new approaches to practices referred to as *deveikut* (see Notes, chapter 6, “A Core idea in both the Zohar”). *Idel, Hasidism*, 45–102; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 334–336.

**This said, Scholem writes**  On the ways Hasidism added mystical ideas to the tradition, see Moshe Idel, “The Tsadik and His Soul’s Sparks: From Kabbalah to Hasidism,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 103, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 196–240; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 340–341.


This teaching builds on Lurianic thought regarding linkages of transmigrated souls, such as one connecting Adam to Abel and another connecting Adam to Cain, at least as underlined by Luria’s disciple, Hayim Vital. See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 333–339.

The text continues:

Now Cain is [akin to] the realm the sefira of gevura. His name is numerically equivalent to the Hebrew word for “rock.” . . . There are many souls from the realm of Cain, which are much loftier than those of Abel. When they fall, their drive for evil is far greater. . . . *Shaar Hagilgulim* lists various ancient souls including the sages of the Mishna and the Talmud and designates them as stemming either from Cain or Abel. There are in fact signs by which to recognize the roots of souls. It is written in *Shaar Haga-vanot* [The Gate of Medications: a book relayed to Hayim Vital by his teacher, Luria], one who is wrapped in a tallit [prayer shawl] from right to left and left to right is from the realm of Abel. And one whose nature and custom is to fold the two sides of his tallit on his two shoulders is from the realm of Cain. (It was the Baal Shem Tov’s custom to fold his tallit on his shoulder, and perhaps he was from the realm of Cain.)


**SPECIAL TOPIC 6.5**  Daryn, “Moroccan Hasidism,” 351–372.


**For many Jews, mystics or otherwise**  On what medieval Jewish philosophers considered heretical, see Fine, *Kabbalistic Texts*, 327–336.

**As for the act of prayer itself**  On meditative prayer, see Green, *Guide to the Zohar*, 134–144; Kaplan, *Jewish Meditation*.

**For the most part, Jewish mystics**  There were other forms of meditative prayer as well. For instance, in the sixteenth century, Safed mystics commonly practiced a ritual called *gerushin*, in which one focused on a single verse of a sacred text and either repeated it over and over again or wrote it down on parchment and stared at it (i.e., visual contemplation). In Hinduism and Buddhism, this might be referred to as a mantra, and in psychotherapeutic milieus as Standardized Clinical Meditation.

**But nowhere is there any discussion**  On mitzvot, reward, and punishment, see, e.g., Deut. 11:13–21, which is also the second paragraph of an important Jewish prayer called the *Shma* (see special topic 5.1).


**Other texts from the rabbinic period**  Reward, punishment, good, and evil are mentioned explicitly in BT Ber. 4a, Eruv. 19a, Hag. 16a, San 107b, Sotah 47a, Yoma 69b; and Gen. Rab. 97. See also Cooper, *God Is a Verb*, 244–250; Ishay Rosen-Zvi, “Refuting the Yetzer: The Evil Inclination and the Limits of Rabbinc Discourse,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 17, no. 2 (2009): 117–141; Jeffrey Spitzer, “The Birth of the Good Inclination,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-birth-of-the-good-inclination. This is to say nothing about notions such as the “evil eye,” which, though linked to larger questions like what is evil and where did it come from, is quite different (see Brigitte Kern-Ulmer, “The Power of the Evil Eye and the Good Eye in Midrashic Literature,” *Judaism* 40 [June 1, 1991]: 344–353).


**As for how to deal with evil**  On performing mitzvot and...


Luria took considerations of evil On Hasidic texts continuing Lurianic ideas, see Fine, Physician of the Soul, 150–186.


Jewish mysticism, according to Scholem Scholem, Major Trends, 37–39.


The phallic nature of Yisod: As seen in fig. 6.3, Yisod is situated just above Malkhut, the sefira directly connecting God to the earthly realm. This means that the other eight sefirot, God’s “body,” rest upon Yisod; it is their foundation. All earthly souls emerge from Yisod but are then birthed into the world through Malkhut, Yisod’s feminine counterpart. See, e.g., Daniel C. Matt, God and the Big Bang: Discovering Harmony between Science and Spirituality (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1996); and Gershom Scholem, On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah (New York: Schocken Books, 1991).

Perhaps the most important of the female sefirot Such ideas are found in important Kabbalistic texts such as Iggeret Hakodesh (written c. twelfth or thirteenth century) as well as the Zohar. See Rachel Biale, Women and Jewish Law: Their Essential Texts, Their History, and Their Relevance for Today (New York: Schocken Books, 1993), 140–145; Green, “Introduction,” xliii–lii; Scholem, Major Trends, 219, 235.

Green suggests that this idea Green, Guide to the Zohar, 94–98.

Daniel Matt notes Matt, God and the Big Bang, 52–53.

Although not claiming that pre-Hebrew Matt, God and the Big Bang, 52–53.


The mainstream idea of tikun olam On social justice activism, see chapter 4.


Mysticism and mainstream rituals: Schwartz, “How the Ari Created a Myth.” See also discussion in chapter 4 about the link between tikun olam and the messianic age.

In addition, many prayers On mainstream prayers and mysticism, see Fine, Physician of the Soul, 5–6, 248–258; Scholem, Major Trends, 285–286; Adin Steinsaltz, “Afterword,” in Weiner, 9½ Mystics, 386.

Perhaps the most important addition On Shabbat and Jewish mysticism, see Fine, Physician of the Soul, 5–6, 248–258; Elliot K. Ginsburg, “Kabbalistic Rituals of Shabbat Preparation,” in Fine (ed.), Essential Papers, 400–437.

The imprint that Jewish mysticism has left Steinsaltz, “Afterword,” 386. Note that Steinsaltz is using the term “Kab - bala” here to mean Jewish mysticism at large.
Chapter 7. Cultures

Like many other Americans When asked about their religious affiliation, my maternal grandparents’ usual response was that, to some degree, they identified with the United Church of Canada (at the time, similar to American Presbyterianism). But if anything, this was merely a remnant of their time in Winnipeg, where they both grew up, as well as a scripted response intended to put the questions on this topic to bed.


Today, many Jews in the United States and Israel On Jews who don’t identify as religiously Jewish, but as Jewish nonetheless, see Pew Research Center, “Portrait of Jewish Americans.”


Please note that the attention One of the “Invisible Gorillas” (see chapter 5) in this chapter—addressed in particular instances rather than generally—is the fact that both gender and sexuality are central to the formation of all cultures discussed herein.

In the Jewish community, male hegemony goes back to the Bible (at least according to the text’s pshat). As for heteronormativity, this term means something very different with regard to biblical times, when polygyny was permitted and polyandry prohibited, than it does in a present-day context. To further explore what this idea means today we would have to localize it to a particular time and place.

Before continuing, we need to consider David Biale, “Preface: Toward a Cultural History of the Jews,” in Biale (ed.), Cultures of the Jews, ix–xv.

For Jews, there is not “Inseparable from [those] of their Canaanite . . .”: Biale, “Preface,” xvii–xxi.


Subordinated groups and the influence of dominants: Barbara Jean Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,” New Left Review 181 (1990): 95–118. As for why non-Christian Americans, like Jews, also approach Jewish identity as if it were a religious category, this reflects how dominants shape even the ideas that subordinated groups have about themselves. See Kaye/Kantrowitz, Colors of Jews, 12–13, 30–31; Pew Forum, “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey.”

Second, because Christianity Paul Tillich also briefly explores this phenomenon in Germany and Russia; see Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).


It is not simply happenstance On the significance of


For most of their history On the idea of a cross-cultural spectrum, see Clifford Geertz, Life Among the Anthropos and Other Essays, ed. Fred Inglis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

This isolationist approach This isolationism does not include two distinct ultra-Orthodox groups, Chabad and Aish Hatorah, whose primary purpose is to missionize non-Orthodox Jews and bring them into the ultra-Orthodox fold. See, e.g., Aaron Joshua Tapper, “The ‘Cult’ of Aish Hatorah: Ba’alei Teshuva and the New Religious Movement Phenomenon,” Jewish Journal of Sociology 44, nos. 1–2 (2002): 5–29.


Of course, particular rituals The application of the term cross-fertilization to this particular phenomenon was introduced to me by photographer Frédéric Brenner in a conversation in the summer of 2005. (See chapter 1.)


As the biblical prophets foretold In the third book of the Torah, God tells Moses that the Israelites will be scattered all over the world (Lev. 26:33), an idea echoed by two of the biblical prophets, Isaiah and Ezekiel, who both use the phrase “to the four corners of the earth” (Isa. 11:12, Ezek. 7:2).


“Jews are like everyone else, only more so”: This quote has been attributed to the likes of Isaiah Berlin, Sigmund Freud, Heinrich Heine, Mark Twain, and Chaim Weitzman, among others. See, e.g., Elliot E. Cohen, ed., Commentary on the American Scene: Portraits of Jewish Life in America (New York: Aldred A. Knopf, 1953), xxii.


Some Judeans, referred to as Hellenists On Hellenists identifying as Greek culturally but not ethnically or tribally, see Michael Edward Stone, Scriptures, Sects, and Visions (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 3.

Erich Gruen reference: Gruen adds that at the same time they were synthesizing Jewish and Greek culture, among Jews living in the Land of Israel there was also a “strong strain in Jewish literature [that] emphasized the differences in culture and behavior between the two peoples, categorizing the Greeks as aliens, inferiors, even savage antagonists.

A number of examples reflect Although the Torah may have been solidified by this time, it is unlikely that the Bible was; see James C. Vanderkam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 213–217. For more on the distinction between the Torah and Bible, see chapter 2. As to when the Torah was translated into Greek, see special topic 2.1.

Performing Jewish rituals in Greek: As Cohen remarks, “All the Jews of antiquity were ‘hellenized’ in some way” (Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987], 40–41). As for the oft-cited prohibition that Jewish leaders imposed on the study of Greek texts, which is refuted by such scholars as Saul Lieberman, perhaps this directive emerged to support the historical construction of the Hasmonean attempt to keep the Jewish community “pure.” See Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), 100–114. That said, prohibitions against idolatry, particularly forms that flourished in the Greek Jewish community, can be found in numerous places from this era; see, e.g., ibid., 115–138.

Parallels between Jewish texts and Greek texts from this era: In addition, multiple textual dramas written by Jews from this period integrate Greek literary styles with biblical narratives, focusing on stories involving Joseph, Moses, and Kings David and Solomon, among others. Because they often address seeming ambiguities in the Bible, these texts can also be described as among the earliest forms of Midrash (see chapter 5). See Erich S. Gruen, “Hellenistic Judaism,” in Biale (ed.), *Cultures of the Jews*, 177–132; idem, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); idem, “Jewish Perspectives”.

Some Judean Hellenists Judean Hasmoneans, also called Maccabees, regained control over the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BCE from the Seleucid Greeks. They created a small Maccabean state within the Seleucid territory, but in 63 BCE the Romans conquered Judea, thus defeating them. See Cohen, *Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 14–15; see also chapter 8.

Intra-Judean violence: Some scholars cite this intra-Judean tension as the true impetus for the major revolt that eventually took place against the Greeks, rather than the oppression of Greek rule itself. See Stone, *Scriptures, Sects, and Visions*, 27–30; Vanderkam, *Introduction to Early Judaism*, 11–24.


Perhaps to the Hasmoneans’ chagrin According to scholar Richard Kalmin, in contrast to the Babylonian rabbis, some Palestinian rabbis were comfortable with idolatry. One possible reason is that in Persia, unlike in Judah, idol worship was uncommon, which allowed Babylonian rabbis to rail against such practices. (Others dispute this argument.) Kalmin also notes that Babylonian rabbis were somewhat indifferent toward the larger Jewish community, perhaps a reflection of how Persian non-Jewish authorities dealt with the masses. (Alternatively, perhaps this behavior had to do with Babylonian rabbis not having as much authority over their Jewish community as is commonly assumed.) Some of these rabbis openly embraced aspects of the larger non-Jewish Persian culture. For example, at least one third-century BCE Babylonian rabbi was criticized by his colleagues for “putting on Persian airs.” See Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia Between Persia and the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3–18.


For centuries prior to their decimation For a detailed list of Romanote Jewish American customs, including ones no longer practiced, see Richard Glaser, “The Greek Jews in Baltimore,” *Jewish Social Studies* 38, nos. 3–4 (Summer/Fall 1976): 321–326.


Even before the Land of Israel One could call the community at this time “Babylonian Judeans,” perhaps a more accurate term for these proto-Jews in this specific time and place. Some argue that the Jews who remained in Judah called themselves the “Children of Israel,” whereas those who were exiled went by “Judean” or “Israelite.”

The primary contemporary group For centuries, the largest Jewish Syrian communities were in the country’s most populated cities, Damascus and Aleppo, though smaller communities existed as far east as Qamishle, today on the border with Turkey. The contemporary Syrian Jewish community is primarily composed of three groups: those who claim a Syrian lineage going back to the days of the Babylonian Empire; those whose ancestors arrived during the fifteenth through
seventeenth centuries as a result of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions (also known as Sephardi Jews); and those who identify as Kurds. As with Egyptian Jewry, there are also those who trace their families back to Jews who arrived in Syria from Italy or other European countries via trade opportunities.

Origins of Syrian Jewish community: Some Syrian Jews date their community back even further, to the era of King David. As for the Kurds, there is viable evidence from the biblical era that they arrived in Kurdistan during the Assyrian Exile in the eighth century BCE. According to a dominant oral tradition, they are one of the so-called Lost Tribes of Israel that was exiled during this time.

During the twentieth century most Syrian Jews immigrated to Israel and the United States (specifically New York City), where approximately 80,000 and 75,000, respectively, lived as of 2010. Others made it to European countries (especially England), as well as South America (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile) and Central America (Mexico and Panama). Of course, some Syrian Jews began immigrating to these places earlier than the last century, such as those who moved to Ottoman-controlled Palestine in the nineteenth century. Given the violence in Syria since 2011, it is likely that the number of Jews left in Syria is today less than fifty.

Like Iraqi Jews and others immigrating to Israel and the United States from Middle Eastern countries during the twentieth century, most Syrian Jews identified with a particular urban center, such as Damascus (Shammi) or Aleppo (Halabi). In Syrian-only contexts many still claim such connections, but when interacting with non-Syrians, especially in the United States, members of this Jewish community typically identify as Syrian more generally. An exception is Syrian Jews who relocated to Israel and Mexico in the 1950s and 1960s and have largely maintained the nuances of their families’ geographic roots.

Some Jews immigrating to Israel from countries outside Syria, such as Turkey, also have identified as Halabi, which at this point is much more of a subcultural signifier than anything else. In Mexico City, Syrian Jews still identify as Shammi, Halabi, or Sephardi. Outside Israel, where it is not uncommon for Syrian Jews to marry non-Syrian Jews, Syrian Jews marry “in” more so than other Jewish subcommunities. To this day there are a number of prayer melodies particular to the Syrian Jewish community, many of which reflect dominant Arabic musical trends from when the community lived in Syria.


**Despite this variety** On Iraqi Jews as Arab Jews, see Yehouda Shenhav and Hannah Hever, “‘Arab Jews’ after Structuralism: Zionist Discourse and the (De)Formation of an Ethnic Identity,” Social Identities 18, no. 1 (January 2012): 101–118. See also chapters 1 and 10.

**One member of the larger Arab Jewish community** Albert Memmi, Jews and Arabs, trans. Eleanor Levieux (Chicago: J. Philip O’Hara, 1975), 29, quoted in Shenhav and Hever, “‘Arab Jews,’” 103. While Memmi might describe his identity differently today, this does not change how he understood his identity at this earlier stage of his life.


**During the 1940s** As of February 2003, it was estimated that out of a worldwide population of 250,000 Iraqi Jews, fewer than one hundred were still living in Iraq. Over the last century most have migrated to Israel, while about 45,000 live in London, England, and 10,000 in Los Angeles. See Rachel Pomerance, “Iraq Home to Glorious Jewish Past but Lonely and Fragile Present,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, February 10, 2003, www.jta.org/2003/02/10/archive/crisis-in-iraq-iraq
-home-to-glorious-jewish-past-but-to-a-lonely-and-fragile-
-present. Given the violence in Iraq since 2002, it is likely
that this number has shrunk even more.

Operation Ezra and Nehemiah: See “Immigration to
Israel: Operation Ezra and Nehemiah—The Airlift of Israeli
Jews (1951–1952),” www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource
/immigration/ezra.html.

Fewer than 10: David Van Biema, “The Last Jews of Bagh-
/world/article/o.8599,1647740,00.html.

Ironically, the process of assimilating The final Mid-
dle Eastern area where Jews lived prior to 1948 who could be
added to this group are, of course, those Jews who were pre-
sent in Ottoman-controlled and British-occupied Palestine.
See chapter 10.

Population of Middle Eastern Jews not living in Israel: See,
e.g., Norman A. Stillman, The Jews of Arab Lands: A History
and Source Book (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society
of America Press, 1979); idem, The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern
Times (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America

Population of Middle Eastern Jews today: See Notes, chap-
ter 7, “Whether going back millennia.”

The roles of women also changed See, e.g., Sammy
Smooha, Israel: Pluralism and Conflict (Berkeley: University of

Another difference is Samir Naqqash is quoted in Reuven
Snir, “‘Arabs of the Mosaic Faith’: Chronicle of a Cultural

Another reason for negative feelings On Iraqi Jewish
immigration to Israel, see Haya Gavish, Unwitting Zionists:
The Jewish Community of Zakho in Iraqi Kurdistan (Detroit:
Wayne State University Press, 2010).

For more on these bombings, see Ian Black and Benny
Morris, Israel’s Secret Wars: A History of Israeli Intelligence
Services (New York: Grove Press, 1992); Moshe Gat, The Jewish
Exodus from Iraq, 1948–1951 (Portland, OR: Frank Cass & Co.,
1997); Naeim Giladi, Ben Gurion’s Scandals: How the Haganah
and the Mossad Eliminated Jews (Berkeley: University of
California Press, 2003); Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, “Iraqi Jews in
Israel: From ‘Refugees’ to ‘Zionists’ and Back Again,” in Popu-
lation Resettlement in International Conflicts: A Comparative Study,
ed. Ariel M. Kacowicz and Paweł Lutomski (Lanham, MD:
Lexington Books, 2007), 115–134; Tom Segev, “Now It Can Be
Told,” Haaretz, April 6, 2006, www.haaretz.com/now-it-can
-be-told-1.184724; idem, 1949: The First Israelis, trans. Arlen N.

Other reasons for dissatisfaction with their new home are
touched on in chapters 1, 9, and 10.

Kurdistan today encompasses On Seharane, see Lazar
Berman, “Cultural Pride, and Unlikely Guests, at Kurdish
Jewish Festival,” Times of Israel, September 30, 2013, www
.timesofisrael.com/pride-and-unlikely-guests-at-kurdish
-jewish-festival; Jewish Agency for Israel, “The Seharane,”
www.jewishagency.org/holidays-and-memorial-days
/content/23863.

Although there have been Kurdish Jews On Kurdish Jews
in Israel, see, e.g., Berman, “Cultural Pride”; Jerusalem Cen-
ter for Jewish-Christian Relations, “Kurdish Jewish Communi-
ty,” www.jcjr.org/kurdish-jewish-community; Lokman
I. Meho, “The Kurds and Kurdistan: A General Background,”
in Kurdish Culture and Society: An Annotated Bibliography,
comp. Lokman I. Meho and Kelly Maglaughlin (Westport,
CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 3–25; Yona Sabar, “Jews of Kur-
distan,” in Encyclopedia of World Cultures, vol. 9: Africa and the
Middle East, ed. John Middleton and Amal Rassam (Boston:
G. K. Hall, 1995), 144–147.

In general, Kurdish Jews On Seharane, see Berman,
“Cultural Pride”; Jewish Agency for Israel, “The Seharane.”
See also Erich Brauer, The Jews of Kurdistan: An Ethnologi-
cal Study, ed. Raphael Patai (Detroit: Wayne University Press,
1993); Naomi Gale, “Kurdish Women,” Jewish Women’s
Mehrad R. Izady, A Concise Handbook: The Kurds (Cam-
bridge, MA: Taylor & Francis, 1992); Mordechai Yona, Kur-
dish Jewish Encyclopedia, vols. 1 and 2 (Miami: University of

Returning to Kurdistan: See, e.g., Ivan Watson, “Iraq’s
Kurdish Jews Cautiously Return to Homeland,” National Pub-
.org/en/info/iraq-s-kurdish-jews-cautiously-return-to
-homeland-119728029.html.

Instances of this cultural synthesis For more on Per-
ian Jews, see Agence France-Presse, “Iran Young, Urban-
ized, and Educated: Census,” The National, July 29, 2012,
www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/iran-is-young
-urbanised-and-educated-census; Arlene Dallalifar, “Negoti-
ated Allegiances: Contemporary Iranian Jewish Identities,”
Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East
20, no. 2 (2010): 272–296; Yaakov Elman, “Acculturation to
Elite Persian Norms and Modes of Thought in the Babylo-
nian Jewish Community of Late Antiquity,” in Netirot LeDa-
viv: Jubilee Volume for David Weiss Halivni, ed. Yaakov Elman,
Ephraim Halivni, and Zvi Steinfeld (Jerusalem: Orhot Press,
2004), 31–56; idem, “Middle Persian Culture and Babylo-
nian Sages: Accommodation and Resistance in the Shaping
of Rabbinic Legal Tradition,” in The Cambridge Companion to
the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature, ed. Charlotte E. Fonrob-
ert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 2007); Isaiah Gafni, “Babylonian Rabbinic Culture,” in
Biale (ed.), The Jews of Iran in Zionist/Israeli Imagination,”
in JUDAISMS/NOTES TO PAGES 122–124

Jews (or Judeans) becoming Persian Jews: Interestingly, the main evidence we have of the sixth-century BCE Jewish community living under Persians—specifically after those in the Babylonian Jewish community decided to return to Judah (once given permission)—is anti-assimilationist and not integrationist. In fact, aside from the Torah’s directives against marrying into particular non-Hebrew and non-Israelite groups, the first evidence of a prohibition against proto-Jews marrying outside their community is in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which describe events alleged to have taken place during the fifth century BCE (but only among those living in Judah).

Ezra and Nehemiah were concerned about Judean cultural purity. For example, Ezra firmly opposed intermarriage. Indeed, his first action upon returning to Judah was the dramatic step of engaging in mourning rituals (i.e., tearing his clothes and wearing a sackcloth) because some of the Judeans who stayed had intermarried. He called for the expulsion of all non-Jewish wives and their children. Though one of the biblical directives prohibited intermarrying with specific communities, it did not say that the punishment was exile. (Based on this decree, some scholars have theorized that Ezra is responsible for the shift in Jewish identity from patri-lineal to matrilineal descent.)

Because of such severe edicts, some speculate that one of the major issues for Babylonian and Persian Jews was assimilation, not integration. In the words of scholar Philip Esler, “Ezra’s attitude reflects a concern that a symbolical boundary between Israel and other ethnic groups had been breached in a manner which threatened his people’s very identity” (Philip F. Esler, “Ezra-Nehemiah as a Narrative of [Re-Invented] Israelite Identity,” Biblical Interpretation 11, nos. 3–4 [2003]: 421).

Others argue that Ezra and Nehemiah made these firm demands under pressure from the Persian Empire, which wanted there to be clear demarcations in the Land of Israel between Judeans and non-Judeans. (It is also worth noting that given the Babylonian Exile and, for some, the return to Judah, the expulsion of non-Judean wives along with their children was yet another exile, this time imposed from within.) According to the Bible, Ezra also reestablished what he considered to be authentic Judean cultural practices, some of which were actually more rigorous than those outlined in the Torah, such as practices of public Torah readings and strict observance of the Sabbath. He also declared that the Temple needed to be rebuilt. See Esler, “Ezra-Nehemiah,” 413–426.

Scroll of Esther and the Bible: It was also during the sixth through fourth centuries BCE that the Bible began to be edited, including some of the books compiled in the Prophets and Writings (chapter 2). Many of these texts echo themes of sadness, longing, and hopelessness. Some of the prophets, such as Jeremiah, are particularly critical of Jerusalemite prophets, which might reflect another intra-Judean struggle over authority and power.


An annual holiday than often overlaps Saba Soomekh, email with author, September 13, 2013; Soomekh, From the Shahs to Los Angeles, 40.

According to scholar Saba Soomekh Saba Soomekh, email with author, September 13, 2013.

King Cyrus’s treatment of Jews: See Notes, chapter 3, “A little less than fifty years after.”

As for esphand Sookieh, email with author, September 13, 2013.


A number of today’s Jewish communities It is not
uncommon to see other groups of Jews, such as those from Kurdistan, also referred to as “Mountain Jews.”


Within a few generations Douglass, Rise and Spread of Islam; Esposito, Oxford History of Islam; Firestone, “Jewish Culture”; Jenkins, Muslim Diaspora; Kennedy, Great Arab Conquests; Lyons, House of Wisdom; Morag et al. (eds.), Studies in Judaism and Islam.


But as with most generalizations Scholar Bat Ye’or argues that there was one primary difference between the contexts of living under Christians versus living under Muslims: “During the first two centuries of the [Muslim Arab] conquest—and certainly at the outset—the Arabs were themselves a minority. In order to impose their laws, their language, and their foreign culture on ancient civilizations [outside Arabia], they had to proceed with caution. . . . The dhimma prepared the way for Arab colonization in the political, economic, religious, and cultural sectors. The divine rights of conquest transformed the foreign lands into ‘Arab territories,’ while Arabization reinforced the military conquests” (Ye’or, Dhimmis, 67–68).

Some Yemenite Jews Origins of Yemenite Jewish community: According to documents from the Cairo Genizah [a genizah is a bin or room where Jews store sacred texts and objects rather than throw them out], among other places, Jews may have been in Yemen since the sixth century BCE. There is also evidence that in the period 517–525 CE Yemenite Jews had their own kingdom under the authority of the last of the Himyar kings, Yusuf Dhu Nawas. Other sources suggest that a Jewish presence in this area goes back as far as King David. Though researchers often cite all of these traditional narratives, scholar Reuben Aharoni maintains that the “earliest credible historical evidence” of their presence in Yemen is found in a passage from one of the books of Josephus, written during the first century CE. See Reuben Aharoni, Yemenite Jewry: Origins, Culture, and Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 20–37, 42–48; Nathan Katz, Ranabir Chakravarti, Braj M. Sinha, and Shalva Weil, eds., Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: A View from the Margin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 53.


Second, prior to the mid–twentieth century Quote about Yemenite Jewish heterogeneity: Aharoni, Yemenite Jewry, 15–16.

As for their lives outside of Yemen On Yemenite Jews in Ottoman-controlled and British-occupied Palestine, see Yoav Peled, “Inter-Jewish Challenges to Israeli Identity,” Palestine-Israel Journal 8, no. 4 (2002) and 9, no. 1 (2002): 15; see also 12–23.

During the 1950s For the reasons Yemenite Jews immigrated to Ottoman-controlled Palestine in 1882, see Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer, eds., The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 406, in P. Ram, Life in Yemen: Yemen History and Culture (AnVi Open-Source Knowledge Trust, 2015), 393.


According to this claim On the taking away of possessions, see Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber, Israeli Media and the


Since that time On Yemenite babies being handed over to Ashkenazi families, see Madmoni-Gerber, Israeli Media, 1–2.


State-appointed commissions: Critics of these inquiries, such as scholar Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber, argue that the first two had “no subpoena power and no intention to investigate,” and all three “were exceptional only in how slowly they worked and how little new information they could discover” (Madmoni-Gerber, “The Yemenite Babies Affair: What if This Was Your Child?,” +972 Magazine, July 12, 2013, http://972mag.com/the-yemenite-baby-affair-what-if-this-was-your-child/75672/#_edn1).

Marginalization of this episode in teaching Jewish history: Madmoni-Gerber, Israeli Media, 125.


Within these groups Snir, “Jewishness, Arabness, and Egyptianness,” 203–206.

As in Iraq, Jews played Yaqub Sanu and Esther Lazari-Moyal: See Snir, “Jewishness, Arabness, and Egyptianness,” 215–216. Born in Beirut, Lazari-Moyal spent the first twenty-five years of her life in Lebanon. Thus, some Lebanese Jews also claim her as “one of their own.”

All of these differences Beinin, Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry; Gottreich, “Historicizing the Concept”; Landau, Jews in Nineteenth-Century Egypt; Levy, “Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews”; Snir, “‘Arabs of the Mosaic Faith,’” idem, “Jewishness, Arabness, and Egyptianness.

There were two major migration waves Beinin, Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry; Gottreich, “Historicizing the Concept”; Landau, Jews in Nineteenth-Century Egypt; Levy, “Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews”; Snir, “‘Arabs of the Mosaic Faith,’” idem, “Jewishness, Arabness, and Egyptianness.

The Roman Empire On the illegality of studying Mishnah, see Oded Irshai, “Confronting a Christian Empire: Jewish Culture in the World of Byzantium,” in Biale (ed.), Cultures of the Jews, 1:181–221; Kalmin, Jewish Babylonia.


In 1984, following reports For more on Ethiopian Jews


**Most research attempting** Demarcations between Ethiopian Jews and Ethiopian Christians: Salamon, “Religious Interplay.”


**Although Ethiopian Jews had other laws separating them** On the notion that Ethiopian Jews did not look different from their non-Jewish neighbors, see Steven Kaplan, “Can the Ethiopian Change His Skin? The Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) and Racial Discourse,” *African Affairs* 98 (1999): 544–547.

**In Ethiopia, these people were accepted** After much protest, the request that Ethiopian Jews go through a ritual conversion upon reaching Israel was altered somewhat to apply only to those Ethiopians trying to get married. See Salamon, “Ethiopian Jewry,” 232–233.


**A subset of Ethiopian Jews** This group is usually referred to as the “Falash[a] Mura.” (In fact, some call all Ethiopian Jews “Falash[a].”) Because this has become a pejorative term, I refer to them as the “Feres Mura,” the term most of them prefer. See, e.g., Don Seeman, *One People, One Blood: Ethiopian Jews and the Return to Judaism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009); Michal Shmulovich, “The Last of the Falash Mura?,” *Times of Israel*, August 26, 2013, www.timesofisrael.com/the-last-of-the-falash-mura.


November 2015 proposal for an additional 9,000-plus Ethiopians to receive Israeli citizenship: “According to the proposal, only those who intend to convert in Israel, who left their villages before January 1, 2013 and who have been
waiting in Addis Ababa or Gondar since then will be eligible to come to Israel.” Similar to the 2010 government decision to bring a group of Ethiopians to Israel, this proposal also says that this will be the final group of Ethiopians “brought to Israel for conversion on the claim of belonging to the Falashmura community” (Ilan Lior, “Israel Set to Greenlight Final Aliyah of Ethiopia’s Falashmura Community,” Ha’aretz, November 14, 2015, www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.685833).


As mentioned in chapter 1 Regarding those converts who returned to Judaism a few decades later, see also Notes, chapter 1, “During the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions.”


Everywhere, these Jews On Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire, see Haim Beinart, ed., The Sephardi Legacy, vols. 1 and 2 (Jerusalem: Magnus Press, 1992); Aviva Ben-
only exacerbated things. Others say that white Jews were the Sephardi Jews and that it was only in the fifteenth century when these problems began.


Regarding particular Cochini rituals Katz, Who Are the Jews of India?, 41–81.

Cochini Jews are also known Katz, Who Are the Jews of India?, 41–81.

According to one tradition On the origins of Bnai Israel Jews, see Katz, Who Are the Jews of India?, 101–120.


At the beginning of the twentieth century For more on Jews in Pakistan, see Yoel Moses Reuben, The Jews of Pakistan: A Forgotten Heritage (Mumbai: Bene Israel Heritage Museum and Genealogical Research Centre, 2010), 7–8, 73, 163, 206–207.

Perhaps most noteworthy in terms of ritual Katz, Who Are the Jews of India?, 101–120.


The Baghdadi Jews were unusual For more on Baghdadi Jews, see Joan G. Roland, Jews in British India: Identity in a Colonial Era (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989).

Many scholars agree On antisemitism in India, see Katz, Who Are the Jews of India?, 128–159.

Most Cochini and Bnai Israel Indian Jews For more on the population of Indian Jewish subcommunities today, see Elliman, “Menashe’s Children Come Home”; Katz et al. (eds.), Indo-Judaic Studies; Katz, Who Are the Jews of India?: Primack (ed.), Jews in Places; Singh, Being Indian, Being Israeli. For more on Jews in Israel marrying individuals the government considers to be non-Jewish, see chapters 10 and 11.


Whether living under For example, when the Yellow River flooded during the fifteenth century, Kaifeng’s synagogue was destroyed along with most other city buildings. Interestingly, they seem to have been given special permission to rebuild, and they also received new Torah scrolls from two Chinese Jewish communities to Kaifeng’s southeast, Ningbo and Yangzhou. See Donald D. Leslie, Chinese Jewish Communities in Kaifeng, China: Jewish Communities of Iran, 147–148.

With the abandonment of the Silk Road On Kaifeng’s gradual isolation, see Xin, Jews of Kaifeng, 47–66.

Population of Kaifeng Jews: Xin, Jews of Kaifeng, 72–73.

Like other groups of Jews On the integration of Confucian thought, see Andrew H. Plaks, “The Confucianization of the Kaifeng Jews: Interpretations of the Kaifeng Stelae Inscriptions,” in Goldstein (ed.), Jews of China, 1:36–49. As the
local Chinese language had no name to represent a mono-
theistic God, an idea central to Jewish thought, the author
of this inscription instead used words such as Tian (Heaven),
Duo (the Way), and Tian dao (the Way of Heaven). Similarly,
the inscription links the Torah’s first human, Adam, with
Pangu, a giant who, according to local Chinese narratives,
was the first human; and the timeline of figures in the Torah,
such as Abraham and Moses, are explained in relation to
the Chinese calendar rather than the ancient Jewish calen-
dar. See Jonathan N. Lipman, “Living Judaism in Confucian
Culture: Being Jewish and Chinese,” in Judaism in Practice:
From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period, ed. Law-
265–277.


These Chinese Jews had other Morar substitution: Don-
ald D. Leslie, The Survival of Chinese Jews: The Jewish Com-
nunity of Kaifeng (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 87, in Xin, Jews of
Kaifeng, 99.

Marking graves: Xin, Jews of Kaifeng, 103.

Scroll of Esther: Cecil Roth, in William Charles White,
Chinese Jews: A Compilation of Matters Relating to the Jews of
Kaifeng Fu (New York: Farargon Book Gallery/University of

Jews also lived in other Chinese cities See, e.g., Boris
Bresler, “Harbin’s Jewish Community, 1898–1958: Politics,
Prosperity, and Adversity,” in Goldstein (ed.), Jews of China,
1:200–215; Joan G. Roland, “Baghdadi Jews in India and
China in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparison of Eco-
nomic Roles,” ibid., 141–156; Zvia Shickman-Bowman, “The
Construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Origin of

Finally, Jews have lived in Hong Kong On Jews in Shang-
hai, Japan, and Hong Kong, see Chiara Betta, “Silas Aaron
Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai,” in
Goldstein (ed.), Jews of China, 1:216–229; Dennis A. Lev-
enthal, “Environmental Interactions of the Jews of Hong
Kong,” ibid., 171–186.

Whether going back millennia Muslim-majority areas—
Algerian Jews: As recently as the mid-1980s, there were a few
Jews still living in Ghardaia, Algeria, one of the so-called five
cities of the Sahara. There was even a synagogue there at this
time, though it was unused. One dominant communal tradi-


Jews in South Korea: Since at least the mid-twentieth-century there has been a Jewish presence in South Korea (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, “South Korea,” www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/vjaw/south_korea.html).

**Does this mean that there is no** Biale, “Preface,” xxii.


**To take this conversation** Frédéric Brenner, conversation with author, summer 2005; Frédéric Brenner, email to author, September 28, 2013.


**Chapter 8. Movements**


**Most definitions of “religion”** Dalai Lama quote: In other words, the Dalai Lama was orienting toward the term atheism as nontheism, not believing in a theistic God or higher power. See Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World’s Beliefs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 27.

**If we take God out of the equation** Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 119–120.

**Scholar Ninian Smart** Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred.*

**Jewish identities also have different meanings** On the term secular, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); also introduction and chapter 10.


**Although nearly half of Jewish Israelis** Arian et al., “Portrait of Israeli Jews.”

**The same poll found** Arian et al., “Portrait of Israeli Jews”; Pew Research Center, “Portrait of Jewish Americans,” 8–13. In a different poll of Jewish Israelis, 30 percent (31 percent of whom identified as secular, 43 percent as orthodox or religious, and only 20 percent as ultra-Orthodox) were in favor of building a Temple on the Temple Mount. Muslims call this same site al-Ḥaram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary), and consider it to be one of the most sacred sites in Islam; rebuilding a temple there would certainly cause major problems both locally and globally. See Nir Hasson, “One Third of Israeli Jews Want Temple Rebuilt in Jerusalem, Poll Finds,” *Haaretz*, July 12, 2013, www.haaretz.com/news/national/premium-1.533336.

**Scholars of modern Jewish groups** The debate over whether to call the particular communities explored in this chapter sects, movements, or something else altogether is an important scholarly endeavor worthy of consideration. However, this question is secondary to this book. Shaye Cohen, for example, contends that “a ‘sect’ is an organized group which separates itself from the community and asserts that it alone has religious truth.” He then goes on to describe other characteristics of sects in great detail. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, “The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Sectarianism,” in *Origins of Judaism: The Pharisees and Other Sects*, vol. 2, pt. 1, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Garland, 1990), 103.

**According to dominant Jewish narratives today** Persia was conquered by Alexander the Great in roughly 334 or 333 BCE. Following his death, his empire was divided up between his generals, which led to thirty years of infighting. By 300 BCE, Judea was controlled by the Macedonian Ptolemies of Egypt (commonly called “the Greeks”). In approximately 200 BCE, Judea was conquered by another Macedonian (or “Greek”) kingdom, the Syrian Selucids, who were eventually challenged by the Judean Hasmoneans (also called Maccabees), who in turn regained control over the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BCE. The Hasmoneans created a small Maccabean state within the Selucid territory, but in 63 BCE the Romans conquered Judea and the Maccabees. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From
the Maccabees to the Mishnah (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 14–15; see also chapter 3.

Not only is there reason to doubt On customs connected to Hanukkah, see Clemens Leonhard, “‘Herod’s Days’ and the Development of Jewish and Christian Festivals,” in Jewish Identity and Politics between the Maccabees and Bar Kokhba, ed. Benedikt Eckhardt (Boston: Brill, 2012), 189–208.


Most relevant for us, the core Others point to the second century BCE, prior to the Hasmonean revolt against the Greeks, as the period when the Samaritan community emerged. See, e.g., Robert T. Anderson and Terry Giles, The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 10. See also chapter 11.


But lest we think that clear lines According to Shaye J. D. Cohen (The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999], 110–139), the Idumeans were given the choice of expulsion or joining the Judeans.


These communities have been the subject The facts about these Jewish subgroups are much less concrete than what is described here. See, e.g., Gregory Knight, “The Pharisees and the Sadduccees: Rethinking Their Respective Outlooks on Jewish Law,” Brigham Young University Law Review 3 (1993): 925–948. Scholar E. P. Sanders (Judaism) contends that despite the heterogeneity of the Jewish community during this period, there were dominant, or “common,” Jewish practices; see Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Common Judaism in Greek and Latin Authors,” in Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities, ed. Fabian E. Udoh (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 69–87. Others, however, disagree, pointing to different practices among Jewish subgroups, such as those relating to fast days. See, e.g., Cohen, “Significance of Yavneh,” 101–127; Hayes and Miller, Israelite and Judean History, 549–550.

Part of the ambiguity is due to the sheer breadth and depth of scholarship on this topic. As one scholar notes, the literature on these groups alone could fill up an entire library (Solomon Zeitlin, “The Pharisees and the Gospels,” in Neusner [ed.], Origins of Judaism, vol. 2, pt. 2, 485).


Some families had been part of this heterogeneous Jewish community for only a few centuries, following forced conversions at the hands of the Hasmoneans during the second century BCE. By some accounts, these groups were not nearly as “Judaized” as those who had been Jewish (or Judean) prior to this time (Neusner [ed.], Origins of Judaism, vol. 2, pt. 1, viii–xii).

The facts about any of these groups On the Pharisees, see Cohen, “Significance of Yavneh,” 101–127; idem, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 156–157.


Pharisees who killed non-Pharisee Jews: Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 145.


We aren’t even positive On the origins of the name Pharisee, see Samuel S. Cohen, “Pharisaism: A Definition,” in Neusner (ed.), Origins of Judaism, vol. 2, pt. 1, 135–144; Ralph...

Being named oppositely (i.e., in terms of what group you are not): Zeitlin, “Pharisees and the Gospels,” 488.


Pharisees in opposition to being am ha-aretz: Rivkin, “Pharisaism.”

Then there are the Zealots  Zealots as Sicarii: According to Shaye Cohen (Maccabees to the Mishnah, 164–166), the Sica- rii and the Zealots were two different groups.


All of these changes  Changes during the Jewish Enlighten-ment: Todd M. Endelman, Broadening Jewish History: Toward a Social History of Ordinary Jews (Portland, OR: Litt- man Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011).

SPECIAL TOPIC 8.1 “At first glance, middle-class Jews in Berlin”: Endelman, Broadening Jewish History, 33–35, 43; see also 45, 66, 72, 76, and 296.


France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Greece  For the quote attributed to a French Jew, see Eli Barnavi, “Jewish Emancipation in Western Europe,” www.myjewishlearning .com/article/jewish-emancipation-in-western-europe. See also chapter 3.


In the German Jewish community  Naftali Herz Wesse-ley, one of Mendelssohn’s colleagues, echoed these ideas when writing about the differences between the laws of humans and the laws of God. See Joshua Barzilay Folman, “Wessely, Naftali Herz,” Encyclopedia Judaica (2008), available at www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica /ejud_0002_0021_0_20854.html.

FIGURE 8.2 As explained by the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, where the painting is housed, “The scene refers to two foundational moments in the history of German-Jewish cultural interaction. The actual meetings between Mendelssohn and Lavater, which took place in 1763–1764, were followed by the failed attempt on the part of the theologian to convince Mendelssohn to embrace Christian-ity. The well-known friendship between Mendelssohn and Lessing, one of the high points of the haskalah, or ‘Jewish Enlightenment,’ came to be considered a paradigm of the possibility of a harmonious cohabitation between Germans and Jews” (“Painting [75.18]: Lavater and Lessing Visit Moses Mendelssohn, by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim (1856),” Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, www.flickr.com/photos /magnesmuseum/4402841084).


Mendelssohn’s children and their Jewish identities: Some even say that Joseph, one of Mendelssohn’s two children who remained Jewish, was only “nominally” Jewish, while Recha, the other, never married and thus could not instill a Jewish identity in her progeny. See David Sorkin, “The Mendelssohn Myth and Its Method,” New German Critique 77 (Spring/Sumi- mer 1999): 8–10.


The early reformers were laypeople  On the origins of the modern Reform movement, see, e.g., Union for Reform Juda- ism, “Reform Judaism,” www.urj.org/who-we-are/history.

According to another source, in 1810 Jacobson founded the first Reform synagogue as “part of the boys’ school in See- son, Westphalia, [where he conducted] the first confirmation service that same year” (Dana Evan Kaplan, The New Reform Judaism: Challenges and Reflections [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013], 323).

To explain why these challenges  On Eliezer Lieberman, see Kaplan, New Reform Judaism, 99–100.

There was a range of opinions  In 1840 England, for example, one synagogue declared their allegiance to the Bible while condemning the Talmud as a document written by humans, not unlike the radical idea the Karaites brought to the fore in ninth-century Iraq (see chapter 11).

Meanwhile, new camps within the movement  The extent to which Geiger and Holdheim differed is a matter of opinion. In regard to the mitzvah (biblical directive) of ritual circumsicion, in 1845 Geiger said: “The fact remains that it is a barbaric, gory rite which fills the infant’s father with fear and subjects the new mother to harmful emotional strain.” Regarding the laws of kashrut, he said: “It is precisely these dietary laws that are so void of rationale and … such a hin- drance to the development of social relationships” (Max Wiener, ed., Abraham Geiger and Liberal Judaism: The Challenge of the Nineteenth Century [Cincinnati: Hebrew Union


Technically, Jews were not arriving from Russia, per se, but the Russian Empire.


Wise did not initially intend to start a new movement For more on Wise and his changes to ritual practices, see Ellenson, “American Jewish Denominationalism”; Kaplan, New Reform Judaism, 323–325.

By 1873, Wise had founded On the founding of the first Reform institutions in the United States, see Ellenson, “American Jewish Denominationalism”; Kaplan, New Reform Judaism, 323–325.


Even more important, although Einhorn “One of the most notable ideas articulated”: In 1897, prior to the first Zionist National Congress in Europe, the CCAR passed a resolution rejecting Zionism; see Kaplan, New Reform Judaism, 323–325.


Although the Reconstructionist movement began accepting patrilineal descent as far back as 1968, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, more Jews have affiliated with Reform Judaism than Reconstructionist Judaism (see later in chapter).


Modern Orthodoxy (or Neo-Orthodoxy): Also referred to as “Enlightened Orthodoxy”; see Nathan Glazer, American Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 58.


With the growth of Reform Judaism On the history of Orthodoxy in the United States, see Neil Gillman, Conservative Judaism, 32–40.

By the turn of the twentieth century Scholar Moshe D. Sherman adds, “Sephardic, German, Lithuanian, Polish, Hungarian, and Galician congregations were only some of the distinct [Orthodox] communities represented in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and other cities throughout the United States. They also differed in such matters as the modernization of synagogue services” (Sherman, “Orthodox Judaism in America,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/a-short-history-of-orthodox-judaism-in-america).

Other important Orthodox institutions The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) was the first American seminary focused on advanced Talmud study. Founded in 1896, it eventually became part of Yeshiva University. Stern College, a female-only counterpart to Yeshiva College, was launched in 1945.

In looking at Orthodoxy Since the eighteenth century,
members of the Hasidic movement have prayed according to 
*Nasah Sfarad*, a distinctive liturgy derived from, but not identical to, that of Sephardic Jews.

Tension between Orthodox submovements: For example, while the *Agudat ha-Rabbanim* and RCA struggled over who was more legitimate, the Hasidic rabbis created yet another organization, *Agudas ha-Admorim*, in 1924, claiming that only they had the authority to speak on behalf of Orthodox Jews. See Ira Robinson, “The First Hasidic Rabbis in North America,” *American Jewish Archives* 44 (1992): 501–515.


**Some argue that today's Hasidic Jews** Within the subgroup of ultra-Orthodox Jews there are two distinct communities, Chabad and Aish Hatorah, whose primary purpose is to missionize non-Orthodox Jews in order to bring them into the ultra-Orthodox fold. Because of such practices, it is inaccurate to consider them as self-isolated as all other ultra-Orthodox subgroups. See, e.g., Aaron Joshua Tapper, “The ‘Cult’ of Aish Hatorah: Ba’alei Teshuva and the New Religious Movement Phenomenon,” *Journal of Sociology* 44, nos. 1–2 (2002): 5–29.


**Some cite a mid-nineteenth-century rabbi** On Zechariah Frankel and the origins of Conservative Judaism, see Gillman, *Conservative Judaism*, 22.

**Less than ten years later** See Gillman, *Conservative Judaism*, 22.

**Like Reform Judaism** The term *treif* refers to the biblical prohibition (Exod. 22:30) against eating food that was torn by wild animals; see “Treyf: a Yiddish Word Meaning Non-Kosher,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/treyf.

Degrees of kashrut: See the section “Meta-Halakhah and Kashrut” in chapter 5.

*Trefa* banquet and the emergence of Conservative Judaism: According to scholar Lance Sussman ("Myth of the Trefa Banquet," 44), “The controversy following the Trefa Banquet, its denominational consequences, and the deepening problems in the U.S. kosher food industry in the 1880s probably neither slowed nor accelerated the pace of radicalization within the Reform movement.” Cincinnati Reform Jewish norms aside, prior to the 1880s many Reform synagogues did keep the halakhic laws of kashrut, such as Baltimore’s Har Sinai (est. 1842) and New York’s Emanu-El (est. 1843). As historian Leon Jick notes, “Even radical congregations . . . remained substantially traditional in their ritual practice. Men and women were seated separately, heads were covered, and the Sabbath and dietary laws were strictly observed” (Jick, “The Reform Synagogue,” in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer [Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987], 86). Indeed, when the UAHC met in New York City in 1879 for a different banquet, the food was kosher (Sussman, “Myth of the Trefa Banquet”).

**SPECIAL TOPIC 8.2** Sussman, “Myth of the Trefa Banquet.”

**Although JTS would become the central institution** On the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, see Gillman, *Conservative Judaism*, 30–40.

**By 1900, out of the eleven synagogues** The distinctions between Reform and non-Reform practices are discussed in Glazer, *American Judaism*, 58.


It wasn’t until 1913: According to this argument, JTS was still Orthodox as of 1902, pre-schism. Then Schechter took over. Only after this point did this community begin to develop its own distinct institutions, such as the United Synagogue of America, which was an alternative to the UAHC and OU.

**Others say that the line** On both the split in the late 1940s and the required course about Conservatism Judaism, see Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism*; Gillman, *Conservative Judaism*. See Notes, chapter 8, “Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan,” regarding the perception of Mordecai Kaplan’s rabbinic bonafides by his employers at Kehillath Jeshurun, an Orthodox synagogue in New York City where he worked early on in his career.

See also Emet ve’Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbinical Assembly, and United Synagogue of America, 1988).

**In 1900, the JTS community** On the early years of JTS as Modern Orthodox, see Glazer, *American Judaism*, 58.


**Explaining why people were drawn** Gurock quote: Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy*, 36–37.

Regarding the “churchlike” religious radicalism of Reform, consider the following anecdote: In 1910, the well-known Reform rabbi Judah Magnes shared a story with his congregants at New York City’s Temple Emanu-El about a non-Jew who visited the synagogue on a Sunday thinking it was a church; it was not until the service was well under way
that he realized he was not in a Christian house of worship (Judah L. Magnes, “Reformed Judaism—Plans for Reconstruction,” sermon of April 24, 1910, cited in Glazer, American Judaism, 46).

SPECIAL TOPIC 8.3  Some say a synagogue in Charleston, South Carolina: Karla Goldman, “When the Women Came to Shul,” in Judaism since Gender, ed. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt (New York: Routledge, 1997), 58.


Scholar Jack Wertheimer  Wertheimer continues: “They sought a refined synagogue service, sermons in the vernacular, mixed seating of men and women, and a shift from an adult-centered religion to a child-centered one. Reform temples would not do; they were often socially exclusive enclaves, and their services were too church-like to appeal to the children of East European immigrants. Instead, this generation overwhelmingly opted for the Conservative synagogue. . . . Conservative Judaism arose as a modernizing movement in defiance of Orthodoxy, and its religious conservatism was more nostalgic than ideological in nature” (Jack Wertheimer, “The Perplexities of Conservative Judaism,” Commentary 124, no. 2 [September 2007]: 38–44).


Largely in response to the changing social norms  Prior to 1984, as a graduate student, Eilberg had taken a number of courses at JTS and elsewhere that applied toward her rabbinic degree (i.e., she didn’t complete the rabbinical program in one year). As JTS was considering this decision for a number of years, Eilberg had optimistically anticipated their eventual admittance of women, and thus had taken courses ahead of time accordingly. See Lila Corwin Berman, “Amy Eilberg,” Jewish Women’s Archive, http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/eilberg-amy.

In 2007, JTS began accepting  For various positions on homosexuality at different Conservative-affiliated rabbinical schools, see “Judaism and Sexual Orientation.”


Second rabbinic ordination: According to scholar Pamela S. Nadell, while serving the community of Kehillath Jesurun Kaplan’s official title was “minister,” not “rabbi,” “reflecting that [the Jewish Theological] Seminary did not confer semichah, the classical formula for rabbinic ordination. Subsequently, while on his honeymoon in 1908, he received semichah from Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines of Lida, Russia, the founding head of the Zionist religious Mizrachi movement” (idem, Conservative Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook [New York: Greenwood Press, 1988], 147). See also “Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881–1983), Lecture Notes,” Library, Jewish Theological Seminary, www.jtsa.edu/The_Library/Collections/Archives/The_Ratner_Center/Finding_Aids_to_papers_of_Conservative_Rabbis_and_Synagogues/Kaplan_Mordecai_M.xml.

Society of the Advancement of Judaism: “History of the SAJ,” www.thesaj.org/history-of-the-saj. Other sources say that Judah Magnes was the founder and first leader of SAJ; see, e.g., Arthur Hertzberg, ed., The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 442—although in the same text it also says that Kaplan was SAJ’s founder (ibid., 535).


Perhaps most challenging  Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization, 316.


idem, email to author, September 23, 2013. I thank Andrew Ramer for introducing me to Spagnolo’s research on this issue.

It wasn’t this particular act “First American Bat Mitzvah”; Silver, “Excommunication of Mordecai Kaplan.”


Publicly burned his Sabbath Prayer Book: As scholar Zachary Silver notes, “On a basic level, a siddur differs from a haggadah because Sabbath siddurim are used weekly, whereas haggadot are used a maximum of twice yearly. Additionally, a siddur is a way for people to connect to the divine, whereas the haggadah facilitates Jews recalling a collective history. Both of these facts indicate that Kaplan’s choice to publish the haggadah before the siddur served as a test to see how the Jewish world would respond to his liturgical works” (Silver, “Excommunication of Mordecai Kaplan,” 411n.9).

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College On Kaplan’s opposition to starting a new denomination, see Ellenson, “American Jewish Denominationalism,” 12.

Ordained at Hebrew Union College There are interesting parallels between Wine and Humanistic Judaism emerging out of the Reform movement, on the one hand, and Kaplan and Reconstructionist Judaism emerging out of Conservatism, on the other.


As for whether they consider Quote: Society for Humanistic Judaism, “13 Tough Questions.”


Reb Zalman’s early years: Reb Zalman and Reb Shlomo were sent out by the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Joseph Schneerson, not the seventh, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who is discussed in chapter 4.


Early years of Rabbis Schachter-Shalomi and Carlebach: Magid, “Jewish Renewal Movement.”

Jewish Renewal’s proper beginning The B’nai Or Religious Fellowship changed its name to the P’nai Or (Faces of Light) Religious Fellowship in 1985. In 1993 it merged with another Jewish Renewal organization, the Shalom Center, which had been run by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, to form ALEPH. The Shalom Center again became an independent organization in 2005. See “About ALEPH,” http://aleph.org/about-aleph.


The denominational descriptions in this chapter This is to say nothing of the fact that many non-Ashkenazi traditions have become integrated into Ashkenazi American ritual practices. See, e.g., Joseph A. Levine, ed., “Non-Ashkenazi Traditions,” Journal of Synagogue Music 38 (Fall 2013): 1–270, for essays on the influence of non-Ashkenazi music on Ashkenazi synagogue liturgy.

One example is the Persian Jewish community For more on Los Angeles–based Persian Jewish synagogues, see www.nessah.org/about-nessah.shtml and http://sinaitemple.org. Approximately half Ashkenazi Jews and half Persian Jews:
According to a synagogue administrator (email to author, October 21, 2015), Sinai Temple does not keep records regarding members’ Jewish subidentities (e.g., Ashkenazi, Persian, etc.), nor do they track the number of attendees who are also dues-paying members of the synagogue. Thus this estimate is based on anecdotal evidence provided by a scholar of the Persian Jewish community who has also been a member of Sinai for more than three decades (Saba Soomekh, email to author, October 21, 2015). More to the point, even historically Ashkenazi-identified synagogues are not necessarily homogeneously Ashkenazi any more, such as Sinai Temple.

Nevertheless, synagogue affiliation As early as 1916 only 56 percent of American synagogues had a rabbi because there was a lack of institutional finances; see A. W. Rosenthal, “Cultural Changes in American Jewish Life in the Twentieth Century,” Proceedings of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service, June 1930, 7. In a survey of first-generation Jewish Americans (the children of immigrants) conducted in 1935 in New York City, 72 percent of fifteen-to twenty-five-year-old men and 78 percent of fifteen-to twenty-five-year-old women said they had not attended synagogue even once the previous year (Glazer, American Judaism, 85).


Some, of course, choose not to become members of a synagogue largely because of the costs involved.

Some attribute changes Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in the United States (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000). Other criteria that sociologists commonly cite to illustrate a commitment to Jewish identities are matriculation in Jewish parochial schools and summer overnight camps (see chapter 12). However, the proportion of American Jews either attending full-time Jewish parochial schools or summer overnight camp has never exceeded 10 percent; by some accounts, during the 1990s it was less than 5 percent (Wertheimer, “Jewish Education in the United States,” 3–115).

Scholars Ari Y. Kelman and Tobin Belzer argue that younger Jews aren’t overly focused on their individual selves. Rather, their Jewish identities are quite “social,” interconnected with other Jews of their generation, an identity that might best be explained not as the “Sovereign Self” but the “Social Self” (Ari Y. Kelman, “Traditional Jews: ‘Nones’ on Religion,” and Tobin Belzer, “Under Construction: The Social Life of Jewish Identity,” Papers presented as part of the “Interrogating Identity: New Approaches to the Study of Jewish Adults” panel, Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, December 14, 2015).


the literal Word of God or the words of God-inspired human beings, The Torah’s words possess unsurpassed authority” (Groesberg, *Jewish Renewal*, 77; see also 77–79).


Chapter 12 will touch on Non-denominationalism and transdenominationalism: There are at least three rabbinical schools in the United States that do not affiliate with a denomination: the Academy for Jewish Religious Education in New York, founded in 1956 (http://ajrsem.org/about/); the Academy for Jewish Religion in California, founded in 2000 (http://ajrca.edu/history/); and the Hebrew College Rabbinical School, founded in 2003 and located just outside Boston (www.hebrewcollege.edu/history). In the literature of these three schools one finds terms such as pluralistic, non-denominational, post-denominational, trans-denominational, and unaffiliated. Each school has its own requirements regarding who is eligible to apply. Chapter 9. Genocides

That said, I cannot overstate The centrality of the Shoah is often inversely related to the age of a given Jew, it being much more significant to an average Jew in her eighties and much less so to one in her twenties. This is touched on further in chapters 10 and 12.


The genocide of Jews during World War II Two websites offering excellent online educational resources on the Shoah are the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM; www.ushmm.org) and Yad Vashem: The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority (www.yadvashem.org).

Term Holocaust: Some don’t use the term Holocaust because of its theological insinuation (i.e., those who were exterminated in World War II were a sacrifice to God—based on the word’s Greek etymology). Others avoid the word Shoah because it refers only to the Jewish genocide of WWII and does not include the other communities the Nazis targeted and murdered. See, e.g., Bob Brecher, “Holocaust,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. Hugh LaFollette (New York: Blackwell, 2013), 2,431–2,434; “History and Meaning of the Word ‘Holocaust’: Are We Still Comfortable with This Term?,” *Huffington Post*, January 27, 2012, www.


Initially, the Nazis defined two types of Jews According to Peter Black, senior historian at USHMM: “In areas where the Nuremberg Laws applied (Greater Germany, Holland) and generally in Western Europe, where the Germans more or less respected indigenous legal definitions of what constituted a ‘Jew,’ those with a single Jewish grandparent were not subject to deportations or killing. In occupied Eastern Europe (not the territory of Germany’s Axis partners), such distinctions did not exist in practice” (email to author, November 1, 2013).


Racially based definitions in the United States: Similar to this stage in Germany’s history, the United States had antimiscegenation laws—those prohibiting people from particular racial classification groups from having sexual intercourse with one another—for most of its history. Up until 1967, sixteen states still declared it illegal for “different races” to have sexual relations (Scales-Trent, “Racial Purity Laws”).

Laws against sexual relations Scholars maintain that in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Australia, one of the ways the colonialist government attempted to control, and arguably exterminate, those indigenous to continental Australia—Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—was to “breed out their color.” In other words, at times they encouraged sexual relations between whites and Aboriginals because each successive generation had lighter skin. See, e.g., Russell McGregor, “‘Breed Out the Colour,’ or the Importance of Being White,” Australian Historical Studies 33, no. 120 (October 2002): 286–302; Peter Read, The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal People in NSW 1883 to 1969 (Sydney: NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1981), 5–8.


Another example Yom Hashoah is the colloquial name for this solemn day; formally, it is called Yom haZikaron laS-
hoah ve’laGevurah (lit., the Day of Remembrance for the Shoah and Heroism).


This incident raised On comparing two different things, see, e.g., Jonathan Z. Smith, Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xiii, 19–35.

As for those who argued Jewish genocide and Native American genocide: Steven T. Katz, “The ‘Unique’ Intentionality of the Holocaust,” Modern Judaism 1, no. 2 (September 1981): 168–170. In his book The Holocaust in Historical Context, vol. 1: The Holocaust and Mass Death before the Modern Age (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), Katz, a notable scholar of Holocaust Studies who was chosen to become the first president of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, lays out a rigorous definition for genocide, which includes the specific intention to eradicate a group from the face of the planet. In that sense, he says, the Shoah is the only true genocide ever to have taken place. Along the way he rebuts Raphael Lemkin’s definition of genocide, which includes comparisons to other massacres. As for Katz’s intentions for making this argument, he says: “My purpose is to make a fundamental methodological observation about how much of the variegated history of persecution is now being rewritten” (19). In short, he holds that the Shoah is unique (25).


A few years ago, Bauer Bauer, “On the Holocaust and Other Genocides,” 9–15. Bauer suggests replacing unique with unprecedented, but this linguistic substitution does not necessarily help deexceptionalize the Shoah. On the contrary, this argument seems to put Bauer in agreement with Katz (Holocaust in Historical Context, 131) as to the exceptional historical properties of the Shoah. Perhaps the main distinction is that whereas Katz is concerned with whether this event should be seen as “outside of history,” Bauer focuses on the Shoah as a new form of genocide, one that may be replicated in the future.


The issue of the uniqueness When teaching a course based on the content of this book, my students are given an assignment to interview someone who identifies as a Jew, no matter what age, and ask what role the Shoah plays in the individual’s Jewish identity. Every semester, almost all those interviewed, even if they have no familial connection to the Holocaust, say that this event is notably influential in how they view the world.


It is unclear whether the members of the United Nations took the Shoah into account when deliberating the establishment of a new Jewish-majority country (i.e., Israel). It is not uncommon, especially in discussions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to hear people say there is no hard evidence to make this case. There are even those, scholars and others, who argue that the Shoah and the establishment of the Jewish State are linked only because of their proximity in time; e.g., Eviatar Friedel, “On the Myth of the Connection between the Holocaust and the Creation of Israel,” Israel Affairs 14, no. 3 (July 2008): 446–466. Based on the literal text of the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, however, it is abundantly clear that for Jewish Israelis the two events cannot be separated.

FIGURE 9.3B Stand with Us: Alexandra Lapkin, “War Stories from the Israeli Front Line,” Jewish Advocate, April


In a related argument Itzhak Ben-Zvi stated: “Israel’s victory [in 1948] was followed by an armistice; those who had intended following in the footsteps of their Nazi masters had no time to carry out their nefarious designs, and the Jews in Moslem lands had a respite” (Itzhak Ben-Zvi, The Exiled and the Redeemed [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957], 8, quoted in Sammy Smooha, Israel: Pluralism and Conflict [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978], 372).


Nazi intentions beyond physical genocide of Jews: Some maintain that the Nazis had plans to establish a so-called Museum of an Extinct Race, focusing on the soon-to-be extinct Jewish race. There is little evidence to support this...


**Shohat calls this trend** The full quote that includes the term *cultural massacre* is as follows: “In many respects, European Zionism has been an immense confidence trick played on Sephardim, a cultural massacre of immense proportions, an attempt, partially successful, to wipe out, in a generation or two, millennia of rooted Oriental civilization, unified even in its diversity” (Ella Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims,” *Social Text* 19/20 [Autumn 1988]: 32).


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opportunity to kill him. . . . Yet no one would speak openly about [Jesus] for fear of the Jews” (John 7:1, 13).

* Jesus said to [the Jews], “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:42–44).

Each one of these passages creates divisions between Jesus and “them,” the Jews. When the Gospel narratives reach the end of Jesus’s life, immediately before he is said to have been crucified, we find verses that seem to absolve the Romans of any wrongdoing, placing the responsibility instead fully onto the Jews. For example:

• “When the chief [Temple] priests and the police saw him, they shouted, ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’ . . . Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor’” (John 19:6, 12).

• “So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.’ Then the people as a whole answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’ So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified” (Matt. 27:24–25).


It wasn’t until the last half of the twentieth century, in 1965, that the Catholic Church officially changed its position on this matter. In the Nostra Aetate proclamation, the Church said that Jews were not responsible for the death of Jesus. Their official statement at the time was as follows:

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ. (“Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate, Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI,” October 28, 1965, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html)

Some link the so-called Blood Libel Larry Domnitch, “Blood Libels: The Accusation That Blood Was Used to Make Wine or Matzah on Passover,” www.myjewishlearning.com


But Jews were not the only moneylenders Quote: Roth, “Jewish Moneylending.”


The book appeared in Europe On recent antisemitism related to the Protocols, see USHMM, “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.”


Perhaps Baron Cohen’s most famous scene Those at the bar were in on the joke: Nathaniel Popper, “Comic Pushes Limits in Antisemitic Sing-along,” Jewish Daily Forward,


Some call figures such as Baron Cohen For more on the charge that Theodor Herzl was antisemitic, see Jordin Gerson, “Self-Hating Jews? How Does One Qualify?”, www.myjewishlearning.com/article/self-hating-jews. See also chapter 10.


In dealing with antisemitism In American police lingo, as represented on popular television programs such as C.S.I. and Law & Order, the “vic” (short for victim) is the nonspecific term used to describe a person who has been on the receiving end of a crime, whether dead or alive. Yet when police detectives speak with victims directly, the terms survivor and victim are often used interchangeably, despite their different meanings.


Until a few years ago In We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1962 (New York: New York University Press, 2009), Hasia Diner argues that in the United States numerous memorials, programs, Shoah observances, and survivor gatherings were held as early as the 1950s. School curricula were developed and books about the Shoah were published. The Holocaust was already a central part of American and Jewish American discourse in the late 1940s and 1950s; the alleged silence is not factual. Others disagree, saying that although Diner’s proof of these events is indisputable, such occurrences were marginal to most Jewish American communities. In an article examining Diner’s book, scholar Jerome Chanes says that survivors were often treated with contempt by fellow Jewish Americans, including being shunned by synagogues; see Jerome A. Chanes, “Remembering (Not) Remembering,” Jewish Daily Forward, August 26, 2009, http://forward.com/articles/112892/remembering-not-remembering.

In Israel, survivors had a different experience Immediately prior to the Shoah, many Hasidic rebbes fled, and some were charged with allowing their devotees to go to the Nazi death camps like “lambs to slaughter.” See, e.g., Yair Ettinger, “When the Shepherds Fled,” Haaretz, April 20, 2009, www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/when-the-shepherds-fled-1.274415.


Many of these negative feelings Eichmann: see Notes, chapter 9, “This was not always the case.”

In Israel, the primary method On Holocaust education, see JaspaI and Yampolsky, “Social Representations,” 203; more generally, 201–224.


Holocaust education as the Godhead of Israel’s civil religion Some would put the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) immediately next to the Holocaust as the Godhead of Israel’s civil religion. See chapter 10.


To some degree, the particularist versus universalist dichotomy is seen among those who see the Shoah as a one-of-a-kind event versus those, such as Raphael Lemkin, who see commonalities between the Jewish genocide and other genocides, such as the Armenian genocide.

**Those who gravitate** The two ends of this spectrum (particularism vs. universalism) orient toward the genocides of World War II either as a calamity that targeted Jews only or as “a crime against humanity ‘on the body of the Jewish people’” (Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann on Trial: A Report on the Banality of Evil* [New York: Viking, 1964], 8). Of course, people can shift back and forth between the ends of this spectrum or, in some cases, hold both ends to be true simultaneously.


**The question, however** The guard appears in Yoav Shamir’s 2009 film *Defamation: Anti-Semitism, the Movie.*


**Chapter 10. Powers**

**I wouldn’t have thought** I am using stereotypical understandings of David and Goliath—with the former character embodying a feisty underdog who is out of his league when facing the latter, a massively brawny giant—rather than integrating some of the contrarian perspectives regarding these archetypes, such as those found in Malcolm Gladwell’s *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants* (New York: Little, Brown, 2013).


**Twenty-first-century Jews are not powerless** First time in history: Even if one accepts the biblical story of King David as historically factual, David was the leader of a kingdom, not a country.


“Israel and the United States contain approximately 80 percent of Jews worldwide”: This important statistic has been mentioned in previous chapters. Note that this chapter interweaves the Jewish community’s status in the United States and Israel as if it is part of a single, cohesive worldview. In terms of dominant Jewish narratives worldwide, I maintain that this is accurate. That said, of course the situation of Jews in the United States is different—in countless ways—from that of Jews in the State of Israel.

**These questions are rooted in** In terms of total world population, of course, .2 percent represents a modest number of Jews. In terms of social mobility and power, however, even though Jews have not had the same communal experiences in every country, in many industrialized countries Jewish power has reached historically unprecedented levels since the latter half of the twentieth century and into the early twenty-first century. See, e.g., Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, “The War of Words: Jews, Muslims, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on American University Campuses,” in *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, and Complexities*, ed. Reza Aslan and Aaron J. Hahn Tapper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).


Power and authority: Hannah Arendt, “Authority in the

**When we say that during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries** Power vs. control: Consider, e.g., this definition of power: “The ability of a people to control its relations to other peoples as well as its own internal political, cultural, religious, economic, and social life” (David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* [New York: Schocken Books, 1986], 7).

**Since World War II** On academia, government, the media, and pop culture, see Hahn Tapper, “War of Words,” 80, 921n.72.


In addition, according to a recent Pew study, Jewish Americans have a university graduation rate of 59 percent, in terms of minority “religious communities” second only to Hindu Americans (at 77 percent); see Uriel Heilman, “1 in 6 American Jews Are Converts—and 9 Other Findings in Pew Study,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 12, 2015, www.jta.org/2015/05/12/news-opinion/united-states/1-in-6-jews-are-new-to-the-faith-and-9-other-new-pew-findings.


This is to say nothing of Jewish activists, many of whom can be labeled “antigovernment” in terms of their political efforts, such as those involved in leftist circles of the 1960s and 1970s. As one scholar notes, “Altogether about 60 to 80 percent of student radicals were of Jewish origin in the sixties and an astounding 30 to 50 percent of the core organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), were Jewish. The same overwhelming predominance was found in related organizations such as the Yippies and Berkeley’s Free Speech Movement, five of whose seven leaders were of Jewish origin” (Henry L. Feingold, *Jewish Power in America: Myth and Reality* [New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2008], 125).


Yet contrary to the claims 1990s poll: Goldberg, Jewish Power, 57.


Although many Americans are aware See UJA–Federation of New York in consultation with the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, “Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 Special Report on Poverty,” www.ujafedny.org/get/762375 . According to one study, as of 2011 there were 333,000 Jews in metropolitan New York City who were poor, with an additional 174,000 living in “near poor” conditions. In addition, approximately 50,000 Jews live in poverty in the Los Angeles area; see Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, November 20, 2014, www.jewishla.org/blog/entry/our-erza-network-is -helping-impoverished-jews-in-la.-and-so-can-you.


“In their own land”: In stating that the land on which the State of Israel was established belongs to Jews—i.e., “exercising sovereignty in their own land” [italics are my own]—Greenberg reflects a dominant trend found within the Jewish community.

Greenberg begins by acknowledging Greenberg, “Ethics of Power,” 403–407. In 2000, Greenberg expanded on this 1995 essay, addressing, to some degree, the need for Jewish Israelis to be more aware of their power. Yet many of the conclusions in the 2000 piece are the same as in his 1995 article, such as that the Shoah was a “disaster that essentially was made possible by [the Jewish community’s] own powerlessness” and that Jews—specifically Jewish Israelis—often have “no choice” but to abuse their power. Echoing a dominant narrative in the Jewish community, he also argues that the Israeli military’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is “moral” (Greenberg, “The Ethics of Jewish Power Today,” Speech delivered at the General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities, November 2000, 5–12, available at www .bjpa.org/Publications/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=2486).

Power’s potential to corrupt: This alludes to the oft-cited statement made by the nineteenth-century British historian Lord Acton, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” first found in a letter sent by Acton (John Emerich Edward Dalberg) to Archbishop Mandell Creighton, dated April 5, 1887 (“Acton-Creighton Correspondence [1887],” available at http://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/acton-creighton-correspondence-1887?q=power+tends+to+corr upt#).

For a critique of those, such as Greenberg, who approach Jews’ current situation—specifically issues related to the State of Israel—through the lens of the Shoah, see, e.g., Avraham Burg, The Holocaust Is Over; We Must Rise from Its Ashes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Idith Zertal, Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

In contrast, scholar Carl Sheingold “The most important general challenge confronting Jewish politics today,” Sheingold writes, “is that of taking responsibility for power. Conversely, Jews cannot and should not take pride in feeling or acting as if they are outsiders to power . . . when they are not” (Carl A. Sheingold, “Towards a Politics of Paradox: The Jewish Confrontation with Power,” in American Pluralism and the Jewish Community, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset [New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990], 129).

“Addressing the need for accountability”: Sheingold, “Towards a Politics,” 118, 126.

Asymmetrical power and destructive social relations: Schrock-Shenk, Mediation, 80–81.


Of course, some Jews are not on this spectrum Goldberg, Jewish Power, 5–6. As Goldberg’s book is from 1996, I emailed him in 2014 to see if he would still hold by this statement. He responded by saying, “I think [what I wrote in this quote is] a little less true than it was in 1996, but still represents the majority. . . . It’s noteworthy that public references to ‘the Jewish lobby’ are still widely regarded, by the major organizations and much of their constituency, as an anti-Semitic slur. . . . The division between Jews and gentiles that you quoted from my book is probably more intense than ever, though the number and proportion of Jews who see the reality of a Jewish lobby is probably larger than before (which is why I say it’s less true)” (J.J. Goldberg, email to author, August 22, 2014).

The modern nation-state of Israel For a range of primary documents related to Zionism, see Arthur Hertzberg, ed., The


Golan Heights and occupation: The Golan Heights was part of Syria prior to the June 1967 war; since then it has been occupied (special topic 10.2) by Israel. This contested region is primarily an issue between Israel and Syria as opposed to Israel and Palestine (or the Palestinian Authority). When people use either the term State of Israel or Palestine, they are sometimes implying an inclusion of the Golan Heights.


As explained by scholar Zachary Lockman, “By 1900 there were twenty-two moshavot [rural settlements rooted in socialist ideals established during early proto-Zionist and Zionist immigrations] with a total population of about 5,000. Most of these settlements had come to be organized on the Algerian colonial model preferred by Baron Rothschild and his agents, with European Jewish farmers employing local Arab peasants to cultivate their vineyards, citrus groves, and fields. Zionist historiography has tended to focus on this segment of the growing Yishuv [body of Jewish residents in pre-Israel Palestine], seeing in these struggling farmers the forerunners of Zionism’s settlement and state building project” (Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine,* 1906–1948 [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996], 25–26).

It should be noted that Jewish Zionists settling Ottoman-controlled Palestine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries embodied a different form of colonialism than did European countries colonizing Africa and other parts of the word during this same time, insofar as Jewish communal narratives have maintained a connection to the Land of Israel going back centuries.


Other mainstream Zionist ideologues, such as Max Nordau, Leo Pinsker, and Israel Zangwill, similarly did not prioritize the establishment of a Jewish autonomous region in the Land of Israel. Nordau, who supported Herzl’s Uganda idea, was almost assassinated for taking this position.

At the 1903 World Zionist Congress  The Jewish Territorial Organisation (abbreviated ITO based on its Yiddish name), established in 1905, was originally an offshoot of the Zionist Organization. Though the ITO waned in the 1920s and the JNF at this time was not nearly as important as it soon became, during the 1930s this same ideology—building a Jewish State outside the Land of Israel—gained momentum yet again, this time with either Australia or New Zealand as the potential sites. See “About JNF,” Jewish National Fund, www.jnf.org/about-jnf; Alroey, “Zionism without Zion”; Avineri, “Theodor Herzl”; Blakeny, “Proposals”; Buber, “Pressing Demand”; Theodor Herzl (miscellaneous papers), in Hertzberg (ed.), *Zionist Idea*, 204–230; Laqueur, *History of Zionism*; Leon, “Jewish National Fund”; Medina and Barromi, “Jewish Colonization Project”; Seltenreich and Katz, “Between the Galilee”; Axel Stähler, “Constructions of Jewish Identity and the Spectre of Colonialism: Of White Skin and Black Masks in Early Zionist Discourse,” *German Life and Letters* 66, no. 3 (July 2013): 254–276; Weisbord, “Israel Zangwill.”


A land without people for a people without a land  This slogan was originally coined by the nineteenth-century British Christian Zionist Lord Shaftsbury and popularized by Zionist writer Israel Zangwill; see Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 42.

When Herzl first began  For more on Jews moving to the Land of Israel under the Ottomans, see Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 22–23.


The Conservative movement had a similar position as the CCAR. For example, in 1948 the American Conservative movement’s most important institution, the Jewish Theological Seminary, banned the Israeli national anthem from being sung at their commencement ceremony. See Jack Wertzheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), cited in Harriet Hartman and Moshe Hartman, “Denominational Differences in the Attachment to Israel of American Jews,” *Review of Religious Research* 41, no. 3 (March 1, 2000): 399.


In 1889, for example  Soloveitchik quote and on immigration to the United States rather than the Land of Israel, see Rabkin, *Threat from Within*, 9, 75–76.

Technically, Jews were not leaving Russia, per se, but the Russian Empire.

Anti-Zionists were so opposed  Jewish Zionist collaboration with Nazis: Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement: The Dramatic Story of a Pact Between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* (New York: Macmillan, 1984). Some Zionist leaders...
also opposed policies that allowed Jews attempting to escape from the Nazis to immigrate to British-occupied Palestine, maintaining that only Jews who wanted to settle and build the new Jewish State should immigrate there, versus those wishing mainly to find a place of refuge. See, e.g., Rabkin, *Threat from Within*, 168–183; Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 197.

Adolf Eichmann, of all people, was one of the Nazi officers who helped Jews flee to Palestine. He is perhaps best known today as the only person in Israeli history to have received the country’s legally sanctioned punishment of the death penalty (different from military “targeted assassinations” that have become a normalized phenomenon in Israel since 2000). For more on Eichmann, see Notes, chapter 9, “This was not always the case.”

#### After 1948


During the 1960s and 1970s, some ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionists in Israel attempted to make alliances with disgruntled Mizrahi Jewish Israelis, including the Israeli Black Panthers, a group with which they shared the goal of fighting a “state governed by Ashkenazim for Ashkenazim.” See Ruth Blau, *Les gardiens de la cité: Histoire d’une guerre sainte* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), 275, cited in Rabkin, *Threat from Within*, 38; also 53–54.

Few ultra-Orthodox groups publicly decry Zionism: Consider, for example, a statement recently made by Rabbi Shalom Cohen, the spiritual leader of Shas, a popular ultra-Orthodox political party in Israel, explaining that halakhic prayer is superior to declarations such as the Israeli national anthem (“Hatikvah”). One should, Cohen said, stand up to pay halakhic respect to God in prayer, and not while singing a nation-state anthem. This stance reflects a “religious Zionist” perspective rather than a Zionism understood in terms of a nonhalakhically sanctioned nation-state. See Jeremy Sharon, “Shas Spiritual Leader: ‘Hatikvah is a Stupid Song,’” *Jerusalem Post*, February 22, 2015, www.jpost.com/Israel-Elections/Shas-spiritual-leader-Hatikva-is-a-stupid-song-391825. I thank Avi Jorisch for pointing me to this.

#### Meanwhile the majority of Orthodox


#### Zionists such as Herzl

Ahad Ha-am, “The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem” (1897), in Hertzberg (ed.), *Zionist Idea*, 262–269.

The Arabs must be made to feel, must be convinced, by deed as well as word that whatever the future numerical relationship of the two nations in Palestine, we, on our part, contemplate no political domination. Provided that the mandate is both recognized and respected, we would welcome an agreement between the two kindred races on the basis of political parity. It is our duty to explain our aims and ideals clearly and without ambiguity to the Arab peoples, and to neglect no opportunity of coming into touch with them and no channel of communication which may help towards a mutual understanding. . . . Only in this way shall we succeed in cooperating with the Arab peoples, who themselves are struggling toward the light and now, after many centuries, are reentering the political arena of the world. (Chaim Weizmann, in Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work*, 45–46.)

#### Along with other important intellectuals


Even Chaim Weizmann: In a speech delivered in 1931, Weizmann said:

> The Extraordinary Life and Worldview of Rabbeinu Yoel Teitelbaum. I use the term Palestinian Arab when discussing (non-Jewish) Arabs living in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. At the time, many in these communities referred to themselves simply as Arabs rather than Palestinian Arabs, and some identified more with the region or province where they lived. Just when a distinctly “Palestinian Arab” identity emerged is beyond the scope of this book. See Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 18, 21–23; also Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*.


#### Similar to the cultural and spiritual Zionism


Other important figures who advocated a Zionism unte-
thered by a nation-state were Simon Rawidowicz and Hans Kohn. See, e.g., David N. Myers, Between Jew and Arab: The Lost Voice of Simon Rawidowicz (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2008); Planko, Zionism.

On the other end of the Zionist spectrum “Terrorists”: For more on the use of this term as applied to the Irgun and some of its offshoots, see “The Yishuv Responds,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-yishuv-responds/single-page. See also Morris, Righteous Victims, 128–151, 161, 173–180.

At the same time the Irgun are often labeled “terrorists”: For a piece highlighting Jabotinsky’s public statements on the need to accord Palestinian Arabs the same human rights as Jews, see Mordechai Kremnitzer and Amir Fuchs, “Ze’ev Jabotinsky on Democracy, Equality, and Individual Rights,” Israel Democracy Institute, 2013, http://en.idi.org.il/media/2384931/Jabotinsky-IDI-2013.pdf.

The core Jewish narrative Morris, Righteous Victims, 91.

This observation was also quite obvious As scholar Mark Tessler explains, “The absolute population size of the Arab population grew steadily during this period. Although it increased at a slower rate than did the Jewish community, the Palestinian Arab population grew at an annual rate that averaged almost 3 percent between 1922 and 1945, enabling it to nearly double during those years. The growth rate itself also increased steadily as improvements in health care lowered the number of deaths each year. Among Muslims, the annual rate of natural increase had risen to almost 4 percent by the end of the mandate” (Tessler, History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 210). See also Baruch Kimmerling, The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 35.

This meant that the Zionist Jews On “relational history,” see Lockman, Comrades and Enemies, 8–10.

With regard to dominant Jewish narratives For more on the “Hebron massacre” see, e.g., Noit Geva and Dan Geva, What I Saw in Hebron (1999) [film]; Morris, Righteous Victims, 111–118.


Refugees: Palestinians living in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights largely stayed put following the 1949 armistice agreements, as they were still living under the government rule of Jordan and Syria, respectively, who controlled these areas pre- and post-1949. As for Palestinians who left the area that was now under Israeli rule (i.e., as of 1948–1949 called the State of Israel), some of these refugees ended up in the West Bank (under Jordanian rule), some relocated to Gaza (under Egyptian rule), some fled to other Arab-majority countries in the Middle East, and some left the Middle East altogether. Among those Palestinians who remained in what was now the Jewish State, some continue to identify today as refugees—internally displaced peoples—even though they did not register with the United Nations Refugee Workers Agency in 1948–1949 and despite the stigma attached to this label within Arab communities generally and Palestinian communities specifically. For more on Palestinian refugees, see, e.g., “The United Nations and Palestinian Refugees,” Public Information Office, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), January 2007, www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011791015.pdf.

By some accounts On the mixed support American Jews have given the new Jewish State over time, see Steven M. Cohen, “Relationships of American Jews with Israel: What We Know and What We Need to Know,” Contemporary Jewry 23, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 133.


In accord with this particular narrative Some date the beginning of the intensification of violence between Jewish Zionists and Palestinian Arabs to the United Nations announcement of a “Partition Plan,” delivered in November 1947, a proposal that suggested the two communities divide up the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea along specified borders (see figs. 10.5).


Yet, Sharon is far from the only Jewish Israeli Although...
the historical veracity of the events depicted in the Hebrew Bible is certainly debatable, this story is nevertheless core to dominant narratives among Jewish Israelis, regardless of whether identifying as secular or religious (see chapters 1, 8, and later in this chapter). As such, many Jews felt, and continue to feel, that only after the war of June 1967 did Jews—once again—control these specific biblical regions.


**One cannot overstate the impact** Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 329. This increase in conquered land not only was seen to strengthen the country’s security but also gave the Jewish State a major bargaining chip for future negotiations with their neighbors. As Morris (ibid., 330) notes, “Israelis at last had something they could give the Arabs in exchange for peace.”

**Jewish Israelis felt as if they had finally** The *Haaretz* editorial is cited in Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 329.


**Conquered land aside** Population figures can be found in Tessler, *History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 401–405.


Bush quote: “Bush Calls for an End to ‘Occupation’ of Arab Lands.” Former Speaker of the House and Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich also used the term *occupied* in relation to the West Bank and Gaza when voicing his support for Israeli development: “I do not oppose any development in the Israeli-occupied areas, because I think that’s part of the negotiating process. As long as the Palestinians are waging war on Israel, they are in no position to complain about developments” (Wayne Barrett, “Is Gingrich’s Hardline on Palestine Paid for by Sheldon Adelson,” *Daily Beast*, January 18, 2012, www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/01/18/is-gingrich-s-hard-line-on-palestine-paid-for-by-sheldon-adelson.html.)


In terms of different numbers as to Palestinians living in Israel vs. those living in the occupied West Bank (also commonly called Palestine), sometimes discrepancies are based in where one draws the line between Israel and Palestine. More specifically, there are often differences in opinion as to which parts of Jerusalem “belong” to which group and/or nation-state.


Baruch Kimmerling quote: Kimmerling, Invention and Decline of the Oslo Peace Process, 16.


According to the dominant Israeli national narrative Eliezer Ben-Yehuda quote is from Fellman, “Eliezer Ben Yehuda.”

Even before Israel was officially established “Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel.”

A little more than two years Jewish identities and the Law of Return: There is no official representative of the worldwide Jewish community; however, de facto, and to some extent de jure, the State of Israel plays this role more than any other body (see special topic 10.4). As mentioned, the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel declares Israel to be “the” Jewish State, and the Law of Return gives Jews Israeli citizenship. By virtue of being Jewish, an individual has more legal right to become a citizen of the State of Israel than, for instance, a Palestinian Arab family whose ancestors had lived in Palestine for centuries yet in 1948 or 1967 was either expelled or fled the Jewish State and thus, according to Israeli law, relinquished their right to property and citizenship.

Put another way, the Law of Return expresses the idea that all Jews not living in Israel have a legal relationship with the State of Israel, whether they choose to enact that bond or not. In 1977, this ethos was expanded in the passing of a new
Israeli law that asserted “extraterritorial jurisdiction to criminally sanction anyone who has committed an offense against ‘the life, body, health, freedom or property of a Jew, as a Jew, or the property of a Jewish institution, because it is such’” (Penal Law, 5737–1977, § 13[b][2] [1977], quoted in Adeno Addis, “Imagining the Homeland from Afar: Community and Peoplehood in the Age of the Diaspora,” Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law 45, no. 963 [2012]: 1001 and 1030).


Since 1950, among the Israeli Supreme Court’s Brother Daniel: See Notes, chapter 11, “As for how they are understood.”


The process of identity formation On the local population already identifying as Palestinian Arabs, see, e.g., Khalidi, Palestinian Identity; Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, The Palestinian People: A History (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

After 1948, the Jewish State Helga Tawil-Souri, “Uneven Borders, Coloured (Im)mobilities: ID Cards in Palestine/Israel,” Geopolitics 17 (2012): 156.

Each card designated a single “nationality” The only other countries to list an individual’s religion on their national identification cards are Afghanistan, Brunei, Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey, while only four countries list ethnicity (Bhutan, China, Ethiopia, and Vietnam), only two list race (Malaysia and Singapore), and only one lists color (the Dominican Republic) (Tawil-Souri, “Uneven Borders,” 159). Distinguishing between Jews and Arabs on national identification cards: The idea that a Jew was unable to be both Jewish and Arab did not come from the founders of Israel but predated the establishment of the Jewish State by decades, if not centuries. See Gil Anidjar, The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).


HAHN TAPPER, JUDAISMS / NOTES TO PAGES 202–205 125


About this process Raz-Krakotzkin, “Zionist Return,” 175.


Ben-Gurion was not the only figure Golda Meir quote is from Nissim Rejwan, “Israel’s Communal Opposition—an Oriental Appraisal,” Midstream 10, no. 2 (June 1964): 16, cited in Smooha, Israel, 88–89.

Another influential Jewish Israeli figure who voiced similar ideas was Abba Eban, Israel’s foreign minister and ambassador to the United Nations. In his 1969 book Voice of Israel, he wrote: “One of the great apprehensions which afflict us when we contemplate our cultural scene is the danger lest the predominance of immigrants of Oriental origin force Israel to equalize its cultural level with that of the neighboring world. So far from regarding our immigrants from Oriental countries as a bridge toward our integration with the Arabic-speaking world, our object should be to fuse them with an Occidental [Western] spirit, rather than to allow them to drag us into an unnatural Orientalism” (Abba Eban, Voice of Israel [New York: Horizon Press, 1969], 76).


One way scholars frame Ashkenazi hegemony “Intra-Jewish Orientalism”: Take, for example, the name of the first major assisted immigration of Yemenite Jews to Israel, “Operation Magic Carpet” (Madmoni-Gerber, Israeli Media, 36). Similarly, one of the names for the first major airlifts to Israel of Iraqi Jews was “Operation Ali Baba” (“Immigration to Israel: Operation Ezra and Nehemiah—The Airlift of Iraqi Jews [1951–1952], www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/immigration/ezra.html).

Deliberate segregation and subsequent placement: One could argue that this phenomenon actually predated the establishment of the State of Israel by more than half a century. Although small pockets of non-Ashkenazi Jews, such as Yemenites, arrived prior to the much larger waves of Jews of Russian and Polish descent, whether arriving under Ottoman rule (1881 to 1915) or immediately after Israel was established (1949 to 1951), Yemenites were consistently treated unequally by their Ashkenazi brethren. See, e.g., Gershon Shafir, “The Meeting of Eastern Europe and Yemen: ‘Idealistic Workers’ and ‘Natural Workers’ in Early Zionist Settlement in Palestine,” Ethnic and Racial Studies 13, no. 2 (1990): 172–197.

Policies in 1950s absorption centers: Smooha, Israel, 89.

The Otherization On the long-term effects of internalized oppression, see Madmoni-Gerber, Israeli Media, 5, 25–27.

Mizrahi history in Israeli textbooks: Some point out that most of the authors of these textbooks are Ashkenazi (e.g., Sami Shalom Chetrit, The Mizrahi Struggle in Israel [Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004], cited in Madmoni-Gerber, Israeli Media, 21), and more specifically, that they are Ashkenazi males, who likewise dominate Israeli academia (Smadar Lavie, “Academic Apartheid in Israel and the Lily White Feminism of the Upper Middle Class,” Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal 3 [2002]: 1, cited in Madmoni-Gerber, Israeli Media, 4) and media (Madmoni-Gerber, Israeli Media, 43–67).

Of course, such claims can also be problematic as they rely on the idea that Ashkenazi scholars marginalize non-Ashkenazi history based on identity alone, which is not always the case and is quite difficult to prove.

Negative treatment of Ethiopian Jews in Israel: This should be seen in contradistinction to Ashkenazi Jews immigra-
Zionism, like other forms of nationalism, puts one nation—the State of Israel—above all others. The core ethos (the Zionist “Ten Commandments,” if you will) replaces God with the Jewish State. The development of this ideology played a role in Jewish Israeli ideologue Yeshayahu Leibowitz, among others, censuring of anyone who declared an object of any kind—whether a wall in the Old City of Jerusalem or the Land of Israel itself—to be sacred or “holy,” a reproach against Jews of many stripes. See, e.g., Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State, ed. Eliezer Goldman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).


Max Nordau, for example Michael Stansilawski, Zionism and the Fin-de-Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 92–93.


Loathed the Zealots: See chapter 8.
As scholars Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin explain, Boyarin and Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora*, 47. See also Zerubavel, “Death of Memory,” 75.

Kibbutz: A kibbutz is a collective community in Israel rooted in the combined ideologies of Zionism and socialism. For more, see www.kibbutz.org.il/eng/welcome.htm.

**Today, the Boyarins** Boyarin and Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora*, 47. See also Zerubavel, “Death of Memory,” 75.

**For many Jews, the Zealots have come to symbolize** On Shoah survivors being criticized for going “like lambs to the slaughter,” see Ben-Yehuda, *Masada Myth*, 142; Boyarin and Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora*, 47–50; Zerubavel, “Death of Memory,” 80.

Masada: Masada was popularized further, specifically in the United States, by Leon Uris and his best-selling novel *Exodus* (1958) and by the 1980s television miniseries *Masada*.

**Tourism aside, Masada is also used as a site** During military rituals, when new military recruits reach the summit, they swear their allegiance to the Jewish state and declare, “Masada shall not fall again!” See, e.g., “Masada Today,” www.azravtworld.com/israel-travel-guide/israel-travel-destinations/masada.aspx.


Only country to conscript women: De jure, the Israeli military is also one of the most progressive in terms of soldiers’ sexual orientations. When this point is advertised in North American communities, the charge of “pinkwashing” often arises—the claim that in proudly pointing to the military’s good treatment of LGBT soldiers, Jewish Israelis “wash over” the human rights violations of Palestinians. (The term was originally coined in connection to raising money to combat breast cancer, a cause commonly linked to the color pink.)


In comparison to other countries’ militaries: For example, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, and the United States; see Mulrine, “8 Other Nations.”


Miri Eisen quote: Abramson, “Women in Combat.”


**Women are also marginalized in terms of military narratives** Another example of marginalization is that only twenty-seven out of more than nine hundred military memorials built through 1998 are connected to women. See Judith Baumel-Schwartz, “‘We Were There Too’: Women’s Commemoration in Israeli War Memorials,” in *Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel: Life History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Ruth Kark, Margalit Shilo, and Galit Hasan-Rokem (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2008), 321–337. See also Anne R. Bloom, “Women in the Defense Forces,” in *Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel*, ed. Barbara Swirsky and Marilyn Saffer (New York: Pergamom Press, 1991); Izraeli, “Israel Defense Forces.”


Archetype for military power: Baumel-Schwartz, “‘We Were There Too,’” 321. Some might argue that images of females in the Israeli military are just as common, if not more so, than those of males. One critical question to ask regarding such images, however, is whether they aim to represent strength or sexuality.

**As mentioned in chapter 8** On Jewish Immigration to...

For instance, according to a 1944 poll Goldberg, Jewish Power, 117–120.


As explored in chapter 1 Stephen J. Whitfield writes, “The culture of American Jewry was born in Eastern Europe and was then transplanted and refashioned in cities such as New York” (Stephen J. Whitfield, In Search of American Jewish Culture (Waltham, MA: University Press of New England, 1999), 1). This description—as if all American Jews are descendants of Ashkenazi Jewry—is a common take on Jewish American history, by historians and nonhistorians alike. Yet it is not factual. Not only is it New York–centric (or, more broadly, East Coast–centric), but it also homogenizes the American Jewish community under a single Ashkenazi umbrella. By some accounts, New York City has the second largest Jewish population in the world (after Tel Aviv); but approximately four million of America’s six million or so Jews live in other parts of the United States.

When asked about this bias, Whitfield said, “A distinctive style or slant to American culture coming from the Jewish minority doesn’t really become noticeable until after the massive Eastern European Jewish immigration. The Sephardim and the Germans of the nineteenth century were simply too few to constitute a recognizable body of creators and performers, which had to await the millions from Eastern Europe. Some of German background or with Sephardic roots made their contribution, of course (Emma Lazarus, Alfred Stieglitz, Walter Lipmann, Neil Sedaka) but more as individuals, in my opinion” (Stephen Whitfield, email to author, September 24, 2013).


Intellectual, scholarly, and artistic: We can point, for example, to intellectuals such as Hannah Arendt, Norman Mailer, Susan Sontag, and Lionel Trilling; scholars such as Nobel Laureates Melvin Calvin (chemistry) Gerty Cori, Joseph Erlanger, Herbert Glaser, Joshua Lederberg, Fritz Lipmann, Hermann Muller, Selman Waksman (physiology or medicine), Felix Bloch, Isidor Rabi, Otto Stern (physics); and, in the arts, comedians such as Jack Benny, Milton Berle, and Sid Caesar.


Assimilation in the United States One such Haggadah was created by journalist Cokie Roberts and her husband, Steve Roberts: Our Haggadah: Uniting Traditions for Interfaith Families (New York: Harper, 2011).


Another way Jews have worked within The prohibition against carrying objects on Shabbat applies particularly when going from a private to a public space, from a public to a private space, or within a public space. In order to set up an eruv, American Jews usually need legal permission from the local municipality. See Sharonne Cohen, “What Is an Eruv?,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/eruv/.


Goldberg quote: Jeffrey Goldberg, “Jews You Can Use,” *Slate*, April 12, 1998, www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/1998/04/jews_you_can_use.html. In stark contrast to Cohen, Goldberg then adds: “By the time I hit 16, my understanding of Jewish gangsters had become substantially more nuanced. Great nicknames and fists aside, I began to recognize these Jewish gangsters as fools and thugs who preyed on their own communities, robbed the Jewish poor, and murdered their own people. Rich Cohen, author of a new book titled *Tough Jews: Fathers, Sons, and Gangster Dreams*, doesn’t get this fact. For Cohen, a writer for *Rolling Stone* magazine, the Jewish gangsters are the purest expression of the Jewish spirit and the means through which he defines his own Jewishness.”

This pride, conflicted or otherwise A new Mob Museum in Las Vegas, formally called the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, is only slightly better at offering some of the details of these individuals’ crimes. But here, too, Jewish gangsters are glamorized.


Jews’ desire for power as inspiration for superheroes: Some disagree with this premise. For example, according to writer and artist Ben Katchot, the argument that Jews are the most important innovators in the field of comics “is a simplification of history made by people who think that comics were invented in 1938 by Siegel and Shuster [the creators of Superman]” (Derek Parker Royal, “Jewish Comics; or, Visualizing Current Jewish Narrative,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 29, no. 2 [2011]: 4–5).


“Marvel Comics”: In 1938, when this company was founded, it went by the name Timely Comics. The “Daredevil” character was co-created by Stan Lee and Bill Everett; “Fantastic Four,” “Hulk,” and “X-Men” were co-created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby; “Ironman” was created by Stan Lee, writer Larry Lieber, and artists Don Heck and Jack Kirby; “Spiderman” was co-created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko; “Thor” was co-created by editor Stan Lee, writer Larry Lieber, and artist Jack Kirby.

One indicator of Jewish power today The USSR was the first country to recognize Israel de jure; see IMFA, “The State of Israel is Born,” www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/about Israel/israelat50/pages/the%20state%20of%20israel%20is%20born.aspx.


One of the most powerful in the world: As scholar and journalist Fareed Zakaria wrote in 2012, “Money doesn’t begin to describe Israel’s real advantages, which are in the quality and effectiveness of its military, in terms of both weapons and people. Despite being dwarfed by the Arab population[s of its neighbors], Israel’s army plus its high-quality reservists vastly outnumber those of the Arab


Another reason (not explored here) is the argument that since November 11, 2001, the U.S. government and the State of Israel have shared a common desire to defeat violent extremist Muslim organizations.


*My Promised Land*, by Jewish Israeli journalist Ari Shavit, reflects Israel as an embodiment of both David and Goliath. He lays out the cyclical nature of acknowledging this communal fear alongside recognition of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and how it has, in turn, fueled violence against Jewish Israelis, which has fanned the community’s fear, and so on (see, e.g., ix-xiv).


**SPECIAL TOPIC 10.4** Representation: Yariv Levin, “Why


Foxman is far from the first Jew Herzl and Nahum Goldmann references: Biale, Power and Powerlessness, 130–136; Goldberg, Jewish Power, 16–17.

Self-promotion: A similar case example might be the so-called pro-gun lobby in the United States, led by groups such as the National Rifle Association (N.R.A.). In a 2013 analysis of the N.R.A.’s power, Robert Draper writes: “Though the N.R.A.’s opponents still question whether the group is really as indomitable as it is perceived, at a certain point, political mythology engineers its own reality” (Robert Draper, “Inside the Power of the N.R.A.,” New York Times Magazine, December 15, 2013, 50).


To complicate things “One-stop” philanthropic granting agency: Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), “The First Federation,” available at www.jewishatlanta.org/who-we-are/our-history. See also chapter 12.


The question of whether the State of Israel Of course, what it means to “support Israel” includes a range of opinions. Those identifying as conservative often maintain that it means backing policies of the Israeli government, whereas those identifying as liberal commonly argue that to support Israel one must be critical of Israeli policies as well.


In contrast, another acclaimed Jewish writer Philip Roth quotes are from Breines, Tough Jews, 54–55.

Chapter 11. Borders

In fact, this group was extraordinary. For more on the debate over whether to call the particular communities explored in this chapter “sects,” “movements,” or something else altogether, see Notes, chapter 8, “Scholars of modern Jewish groups.”

“The rabbis”: The notion of “the rabbis,” also code for “rabbinic authority,” is explored in chapter 5.

“Little Boxes”: Though first popularized in a version sung by Pete Seeger, “Little Boxes” was written and composed by Malvina Reynolds.


This leads us to a critical question. An ancillary question is whether those outside a group also need to recognize someone as a member of a group for that identity to be legitimized, which will also be discussed in this chapter. See, e.g., Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert Cohn, eds., The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

One way to understand. “Binary opposites”: when a word is understood in relation to its opposite. For example, many define good as something that is not evil, or evil as an absence of good. See, e.g., John Lyons, Semantics, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 270–277.

Multiple centers and margins simultaneously: See, e.g., chapter 3.

Claims of authenticity. Regarding the shift from Hebrews to bnei yisrael (Children of Israel) to Israelites to Judeans to Jews, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, and Uncertainties (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). See also chapter 2.


Aside from the “good Samaritan.”


Tradition based on passages found in the Hebrew Bible: According to one biblical passage, the Assyrian king “brought men from Bavel, and from Kuta, and from Avva, and from Hamat, and from Sefarvayim and settled them in the cities of Shomeron, in place of the children of Yisrael” (II Kings 17:24). See also II Kings 17:24–34, and chapter 3.

Dominant trends in scholarship. Both Samaritans and Jews trace the priestly lineage back to the biblical figure Aaron, who, according to the Torah, was the first Israelite High Priest.

Regarding “Zion,” see chapter 3.

According to one Samaritan representative. The Torah’s mention of Mount Gerizim’s importance: Husney W. Cohen, conversation with author, June 22, 2011.


Some scholars continue this line of argument. Destruction of Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim: Reinhard Pummer, “Samaritanism—A Jewish Sect or an Independent Form of Yahwism,” in Mor and Reiterer (eds.), Samaritans: Past and Present, 3; see also below.


Talmudic rabbis: Moshe Lavee, “The Samaritan May Be

Sharing of communal meals: In some Talmudic passages the Samaritans are understood inclusively, as a group that can join Jews in prayers, specifically those recited after one shares a communal meal (Lavee, “Samaritan May Be Included,” 149–154; see also Anderson and Giles, The Keepers, 43–49; Pummer, “Samaritanism,” 16). As with the Karaites (see later in this chapter), rabbinic opinions regarding the Samaritans run the gamut. See, e.g., Lawrence A. Schiffman, “Rabbinic Literature, Samaritans in,” in A Companion to Samaritan Studies, ed. Alan D. Crown, Reinhard Pummer, and Abraham Tal (Tübingen, Ger.: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993), 198–199.


According to the Samaritan version of the Torah, the tenth commandment in the Decalogue states that Mount Gerizim is the community’s sacred center; see Mordecai Roshwald, “Marginal Jewish Sects in Israel (II),” International Journal of Middle East Studies 4, no. 2 (April 1973): 328–329, 335–337. Michael Corinaldi notes that the Samaritan Pentateuch and the normative Jewish Pentateuch differ in six thousand instances; see Michael Corinaldi, “Samaritan Halakhah,” in An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law, ed. Neil S. Hecht, Bernard S. Jackson, Stephen M. Passamanek, Daniela Piattelli, and Alfredo Mordechai Rabello (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 62. The Samaritans date the origins of their Torah scroll to the biblical character Abisha, the great-grandson of Aaron (i.e., Abisha son of Pinhas son of Eleazar son of Aaron). Some scholars date the Samaritan’s oldest Torah scroll back to the ninth century CE and others to c. 1150 CE (Anderson and Giles, The Keepers, 105–116; Alan D. Crown, “Abisha Scroll,” in Crown et al. [eds.], Companion to Samaritan Studies, 4–6).

Different times of the year and in different ways: Both Jews and Samaritans base their yearly calendar on the Torah. Yet because they have different versions of the Torah and interpret this text differently, their communal calendars are not the same. In addition, the Jewish community, in contrast to Samaritans, observes a few holidays that are not mentioned in the Torah, such as Hanukkah.


300,000: “The best estimate of the Samaritan population in the fifth and sixth century [CE] is three hundred thousand souls in the homeland alone. This compares with an estimate for a total Jewish population in the Roman Empire before 70 [CE] of some six to seven million souls, of whom five million are estimated to have been in Palestine” (Michael Avi-Yonah, “The Samaritan Revolts against the Byzantine Empire,” Eretz Israel 4 [1956]: 128 [Hebrew] and Jean Juster, Les Juifs dans L’Empire Romaine [New York, 1914], 210, in Alan D. Crown, “The Samaritan Diaspora to the End of the Byzantine Era,” Australian Journal of Archaeology 2, no. 3 [1974–75]: 117).


Earliest census records still in existence: Anderson and Giles, The Keepers, 91.

Approximately 777: According to a Samaritan community website, as of January 1, 2015, there were 777 Samaritans in existence (Benyamim Tsedaka, A.B., Institute of Samaritan Studies, Holon, Israel, available at http://thesamaritanupdate.com).

Their very small numbers According to one scholar, the Samaritans’ “inbreeding coefficient is the highest recorded for any human population” and they “represent the oldest and smallest true genetic isolate in the world” (Batsheva Bonné-Tamir, “Genetics,” in Crown et al. [eds.], Companion to Samaritan Studies, 98–99).


Regarding whether they are accepted This contrasts with the effort made by the Sephardi Chief Rabbi in Ottoman-controlled Palestine, in 1842, to protect the Samaritans; he wrote, “Samaritans are a branch of the Jewish people who acknowledge the Torah” (Michael Corinaldi, “The Problem of the Patrilineal or Matrilineal Decent and Inter-Marriage according to the Samaritan and Rabbininc Halakah,” in Shehadeh and Tawa [eds.], Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress, 178).


Despite their legal designation Instead they have a peculiar status: Shomron and Sassoni, “Samaritan-Israelites and Their Religion,” 28. As the Israeli government does not make a distinction between religious law and civil law, but adjudicates both simply as state law, it is particularly difficult for someone from one legally distinct Israeli community to
marry someone from another, since the law designates that each has its own separate “religious” authority. (And, in this case, the Samaritan religious authority in Israel cannot adjudicate their own community’s religious law without the Ministry of Interior’s approval.)

**Like Samaritans, African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem**


Real descendants of the ancient biblical Israelites: According to scholar John L. Jackson, Jr., this group has recently begun claiming to be the true descendants of Judeans rather than Israelites; see John L. Jackson, Jr., *Thin Description: Ethnography and the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).


**AHIJ do not say** Rather than rooting the claim that all African Americans are descended from the Israelites in academic scholarship, the community utilizes the Hebrew Bible to support their belief. See, e.g., Fran Markowitz, “Israel as Africa, Africa as Israel: ‘Divine Geography’ in the Personal Narratives and Community Identity of the Black Hebrew Israelites,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (1996): 193–205.


**Initially arriving in Israel** According to one source, the first group of African Hebrew Israelites arrived with the visa status of “new immigrants,” pending the Israeli government’s decision on whether they would be permitted to become citizens under the Law of Return; see Lounds, Jr., *Israel’s Black Hebrews*, 161–163.

Population: Jackson (“All Yah’s Children,” 100) estimates that in 2005 there were approximately three thousand members of the African Hebrew Israelite community in Israel.


**This community observes a set of rituals** According to Lounds (*Israel’s Black Hebrews, 61*), aside from the Sabbath, the African Hebrew Israelites do not follow any of the holidays described in the Hebrew Bible.


Perhaps not surprisingly, they have never been accepted


For more than two decades “Legal status came about in May 1990 with first B/1 visas, followed by temporary residency a year later. That status was extended until August 2003 when the Ministry of Interior granted them permanent residency” (IMFA, “Hebrew Israelite Community”).

The reasons behind Another possible reason why the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem finally received permanent Israeli residency in 1990 was that the minister of the interior at the time, Avraham Poraz, was more lenient than his predecessors. Poraz was a member of the Shinui political party, which at the time was more liberal in its position on naturalization and citizenship than the party with which the previous ministers of interior identified. See Haim Shadmi, “Poraz to Grant Black Hebrews Permanent Residence,” *Haaretz*, July 28, 2003, www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/poraz-to-grant-black-hebrews-permanent-residence-1.95492.

I thank Netanel Fisher for suggesting this theory to me (conversation with author, October 28, 2012, Omaha, NE).


Dimona’s mayor quote: Lawrence, “Finding a Home in the Promised Land.”


Since then, this group has experienced IMFA, “Hebrew Israelite Community.” Contrary to this government statement, Könighofer (*New Ship of Zion*, 119) maintains that it
is illegal for members of the African Hebrew Israelite community to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), though they are permitted to perform National Service. Jackson ("All Yah's Children," 107) maintains that the first African Hebrew Israelite of Jerusalem was inducted into the IDF in 2006.


Aside from their outspokenness and residency issues, AHIJ battled with the Israeli government on a number of other fronts for years. See, e.g., Shaleak Ben-Yehuda, Black Hebrew Israelites: From America to the Promised Land (New York: Vantage Press, 1975); I. J. Gerber, The Heritage Seekers: American Blacks in Search of Jewish Identity (Middle Village, NY: Jona-

Davidian View of the Hebrew Bible to trump that of the Talmudic rabbis (Fred Astren, "Karaite: As mentioned in Chapter Five, the root of the word Rabbanite is râv or râh, meaning "teacher," which some say points to the Rabbanites’ historical acceptance of the authority of “the rabbis” regarding halakhah. The root of the word Karaite is qâra, meaning “to read,” which suggests that the Karaites are more literal in interpreting Jewish law than Rabbanites. Others note that qâra can also mean call, thereby reflecting the influence by a sectarian Muslim Shi’i community present in the eighth- through tenth-centuries on the Karaites, a group that also referred to their religious leader as a da’i or caller (Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole, Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Carol Geniza (New York: Schocken Books, 2011), 154).

Mishnah and Talmud: The Karaites argue that Rabbinite interpretations of the Torah—in particular those juridical responses found in the Talmud—are much too reductive, far too removed from the original intention of the Pentateuch text. Consequently, Karaites consider their understanding of the Hebrew Bible to trump that of the Talmudic rabbis (Fred Astren, Karaite Judaism and Historical Understanding (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004)), 14).

That said, the Karaites have had, and continue to have, a detailed system of Jewish law that is unabashedly interpretive, a fact argued, for example, in Astren, Karaite Judaism, 13–14; Daniel Frank, "Karaite Exegetical and Halakhic Literature in Byzantium and Turkey," in Polliack (ed.), Karaite Judaism: A Guide, 529–538; and Meira Polliack, "Major Trends in Karaite Biblical Exegesis in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in ibid., 362–413.

Fifty thousand Karaites worldwide: This figure was relayed to me by Abraham Massuda, president of the board of directors of the Karaites of America, in 2011 (conversation with author, November 15, 2011, Congregation B’nai Israel, Daly City, CA); see also Introduction to Karaite Judaism, 39–43. Others estimate that in Israel alone there are 15,000 to 30,000 Karaites. In his comprehensive guide to the Karaites, scholar Joel Beinin estimates that there are 20,000 Karaites worldwide (Joel Beinin, Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998], 298). See also Polliack, "Preface," in Polliack (ed.), Karaite Judaism: A Guide, xvii.

Similar to Samaritans: On Karaism as the original form of Judaism, see Shawn Lichaa, Nehemia Gordon, and Meir Rekhavi, As It Is Written: A Brief Case for Karaism (N.p.: Hilkhiah Press, 2006), 7–8. This tradition is echoed in many texts written about the Karaites community by Karaites, e.g., Introduction to Karaite Judaism; El-Kodsi, Karaite Jews of Egypt, 1–3.


As to why they appeared: Fred Astren writes, “Karaite Judaism emerged in the late ninth century from the confluence of a number of trends within Judaism. These include scripturalism, messianism, quasi-asceticism, a renewed focus on Palestine, anti-rabbinism of various types (some perhaps regional), and possibly the influence of so-called rationalism. The last point is debatable. Also included in the mix are the Ananites, followers of Anan ben David and his family. Anan [goes] back to the eighth century, but his movement is not Karaism” (Astren, email with author, December 23, 2011).


Yet evidence also exists: According to scholar Elinoar Bareket, “The Karaites had different customs to the Rabbanites. The main areas of variance that were noticeable related to fixing the festival calendar, the laws of ritual slaughter and foods in general, marriage laws and the laws of incestuous relationships, inheritance laws, and the overall perception of the world, especially regarding Palestine and their attitude toward it” (Elinoar Bareket, “Karaite Communities in the Middle East,” in Polliack (ed.), Karaite Judaism: A Guide, 242).

At times, however, they embraced positions similar to those of the Rabbanites, sometimes integrating Rabbanite responses into their own. See, e.g., Bernard Revel, “Inquiry into the Sources of Karaite Halakah,” Jewish Quarterly Review 3, no. 3 (January 1913): 319–337; Rustow, “Karaites Real and Imagined,” 42–43; Ofra Tirosch-Becker, “The Use of Rabbi

Early twentieth-century Egypt: El-Kodsi, Karaite Jews of Egypt, 8.

**One major distinction**  Delineation of a Jew via matrilineral descent has been the norm for most Jews for centuries; see, e.g., Cohen, “The Matrilineral Principle,” in Beginnings of Jewishness, 263–340. The notion of being “born to a Jewish mother” has become more complicated since the advent of in vitro fertilization, in which case halakhic authorities consider a number of factors when determining a baby’s Jewish identity; see Fred Rosner, “In Vitro Fertilization: Legal and Ethical and Considerations,” www.myjewishlearning.com/article/in-vitro-fertilization-legal-and-ethical-considerations.

Karaite attitude regarding conversion: Introduction to Karaite Judaism, 225–230.

Chief Karaite rabbi in Israel: Rabbi Moshe Firrouz, email with author via Daniel Lasker, January 1, 2012 [Hebrew].


Data indicate that in Palestine and Constantinople Karaites were murdered and mistreated precisely because non-Jews perceived them as Jews, rather than deeming them guilty of being merely non-Christian (Danon, “Karaites in European History,” 285–360). Some argue, in contrast, that Jews were not necessarily killed because they were Jewish, but rather because they were not Christians of the type with which their attackers identified (Astren, email with author, June 7, 2012).


**Less than a decade later**  Some Egyptian mistreatment of Karaites was undoubtedly due to the Egyptian government’s capture of Moshe Marzuq, a Karaite Jew accused of spying for Israel; he was ultimately executed in 1953 for his role in Operation Suzannah, better known in Israeli history as the Lavon Affair. See Beinin, Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry, 90–117; Shabtai Teveth, Ben Gurion’s Spy: The Story of the Political Scandal That Shaped Modern Israel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).


Intracommunal opposition: Beinin, Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry, 183.

**To this day, Karaite and non-Karaite Jews**  On the advantages Jews have in the Jewish State, see, e.g., Mordecai Roshwald, “Marginal Jewish Sects in Israel (I),” International Journal of Middle East Studies 4, no. 2 (April 1973), 226–227.

Inability to legally marry non-Karaite Jews: The State of Israel made an explicit exception to this law when Joseph Marzuq, the brother of Moshe Marzuq (see Notes, chapter 11, “Less than a decade later”), requested permission to marry a Rabbanite woman; see Roshwald, “Marginal Jewish Sects in Israel,” 232.

**On a side note**  On Karaite Americans, see Introduction to Karaite Judaism, 42.

Population of Karaite American community: Best estimates are that there are about 1,000 Karaites living in the United States, about 450 of whom live in the San Francisco Bay Area (Beinin, Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry, 185; Abraham Massuda, conversation with author, November 15, 2011). This would make Karaites .017 percent of American Jewry.


Rabbinic paradigm: Although Reform Judaism maintains that halakhah is not obligatory, Reform Jews still work within a rabbinic framework (e.g., observation of holidays is determined according to a rabbinic calendar, not, e.g., a Karaite one). I thank Shawn Lichaa for sharing this insight with me.

**Perhaps the only thing that most Jews**  In January 2012, I conducted an informal survey of rabbis at eight San Francisco synagogues of various normative movements. One of the questions I asked was “Is it your opinion that ‘Messianic Jews’ are not Jews (i.e., are not Jews in the way you understand and define the term ‘Jew’)?” Rabbis from all eight synagogues answered yes to this question, with minor caveats noted for situations involving individuals born Jewish according to halakhah but who believe in Jesus Christ.

Heretics, apostates, or even members of a cult: See, e.g.,

**In practice** Anonymous rabbi, email with author, January 12, 2012.

Menachem Mendel Schneerson: See chapter 4.

**But the label Messianic Jew** Scholar Rachel Adler defines Messianic Jews as a “theological community extruded by Judaism . . . who believe that God is Christ and who are both doctrinally and structurally interlinked with Christian ecclesiastical organizations” (Rachel Adler, *Engendered Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1998], 102).


**A number of groups** Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 87–166.


According to Jews for Jesus, which does not identify with UMJC or IAMCS, there are twenty-five Jews for Jesus branches worldwide (www.jewsforjesus.org/branches); see also Stern, *Messianic Judaism*, 197; Wasserman, *Messianic Jewish Congregation*, ix.

According to another source, as of 1996 there were three hundred Messianic Jewish congregations worldwide (1996–1997 *International Messianic Directory* [Virginia Beach, VA: Messianic Bureau International, 1996], 3). Although Messianic Jewish groups have been accused of exaggerating their numbers, Jewish anti-missionary organizations have been charged with doing so as well; see Wasserman, *Messianic Jewish Congregations*, ix, 46.


**As for how they are understood** The 1989 High Court case was arguably not finalized until 1992; see Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 200.

Further, since the late 1950s the Israeli Supreme Court has rejected the Jewishness of those born Jewish who convert to another religion, such as Roman Catholicism. The most famous case revolves around Brother Daniel, who first applied for citizenship in 1958. Born to Jewish parents and raised a Jew with the name Oswald Rufesin, during World War II, while hiding from the Nazis in a Polish convent, he began to identify as a Christian. Shortly thereafter, he formally converted to Catholicism and became a priest, changing his name to Daniel. When he applied for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return, the court denied his request, saying that someone who identified with a religion other than Judaism could not be received as a Jew. They added that an individual born to a Jewish mother who converts to another religion prior to giving birth will also not be accepted as a Jew under the Law of Return. Since the 1970s Israeli Supreme Court justices have expressed various viewpoints as to what it means to be “part of another religion.” Despite the Supreme Court’s ruling, the Israeli rabbinate ruled that, despite his Christian beliefs, Brother Daniel should be accepted as a Jew because he was born to a Jewish mother, as should someone born to a Jewish mother who converts to another religion prior to giving birth. See S. Zalman Abramov, *Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State* (Teaneck, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson, 1976); Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, 192–202; Michael Corinaldi, *Jewish Identity: The Case of Ethiopian Jews* (Jerusalem: Magnus Press, 1998), 27–50; Nehama Tec, *In the Lion’s Den: The Life of Oswald Rufesin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel, www.catholic.co.il/index.php?lang=en.

In 2011, Israeli author Yoram Kaniuk (who died in 2013)


Perhaps the two main reasons  Cohn-Sherbok, Messianic Judaism, 81; Stern, Messianic Judaism, 13-16.


Al-yahud al-samarah: Although sometimes Palestinians call the Samaritans a-samarah or e-samarah for short, they typically refer to them as al-yahud a-samarah and perceive them to be an ancient “Jewish” sect, despite the community’s objections otherwise.

The question of their identity  Nablusi Samaritans identifying and not identifying as Palestinian: Husney W. Cohen, conversation with author, June 22, 2011.


An analogy for the alleged disconnect between the Kabbal Centre’s practices and Jewish tradition may be found in the way, for many Americans, yoga has become detached from Hinduism. I thank Andrew Ramer for sharing this insight with me.

There are a number of obvious linkages  Scholar Jody Myers notes that although the Centre practices the ritual of setting aside sacred time each week between Friday evening and Saturday evening (i.e., the Centre staff observe the halakhic observances connected to Shabbat), such as ceasing from carrying out actions of “work,” etc.), most within the Orthodox Jewish community who are critical of the Centre and unaffiliated with it are unaware of this. It is reasonable to assume that these Jews would be even more upset if they knew about this practice because this would be seen as another reappropriation of an “authentic” Jewish ritual by an “inauthentic” Jewish group (Jody Myers, email with author, April 22 and April 24, 2012; note that Myers did not use the terms reappropriation, authentic, or inauthentic).

First established  It is not uncommon for Jews to change one or more of their names when moving to or living in the State of Israel. Both Philip and his second wife, Karen, changed their first and last names in this process (Karen’s name had been Tova). See Jody Myers, Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest: The Kabbalalah Centre in America (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 16–38, 51.

Yehudah Ashlag: Ashlag arrived in Palestine in 1921 (Myers, email with author, April 22, 2012).
Teaching non-Jews Kabbalah: Myers, email with author, April 22, 2012.

**From the 1980s onward** Los Angeles as world headquarters: Myers, *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest*, 50–54, 62–73, 119.


**Berg did not stop** The Centre leadership has, to some degree, redefined a number of ideas and terms, including the signifiers *Jew* and *Judaism*. At the same time, the Centre maintains a distinction between Jews and non-Jews in their practices. For instance, a number of rituals during Jewish prayer services, according to Jewish law, can be carried out only by Jews, such as saying the blessings before and after one reads from the Torah; the Centre follows this tradition. At the same time, they permit anyone to join the communal service itself, regardless of whether they are Jewish (Myers, email to author, March 13, 2012).

**Coincidental**: Myers, *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest*, 54–73, 115–121.

**American music legend Madonna** On the Hebrew letters tattooed on her body, see Huss, “All You Need,” 611–624.

Explicitly professed: When asked by an interviewer if studying Kabbalah was a step on her way to becoming Jewish, Madonna responded:

Oh, no, please. Don’t make me sick! I’m never gonna be Jewish, and I hate that phrase. And I have not converted to Judaism and I am not a member of any religion. . . . [Kabbalah’s] not religion. It is, you know, it’s a belief system that has been around, a philosophy or body of wisdom that has been around for thousands of years, and it pre-dates religion. And in fact most, a lot of religious beliefs get their ideas from the Kabbalah. . . . It’s actually quite fascinating and amazing to realize how many people were actually studying Kabbalah over the last thousand years, or the last couple of thousand years. (Interview with Terry Gross, “Fresh Air from WHYY: Interview with Madonna,” National Public Radio, November 23, 2004, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=418384)


Cognitive dissonance: According to Myers, the Centre’s instructors make a clear separation between what they teach and its relation to Judaism. They emphasize that it was not Jews or Jewish mystics who wrote kabbalistic texts such as the *Zohar*, but rather Kabbalists, implying that these mystics were not Jewish. Centre teachers also say that Judaism is a false construct that has been manipulated over the centuries, a “calcified or shallow religious belief and observance,” a critique that they “believe wholeheartedly was also shared by [previous generations of] kabbalists.” The Centre’s dominant narrative scorns Jews who say that Kabbalah is strictly Jewish, framing this claim of communal ownership a type of false pride (Myers, email with author, March 14, 2012).

**Paradoxically, despite the Centre’s disassociation** On the Kabbalah Centre’s devotees, see Myers, *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest*, 75.


**Ultimately, the way one answers** “To some degree, all conflicts are about the relationship between power and identity. As individuals and communities, we enact a constructed sense of identity, or self, through our behavior, which in turn is shaped by cultures, value and belief systems, histories, and narratives” (Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, “The War of Words: Jews, Muslims, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on American University Campuses” in *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, and Complexities*, ed. Reza Aslan and Aaron J. Hahn Tapper [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011], 71).

“Professional Jews” Jubus: Some attribute the popularization of the term *Jubus* to Roger Kamenetz’s 1994 book *The Jew in the Lotus*. Others say it emerged from the fact that a number of prominent twentieth-century American Buddhist leaders were born Jewish. In terms of pop culture, people such as Leonard Cohen, Allen Ginsberg, and Adam Yauch have also played a role in popularizing Jewish-Buddhist identities (Roger Kamenetz and Emily Sigalow, “After the *Jew in the Lotus*: American Jews, Eastern Religions, and a New Culture of Jewish Spirituality,” Paper presented at the 46th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, Baltimore, 2014).


**Chapter 12. Futures**

**Northern California** These numbers are approximate estimates made in 2013 by senior administrators at both my daughter’s former preschool (Zvi Weiss, email with author, December 9, 2013) and my son’s school (Steve Bogad, conversation with author, December 10, 2013), based on both anecdotal and hard evidence. The large number of non-Jewish parents at the preschool is partly due to the excellent reputation of this preschool rather than its status as a Jewish school. At my son’s school, the 20 percent figure rises to 25–30 percent when we’re talking about how many students have at least one non-Jewish grandparent.

**In the San Francisco Bay Area** According to data from 2000–2001, 27 percent of Jewish Americans between the ages of six and seventeen attended Jewish parochial schools.


One out of three: Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, eds., “Population,” Encyclopedia Judaica (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 397–398. See also Notes, chapter 9, “Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler.”

11 to 12 million: Dashefsky, DellaPergola, and Sheskin, “World Jewish Population, 5”. This study actually says that, post World War II, the “core” Jewish population was 11 million, defined as those individuals who exclusively identified as Jews and did not have “multiple cultural identities.” Later in the same section, the figure is given as being closer to 11 to 12 million individuals. For more on the study’s definition of “core Jewish” identities, see ibid., 10–15.

“Relative share . . .”: Ibid., 5.


But one can justly argue According to a 2013 Pew study (“Portrait of Jewish Americans,” 7–9), of those Jews who have been married since 2000, 60 percent married non-Jews, as opposed to 40 percent in the 1980s and 17 percent before 1970. At the same time, a 2014 study found that 65 percent of all Jewish Americans who are married are partnered with another Jew; see “2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study” in Uriel Heilman, “1 in 6 American Jews are Converts—and 9 Other Findings in Pew Study,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, May 12, 2015, www.jta.org/2015/05/12/news-opinion/united -states/1-in-6-jews-are-new-to-the-faith-and-9-other-new -pew-findings.


Virtually all of the studies published: These studies have allowed self-identification, usually also relying on whether or not the identifying Jew also has at least one Jewish parent, a Jewish spouse, or converted to Judaism. I thank Steven M. Cohen for assisting me in qualifying these data. As for the second assumption The major denominations have policies on intermarriage. Reform institutions commonly embrace interfaith couples, Orthodox ones frequently reject them, and, until recently, Conservative groups have often encouraged the non-Jew to convert from the outset. See also Pew Research Center, “Portrait of Jewish Americans,” 7–9; special topic 8.4.


Of course, it can be damaging On Jewish parochial schools, see Alex Pomson and Howard Deitcher, eds., Jewish Day Schools Jewish Communities: A Reconsideration (Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 1–3; Pew Research Center, “Portrait of Jewish Americans,” 66.

In contrast to the American Jewish community, in Australia, South Africa, and Latin America roughly 70 percent of Jewish youth attend Jewish parochial school; in Great Britain, more than 50 percent (versus 25 percent in 1975) do; and in France, almost 40 percent (versus 16 percent in 1986) do. See Pomson and Deitcher (eds.), Jewish Day Schools, 1–3.

The term intermarried Celebration of both Hanukkah and Christmas: Steve Bogad, conversation with author, December 10, 2013. See Notes, chapter 12, “Northern California.”


The third experience Since it was established in 1999 and the first cohort was sent to Israel in 2000, considerable attention has been paid to the Taglit-Birthright Israel program and its impact on strengthening Jewish identities. See, e.g., Shaul Kelner, Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Education (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Alex Pomson and Howard Deitcher, “Day School Education in the Age of Birthright,” Journal of Jewish Education 7, no. 1 (2010): 52–73.

Quote from TBI website: Taglit-Birthright Israel, “The Educational Journey,” www.birthrightisrael.com/TaglitBirthrightIsraelStory/ Pages/Education.aspx. See also “About Taglit-Birthright Israel” on same website.


Studies show that Israel “Less important” does not mean “not important.” Whereas 80 percent of Jews over sixty-five said that “caring about Israel is an important part of being a Jew,” 60 percent of Jews under thirty-five felt the same way. Similarly, whereas 40 percent of Jews over sixty-five said their overall attachment to Israel was “high,” the rate drops to approximately 20 percent for Jews under thirty-five (Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, “Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel” [New York: Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, 2007], 9–10, available at www.acbp.net/pdf/pdfs-research-and-publications/Beyond_Distancing.pdf).


Those who look to population size As Rabbi Ed Feinstein, among others, has pointed out, the cover story for a 1964 edition of Look magazine was titled, “The Vanishing American Jew.” The accompanying article argued that no new immigrant group in America makes it past the third generation without assimilating away from their subcommunity. Yet now, more than forty years later, there are still millions of Jews in the United States, and Look magazine is out of print. See Edward Feinstein, ed., Jews and Judaism in the 21st Century: Human Responsibility, the Presence of God, and the Future of the Covenant (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007), 143.


Then there are those such as scholar Shaul Magid. See, e.g., Shaul Magid, American Post-Judaism: Identity and Renewal in a Postethnic Society (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 219.

Magid contends that such figures as Schachter-Shalomi Quotes are from Magid, American Post-Judaism, 219 (“offers a systematic critique”), 242 (“American Jewry and Judaism”), and 21 (“the Jewish collective in America”).


Some would argue. On “unaffiliated” Jews, see Pew Research Center, “Portrait of Jewish Americans.”


One of the rationales. These institutions have been established for every American community with more than one thousand Jews. See JFNA, “About Us,” http://jewishfederations.org/about-jfna; and idem, “First Federation.”


To the professional Jewish world’s credit. For a sampling of these organizations, see Wertheimer et al., “Generation of Change.”


As Rabbi Noa Kushner. Kushner goes on to explain: “By analogy, if yoga studios asked people to become yogis as a condition for taking classes, those studios would lose much of their popularity. But yoga is marketed as something one can just do; it doesn’t necessitate an identity shift. As a result, people feel comfortable trying it out. Of course, once they try it, some continue in their yoga practice and it becomes a part of their lives. The same operative principle is true for us—if we want people to grow Jewishly, we need to encourage them to do Jewish first” (Noa Kushner, “‘Doing Jewish Stuff’—An
Perhaps it is just as Jewish communal leader Covenantal or spiritual vs. tribal: Schwartz, “Jewish Megatrends,” 10–14. Barry Shrage points out that although there is wisdom in Schwartz’s dichotomy of “tribal” and “covenantal” Jews, more often than not individual Jews of all generations reflect both of these trends in their day-to-day lives; see Barry Shrage, “The Federation System: Loving Humanity and the Jewish People,” in Schwartz (ed.), Jewish Megatrends, 188–201.

Multiple ways to express one’s Jewishness: Greenberg, “Grand Soy Vanilla Latte with Cinnamon.”

Another significant change Dan Mendelsohn Aviv, End of the Jews: Radical Breaks, Remakes, and What Comes Next (Toronto: Key Publishing House, 2012), 216; see also 155–213.


Another major trend “The Jewish Farm School teaches about contemporary food and environmental issues through innovative trainings and skill-based Jewish agricultural education” (www.jewishfarmschool.org).


A partial sampling of these organizations includes Adamah, Jewish Farm School, Hazon, Eden Village Camp, Teva Learning Center, Urban Adamah, and Wilderness Torah, as well as retreat centers such as the Pearlstone Center and Isa Learning Center, Urban Adamah, and Wilderness Torah, as well as retreat centers such as the Pearlstone Center and Isa Learning Center, Urban Adamah, and Wilderness Torah. 144 HAHN TAPPER, *Judaisms* / NOTES TO PAGES 240–241.

Passow goes on to point out Some of these twenty-first-century organizations are more intent on educating participants about better ways to treat the natural world or methods to grow their own food than necessarily to show how these things are also Jewish.


Educator Gabe Goldman Goldman, email with author, December 18, 2013. When asked what he thought were the main differences between the development of Jewish environmentalism in Israel and in the United States, Goldman added:

Few of the hundred or so Israeli environmental organizations currently active . . . view their work as an expression of Jewishness. And it is this point that distinguishes the place of environmentalism in Israeli society from that which it has in American Jewish life. From the beginning, American Jewish environmentalists have insisted on centering environmentalism within Jewish tradition: connecting the acts of conservation to the Torah principles of bal tashchit (to not destroy) and zaaar ba’alei hayim (to not engage in inhumane animal-rearing and slaughtering practices); as well as linking organic gardening to the miztvot of Peah [lit., “corner”: leaving a portion of one’s agricultural harvest for the poor] and feeding the hungry. American Jewish environmentalism has been a way to energize a generation of Jews to find meaning in Judaism at a time when traditional Jewish institutions have failed to inspire them, and there is an increasing number of American Jews whose essential Jewish identity is expressed in their living environmentally conscious and healthy lives.


Kelman, “Gay, Jewish, or Both? Sexual Orientation and Jewish Engagement,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 84, nos. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 2009): 154–166, available at www.bjpa.org/Publications/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=3872. Other research focused on gendered, sexed, and sexualized issues within the Jewish community, such as those regularly conducted by Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community, are also integral to this field.


**One of the more important innovations** This is not to say that *Siddur Sha’ar Zahav* is the first Jewish text to approach the situations addressed by these blessings. Rather, this prayer book is unique in the way it did so, using the traditional Jewish framework of a blessing and integrating previously marginalized gender- and sexuality-related identities and issues. Michael Tyler and Leslie Kane, eds., *Siddur Sha’ar Zahav* (San Francisco: Congregation Sha’ar Zahav, 2009). Arguably the first text that integrated traditional Hebrew prayers with accessible, nongendered language, presenting them alongside contemporary poems, is Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

A number of such prayers: *Siddur Sha’ar Zahav* includes prayers applicable to coming out, coming into our sexuality, queer elders, transgender transitioning, the partner of someone in gender transition, being single, marriage equality, the adoption of a child, donor fathers and surrogate mothers, the childless, letting go of having a biological child, a torn family, questioning sexuality, and adult renaming.

One challenge with *Siddur Sha’ar Zahav* (2009) is that terms used to describe particular queer subidentities are now (2015), at least in certain places, such as the San Francisco Bay Area (where Congregation Sha’ar Zahav is based), passé. This is largely a reflection of the ever-changing terminology used by those in queer communities. I thank Andrew Ramer for sharing this insight with me.

See also caption for image on book’s front cover, top right corner: Rabbi Tsipi Gabai, the first female rabbi of Moroccan descent, blessing Tom Chai Sosnik during a gender transition ceremony at Tehiyah Day School (El Cerrito, CA) in March 2015, with proud parents Esti and Udi in the background. While a handful of Jewish parochial schools in the United States have taken steps to accommodate transgender students, such as creating nongendered bathrooms, Sosnik’s transition ceremony is thought to be the first time a Jewish school performed a ritual of this kind in a communal setting. Created by Gabai, the forty-minute ceremony included various Jewish traditional blessings and readings about transitions and new beginnings.

**Over the last sixty years** None of this means that a large number of Jews are marrying other Jews outside their immediate subgroup. However, because this was so rare prior to the twentieth century, and because the State of Israel was founded during this time—thereby creating a context for regular intramarriage of Jews across subcultural lines—any increase must be understood as a significant development from previous norms.


**Although we don’t have analogous evidence** Jewish intramarriage in the United States: Tobin et al., *In Every Tongue*, 50–51.

Interestingly, some scholars maintain that the increase in intramarriage among Jews in Israel is influenced by the American context; see, e.g., Stan L. Albrecht and Tim B. Heath, “The Changing Pattern of Interracial marriage,” *Social Biology* 43, nos. 3–4 (1996): 203–217.

**In the United States** Tobin, et al., *In Every Tongue*, 50–51.

**Some professional Jews have suggested** A recent study (Heilman, “1 in 6 American Jews”) found that 17 percent of Jewish Americans were raised in a religion other than Judaism. This said, there is no data supporting the conclusion that this is the result of a conversion outreach plan of any kind.


Although this essay begins by underscoring Rawidowicz, “Israel,” 62–63.

*Whereas Rawidowicz looks to the past* Referring to one of the founders of Future Studies, Fred Polak, David Passig adds that by concentrating on ideas in the present we can visualize a yet-to-come reality that is radically different from what we see before us: “These images transcend the present by providing detailed descriptions of ideal future worlds. Such images, although introduced by a creative minority, are eventually embraced by the masses, and then provide guidance and motivation for cultural innovation” (David Passig, “Teaching Future Jewish Life through a Cross-Generation Future-Oriented Curriculum,” *Religious Education* 95, no. 2 [2006]: 193). According to this understanding, the future is the nexus of a community’s expectations, rooted in their perception of the past and present, and their hopes, their radical ideals for what lies ahead.


*Jews have been incredibly successful* Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: Jews, Judaism, and Israel in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Schocken Books, 2009), 33.


### Activities

#### Introduction

Activity 4, *What Is “Jewish” Music?* I thank Oren Kroll-Zeldin for introducing me to this article.

### Chapter 1


Some of the suggested questions in this activity are taken almost verbatim from Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, eds., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 132. This book contains a number of other activities that are relevant for chapter 1 of Judaisms.

### Chapter 2

**Activity 1, *What Does It Mean to Interpret a Text?*** Newspaper article: www.nbcnews.com/id/23244309/ns/us_news-weird_news/t/con-artists-use-fake-rip-girl-scouts/#.VKtLyTKaI3NE.


**Activity 2, *PaRDeS Methods of Interpretation.*** The four interpretations of the Garden of Eden narrative are from David A. Cooper, *God Is a Verb: Kabbalah and the Practice of Mystical Judaism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 42–44. For
another excellent example, in this case interpretations of Gen. 28:16, see Lawrence Kushner, God Was in This Place and I Did Not Know (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994).


Chapter 3

Activity 1, A Sacred Classroom? I thank Andrew Ramer for introducing this activity to me.


Chapter 4


Chapter 6


Chapter 7


Chapter 9


Chapter 10


