

# Dark Star

by

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MEMORY BOOKS

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# Introduction

A dark star is a star that gives light yet is not seen. At night, the sun is such a star for us. We see its light shining from the surface of the moon, yet we do not see the sun.

The purpose of this book is to show how the Jewish people has played the role of a dark star in human history. The light of the Jewish people has cast its radiance all over the earth, yet the source of this light is not seen. What is seen is Jesus or Mohamed or Marx.

These are but reflections of a greater light, pale moons of a dark Jewish star.

Jewish history has remained invisible to Christians, Muslims and Marxists alike because its light is generated by a pain too intense for them to bear. They cannot stand to look on the faces of the 2 million Jews murdered by the Romans, or the 1 million Jews murdered by the Christian Europeans, or the 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis. So instead they look at this one dead Jew, or this one would-be Jew, or this one ex-Jew, and they see the light that shines from the one. Yet it is from the many that the light comes, whose pale reflection they so adore.

There are innumerable histories of the Jewish people. Jews have been writing and reading histories of themselves for a long, long time.

This book is an attempt to show the relationship between Jewish history and its many reflections, particularly Christianity, Islam and Marxism. It seeks to make visible what has been invisible.

There are many dark stars in human history. The history of all oppressed peoples glows with a great light. Jewish history is unique only in that its reflection has been so widely perceived. There are literally billions of Christians, Muslims and Marxists in the world. All these billions of people are looking at the same reality, yet they do not see it. I want them to see what they are looking at.

The key to seeing the history of the Jewish people is to see it in a

strictly secular spmt. By secular, I mean realistic or objective or truthful, as opposed to religious or superstitious or dogmatic. True miracles result only from hard work. In reality, there are no such entities as "Adonai", "God" or "Allah". Babies come from sex; people are bodies who die; the universe is a great night filled with light.

Secular does not necessarily mean profane. Jewish history is filled with great beauty, strength and love. Yet when all is said and done, Jews are people like any others. We have our good points and bad, our high points and low. We were not "chosen" by any entity for any destiny, but evolved over time like everyone else.

Yet if the Jews were not "chosen" by an all-powerful entity for some special destiny, then why is Jewish history so widely reflected around the world? For the following reasons:

(1) Archaeologists have found evidence of agriculture in the Middle East dating back roughly 10,000 years. Elsewhere in the world, the earliest signs of agriculture appear only about 5,000 years ago.

The Middle East seems to have been the first place in the world where human beings developed agriculture; for up to 5,000 years, it may have been the only place.

(2) The central position of the Middle East in human history was further reinforced and heightened by its geographical location near the center of the Old World, at the point where Europe, Asia and Africa meet.

(3) The Jewish people is, if not unique, then at least unusual among peoples in that its earliest traditions are associated with runaway slaves. Since nations founded by runaway slaves are rare in human history, it is only natural that the laws and beliefs of such a nation should attract widespread attention.

(4) As is pointed out on page 31 of Volume 2 of The World History of the Jewish People, edited by Benjamin Mazar, the alphabet was first invented by Semitic miners in the Sinai desert. The Jews were among the first people in the world to use the alphabet and hence to write about themselves in a form that could be easily read. As a result of all these factors, the sheer volume of written material dealing directly or indirectly with Jewish history has grown to the point where it probably exceeds that devoted to the history of any other people.

Yet although Jewish history is widely reflected, it is not widely seen.

It is concealed by the myth of "God," by the myth of "Jesus," by the lies that Mohammed and Marx told to deny their debt to the Jews.

## Introduction

The world is filled with people who regard themselves as experts on the Jews, yet what they actually know of Jewish history is very little.

They know the Christian or the Muslim or the Marxist line on the Jews, but as to why all these movements should have found it necessary to evolve a line on the Jews, they have not an inkling.

For the most part, Jewish history has been studied realistically only by Jews. During the 20th century, there have appeared thousands of books, most of them by Jewish historians, covering every phase of Jewish history. Although some Jewish historians have shown themselves overly protective of certain ancient Hebrew myths when dealing with early Jewish history, on the whole Jewish historians have approached Jewish history in a truthful and realistic manner. The Jewish people, of all people, has a deep need to understand the truth about Jewish history. This book is primarily based on English language studies of Jewish history, most of them by Jewish writers.

This book is also based on a thorough study and analysis of the sacred texts of the Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Marxist creeds. These works are generally available in English. There is a rich vein of feeling which flows through many of these texts, a feeling of hope, determination and love. Yet these works also contain many distortions and inaccuracies, to say nothing of outright lies. I have tried to understand the authors of these works as real people, with hopes and fears like any others.

This book is also based on many years of struggle for a more democratic and egalitarian way of life in the United States. Democracy and equality are the great ideals of what might be called the Jewish-Christian-Muslim-Marxist tradition. I have tried to put these ideals into practice in my own life, as best I could. It is out of a concern for the future of democracy in the United States that I have written this book.

The movement for greater equality and democracy in the United States today is hampered by the lack of a more realistic understanding of Jewish history. Jewish history is an issue in American politics, yet Jewish history is generally understood only in terms of competing mythologies. Adherence to one or another of these mythologies divides and weakens the democratic movement. A more realistic understanding of Jewish history would also promote a more realistic understanding of Christianity, Islam and Marxism, thus helping to overcome divisions among people whose heart is basically in the same place.

I have tried to gear this book to the average reader. Because the

average reader ignores the footnotes, I have incorporated all references into the body of the text. If a reference is worth mentioning at all, it is worth mentioning where most people will find it. I have tried to include enough references so that the reader can check my sources, yet not so many as to distract from what I am trying to say.

In *The Way of the Sufi*, edited by Idries Shah, on page 108, appear the following lines from the poem, "Truth," by Jalaludin Rumi:

The Prophet said that Truth has declared:  
'I am not hidden in what is high or low  
Nor in the earth nor skies nor throne.  
This is certainty, O beloved:  
I am hidden in the heart of the faithful.  
If you seek me, seek in these hearts.'

On a certain level, the truth of Jewish history has been known and understood by many Christians, Muslims and Marxists for a long time. But for the most part, these people do not know what they know.

They feel it, but they don't see it.

They have never heard of Hannah Senesh, whose name is known to every school child in Israel. In *Hannah Senesh: Her Life & Diary*, on page 13, appear these lines from her writings:

There are stars whose radiance is visible on earth though they have long been extinct. There are people whose brilliance continues to light the world though they are no longer among the living. These lights are particularly bright when the night is dark. They light the way for Mankind.

Hannah Senesh was a young Israeli volunteer who parachuted into Eastern Europe during the Second World War as part of an effort to help organize a Jewish underground against the Nazis. She was captured and killed in Hungary in 1944. She is one of very literally millions upon millions of Jews who have given their lives in the world struggle for democracy and equality. To all those "whose brilliance continues to light the world though they are no longer among the living," this book is dedicated .

## Chapter One

### The Hebrew Revolution

Modern understanding of early Hebrew history is still shaped to a large degree by the myth of the "children of Israel".

According to the Torah-the first five books of the Christian "Bible"-the entire Hebrew nation was descended from a man named Israel. Israel was the son of Isaac who was the son of Abraham. Israel had 12 sons who became the fathers of the 12 Hebrew tribes .

When these tribes fled Egypt, they took a census and discovered that they included more than 600,000 men, plus uncounted women and children. This entire group was supposed to be composed of the "children of Israel".

Few today still assert the literal truth of every detail of this astonishing story. Modern writers assume that the number of Hebrews who fled from Egypt must have been much smaller than stated in the Torah. They do not insist that every single one of these Hebrews was descended from a man named Israel. Yet with surprisingly few exceptions, they do appear to believe that at least the great majority of the Hebrews who fled from Egypt were in fact descendants of men named Abraham, Isaac and Israel who had lived many generations before and had many children.

The pervasiveness of the myth of the "children of Israel" in the scholarly literature is shown by its presence in *When God Was A Woman* by Merlin Stone. Stone sees the early Hebrews as hard-core male supremacists. She considers it " ironic", on page 127, that Hitler killed so many Jews, since the Hebrews and the Nazis had so much in common. Yet Stone does not for a second question the blatantly patriarchal myth of the "children of Israel".

Stone's attitude towards the Torah tale of 600,000 men all descended from a single man is brought out very clearly in the following passage, from page 105 of *When God Was A Woman*:

Biblical scholars generally date Abraham at about 1800-1700 Be. But many of these same scholars assign Moses to about 1300 or 1250 Be. If we carefully trace the generations as listed in the Bible, however, we find that there are only seven generations between and including these two patriarchal figures. Five or even four hundred years seems a long time for seven generations. Since the dates on Moses are based on more historical evidence and lead more directly into the more historical accounts of Saul, David and Solomon, I would place Abraham at about 1550 Be. Placing Moses at 1300 BC, this would still allow more than forty years between each generation, which is more likely than the sixty to seventy years the other dates would suggest. Using these same biblical lists of generations, unless we assume that names were omitted, and allowing thirty-five to forty years for each generation, we find that even the primeval figure of Noah, who is only ten generations before Abraham, would be dated at about 2000-1900 BC, well within the time of the arrival of the Indo-Europeans into the Near East.

So far as Stone is concerned, the point of this analysis of "Biblical" generations is to lay the groundwork for her theory that the Hebrew "patriarchs" were actually Indo-Europeans or Aryans. But what she reveals in passing is that she too really believes that men named Abraham, Isaac and Israel had many children who eventually fled from slavery in Egypt.

Stone's faith in the myth of the "children of Israel" is all the more mysterious in the light of the position which this myth occupies within the Torah as a whole. It is no mere accident that Israel has so many children. It all goes back to Abraham, a childless man, who was promised many children in the land of Canaan by an invisible spirit.

It was precisely in order to demonstrate the power of the invisible spirit to deliver on this promise that the Torah insisted that no less than 600,000 Hebrew men fled from Egypt. Imagine that: 600,000 men all descended from 12 men descended from one man descended from another man, and yet another, and before him untold generations, always of men, always descended from each other, right back to the very first man, the creation of an invisible spirit named "He", and yet Stone never wonders what happened to all the women. Evidently she needs the Hebrews to be patriarchs, so that she can blame them for it.

Stone would never have swallowed the myth of the "children of Israel"

so easily were it not fed to her by the "Biblical scholars" whom she cites. Perhaps the leading authority among modern "Biblical scholars" is William Albright, author of numerous books and articles, including *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*. In this book and elsewhere, Albright has set forth a picture of Abraham and the other "patriarchs" as conducting caravans of donkeys across the deserts of the Middle East. Albright believes that their caravans eventually led them to Egypt, where their descendants were enslaved just as stated in the Torah. Philip Hitti, Sabatino Moscati and Roland de Vaux are some of the other leading "Biblical scholars" who do not even question the myth of the "children of Israel".

The reasons for this remarkable indulgence of a not very plausible story by scholars in the field are stated almost frankly in the authoritative *A History of the Jewish People* edited by Haim Ben-Sasson and originally published in Israel in 1969. The section on Hebrew origins is written by Abraham Malamat. After reviewing some of the objections which have been raised to the story of the "children of Israel",

Malamat continues:

The view adhered to here, in the present assessment of biblical tradition, is quite different. It is, of course, a moot point whether research into Israelite protohistory will ever go beyond the hypothetical stage.

Perhaps biblical tradition itself intended to pass on only the early Israelites' own conjectural conception of their national antecedents. Thus it is preferable to regard this tradition, a product of the innate historical consciousness with which the people of Israel was blessed, as a working hypothesis for any attempted reconstruction of the events. This view should certainly lead to a more positive evaluation, as does the approach of the Albright school-which has gained considerable momentum in the last generation-that much of biblical tradition may serve as an authentic historical basis for reconstructing Israelite protohistory. In this respect great importance must be attached to the deeply rooted Israelite belief that all the tribes of Israel derived from the same ancestry, for this postulate provides the rationale for a national organism that was eventually to encompass both banks of the Jordan, despite severe physical obstacles.

In other words, Malamat doesn't know if they were the "children of Israel", he doesn't even know if they knew, but he prefers to believe that they were because they preferred to believe this and won many battles on this account. This may be "Biblical", but is it scholarship?

As Malamat more or less admits, those who believe the story of the "children of Israel" do so because they wish to do so. Were the need to believe not so pressing, few could be found to credit this tale of 12 whole tribes of men all descended from the 12 sons of one father.

How could all 12 sons have so many descendants? How could all these descendants remain together in one group under conditions of slavery? How could they preserve their tribal organization intact under such conditions? And what happened to the women? Why didn't they have daughters as well as sons? Is it not apparent that the entire tale of the "children of Israel" is one big patriarchal phantasy?

The main weakness, not only of modern but also of ancient "Biblical scholarship", has been the difficulty experienced by the scholars in thinking realistically of the Hebrews as runaway slaves. Out of the whole Torah, the part about the Hebrews having been slaves is the least likely to have been invented. The stigma attached to slavery in the world is such that no people would care to present itself as a nation of runaway slaves unless it were true. But if the Hebrews really were slaves in Egypt, then they could not possibly have maintained themselves over generations of slavery as a nation of 12 distinct tribes. To one extent or another, they would have shared the fate of all slaves, to be dispersed, mixed up and moved around at the will of their owners. Any large group of slaves, such as the Torah describes fleeing Egypt, would have certainly been composed of people from many different families, tribes and even nations.

Even those few "Biblical scholars" who have questioned the legend of the "children of Israel" still cannot deal with the Hebrews as runaway slaves. Among the critics of the story of the "children of Israel", perhaps the best known is Martin Noth, author of *The History of Israel*. Noth, a German Protestant theologian, does not believe anything those sly Hebrews tell him. He thinks they were really "land-hungry semi-nomads" who peacefully infiltrated the largely uninhabited hill country of Canaan. There was no conquest of Canaan under Joshua, no gathering at Sinai under Moses, no large scale exodus from Egypt-and no "children of Israel" either. In contrast to the "Biblical scholars" who need to believe in the story of the "children of Israel", Noth and his followers, also predominately German Protestants, need to disbelieve in it. Neither the one nor the other can see the Hebrews in a realistic light as runaway slaves.

It is not hard to understand why a group of runaway slaves should want

to invent a pedigree for itself. The Torah presents the Hebrews not as they were but as they wished to be. It is precisely slaves who are the least likely of all people to remain one big family in a literal, biological sense over a long period of time. Just because it is the common experience of slaves to be divided and mixed up, it is easy to understand why a group of runaway slaves should have yearned for a secure family structure. The whole intent of the Torah was to bring such a structure into being. Projecting a patriarchal family structure into the Hebrew past was one means among many of achieving this intent.

### The Habiru

As Malamat among others has pointed out, the Torah almost always uses the term "children of Israel ", sometimes translated as " Israelites", when speaking of the Hebrews alone. It only uses the Hebrew word "Ivri", meaning "Hebrew", when speaking of the Hebrews in relation to others, as in the expression "Abraham the Hebrew" when speaking of Abraham in relation to the Egyptians. It is clear that the Hebrews preferred to call themselves "children of Israel" or "Israelites", but were known as Hebrews to others.

For nearly a century now, "Biblical scholars" have been discussing the possible relationship between the Hebrews or "Ivri" and a group of people whose name has been discovered on many ancient inscriptions unearthed by archaeologists in the Middle East. Many of these inscriptions are written in Accadian and speak of a group whose name is variously given in English by different writers as Habiru, Hapiru, Khabiru, Apiru or Epiru. Other inscriptions use another term, the Sumerian expression SA.GAZ, which was translated to mean Habiru in Hittite treaties written in both Accadian and Sumerian. This translation seems accurate, since the terms Habiru and SA.GAZ are used in very similar ways in the ancient inscriptions. Habiru was a Semitic word pronounced much like Hebrew.

Certain writers, such as Hitti in his History of Syria, have argued that the Habiru could not have been related to the Hebrews because Habiru does not sound like "Ivri". But as Moshe Greenberg shows in his article, "The Hab/piru", appearing in Volume 39 (1955) of the American Oriental Series, "Ivri", often pronounced "Ibri" , could easily have evolved from the Semitic root, "pr", found in most of

the forms of the word Habiru in the ancient inscriptions. Yet even Greenberg, although he rejects most of the arguments previously advanced against identifying the Habiru with the Hebrews, ends by concluding that the two groups probably were not the same.

The problem for the "Biblical scholars" with the Habiru is that they sound too much like runaway slaves and not enough like "patriarchs". Indeed, several inscriptions specifically state that the Habiru were runaway slaves. One such inscription appears on page 273 of Volume 1 of Pritchard's *The Ancient Near East*. It comes from a letter sent by the Egyptian puppet king of Jerusalem to the Egyptian court perhaps 100 years before the time of Moses. It reads in part:

All the governors are at peace, but there is war against me. I have become like an 'Apiru and do not see the two eyes of the king, my lord, for there is war against me. I have become like a ship in the midst of the sea! The arm of the mighty king conquers the land of Naharaim and the land of Cush, but now the 'Apiru capture the cities of the king. There is not a single governor remaining to the king, my lord—all have perished! Behold, Turbazu has been slain in the very gate of Sile, yet the king holds his peace. Behold Zimreda, the townsmen of Lachish have smitten him, slaves who had become 'Apiru .

Imagine that: a letter from the king of Jerusalem talking about slaves called Apiru in rebellion against Pharaoh just a short time before the Hebrew exodus is believed to have taken place, yet most "Biblical scholars" still cannot see any connection between the Habiru and the Hebrews.

Another inscription linking the Habiru with runaway slaves is cited by Albright in *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*. He states, on page 86:

We read in the tablets of Ugarit that escaped slaves had been accustomed to find asylum with the 'Apiru, preferably on the other side of the border between the Hittite empire proper and the vassal state of Ugarit. This practice was explicitly forbidden and runaway slaves had to be extradited.

Perhaps it was experiences of this kind which led the ancient Hebrews to state in the Torah, in Chapter 23 of the Book of Deuteronomy:

You shall not turn over to his master a slave who seeks refuge with you from his master. He shall live with you in any place he may choose among the settlements in your midst, wherever he pleases; you must not ill-treat him.

A link between the Habiru and runaway slaves is also suggested by texts cited by Greenberg in his article, "The Hab/piru". Greenberg speaks on page 64 of an "aspect of the SA.GAZ groups which is quite marked in the EI-Amarna texts: their hospitality to fugitives. Such hospitality is most naturally explained by assuming that their own group was composed at least in part of similar elements."

Most of the references to the Habiru in the ancient inscriptions convey the impression that they were a group composed primarily of men which lived on the outskirts of the more heavily settled parts of the Middle East. Certain inscriptions refer to them as "troops" and speak of them as if they constituted a serious military force. Other inscriptions refer to Habiru hiring themselves out as day laborers, or selling themselves back into slavery, or picking grapes. The Habiru were found in many areas, sometimes forming a large part of the population, sometimes only a small minority. Greenberg, who has studied them more closely than anyone, concludes: "There does not appear to be any evidence for their desert origin or beduin status."

He sees them, undoubtedly correctly, as fugitives from the more settled areas. Probably a large proportion of these fugitives were runaway slaves.

The clearest indication that the Hebrews were Habiru is provided by inscriptions actually referring to Habiru being carried away into slavery in Egypt by Egyptian invaders of Canaan. One such inscription, cited by John Gray in *The Canaanites*, mentions 3,600 "Apiru" carried off to Egypt from Canaan by the victorious armies of Pharaoh Amenhotep 2. Yet Gray, who cites this inscription, nonetheless believes that the "Khabiru", as he calls them, were "predominately Semitic, land-hungry invaders from the Eastern steppes", who had no relationship whatsoever to the ancient Hebrews. Gray does not mention another inscription, cited by Malamat on page 42 of *A History of the Jewish People*, which dates from the time of Pharaoh Ramses 2 and contains the line: "Distribute grain rations to the soldiers and to the 'Apiru who transport stones to the great pylon of

Ramses." A pylon was part of an Egyptian temple; Ramses 2 was probably the Pharaoh of Egypt under whom Moses was born.

In the light of this evidence, there can be little doubt that the Hebrews were Habiru. The "Biblical scholars" would have come to this conclusion long ago were it not for the fact that it conflicts with the myth of the "children of Israel". In place of the one big family depicted in the Torah, it conjures up an image of scattered bands of runaway slaves and other fugitives gradually organizing themselves into a nation on the soil of Canaan. Many of the "Biblical scholars" have incorporated elements of this image into their picture of early Hebrew history, but always in a distorted form, due to the difficulty which they experience in trying to think realistically about runaway slaves.

Perhaps the closest thing to a realistic image of Hebrew origins yet produced by the "Biblical scholars" is to be found in *The Tenth Generation* by George Mendenhall. Mendenhall devotes an entire chapter to "The 'Apiru Movements in the Late Bronze Age", concluding: The designation Ivri for the Israelites is then the last preserved usage of a term which had applied to any number of stateless persons and groups in the second millennium B.C. It came to be applied to Israel because there was a continuity in pre-Israelite tradition and history of refusal by villagers and shepherds to become assimilated to the existing political organizations in whose environs they lived. When the political empire became intolerable and unable to preserve order, they withdrew from all obligation and relationship to it in favor of another nonpolitical overlord (whose obligations were of an entirely different and functional order).

But although Mendenhall treats the Hebrews as Habiru, he cannot quite bring himself to think of them as runaway slaves. He prefers to imagine "villagers and shepherds" coming together in a "nonpolitical" organization. Mendenhall does not even attempt to deal with the many inscriptions which make the Habiru look like plain old bandits.

All these mysterious "villagers", "shepherds", "semi-nomads" and "donkey caravaneers" are just so many evasions of the conclusion clearly indicated by the evidence that the Habiru were primarily fugitives, particularly fugitive slaves. In order to survive, they often had to fight. Whether they became bandits or mercenaries or hired laborers depended on circumstances. What they had in common was that they

were predominately men, predominately Semitic and predominately fugitives. They formed a well known class of people in the Middle East for many centuries before the time of Moses. Mendenhall, who is close to the truth, asserts it in denying it when he states on page 17 of *The Tenth Generation* that the clash between the Hebrews and the rulers of Canaan was 'neither a race war nor a class war' but a "revolution". It was a revolution, but just on this account, it was also a class war and perhaps something of a "race war" too.

Although the Habiru were found in many different parts of the Middle East, they were all Semitic-speaking. Greenberg is probably correct in suggesting a close link between the Habiru and the Amorites.

Greenberg thinks the Habiru originated as the "economically destitute" Amorites in Canaan, Iraq and Syria. On the other hand, many of the aristocrats in Canaan, as in other parts of the Middle East, were of Aryan or Indo-European origin. Many of the Egyptian puppet kings in Canaan whose letters to the Pharaoh refer to the Habiru have Indo-European names. By the time of Moses, Indo-Europeans such as the Hittites and Hurrians were well established in Canaan, often in dominant roles.

Class and "race" were linked in the Middle East by the fact that the Indo-Europeans as a group had much better access to horses and iron weapons than any Middle Eastern people. Armed increasingly with iron weapons and riding in war chariots drawn by horses, Indo-European groups like the Hittites and Hurrians came to form a landed aristocracy in many parts of the Middle East, lording it over the Semitic peoples native to the region. This was true to some extent even in Egypt, where Indo-European chariot troops figured prominently in the invasion and conquest of Egypt by the Hyksos about 500 years before the time of Moses. The kings and military aristocracy of the Canaanite city-states overthrown by the Hebrews were at least in part of Indo-European origin, whereas the Hebrews were overwhelmingly Semites of the "economically destitute" variety.

### Shechem

Among the letters contained in the Egyptian royal archives found at Tell al-Amarna and dating from perhaps 100 years before the time of Moses is one sent by the Egyptian puppet king of Jerusalem, Abdu Heba, to the

Pharaoh of Egypt, complaining about the lack of sufficient Egyptian support for pro-Egyptian elements in Canaan such as himself. Unless the Egyptians come to the aid of their friends, Abdu-Heba warns, they cannot expect them to remain loyal. He goes on to threaten: "Now shall we do as Lab'ayu, who gave the land of Shechem to the 'Apiru?" The entire letter is reproduced in an appendix to Shechem, by G. Ernest Wright.

Even if there did not exist dozens of other references pointing in the same direction, this one sentence would be sufficient to establish a clear connection between the Hebrews and the Habiru. The "land of Shechem", which Abdu-Heba claimed was given by Lab'ayu to the Habiru, contained what was undoubtedly the most holy and revered shrine of the early Hebrews . In the Torah, it is stated that Abraham first arrived at Shechem when he came to Canaan, that the invisible spirit appeared to him there and that he built a shrine to the spirit there. The whole story of Abraham, Isaac, Israel and the 12 sons of Israel, particularly Joseph, revolves around Shechem. Excavations carried out by Wright and others at the site of ancient Shechem in Israel have shown that a religious shrine of some kind did in fact exist there.

In later centuries, Shechem was the place where the first kings of Israel were crowned. Abimelech, the very first would-be king of the Hebrews, was proclaimed king by the people of Shechem. After David established Jerusalem as the new capital of the Hebrew nation, David's grandson Rehoboam was still forced to return to Shechem to be acclaimed as king by the Hebrew tribes. When Jeroboam was proclaimed king by the 10 tribes in rebellion against the rule of Rehoboam, he too was crowned king at Shechem. Shechem was the first capital of the kingdom of Israel, and after the capital of Israel was moved to Samaria, Shechem was still revered as a holy site by the Samaritans. The small Samaritan community which has always maintained itself in this region lives today on the outskirts of Nablus very close to the site of ancient Shechem.

In the light of this evidence of a deep and enduring attachment to Shechem in Hebrew tradition, it is astonishing that the "Biblical scholars" have given such little weight to Abdu-Heba's letter threatening to do like Lab'ayu, "who gave the land of Shechem to the 'Apiru". Wright, who wrote a whole book about Shechem, nonetheless concluded that the Hebrews could not have been Habiru, "for the 'Apiru are local foreign

groups of various kinds within the country- e.g. mercenaries who fail to receive their pay-who cause trouble and become a symbol of disloyalty to Pharaoh. "As if the Hebrews were not "a symbol of disloyalty to Pharaoh"! And Edward Campbell, who wrote the appendix to Wright's book, devoted a whole article on "The Amarna Letters and the Amarna Period", in the *Biblical Archaeologist*, Volume 23 (1960), to coming to the same conclusion for the opposite reason, namely that "the 'Apiru are not a foreign element in the land, coming from outside, but an indigenous element, and therefore not the Israelites coming from the desert". Most "Biblical scholars" avoid these contortions by ignoring Abdu-Heba's letter altogether.

It is not as if Lab'ayu were a total unknown either. Albright, who refers to him in passing as a Habiru chieftain in Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan, says that his name means "Lion Man". Lab'ayu is mentioned in many of the letters found at Tell al-Amarna and there are even three letters from Lab'ayu himself to Pharaoh. Campbell, in his article in the *Biblical Archaeologist*, calls Lab'ayu "a real scoundrel" and finds his letters to Pharaoh "rather cheeky". In them, Lab'ayu tries to defend himself against charges of associating with the Habiru, stating:

Further, the king has written concerning my son. I did not know that my son was associating with the 'Apiru. Other letters portray Lab'ayu leading an anti-Egyptian uprising in Canaan, Lab'ayu captured by Egyptian agents, Lab'ayu escaping and the sons of Lab'ayu aiding the Habiru.

The uprising which Lab'ayu and his sons helped to lead in Canaan is well documented . It took place during the middle of the 14th century BCE (Before the Common Era) and resulted in the virtual overthrow of Egyptian rule in Canaan for a period of several decades. But by the end of the 14th century, Egyptian troops were back in Canaan.

During the long reign of the Pharaoh Ramses 2, from 1290 to 1224 BCE, Canaan was once more under Egyptian rule. In 1224, a new Pharaoh named Merneptah came to the throne. Around 1220 BCE, Merneptah had made an inscription proclaiming various alleged victories, including the destruction of " Israel". It seems very likely that this inscription was the Egyptian version of the events leading up to the Hebrew exodus,

which took place at the beginning of Merneptah's reign around 1224 BCE.

Many indications point to Merneptah. In the Torah, the old Pharaoh dies and a new Pharaoh comes to power just before the exodus begins. Rebellions often break out following the death of aging tyrants, such as Ramses 2, who ruled Egypt for more than 60 years. There is no mention in the Book of Joshua of the Hebrews encountering Egyptian troops during their conquest of Canaan, making it appear that the Hebrews only entered Canaan after Egyptian rule there was already collapsing. Egyptian rule in Canaan began to collapse during the reign of Merneptah, with the last Egyptian troops leaving Canaan by around 1190 BCE. A mass escape of Habiru slaves from Egypt just after the death of Ramses 2 and the accession of Merneptah is strongly indicated by the evidence, including archaeological findings, which show destruction of many cities in Canaan between 1250 and 1200 BCE.

Taken together, the Torah and the Tell al-Amarna letters convey the image of a process stretching over a period of perhaps 150 years, from roughly 1375 to 1225 BCE, beginning with the establishment of Shechem as a Habiru homeland and ending with the escape of Habiru prisoners from Egypt with the intention of returning to Shechem. No doubt Shechem was held for a time by the Habiru in alliance with Lab'ayu. Although Albright calls him a Habiru chieftain, most of the Tell al-Amarna letters give the impression that Lab'ayu was a recognized Canaanite official of some kind who made common cause with the Habiru in opposition to the Egyptians. Later, after Shechem had fallen to the Egyptians and many of the Habiru had been carried off to Egypt as slaves, Lab'ayu's recognition of Shechem as a Habiru homeland was preserved in Habiru tradition in the form of the legend of Abraham and the "patriarchs".

Only a minority, perhaps a small minority, of the Habiru who fled from Egypt around 1225 BCE could have been descended from the Habiru who had held Shechem 100 or 150 years earlier. Habiru were frequently taken back to Egypt from Canaan as prisoners during the period of roughly 350 years of Egyptian rule in Canaan. Most of the Habiru held in Egypt in 1225 BCE would have been either recent captives or descendants of earlier Habiru prisoners other than the ones that may have been taken from Shechem. But since Shechem was the closest thing to a recognized homeland that any of the Habiru had, all of the

Habim held in Egypt evidently came to think of themselves as the "children" of the Habim of Shechem.

No doubt the emergence of Shechem as a Habim center by perhaps 1375 BCE was the result of a long historical process stretching back even further in time. Greenberg speaks of an unusually large concentration of Habim in the whole Syrian region already in the 15th century BCE. Hittite texts from this same period make reference to the "gods of the Habiru". Over centuries of struggle, a tradition of shared values and beliefs must have taken shape among the Habim of the Middle East. By the middle of the 14th century, this tradition had coalesced around Shechem as the citadel of the Habim. Perhaps the Habim already thought of Shechem as their homeland even before Lab'ayu "gave" it to them. Whatever the exact details, the basic process is clear. What the Torah portrays in the form of the legend of the "children of Israel" was in fact a broad social process of the transformation of a class into a nation.

## Yahweh

Nothing is so typical of modern "Biblical scholarship" as the term Yahweh. Albright uses it right in the title of his *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*. Mendenhall defines the early Hebrew nation as the community of those who accepted the authority of Yahweh rather than the authority of the state. Stone bases her theory of the Aryan origins of the Hebrews on an attempt to show how the word Yahweh might have evolved from an Aryan word for flowing lava. Yahweh is the code word by which the "Biblical scholars" recognize one another and accord each other the status of "Biblical scholar". They are virtually the only ones in the world who use this term, which they themselves invented.

Yahweh is the modern "scholarly" version of the term Jehovah, which was in its day the last word of the original "Biblical scholars", the early Protestants. The "Bible" is a Protestant concept. The first "Bibles" were put together by the first European printers in the late 15th century of the Common Era in order to provide the Protestant movement of that day with a combined edition of the Jewish "Holy Scriptures" and the Roman Catholic "New Testament". To this day, the term "Bible" retains the implication of a combined edition of the so-called "Old Testament"

and "New Testament". Implicit in the very term, "Biblical scholar", is a tendency to approach early Hebrew history from a "New Testament" point of view.

This tendency is nowhere more evident than in the cult of Yahweh so favored by the modern "Biblical scholars". Both Yahweh and Jehovah are Protestant translations of the Hebrew expression YHWH.

This is the expression which is most commonly used in the Torah to describe the invisible spirit which the Roman Catholics had called "Deus" or "God". The early Protestants believed that the expression YHWH was pronounced Jehovah by the Hebrews, and many of them came to use this term in preference to the Roman Catholic "Deus" or "God". But during the last 100 years or so, the "Biblical scholars" have decided that YHWH was actually pronounced Yahweh rather than Jehovah. They love to say Yahweh, believing this makes them more "scholarly" than the other Protestants and more "Biblical" than the Catholics. Today, many Catholic and even Jewish writers, in an effort to be recognized as "Biblical scholars", also say Yahweh.

As the "Biblical scholars" well know but rarely mention, the Hebrew expression YHWH was actually not a word at all but rather a symbol for a Hebrew sentence. The sentence for which it stands is "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh", meaning "I am that I am". This sentence appears in the Torah in Chapter 3 of the Book of Exodus as the response of the invisible spirit to Moses, who seeks to learn its name.

The relevant passage is translated as follows in the edition of the Torah issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America:

Moses said to God, "When I come to the Israelites and say to them 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?', what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh." He continued, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh' sent me to you.'"

In a footnote, the editors suggest various translations for "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh" and "Ehyeh", beginning with "I am that I am" and "I am".

Morris Seale also opts for "I am that I am" and "I am" after a long discussion of possible alternatives in *The Desert Bible*.

Wherever the expression YHWH appears in the Torah, it is intended to stand as a symbol for the full sentence, "I am that I am", or more simply,

"I am". It is incredible that, knowing this, the "Biblical scholars" can still persist in priding themselves on figuring out how YHWH was pronounced. What makes them think that it was pronounced as a word at all? Because a few Gnostic wisecracks, who had nothing but contempt for the Jewish people, used it as a word in Greek? Save for a few passages in Greek, there is not the slightest evidence that the Hebrews ever pronounced YHWH as a word, whether as Jehovah or Yahweh or any other. To the contrary, there is every indication that YHWH was pronounced not as a word but, if it was pronounced at all, in the form of the full sentence, "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh", or more simply, as "Ehyeh". As the "Biblical scholars" also know but rarely mention, there existed a heavy taboo in later Jewish culture against pronouncing the term YHWH in any form. In most ceremonies, it became customary to substitute the expression "Adonai", usually translated as "Lord" and in fact derived from an ancient Semitic word for lord or master, for YHWH. Special marks were written in to instruct readers to say " Adonai" for YHWH. It was these marks which led the early Protestants to conclude that YHWH was spoken as Jehovah. The modern "Biblical scholars" pride themselves on pronouncing YHWH without the marks, forgetting or pretending to forget that the whole point of the marks was to avoid pronouncing YHWH at all.

The taboo against pronouncing YHWH is as hard to understand concerning a word like Yahweh, which has no meaning in Hebrew, as it is easy to understand concerning a statement such as "I am that I am", which cannot be spoken out loud without the speaker assuming the identity of the invisible spirit whose name it is supposed to be. It was the heavy implications of assuming the identity of the invisible spirit which led to the taboo against saying YHWH out loud in later Jewish culture. This taboo is preserved in a much stronger form by the "Biblical scholars", who have suppressed their own awareness of the original meaning of YHWH by obsessively repeating the meaningless phrase Yahweh on every other line.

Although they would not say YHWH out loud, later generations of Jewish writers at least retained an awareness of the meaning of the term. In *The Jewish Mystical Tradition*, edited by Ben Zion Bokser, appears on page 110 the following selection from the work of Joseph Gikatilla, who was born in the 13th century CE (Common Era) in Spain:

Know that all His holy names mentioned in the Torah are all dependent on the four letter name, YHWH. You might ask, Is not the name eheyeh the basis and the source of all? Then know that the four letter name is like the body of the tree, while the name eheyeh is the root of the tree, from which more roots spread and branches reach out on all sides. All other holy names are all like branches and leaves that spread from the body of the tree, and each of the branches bears its own fru it.

Gikatilla specifically states that the Hebrew word "Ehyeh", meaning "I am", is the "root" of the "holy name" , YHWH. In GikatiIIa's metaphor, the Protestant holy name Yahweh would appear as a distant branch of the tree, bearing a strange and poisonous fruit.

It was not by mere chance that the Hebrews contrived the name, " I am that I am", for their invisible spirit. This name reflects the same point of view as the ban on graven images of the spirit in the Ten Commandments. A name is also a kind of image. The clear sense of the passage in which the invisible spirit replies, " I am that I am", to Moses, is that the spirit does not wish to name itself. This same refusal to define the spirit in any way was also incorporated into the Hebrew temple in Jerusalem, whose "Holy of Holies" contained nothing at all.

Idolatry arose in Hebrew culture with the practice of referring to YHWH as "He" . This made it easy to slide over into substituting male names such as "Adonai" or "Elohim" for YHWH, which was not really a male name at all. But the Christians have an even greater need to conceive of YHWH as a male name, for they need "Him" to be a father. That is why the "Biblical scholars" are so devoted to Yahweh, who has become the last line of defense of Protestant theology in its efforts to preserve some remnant of the Roman Catholic " God the Father".

Why did the Hebrews worship a nameless, faceless spirit in an empty temple? Were they not trying to say: do not worship a part, worship only the whole? And did they not say this because they had already experienced worship of idols as oppressive? Were they not the very ones who had dragged the stones to build the temple for the Egyptians to worship an image of Ramses 2? In the eyes of the Hebrews, worship of idols must have been closely associated with the upper classes of Egyptian and Canaanite society. In rejecting idols, they were rejecting the very symbol and banner of the official society of their day. The ban on idolatry upheld so strongly in Hebrew culture was a

revolutionary ideology preached by ex-slaves in conscious opposition to the dominant religious culture of the Egyptian and Canaanite upper classes.

## Moses

According to the Torah, the laws of the new Hebrew nation were derived from the teachings of a man called Moses. Moses in the Torah is portrayed as a child of Hebrew birth who is raised by the Egyptians and then later forces Pharaoh to let the Hebrews escape from bondage. The name Moses is derived from an Egyptian word for son or child, which appears in the name of many of the Egyptian Pharaohs, such as Ramses, which is the Greek form of the Egyptian Ramose, meaning "Son of Ra". Many of the names of the members of the family of Moses as given in the Torah are also of Egyptian origin.

Moses was clearly an Egyptian, and since the story of his birth as given in the Torah is very similar to an earlier story of the birth of Sargon, it seems likely that the Torah story was invented, both to boost the prestige of Moses and to conceal the fact that he was of Egyptian birth. Moses could easily have been of Semitic origin, as were many Egyptians, but there is little reason to believe that he was born of Hebrew parents. In real life, the abandoned children of slaves are seldom raised by royalty, wherever they might be found. Moses seems to have become a Hebrew in the same way as the other Hebrews, by becoming a fugitive. According to the Torah, after killing an Egyptian overseer of Hebrew slaves, Moses fled into the Sinai desert, where he lived for many years. It is easy to imagine Moses as a young Egyptian fugitive in the Sinai making contact with the Habiru bands that were active in this area. In the Torah, Moses is described as slow of speech. Perhaps this was due to the fact that he only learned Hebrew in the Sinai, Egyptian having been his native language.

In Hebrew tradition, Moses became known above all as the "Lawgiver". It seems likely that there was some relationship between the Egyptian background of Moses and his role as "Lawgiver".

Moses, prior to his flight into the Sinai, seems to have belonged to the Egyptian upper classes. Perhaps he was already accustomed to command as an Egyptian. As a fugitive and rebel, he obviously rejected much of official Egyptian culture, yet still retained something

of his earlier attitude of authority. It must have been just this combination of rebellious and authoritarian attitudes which enabled Moses to play the role of "Lawgiver". The Torah gives the impression that the Hebrews were both intimidated by and suspicious of Moses, whose claim to authority was constantly being challenged by them in one manner or another, no doubt in part because of his Egyptian background. Obviously the circumstances surrounding the exodus from Egypt must have been far less miraculous in real life than as portrayed in the Torah. A number of factors-the death of Ramses 2, unrest in Egypt and Canaan, Habiru bands already in the Sinai-must have come together to create a situation in which a successful escape of Habiru slaves from Egypt became possible. There is no reason to doubt the main outlines of the Hebrew tradition of the exodus from Egypt, wandering in the Sinai and invasion of Canaan. That 600,000 men wandered for 40 years is not possible, but that many thousands escaped and wandered for some years is entirely plausible. Almost certainly, the Habiru who escaped from Egypt were soon joined by other Habiru bands. When their numbers became large enough, they invaded Canaan, determined to regain the homeland which had been promised to them so long ago.

There was very likely also a real basis for the legend of the handing down of the Law in the Sinai. In *Moses: The Man and his Vision*, on page 51, David Daiches notes: "The Bible repeatedly calls the Midianites 'Kenites', which apparently means 'belonging to the coppersmiths'."

The Midianites or "coppersmiths" lived in the Sinai. In the Torah, they play a key role in the process leading to the handing down of the Law. The Midianites were the main allies of Moses. Jethro, a Midianite priest, sheltered Moses as a fugitive in the Sinai and allowed him to marry his daughter, Zipporah. After Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt, he returned to Jethro, who again aided him. It was immediately after leaving Jethro that Moses in the Torah went up to the mountain and received the Law. While with Jethro, it is said that Moses "sat as magistrate among the people".

A real basis for the involvement of the Kenites in the Hebrew legend of the handing down of the Law is suggested by the fact that alphabetical writing was developed by miners in the Sinai. The point of the story of the handing down of the Law was that the Law was supposed to have been written down on stone tablets. And who did

the writing? Very likely the Kenites. As "coppersmiths", they would have been closely linked to the miners in the Sinai, who were mainly Semites working for the Egyptians. Nor could there have been any great difference-between the Semitic metal workers and miners in the Sinai and the Semitic fugitives held as slaves in Egypt. Both groups seem to have spoken the same language and shared much the same condition of life.

This condition was reflected in the Torah. Torah means Law. The Torah was understood by the Hebrews above all as a code of law; and as a code of law, it was, as Albright recognizes on page 181 of *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* , "the most humanitarian of all known bodies of laws before recent times". It was the only law code of its time to legislate against enslavement for debt, against mistreatment of hired laborers, against returning runaway slaves . It stipulated that every 50 years, in the Year of the Jubilee, all persons or their descendants who had lost their land through debt would regain it. And unlike most other law codes until recent times, it decreed the same law for all, making no distinction between "patricians" and "plebeians". The Hebrew Revolution was the struggle to establish the "laws of Moses" as the constitution of Canaan. Only some of the laws eventually included in the written Torah could have actually been drawn up by Moses and his followers. Some were already no doubt recognized Hebrew customs; others were only added in later times . The great contribution of Moses to the Hebrew Revolution lay not so much in this or that law as it did in the concept of the Law as the basis of Hebrew unity. It was this concept that completed the transition from class to nation. Already as a class, the Habiru had their own values, beliefs and even "gods". But in order to become a nation, they needed to elevate their values and beliefs to the level of a legal code. Although Moses in real life could not have played quite so dominant a role in this process as the Torah suggests, he was undoubtedly a powerful leader whose concept of the Law had a great influence on the Hebrews.

But if the Hebrew nation grew out of the Habiru class, why did this nation take shape in Canaan? Why should the Habiru have been so strong in Canaan, as opposed to other parts of the Middle East? What was so special about Canaan?

The term Canaan is derived from the Semitic word "kinahhu" ,

which was the name of a purple dye obtained from a species of shellfish found along the coast of Canaan. According to John Gray in *The Canaanites*, the terms Canaan and Canaanite as originally used "denote a culture rather than a distinct ethnic group". The culture was that of the Semitic people who lived on the coastal plain, mainly by farming.

Within the Middle East as a whole, Canaan was the main point of contact between Egyptians and Semites. This was particularly true during the 2nd millennium BCE, for Canaan was under Egyptian rule for much of this time. Claimed by the Egyptians yet predominately Semitic rather than Egyptian in culture, Canaan was an area in which both Egyptian and Semitic political authority was weak.

Because it was a coastal plain, Canaan did not rapidly develop a strong regional identity of its own. Prior to the rise of the Hebrew state, there had not existed any other purely Canaanite state. Canaan was broken up into a number of small city-states or kingdoms, whose territory was also claimed by various competing empires. Not only Egyptian and Babylonian but also Indo-European imperialists, such as the Hittites and later Sea Peoples, were constantly striving to conquer Canaan. Easy of access both from north and south and from the sea, Canaan was a region in which many conflicting versions of political authority sought to impose themselves, without anyone version achieving dominance.

The absence of a strong state power was undoubtedly the major reason for the growth of the Hebrew nation in this particular region. Political instability promoted the Hebrew cause on many levels. The constant wars and invasions in this region were at least partially responsible for the large number of fugitives found there. These same wars and invasions also made it impossible for any Canaanite state to arise, such as might have held the Habiru in check. When the Hebrews did move to establish themselves as the government of Canaan, their many rivals were unable to unite against them. Shechem, located in the hill country between the coastal plain and the desert, was a natural gathering point for the Habiru of the region. From Shechem, they could move down into the coastal plain if they were strong enough, or retreat into the desert if they were not.

The great majority of Hebrews who invaded Canaan towards the end of the 13th century BCE had to be of Canaanite descent. All authorities are agreed that the Hebrews and Canaanites spoke the same

## The Hebrew Revolution

language . Most Habiru in the region of Canaan were fugitives from Canaan itself. They were Canaanites in language, culture and physical appearance, but centuries of struggle as fugitives from the state had set them apart from the rest of Canaanite society. In the language of modern politics, the Hebrews who entered Canaan around 1220 BCE would be called a revolutionary army of national liberation. The leading element within the Hebrew army of liberation was made up of the Hebrews who had escaped from Egypt. They assumed the leadership in part because of the great daring and prestige of their escape, in part because of the concept of the Law which they brought with them out of the Sinai.

The Law defined the Hebrews as a nation , not a class. Their class differences from the other Canaanites were portrayed as national differences.

The legend of the "children of Israel" served this same purpose. In the Torah, everything is done from beginning to end to build up an image of the Hebrew people as one big family of endless generations of fathers and sons . But in this era of worldwide wars of national liberation, it is no longer such a great embarrassment to be a Habiru. The time has come for the world to acknowledge that the Hebrew Revolution, to which it has long paid such reverent tribute, was a real revolution led by real ex-slaves.

## Chapter Two

### Semitism

Much has been written of anti-Semitism but little of Semitism. Does Semitism exist? Is there a Semitic people, a Semitic history, a Semitic ideology?

The term, Semitic, was coined in 1781 by the German writer Schl5zer to describe a group of related languages of Middle Eastern origin. The term came into general use in Europe in the 19th century, reflecting the growing European awareness that Hebrew and Arabic belonged to a larger, Semitic family of languages which had been spoken in the Middle East in ancient times.

From the start, the European usage of the concept of Semitic also served a definite polemical purpose. In Orientalism, Edward Said shows that even on the scholarly level, most of the early European writers on Semitism were rabid anti-Semites. In practice, the term Semite was used primarily with reference to Jews. It served as a constant reminder of the non-European origin of the European Jews and formed a part of the anti-Semitic campaign to brand the European Jews as "racially" alien to Europe. European Jews who were at all Middle Eastern in appearance came to be considered "Semitic" looking, while Europeans who looked Nordic or Slavic were said to appear "Aryan". These "racial" stereotypes had little basis in the actual physical appearance of the ancient Semitic-speaking and Aryan-speaking peoples, which may not have been that different.

The term Semite was derived by the Europeans from the name of Shem, one of the three sons of Noah in the Hebrew Book of Genesis. The three sons of Noah-Shem, Ham and Japheth-are treated in the Book of Genesis as the ancestors of the nations known to the ancient Hebrews. Since the Hebrews believed themselves descended from Shem, the Europeans called them Semites. At the same time, they also coined the term Hamite, which they applied to a group of ancient African languages, including Berber, Egyptian and Cushitic. This usage

was based on the fact that the ancient Cushites are described in the Book of Genesis as the descendants of Ham.

The European distinction between Semitic and Hamitic peoples was not derived from the system of classification used by the Hebrews in the Book of Genesis. In the original Hebrew system, the Elamites, who did not speak a Semitic language, were nonetheless listed among the descendants of Shem. Many of the peoples who did speak a Semitic language were listed by the Hebrews as descendants of Ham. The Accadians and Babylonians, who were both Semitic-speaking, were listed by the Hebrews as descendants not only of Ham but of Cush, Ham's son. Whereas the Europeans treated Ham and Cush as code words for African, the Hebrews made no such distinction.

In Volume I of *The World History of the Jewish People*, E.A.

Speiser argues that the ancient languages classified by the Europeans as Hamitic and Semitic had a common origin. Speiser speculates that the original "Hamito-Semitic" language arose in North Africa, from where it later branched into distinct Hamitic and Semitic tongues.

Among the Semitic languages of antiquity, in addition to Hebrew and Arabic, were the ancient languages of Iraq (Accadian), Syria (Aramaic), Lebanon (Phoenician) and Ethiopia (Ge'ez). Speiser notes on page 139 that ancient Accadian, the oldest known Semitic language, was also the most similar to the Hamitic languages, lending substance to the assertion in the Book of Genesis that the Accadians were descended from the Cushites.

However the Semitic languages may have arisen, they did exist.

Long before the emergence of Arabic as the main Semitic language of the Middle East, some form of Semitic was already widely spoken and written throughout the Middle East. People who share a common language usually also share other cultural traditions as well. However difficult it might be to describe accurately, there did exist something like a Semitic nation of antiquity. The origins of Semitism lie buried in the unwritten history of this nation.

## Accad

Although the Europeans developed the concept of Semite, they have shown little interest in applying it to the history of the ancient Middle East. Having established that the Jews were of Semitic descent, they seem to have had no further use for the concept of Semitic, and in

particular for the concept of a Semitic nation. With a few exceptions, such as W. Robertson Smith's *The Religion of the Semites*, European historians of the ancient Middle East never discuss the Semites as a group but only individual Semitic peoples, who are always depicted in rivalry with one another. Indicative of the general lack of scholarly interest in Semitism is the low profile of Accadian studies in the historiography of the ancient Middle East. Sabatino Moscati in *The Face of the Ancient Orient* is typical in devoting 2 pages to the empire of Accad out of his entire book. There are numerous works in every library on the Sumerians, the Babylonians and the Assyrians but few if any on the Accadians.

Yet Accadian was the main language of Iraq under Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians alike. It was also the main written language of the entire Middle East for a period of more than 1,000 years. Throughout the 2nd millennium BCE most inscriptions in Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon and Israel were written in clay tablets in Accadian cuneiform hieroglyphics. Even in Egypt, in the royal archives unearthed at Tell al-Amarna dating from the 14th century BCE, some scribes wrote in Accadian.

The widespread use of Accadian as a written language in the Middle East dates from the rise of the empire of Accad around 2350 BCE. At its height, the empire of Accad embraced the greater part of the region in which Accadian was later adopted as a written language. It was centered in Iraq but reached as far as Egypt. It was the first Semitic empire, and just for this reason most historians of the Middle East tend to ignore it. Although Iraq for thousands of years was known as the "land of Sumer and Accad", historians of the ancient Middle East usually call it "Mesopotamia", which was an Indo-European term. The historians do not recognize the empire of Accad, but only Sumerians, Assyrians and Babylonians ruling over "Mesopotamia".

As Samuel Kramer shows in *The Sumerians*, Accadian was the main spoken language of Iraq even under Sumerian rule. The Sumerians were invaders who entered Iraq, around 3500 BCE according to Kramer, and founded a number of city-states in which Sumerian was used as a written language, beginning around 3000 BCE. Yet Semites were already living in Iraq when the Sumerians arrived, so that, as Kramer puts it on page 42, "as a result of the cross-fertilization of their two cultures, there came into being the first relatively high civilization in Sumer, one in which the Semitic element was probably predominant". A high percentage of the kings in the Sumerian king lists have

## Semitism

Semitic names . Even under Sumerian rule, Accadian was the main "spoken language, with Sumerian used primarily as a written language and only in southern Iraq as a spoken one as well.

Sumerian rule in Iraq was overthrown around 2350 BeE by Semites led by Sargon of Accad. Sargon fostered the use of Accadian in" lead of Sumerian as a written language and made war on the ruling elites of the Sumerian city-states. There is more than a hint in the ancient inscriptions that the rise of Accad under Sargon was also something of a social revolution. On page 287 of *The Sumerians*, Kramer notes that the Sumerians spoke of the "Martu", Semitic nomads, "as of a slavish, servile disposition". The upper classes of the Sumerian city-states seem to have prided themselves on their Sumerian descent, whether real or imagined, while the lower classes seem to have been Semitic-identified.

Sargon, founder of the empire of Accad, was of lower class background. In *The Ancient Near East*, edited by James Pritchard, on page 85 of Volume 1, appears the text of an inscription written by Sargon himself. It has a strangely familiar ring:

Sargon, the mighty king, king of Agade, am I.

My mother was a changeling, my father [ knew not.

The brothers of my father loved the hills .

My city is Azupiranu, which is situated on the banks of the Euphrates.

My changeling mother conceived me, in secret she bore me.

She set me in a basket of rushes , with bitumen she sealed my lid.

She cast me into the river which rose not over me.

The river bore me up and carried me to Akki , the drawer of water.

Akki , the drawer of water, lifted me out as he dipped his ewer.

Akki, the drawer of water, took me as his son and reared me.

Akki, the drawer of water, appointed me as his gardener.

While I was a gardener, Ishtar granted me her love,

And for four and [ . . ] years I exercised kingship.

This legend of Sargon being discovered floating in a basket on the river Euphrates was very likely known to the ancient Hebrews, who seem to have used it as the source of the story of the birth of Moses in the Torah.

Sargon attributed his rise to power to the favor of the "goddess" Ishtar. Much has been written of Ishtar, but little of her relationship with Sargon and Accad. Most writers on ancient "goddess" worship, such as Merlin Stone in *When God Was A Woman*, have treated Ishtar and similar "goddesses" as survivals of an earlier, more communal and less patriarchal era. This view no doubt has some basis in reality, but overlooks the very considerable extent to which the cult of Ishtar was a state religion, deliberately promoted by the kings of Accad and their allies, the priestesses of Ur. Sargon was the founder of this state religion, whose first High Priestess was his daughter, Enheduanna.

In *The Ancient Near East: A History*, by William Hallo and William Simpson, on page 59, appears the following description of Sargon's religious policy:

Sargon was not insensitive to the opposition that his new imperialism inevitably aroused, and particularly to the latent antagonism between the Akkadian-speaking north and the Sumerian-speaking south. He attacked these problems with characteristic vigor and originality by creating the double office of high priestess of the moon-god Nanna at Ur and of the Heavengod An at Uruk and investing his daughter Enheduanna with this double priesthood, paralleling his own assumption of the double kingship of Uruk and Ur, the ancient condominium of the principal Sumerian centers of the south. For the next 500 years, his example was followed religiously: it became the right of the recognized ruler of all of Sumer and Akkad to appoint his daughter as high priestess to Nanna for life. Many of these princesses outlived their royal fathers and some even their dynasties and provided a unifying link even in periods of disunity. Enheduanna, however, was the greatest of this long line as well as the first.

Although Hallo and Simpson do not stress the point, Enheduanna was also the High Priestess of the cult of the "goddess" Inanna, who was considered the daughter of Nanna. Inanna was the Sumerian name for Ishtar, who was believed to be the daughter of the Semitic moon "god", Sin.

The meaning of the link forged by Sargon and Enheduanna between the Semitic cult of Ishtar and Sin and the Sumerian cult of Inanna and Nanna is brought out by Halla and Simpson, who go on to characterize two inscriptions written by Enheduanna as follows:

One is in honor of the Sumerian goddess Inanna, justifying and commemorating her exaltation to supreme rank in the pantheon as "Queen of Heaven" and consort of the deified heaven, An, king of the gods.

The other honors the temples of Sumer and Akkad, linking the cults of the two areas for the first time and completing the syncretism between the Sumerian Inanna, patroness of love and fertility, and the warlike Akkadian Ishtar, Sargon's personal deity. The consummate literary style of Enheduanna suggests that she may have had a Sumerian mother; in any case she represents the first known author in world literature and the artistic executor of the same purposes that her father sought to accomplish by military and political means.

Halla and Simpson also note on page 60 that Sargon's son, Manishtushu, was the founder of the temple to Ishtar in Nineveh.

Sargon's personal cult of Ishtar seems to have stood at the center of the religious establishment presided over by his daughter in Ur. As worshipped by Sargon and his followers, Ishtar was not primarily a "love goddess" but a "protective spirit" who was often depicted armed or riding on a lion. In Ancient Mesopotamia, A. Leo Oppenheim shows that the Accadians had a word, "ishtar", meaning "protective spirit", which was derived from Ishtar. Oppenheim brings out the link between Sargon's cult of Ishtar and the concept of "protective spirit" on page 205:

From Sumerian and early Old Babylonian royal inscriptions we know that the relationship between the individual and his protective spirits corresponds to the relationship of the king to certain deities of the pantheon (often to Ishtar) whom he considers especially charged with his personal protection . . . In the passages that refer to the king's relationship to Ishtar, the goddess becomes the carrier, the fountainhead, of his power and prestige.

As Sargon's personal protector, Ishtar was the main deity of the Accadian religious world.

Together with Enheduanna, Sargon promoted a merging of the Ac

adian cult of Ishtar with the Sumerian cult of Inanna. In *The Sumerians*, Kramer traces the origins of the cult of Inanna to the Sumerian city of Erech. Inanna was the "tutelary deity" of Erech. During the 3rd millennium BCE, a rite developed in Erech of a "sacred marriage" between the king of Erech and Inanna, played by a priestess.

The rite was said to have been initiated by Dumuzi, a king of Erech during the early 3rd millennium BCE. When this legend was taken over by the Semites, Dumuzi became known as Tammuz. At the same time, Inanna as worshipped by Enheduanna began to take on some of the attributes of Ishtar. The final result of this composite portrait was a full-fledged "Queen of Heaven", daughter of the moon and a wife of the sky, at once "love goddess" and "protective spirit". Kramer in *The Sumerians* on page 63 describes an ancient inscription declaring that in the time of Sargon, Accad had become "prosperous and powerful under the tender and constant guidance of its tutelary deity, Inanna".

The image of Ishtar-Inanna promoted by Sargon and Enheduanna is revealed in a hymn to Inanna written by Enheduanna, the full text of which appears in Volume 2 of Pritchard's *The Ancient Near East*, on page 126. It shows that the "goddess" Inanna worshipped by Enheduanna in Ur was already much like the Semitic Ishtar:

My queen, the Anunna, the great gods,  
 Fled before you like fluttering bats,  
 Could not stand before your awesome face,  
 Could not approach your awesome forehead.  
 Who can soothe your angry heart!  
 Your baleful heart is beyond soothing!

The hymn also declares that the "kingship of heaven has been seized by the woman", Inanna. Worship of Ishtar-Inanna, conducted in both Accadian and Sumerian, was clearly intended to fuse both Semitic and Sumerian cultural traditions into a new imperial cult, whose dominant element was Semitic.

It is perhaps not too fanciful to picture Ishtar, much like the 19th century French image of "Liberty", as a symbol of the oppressed Semitic nation throwing off its Sumerian rulers and asserting its own claims to sovereignty. In any case, there can be little doubt that the cult of Ishtar came to occupy a central, if often submerged, position

in Semitic national tradition. Abraham, acclaimed as the ancestor of Jews and Arabs alike, is described in the Hebrew Book of Genesis as having been born in Ur, the sacred city of the cult of Ishtar-Inanna. His father's name is given as Terah. According to Albert Bailey, on page 53 of *Daily Life in Bible Times*, Terah was a Semitic name for the Sumerian moon "god" Nanna, also known as Sin, the father of Inanna-Ishtar. One of the months of the Jewish calendar, still in use today, is called Tammuz. Perhaps there is also some relationship between the use of the crescent moon and stars as symbols of Islam and the fact that Ur had been a major center, both of moon worship and astrology, which was originated by the people of Ur, known to the Hebrews as the Chaldeans.

In *The Hebrew Goddess*, Raphael Patai shows that a "Queen of Heaven" was worshipped by many of the early Hebrews. He notes on page 56 that if his theories are correct, "it is likely that the Queen of Heaven worshipped in Jerusalem corresponded to the Babylonian-Assyrian Ishtar". Known in Canaan as Asherah, Astarte or Anath, the "Queen of Heaven" was worshipped by many of the kings of Israel. In later centuries, elements from this cult were incorporated into Hebrew religious tradition. Patai brings out a number of citations to show that the figures of the "Cherubim", which formed part of the decoration of the interior of the temple in Jerusalem prior to its destruction by the Romans, were depicted in sexual embrace. On page 83 of *The Hebrew Goddess*, Patai cites among others Rashi, a well known Jewish writer of the 12th century CE, who stated: "The Cherubim were joined together, and were clinging to, and embracing, each other, like a male who embraces the female"

## The Martu

The Semitic nomads whom the Sumerians called "Martu" later became known as Amorites. Both terms are derived from the Accadian word "Amurru", meaning "Westerners". The Martu came into Iraq from the west, from the Syrian desert. They were Arabian nomads, who began to appear in increasing numbers in both Iraq and Syria from about 2000 BCE onwards. In 1894 BCE, according to Georges Roux in *Ancient Iraq*, the Amorite sheikh Sumuabum established his capital at a place he called "Babilim", meaning "The Gate of God" in Accadian. Babilim, later called Babylon, eventually be

came the capital of a large Semitic empire, including the territory of the old empire of Accad and extending beyond it to dominate the entire region between Iran and Egypt .

In its origins, the empire of Babylon was the empire of the Martu. As Roux points out on page 215 of *Ancient Iraq*, the kingdom of Babylon was originally part of "a vast community of Amorite states stretching from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf". Between roughly 2000 and 1750 BCE, the Martu conquered the region north of Arabia in much the same manner as the followers of Mohammed did some 2,500 years later. Eventually the kingdom of Babylon came to dominate the other Amorite states , but even under Babylonian domination, the former Amorite kingdoms still formed the core of the empire. Ashur, which for a time supplanted Babylon as the dominant city-state of the region, was also in its origins an Amorite kingdom. The establishment of the Amorite kingdoms after 2000 BCE came in the wake of the overthrow of the empire of Accad by invaders from the north , the Gutians. To some degree the Martu clearly intended to restore Accadian cultural supremacy in the region. They adopted Accadian as their written language and may have spoken it as well. The exact nature of the spoken language of the Amorites is not known, but it is thought to differ somewhat from Accadian. In general , the Amorites were not content simply to restore Accadian hegemony, but also sought to introduce new concepts of their own. Of these, the most enduring proved to be the concept of the sanctity of private property. Eventually this concept was enshrined in legal form in the famous law code of king Hammurabi of Babylon. But as Roux points out in *Ancient Iraq*, all the early Amorite kingdoms had sought to promote this same concept. Roux states on page 165:

The new monarchs gave or let out for an indefinite period numerous parcels of royal or sacerdotal land , freed the inhabitants of several cities from taxes and forced labour and seem to have encouraged by all possible means the development of private property. Soon a new society emerged, a society of small farmers, free citizens and enterprising merchants which was to last throughout the ages.

It was this society which formed the foundation for the empire of Babylon.

James Wellard on page 114 of *Babylon* associates the empire of Babylon with the "appearance of a quasi-capitalist economy which is alien to the old Sumerian culture" . Babylon rose to power over the

other Amorite states in large part because it led the way in developing a legal and religious justification for the system of private property which all the Amorite states favored.

Private property was sanctified in Babylonian religion by the cult of Marduk . According to the Babylonian legend of creation, the "god" Marduk had created the universe by slicing the "goddess" Tiamat in half, thus forming the sky and earth . Marduk then became king over all the other "gods" and "goddesses", much as Babylon claimed to be supreme over all the other Amorite kingdoms. This image of a celestial dictator carving up Mother Nature according to his fancy was an appropriate metaphor for the origins of private property. Marduk was treated by the Babylonians as their supreme "god" , whose role was played by the king of Babylon in the annual New Year festival. The height of this festival was reached in a "sacred marriage", described by Henri Frankfort in *Kingship and the Gods*, in which the king of Babylon had sex with a priestess of Ishtar, who played Ishtar to his Marduk. This "sacred marriage" of Ishtar and Marduk was symbolic of the union of Accadian and Amorite culture, as experienced by the Martu .

The Babylonian concept of the sanctity of private property safeguarded by celestial dictatorship was rooted in the conditions of life of the Arabian nomads. In Arabia itself, particularly in southern Arabia where most Arabs lived, the Arabians worshipped "goddesses" as well as "gods" . But among the nomadic tribes of northern Arabia, men tended to outnumber women. By the time that the Arabian nomads reached the Syrian desert, they were largely composed of armed men. These men were closely related in language and culture to the Semitic population of the more settled regions north of Arabia, yet still they came out of the desert as conquerors. Their relationship to the Semites in the old empire of Accad was indeed like that of Marduk to Ishtar. Semitic patriarchal ideology, which began with Marduk and culminated in Allah, was all along rooted in the simple fact that the majority of the Arabian nomads were men.

Marduk differed from Allah in that he was thought of only as the king of the other "gods" and "goddesses". The Babylonians worshipped not only Ishtar but all the "gods" and "goddesses" of the Accadians . On page 279 of *Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria*, Georges Contenau cites an ancient inscription which reveals the extreme religiosity of the Babylonians:

There are altogether in Babylon fifty-three temples of the great gods, fifty-five shrines dedicated to Marduk, three hundred shrines belonging to earth divinities, one hundred and eighty altars to the goddess Ishtar, one hundred and eighty to the gods Nergal and Adad, and twelve other altars to various deities.

The greater their imperial pretensions, the more sanctimonious the Babylonians became. They eventually made a practice of dragging the idols of conquered peoples back to Babylon, with a view to making it the one great religious center of the entire Middle East. At the same time, they favored works on magic and sorcery and greatly elaborated the cult of the Zodiac.

Babylonian culture formed a large part of the basis for what later became known as "paganism". Many features of Babylonian culture, such as the cult of the Zodiac, were taken over intact by the later Greeks and Romans. It was partly for this reason that the term, "Babylon", was used as a symbol for the empire of Rome in the Book of Revelations of the Christian "New Testament". Babylon was in fact in many ways the ancestor of Rome. After the Greek geographer Herodotus visited Babylon in 460 BCE, he wrote: "It surpasses in splendor any city of the known world." Babylon was still at that time the largest city in the Middle East and possibly in the world. It was famous for its legal code, religious institutions, hanging gardens and huge walls.

Today the Babylonians are remembered chiefly because they overthrew the Hebrew kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE and carried tens of thousands of Hebrews away with them into captivity in Babylon. In the Book of Daniel in the Hebrew "Holy Scriptures", Babylon was treated as a symbol of a doomed empire about to be punished for its sins. It is also treated in this same way in the Christian Book of Revelations. This use of Babylon as a symbol of doomed empire was based on the fact that about 50 years after overthrowing the kingdom of Judah, the Babylonians were themselves overthrown by the Persians, who permitted the descendants of the exiled Hebrews to return to Jerusalem.

In both Jewish and Christian tradition, the overthrow of Babylon became a symbol of the triumph of justice over force.

The actual inventors of this symbol may have been the Persians themselves. On page 206 of Volume 1 of *The Ancient Near East* edited by Pritchard appears the text of a lengthy inscription written by

## Semitism

Cyrus, king of the Persians, in which Cyrus presented himself to the people of the Middle East as their liberator from the tyranny of the king of Babylon. Speaking of Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, Cyrus declared:

. . . a weakling has been installed as the enu of his country; [the correct images of the gods he removed from their thrones, imi]tations he ordered to place upon them. A replica of the temple Esagila he has . . . for Ur and the other sacred cities inappropriate rituals. . . daily he did blabber [incorrect prayers]. He (furthermore) interrupted in a fiendish way the regular offerings, he did. . . he established within the sacred cities. The worship of Marduk, the king of the gods, he [changJed into abomination, daily he used to do evil against his (i.e. Marduk's) city . . . He ltormented] its [inhabitant]s with corvee-work (lit: a yoke) without relief, he ruined them all.

Cyrus went on to explain how Marduk had selected him, Cyrus, to put things right. It was for this reason that Cyrus gave permission to the descendants of the Hebrews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple which the Babylonians had destroyed. Not only in this instance but in many others, the Persians tried to present themselves as the guardians of religious tradition in the Middle East, which had been violated by the tyranny of Babylon.

What came to be perceived as tyranny on the part of the Babylonians was the effort on the part of the descendants of the Amorites to impose a single legal, religious and administrative system on the entire Middle East. It was in order to suppress resistance to this effort that the Babylonians made a practice of transporting people from one part of their empire to another. The Persians attempted to ally themselves with these subject peoples as a means of breaking up the Babylonian empire and absorbing it piecemeal into a new and larger Persian empire. At the core of this policy was an alliance between the Persians and a group of Semites centered primarily in Syria, the Arameans.

## Aram

Aramaic Semitism suffers from the same academic disinterest as Accadian and Amorite Semitism. Although Aramaic was the main spoken and written language of the Middle East for more than 1,000

years, historians of the Middle East never speak of an Aramaic nation, culture or people. The few works on Aramaic history which do exist, such as Merrill Unger's *Israel and the Aramaeans of Damascus* or Emil Kraeling's *Aram and Israel*, consider Aramaic history to have ended with the fall of the last of the Aramean kingdoms to the Assyrians in 732 BCE. Yet by the beginning of the Common Era, Aramaic was spoken and written throughout the Middle East, including in the land of Israel by the person known to the Christians as Jesus Christ. It remained the main spoken and written language of the Middle East until the rise of Islam in the 7th century CE.

Why did Aramaic become so widely spoken in the Middle East? Few historians of the Middle East even bother to ask this question. Kraeling, in *Aram and Israel*, asks it but responds with a denial of Aramaic nationhood. He argues that the Arameans were "great merchants"

and therefore "their language had the opportunity of becoming a medium of exchange". "Furthermore", continues Kraeling on page 139, "the destruction of the Aramaic states separated this language from all national aspirations or religious propaganda, so that no prejudice against its use could arise." It is not surprising that the word "prejudice" should have occurred to Kraeling as he wrote these lines. He was in effect stating that the Semites wrote and spoke in Aramaic for more than 1,000 years not out of national feeling or religious dedication but because they were "great merchants" seeking a "medium of exchange".

The Arameans were Arabian nomads, like the Martu before them. They first began to appear in Syria and Iraq around 1500 BeE, and by 1000 they had established a number of kingdoms, of which the largest was that of the Arameans of Damascus. In the Hebrew Book of Kings, the rivalry of the Hebrews and Arameans is described in terms which suggest that the two groups had much in common: Thus saith the Lord: Because the Arameans have said: The Lord is a God of the hills, but he is not a God of the valleys; therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thy hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

There are several passages in the Hebrew "Holy Scriptures" in which it is suggested that the Hebrews were in part of Aramean descent. In *The Pharisees*, Louis Finkelstein notes on page 407 that many of the

early Hebrew prophets were also active in the kingdom of Aram. The Hebrew prophet Elisha played a major role in the overthrow of the king of Aram, Ben-Hadad. The prophet Elijah was also involved in Aram. Finkelstein believes there existed a prophetic party in Aram as well as in Israel and Judah. Aramaic and Hebrew were closely related languages which were both written in alphabetical script.

The alphabetical script invented by Semitic miners in the Sinai desert was based on Egyptian hieroglyphics, which the miners adapted for use as alphabetical symbols, perhaps around 1500 BCE. Use of the alphabet spread from the Sinai to Canaan, Syria and Lebanon, where it was used as a basis for the Hebrew, Aramaic and Phoenician writing systems. Alphabetical writing was much simpler and easier to learn than either Egyptian hieroglyphics or Accadian cuneiform writing, both of which were based on the use of a different symbol for each word. But Babylonian culture was literally wedded to Accadian tradition, so the Babylonians resisted changing over to an alphabetical writing system. It was the Persians who made the change, adopting Aramaic as the official written language of their administration in the Middle East.

Persian is an Indo-European language; the ancient Persians called themselves Aryans. They invaded Iran around 1000 BCE and established themselves in the region formerly known as Elam. Under Cyrus, they became the leaders of a coalition of Iranian peoples, including also the Medes and Parthians, which invaded the rest of the Middle East and overthrew the empires of Babylon and Egypt. But even in Iran itself, Persian was not yet at that time the main spoken language of the people. Instead of striving to impose the Persian language and culture on their Semitic subjects, the Persians therefore preferred to ally themselves with the Arameans, who had been defeated militarily by the Assyrians and Babylonians but whose culture was still popular in Syria. Aramaic during this period was used as a written language even in Persia itself, while Arameans formed a large part of the Persian administration in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

Use of Aramaic as the official language of the Persian administration in the Middle East from roughly 540 to 340 BCE was undoubtedly a major reason for the spread of Aramaic as a spoken language during this period. It was at this time that the Jews too became Aramaic-speaking. Moreover, as pointed out on page 16 of Volume 1 of *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, edited by P.R. Ackroyd and C.F.

Evans, the Jews at this time also adopted a new type of Hebrew script, known as Square Hebrew, which was derived from Aramaic script. Adoption of the Square Hebrew script during the era of Persian rule in Judah shows that most Jewish scribes at this time also wrote in Aramaic. By the end of the Persian era, Aramaic was the main spoken and written language of the Jewish people, with Hebrew still written and spoken primarily only by priests and scribes.

Persian influence contributed to the spread of Aramaic but may not have been the main cause. On page 164 of *A History of the Jewish People*, edited by Haim Ben-Sasson, Hayim Tadmor notes that Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, was "probably" of Aramean origin. According to Tadmor, Nabonidus tried to carry through a religious revolution in Babylon, substituting the moon "god" Sin for Marduk as the chief "god" of the Babylonians. When forced to flee Babylon in 552 BCE by the opposition of the priests of Marduk, Nabonidus fled to northern Arabia. His son, Belsharusur, the Belshazzar of the Jewish Book of Daniel, ruled in his stead until 543, when Nabonidus returned from exile, only to be overthrown five years later by the Persians.

The career of Nabonidus suggests that Aramaic influence was already strong on a cultural level under the Babylonians. Philip Hitti, on page 173 of his *History of Syria*, points out that the first images of veiled women in Middle Eastern art appear in representations of the Aramean fertility "goddess" Atargatis. It seems to have been primarily under Aramean influence that the veil was first widely adopted by women in the Middle East. Despite the overthrow of the Aramean kingdoms by the Assyrians and Babylonians, Aramaic cultural influence continued to grow, perhaps because it was continually reinforced by further nomadic migrations from Arabia. The Arameans, like the Amorites before them, did not come out of the desert all at once, but steadily over many centuries. Harran in northern Iraq was a major gathering point for Amorites and Arameans alike. Nomadic pressure may have been the underlying factor that accounted for the popularity of Aramaic culture despite the absence of a strong Aramaic state.

In his *History of the Arabs*, Philip Hitti develops the theory that the entire history of the Middle East can be understood as a series of nomadic migrations out of Arabia, beginning with a hypothetical first wave around 3500 BCE and continuing with the Amorites, Ara

means, Nabateans and Muslims. Whatever the origin of the Accadians, there can be little doubt that from the time of the Amorites onwards, Arabian nomads exercised a powerful influence on the development of Middle Eastern culture. In *The Arab Mind*, Raphael Patai tries to show that among the Muslims, the nomads or "bedouin" were the great culture heroes of Middle Eastern society. The portrait of Abraham in the Book of Genesis suggests that the Hebrews too prided themselves on nomadic descent, whether real or imaginary. Harran, the main gathering point for nomads coming out of the Syrian desert, was claimed as the home of most of Abraham's family in the Book of Genesis.

Aramaic culture arose in a similar manner to Amorite culture, but its later history differed in that it never achieved an imperial dimension comparable to Babylonian or Assyrian imperial culture. Aramaic culture was the culture of the common people of the Middle East at a time when the imperial culture of the region was dominated by Persians, Greeks or Romans. Even though the Persians used the Aramaic language in their administration, their supreme "god" remained the Iranian Ahura Mazda. The Greeks and Romans showed no respect for Aramaic language culture whatsoever and sought to stamp it out in favor of Greek. In place of an imperial dimension, Aramaic Semitism was forced to develop a revolutionary dimension. Judaism, Christianity and Islam could all be understood as reflections of the revolutionary dimension of Aramaic Semitism.

## Semitism and Anti-Semitism

The anti-Semitism of most historians of the ancient Middle East expresses itself most clearly in the general resistance to the concept of a Semitic nation. The anti-Semites are forever breaking up the Semites, separating them into many little nations, whose common language and culture is barely noticed, much less studied and depicted. For at least 4,000 years and more, the Accadian, Amorite and Aramaic cultures maintained a continuous history of Semitic national feeling, which was followed by the rise of Islam and the emergence of Arabic as the dominant Semitic culture. This pattern is obvious to anyone who studies the history of the Middle East, yet it is ignored by most historians, who see only Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians while waiting around for the Greeks and Romans to arrive.

As Hitti and others have pointed out, nomads from Arabia played a key role in all known phases of the history of Semitism. Southern Arabia and Ethiopia were the parts of the Semitic world least affected by the constant series of invasions from the north. At each point in the history of the Middle East when it seemed that Semitic culture was in danger of being overwhelmed by invaders in the "Fertile Crescent" between Egypt and Iran, Semitic nomads from the Arabian desert entered the picture to tip the scales once more in favor of Semitism.

The eventual assertion of Semitic cultural supremacy by Mecca and the Arabs in the name of Islam grew out of this long history of repeated nomadic redefinitions of Semitism.

Yet although the nomads were the great Semitic culture heroes, most Semites were not nomads. The basic reason for the eventual prominence of Semitic ideology in world thought was the key role of the Semites in the development of agriculture. Together with the Hamites, to whom they were closely related, the Semites seem to have been the main pioneers in the development of agriculture in the Old World. By 3000 BCE, at a time when agriculture was just beginning elsewhere in the world, the Middle East already had many cities, towns and villages, all based on agriculture. When historians speak of the Middle East as the "cradle of civilization", what they are really talking about is agriculture. It was the food which made the cities possible. As knowledge of the existence of a great agricultural civilization in the Middle East began to spread through the Old World, the cultural influence of the Middle East naturally grew. This influence was already great by the time of the era of Amorite Semitism during the 2nd millennium BCE, and became even greater during the era of Aramaic Semitism which followed. But whereas Amorite Semitism had been identified with the imperial ambitions of Babylon and Ashur, Aramaic Semitism was humbled by the mighty Greeks and Romans. The Greek and Roman conquest of the Middle East was the main reason for the intense religious fervor which has become associated with Semitism in the eyes of the world. Amorite culture was no less "pagan" than Greek or Roman culture. Indeed, the Amorites were in many ways the inventors of "paganism". Judaism, Christianity and Islam differed from "paganism" because they arose in another era, an era in which Semites were murdered in the millions by hard faced Greek and Roman invaders armed with great quantities of-iron weapons.

## Semitism

Under conditions of foreign domination, Semitism evolved in an increasingly "Messianic" and "prophetic" direction. The more it evolved in this direction, the more central became the importance of the Hebrew tradition within it.

## Chapter Three

### Judah

Much has been written of Judaism but surprisingly little of Judah . Judaism arose from Judah, Yehudah in Hebrew, a small Middle Eastern nation which was overthrown by the Romans some 2,000 years ago. Judaism arose as the religion of Judah, the Jews as the people of Judah. But while many speak of Jews and Judaism, few speak of Judah.

Judah is not even recognized by the historians. They rarely speak of the nation of Judah, but usually only of Jews in Palestine . Although the region around Jerusalem was known as the land of Judah for 1,000 years prior to the time of the Roman conquest, the historians refer to this land as Palestine. If they are forced to refer to the government of Judah for some reason, they call it " the Jewish state" or " the Judean state". Judea was the Roman name for Judah prior to 135 CE. The Greeks called it Ioudaia, the Persians Yahud. Yet although Judah is the recognized English form of the Hebrew Yehudah, the historians avoid this word, preferring a multiplicity of Jews and Judeans in a place called Palestine.

This usage can be traced back to a decree issued in 135 CE by the Roman Caesar Hadrian officially changing the name of the Roman province of Judea to Palestine. This decree was issued at the end of the second "Jewish War", during the course of which the Romans by their own estimate had killed 580,000 Jews. The second " Jewish War" was provoked by a whole series of decrees issued by Hadrian around 130 CE formally banning Judaism as a religion. Adoption of the name Palestine for the former Roman province of Judea was just another point in Hadrian's program for the complete destruction of Judah. It was coupled with a decree changing the name of Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina, meaning "capital of Aelius". Aelius was Hadrian's first name.

The Romans derived the term Palestine from Philistia, a term which

had long been used as a name for the coastal strip of Judah . The term Philistia was in turn derived from the Philistines, Indo-European conquerors closely related to the Greeks who had seized control of the coast of Judah around 1200 BCE. Around 1000 BCE, the Philistines were overthrown by the nation of Judah, led by its king David. In his History of Syria, on page 184, Philip Hitti describes what happened to the Philistines after their conquest by Judah:

As a foreign community they had no guarantee of permanency except through continued replenishment of their blood by immigration, an impossibility under the existing conditions. Towards the end of David's reign they tend to disappear as a colony. In due course they were Semitized and assimilated, leaving very little by which their language, religion, architecture and other aspects of their higher life could be determined.

Writing in the middle of the fifth century, Nehemiah speaks not of Philistines but of " Ashdodites" speaking an Ashdodite dialect. Yet Hitti, like all the other historians, nonetheless uses the term Palestine to speak of the land of Judah throughout its history. No one used the term in that sense prior to 135 CE, when it was deliberately adopted for this purpose by the Romans.

The kingdom of Judah was founded by David around 1000 BCE. At its height, it included an area roughly similar to modern Israel. This is the area which the historians invariably call Palestine. When they say Palestine, they are never referring to the region which was actually called Philistia in ancient times, the strip of land bordering the Mediterranean coast. When they say Palestine, they do not mean Philistia, they mean Judah, for Judah was the only term which was used prior to 135 CE to refer to the whole area.

Speaking always of Jews in Palestine has the effect of perpetuating Hadrian's war on Judah in the history books. The whole point of the Roman attack was to uproot the people of Judah from the land. To speak of a nation or people of Judah implies a unity of people and land. To speak of Jews in Palestine is already to convey an impression of rootlessness. That is why so much has been written of Jews and Judaism, so little of Judah. Jews and Judaism survived the second "Jewish War", but Judah did not. Hadrian's ban on Judaism was revoked by his successor, Antoninus Pius , in 138 CE, but Hadrian's overthrow of Judah was not revoked until the birth of modern Israel. Now perhaps the time has come when Hadrian can also be defied in

the history books and Judah substituted for Palestine as the name of the region prior to 135 CE.

## The Nation of Judah

The nation of Judah founded by David around 1000 BCE derived its name from the tribe of Judah, David's tribe. The tribe of Judah was one of the 12 tribes of the Hebrew tribal confederacy which gained control of the land then called Canaan around 1200 BCE. The tribe of Judah settled in the hill country around Jerusalem, which was captured by David from the Jebusites and established as the capital of the kingdom of Judah. The kingdom was called Judah because of the dominant role of the tribe of Judah in its establishment. In *A History of Jewish Crafts and Guilds*, Mark Wischnitzer shows that the military might of David and the men of Judah was linked to their possession of iron weapons, which David and his followers had taken from the Philistines.

In Jewish tradition, the image of Judah became closely associated with the military conquests of David's time. In the Book of Genesis, there is a passage where Judah, the legendary ancestor of the tribe of Judah, is chosen by Israel for kingly rule. On his deathbed, Israel tells Judah:

You, a Judah, your brothers shall praise;  
 Your hand shall be on the nape of your foes;  
 Your father's sons shall bow low to you.  
 Judah is a lion's whelp;  
 On prey, my son, have you grown.  
 He crouches, lies down like a lion,  
 Like the king of beasts—who dare rouse him?  
 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
 Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet;  
 So that tribute shall come to him  
 And the homage of peoples be his.

These lines reflect the origin of the nation of Judah in military conquest. Judah as defined by David and Solomon was the territory, stretching from Damascus to Arabia, which paid tribute to them as kings in Jerusalem.

After the death of Solomon, the rule of Judah was overthrown by

the other Hebrew tribes, who broke away to constitute themselves as a new kingdom called Israel. Judah remained in control of the region around Jerusalem, the original base of the tribe of Judah, while the kingdom of Israel controlled the regions later known as Samaria and Galilee. The Hebrew rebels against the rule of Judah eventually became known as Samaritans. But although the ancient kingdom of Israel was considerably larger than what remained of the ancient kingdom of Judah, the Samaritans did not possess a center equal in prestige to Jerusalem. Over the centuries, the Samaritans shrank to the position of a small minority, while the great majority of those who venerated the Hebrew tradition came to associate it with the supremacy of Jerusalem and Judah.

From the 6th century BCE onwards, Judah was occupied by foreign conquerors. Under foreign rule, the concept of the nation of Judah was defined increasingly in religious terms. The last king of the line of David was overthrown by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. Under Persian and Greek rule, the recognized leader of the nation of Judah was the High Priest of the temple in Jerusalem. The laws of the nation of Judah were codified during this period in the written Torah, which was treated as a religious document. Yet the laws of the Torah do not concern only matters of diet and religious ritual but also cover questions such as land tenure and punishment of crime. Strict observance of these laws implies political and military control of the territory in which they are supposed to be observed. The Torah was a revolutionary document, for by codifying the laws of Judah in a religious form, it made it possible to continue the struggle for Jewish national independence under conditions of foreign rule.

The revolutionary potential of the Torah was realized by the Maccabean revolt of the 2nd century BCE. Due to the refusal of the historians to recognize Judah, the leader of this revolt is generally referred to under the Latin name of Judas Maccabeus. Judas is the Latin form of Judah; Maccabeus is Latin for the Hebrew Maccabee, meaning "hammer". Judas Maccabeus means Judah the Hammer; it could even be translated as the Hammer of Judah. Judah was called Hammer because of the hard blows which he dealt to the Greek invaders.

In the revived kingdom of Judah founded by Judah the Hammer in 165 BCE, the Torah had the same status as the Constitution of the United States. It was the official law of the land, and the priests and scribes of the Torah were the official judges and lawyers.

At its height around 70 BCE, the independent kingdom of Judah embraced much the same region as had formerly been ruled by David and Solomon. On page 226 of Haim Ben-Sasson's *A History of the Jewish People*, Menachem Stem cites the Greek geographer Strabo, writing in the 1st century BCE, who described this region as follows: "The interior above Phoenicia as far as the Arabs, between Gaza and Antilebanon, is called Judea." This is much the same region as the modern country of Israel. In their own language, the citizens of this region called their country Yehudah. All their neighbors, including the Persians, Greeks and Romans, called it by some variant of this name. Only after 200 years of mass murders, from their initial attack in 63 BCE to the end of the second "Jewish War" in 135 CE, did the Romans dare to proclaim the replacement of Judah by Palestine. The main preoccupation of the historians of Judah ever since has been to justify its overthrow by the Romans. This is true to a considerable extent even of Jewish historians. *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State* by Solomon Zeitlin is typical of many, less ambitious works in this field. The numbers of Zeitlin's three massive volumes are printed in Latin numerals on the cover. Inside, Zeitlin condemns the last ditch defenders of the "Judaean state" for thinking that they could defeat mighty Rome. Yet was it not for love of Judah that Zeitlin wrote his book? This contradiction is characteristic of most works on Judah, which are filled with awe and respect for the Greeks and Romans, yet fascinated with Judah despite themselves. The basic tactic of the historians in their efforts to justify the Roman overthrow of Judah is to identify themselves with the opposition to Jewish militarism within Judah itself. Throughout its history, the rule of Judah was opposed not only by other states but also by many of its own citizens. From the Samaritan revolt through the prophetic opposition to the kings of Judah to the Essenes and Pharisees of Roman times, there was always a substantial party within Judah which saw a strong army and state as a threat to the people's freedom. Over the centuries, this party developed a clearly defined ideology, stressing love, equality and mutual respect as the basis of human relations and strongly condemning militarism, force and violence as the root of all evil. By adopting the point of view of this party, the historians of Judah are provided with a ready-made stick with which to beat the "Judaean state", thereby justifying its overthrow at the hands of the Romans.

## Judah

The whole Christian religion could be viewed as an outgrowth of this tendency on the part of the critics of Judah to adopt the point of view of the internal opposition to Jewish militarism within Judah itself. This connection is explicitly recognized by George Mendenhall in *The Tenth Generation*. Mendenhall sees the early Hebrews as revolutionary pacifists, whose pure doctrine was later corrupted by the ""counter-revolutionary" kings of Judah. On page 196, Mendenhall states:

It was the Mosaic period which constituted revolution; with Solomon the counter-revolution triumphed completely, only to collapse under the same weight of political tyranny and arrogance which had so much to do with the troubles of the pre-Mosaic period. The continuing revolution is represented by the prophetic movement, and culminated in the Christian reformation.

On page 66, Mendenhall blames all the troubles of Judah on "power politics" :

The consequence was division in 922, destruction in 917, 722, and 597, and finally the mass suicide of Masada in A.D. 70. Fortunately, the latter did not represent the sane opinion of most Jews of the time who evidently felt that the rule of God had nothing to do with the madness of power politics.

Mendenhall, like most historians of Judah, follows the prophetic party line, which consistently maintained that Judah would be overthrown for its sins. Yet Judah was not the only Middle Eastern state overthrown by the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. All of Judah's neighbors were also overthrown, and for the same reason, that they lacked large deposits of iron with which to make iron swords and shields, so useful for dealing with invaders. Judah survived the Indo-European invasions longer than any other Semitic state outside of southern Arabia and Ethiopia, and it only succumbed after the Romans had killed some 2 million of its citizens, more than 50% of its population. Is this not a classic case, perhaps the classic case, of blaming the victim?

What the critics of Judah ignore is that without Judah, there never would have been any Judaism. The Samaritan version of Hebrew tradition was no less authentic than the Jewish; indeed, in many respects

it was older and more traditional than the Jewish version. Yet the Samaritans soon shrank to the position of a small minority and have never exercised an influence in the world even remotely comparable to that of the Jews. The only clear and obvious difference between the two groups is that the Jews became associated with a strong state power, while the Samaritans did not. It was the establishment of the Jewish state, first by David and Solomon, then again by Judah the Hammer, that caused the Jewish version of Hebrew tradition to attract such widespread interest. Praising Judaism while denouncing Judah is like praising sunlight while denouncing the sun.

### The Pharisees

The main authors both of the Jewish and the later Christian critique of Judah were the Pharisees. The term Pharisee is derived from the Hebrew word Perushim, meaning "separatists". The Pharisees arose as an opposition faction within the nation of Judah during the 2nd century BCE. They were called "separatists" by the kings of Judah and their followers, the Sadducees. The Pharisees for their part regarded the kings of Judah as militarists, who were unworthy of holding the position of High Priest. They led a revolt against king Jonathan of Judah around 90 BCE, demanding that the king give up the title of High Priest and admit Pharisee representatives to the Sanhedrin or High Court of Judah. Both Judaism and Christianity are derived in large part from the ideology of the Pharisees, who became the leading party of Judah during the 1st century BCE.

The Pharisees formed a definite party, with formal requirements for membership, rules of conduct and branches in all the major cities and towns of Judah. They called each other "comrades", or Haberim, as pointed out by Louis Finkelstein in *Akiba*. In *The Pharisees*, Finkelstein shows that most Pharisees came from the artisan class of Judah. They lived in cities or towns rather than in the country and tended to look down on the country people, whom they thought of as lax in their observance of the laws of ritual purity. Most of the leading Pharisees were scribes who earned a living as artisans and studied and wrote in their spare time. Hillel and Akiba, the two most famous Pharisee leaders, were both from poor families. Hillel was a woodcutter, Akiba a shepherd who was enabled to study by the earnings of his wife, Rachel.

The Pharisee movement was in part an attempt of the scribes to upgrade their status relative to the priests. The priests of Judah, who formed a hereditary caste, had ranked far higher in the social scale than the scribes until the rise of the Pharisees. Finkelstein on page 264 of *The Pharisees* contrasts the priests and scribes as follows: The priest's time was taken up with service at the Temple, attention to business, contact with friendly farmers, and dutiful attendance on his superiors, but the poor plebeian scholar-scribe did his daily stint, ate his meager fare, and proceeded to his book. Without any ability, therefore, to challenge the power or prestige of the priesthood, the scribe yet had the authority which always attaches sooner or later to exact knowledge.

At the same time, the Pharisees also reflected a general movement of urban artisans for greater power in Jewish society.

The Pharisees gained a mass following in Judah during the 1st century BeE by placing themselves at the head of the internal opposition to the militarist and expansionist policies of king Jonathan, ruler of Judah from 100 to 78 BeE. In most works on this period, Jonathan is called Alexander Jannaeus, the name he was called by Josephus in his writings on Jewish history. Jannaeus is a Latinized form of Jonathan; Alexander is the Greek title which Jonathan used on his coins. Jonathan was undoubtedly the most military minded of the kings of Judah of this era. He built up a large army, including foreign mercenaries, and expanded the borders of Judah to their greatest extent since the days of David and Solomon. Like other Middle Eastern monarchs of his day, Jonathan accumulated a large harem, went about protected by his foreign mercenaries and prided himself on his assimilation to the Greek style in upper class living.

In the eyes of the Pharisees, Jonathan was a tyrant who was destroying the moral fabric of Jewish society. The Pharisees led a rebellion against him, which was repressed with great cruelty. Jonathan is said to have had some of the Pharisee leaders crucified while he watched with his concubines. In 78 BeE, Jonathan died. His two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, were too young to succeed him, so from 78 to 69 BeE, Judah was ruled by his widow, Salome. Salome reversed Jonathan's policies, allying herself with the Pharisees and ordering that their major demands be met. Under her rule, the Pharisees

were admitted to the Sanhedrin and a Pharisee leader, Simeon ben Shattah, became the chief judicial authority of Judah . At the same time, the organizational influence of the Pharisees in the major cities and towns of Judah was greatly strengthened. By the time of the Roman invasion in 63 BCE, the Pharisees were the leading party in Judah. The Pharisees had become so alienated from the Jewish state due to their experiences under Jonathan that they refused to support his son, Aristobulus, in his efforts to defend Judah against the Romans. After Salome's death, Aristobulus had tried to carry on in the tradition of his father as king of Judah, while his brother Hyrcanus had perpetuated Salome's policy of alliance with the Pharisees with a view to gaining recognition as High Priest. The Pharisees sided with Hyrcanus and together they made common cause with the Romans against Aristobulus. The upshot was that Aristobulus was killed in 49 BCE, while Hyrcanus and the Pharisees were recognized by the Romans as the leading religious authorities of Judah.

What amounted to an alliance between the Romans and the Pharisees was cemented in the decade of the 40s BCE as a result of the Roman civil war between the forces of Caesar and Pompey. Pompey had led the conquest of Judah in 63 BCE; he was generally identified as the advocate of a hard line against the Jews. As part of his rivalry with Pompey , Caesar pursued a somewhat more liberal policy towards the Jews. He declared Judaism a "legal religion" in Rome and increased the authority of Hyrcanus and the Pharisees in Judah . But Caesar was no less hostile than Pompey to the concept of an independent Jewish state. The last king of Judah of Maccabean descent, Antigonus, was crucified in 37 BCE by Roman troops under the command of Marc Antony, Caesar's close associate and would-be heir. Throughout this period, the Pharisees urged the Jewish people to accept Roman rule and opposed the efforts of Aristobulus and Antigonus to preserve the Jewish state.

The main supporters of the Jewish state and rivals of the Pharisees at this time were the Sadducees. The term Sadducee is derived from the Hebrew Zadokim, meaning Zadokites or sons of Zadok. Zadok was the first High Priest of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. The leaders of the Sadducees were the priests, who prided themselves on their descent from the priests of old, Zadok most of all. Judah the Hammer was of priestly descent, and his brother and heir Simon was named

High Priest of Judah in 140 BCE. The Sadducees were loyal supporters of the Maccabean kings and High Priests, in part because performance of priestly rites implied physical control of the temple, which in turn implied at least a certain degree of military force. Eleazar, commander of the temple guards, was one of the main leaders of the uprising of 65 CE against the Romans.

Finkelstein, probably the leading writer on the Pharisees, sees them as the leaders of a "plebeian" revolt against the "patrician" Sadducees. It is true that the Sadducees were generally more wealthy than the Pharisees, but their policies also had the support of a large proportion of the country people. The Pharisees were urban "plebeians", who stood to gain as well as lose by Roman rule, which did tend to promote commercial expansion and hence new markets for urban handicrafts. The rural "plebeians" or farmers of Judah, who formed the great majority of the population, were far more hostile to the Romans, whom they associated only with taxation, debt and the threat of losing their land. So long as they fought the Romans, the Sadducees had the support of probably the majority of the farmers. The Sadducees were too "patrician" by this time to mobilize this support effectively, but after the defeat and death of the last Maccabean kings, the farmers did not turn to the Pharisees but to newer and more radical leaders who promised to drive out the Romans and restore the Jewish state.

It was the Pharisee critique of the Maccabean state which formed the point of departure of the Christian religion. The Christians simply carried this critique one step further, directing it against Judaism as well as Judah. Indeed, so far as Judah was concerned, the early Christians were in some respects less negative than the Pharisees. Many of the early Christian versions of the Jewish "Holy Scriptures" included the Book of Maccabees, describing the uprising of 165 BCE against the Greeks, while the Pharisees deliberately omitted the Book of Maccabees from their own, official version of the "Holy Scriptures". The Pharisees rejected the Jewish state as unworthy of the Jewish nation, thus paving the way for the Christian rejection of the Jewish nation as unworthy of the Jewish tradition. Yet Roman rule, which both Pharisees and Christians fostered by their rejection of Judah, proved far harsher and more destructive than any king of Judah. That is why the majority of the people of Judah, by the beginning of the Common Era, had begun to look elsewhere for leadership.

## The Zealots

The leaders of the movement to revive the Jewish state during the 1st and 2nd centuries of the Common Era are usually described as Zealots. The man often described as the founder of the Zealots was Judah of Galilee. Judah was the son of Hezekiah of Galilee, who led a rebellion against the Romans during the decade of the 40s BCE. Hezekiah was hunted down and killed by Herod, at that time the Roman puppet governor of Galilee. It was by killing Hezekiah that Herod first commended himself to the Romans as a loyal puppet official. In 37 BCE, the Romans made Herod king of "Judea" , but after Herod's death in 4 BCE, Hezekiah's son Judah led a new rebellion against Herod's heirs and the Romans.

Josephus describes the uprising on page 119 of *The Jewish War* as follows:

At Sepphoris in Galilee Judas, son of Hezekiah—a robber chief who once overran the country and was suppressed by King Herod—collected a considerable force , broke into the royal armoury, equipped his followers , and attacked the other seekers after power.

The uprising was suppressed, but Judah of Galilee was still active ten years later in the opposition to the Roman census of 6 CE. In 48 CE, two of Judah's sons , James and Simon, were crucified by the Romans. Another of Judah's sons, Menachem, survived to play a leading role in the early stages of the Jewish uprising of 65 CE.

By 65 CE, the Zealots had gained a mass following among the people of Judah. A number of different Zealot factions had taken shape, some of which did not accept the leadership of the sons of Judah of Galilee. Zeitlin in *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State* attempts a detailed analysis of the various Zealot factions, but his conclusions are open to question due to his heavy reliance on Josephus for his information about the Zealots. Josephus considered all the Zealots to be "robbers" and "bandits" ; little of what he says about them can be taken at face value. It is clear that the Zealots drew most of their support from the Jewish lower classes, for they attacked the rich as well as the Romans. The Romans called them "sicarii" , meaning "knifers" , due to their attacks on Roman soldiers in the streets of Jerusalem and elsewhere. In the language of modern politics, they would be called revolutionary nationalists,

The Zealots were the main leaders of the Jewish forces during the first "Jewish War". At first Sadducees and Pharisees were acclaimed as the leaders, but when the Romans brought in large reinforcements and began to massacre the Jews, the Zealots took command of the Jewish resistance. All along they had been primarily responsible for efforts to organize an armed struggle against the Romans, which culminated in the uprising of 65 CE. The Sadducees and Pharisees supported the revolt in its early stages but turned against it after the Romans attacked in force. The Zealots held on to the end.

Little is known of the Zealots beyond what appears in the pages of Josephus. It appears that the Zealots had considerable support in the cities from artisans and day laborers, the same people who had earlier supported the Pharisees. But there are also many hints that the Zealots were based, perhaps primarily, on the farmers. Galilee was farm country, and the Zealot movement seems to have begun in Galilee. Farmers had been the main supporters of Judah the Hammer; they were generally considered much more nationalistic than the urban workers . Finkelstein, on page 344 of *The Pharisees*, contrasts the farmer, an "uncompromising nationalist", with the urban artisan, a "liberal universalist". Even in the cities, many of the Zealots seem to have been farmers who had only recently lost their land and moved to the cities in search of work.

No literary work that can be traced directly to the Zealots has survived. Many works from this period, such as the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, may reflect Zealot influence, but precisely what the Zealots themselves believed is simply not known. It was just this type of information which Josephus did not report, for it clashed with his image of the Zealots as "bandits" and "robbers" . There is a tendency among historians to assume that the Zealots were deeply religious in their thinking, but this is far from obvious. At least some of the Zealots might easily have been as secular in their thinking as any modern revolutionary nationalist. No doubt they hoped for miracles, but they had experienced too many Roman massacres to rely on them. In the Talmud, Simon bar Kochba, leader of the Jewish forces in the second "Jewish War" , was attacked for telling his followers to rely not on "God" but on themselves . It is very possible that many of the Zealots thought the same way.

The culmination of the Zealot movement was the emergence of the guerilla armies of Simon bar Kochba during the second "Jewish War".

The main tactical error of the Zealots during the first " Jewish War" had been to take refuge behind city walls from the Romans, who were then able to besiege them at their leisure . During the second "Jewish War", the followers of Simon bar Kochba fought the Romans in the open countryside, using guerilla tactics, and at first inflicted heavy casualties on the Roman legions. Finally they too were forced to take refuge behind the walls of Betar, their last stronghold, which fell to the Romans in 135 CE. The death of Simon bar Kochba in battle with the Romans in 135 CE is often treated as a symbol of the defeat and overthrow of the nation of Judah by the Romans.

The Zealots and Pharisees had a complex relationship, working together under certain circumstances but more often at odds with one another. As Roman rule became increasingly oppressive during the early decades of the Common Era, the Pharisees began to shift towards a somewhat more anti-Roman stance than previously. They allied themselves with the Zealots at the beginning of the first " Jewish War", then broke with them when defeat appeared inevitable. Between 70 and 130 CE, the Pharisees resumed their earlier policy of collaboration with the Romans, but were then forced into opposition once more by Hadrian's decrees of 130 CE banning Judaism throughout the Roman empire. Akiba led most of the Pharisees to support Simon bar Kochba during the second " Jewish War" , an action for which Akiba paid with his life after the defeat of the Jewish forces. The deep underlying basis of the Zealot movement was the system of land tenure which had become established in Judah . Centuries of constant application of the laws of the Torah had created a nation of small farmers. In *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, Victor Tcherikover notes on page 122 that from the 6th century BCE onwards, a formal ban existed in Judah on the sale of land by private individuals. Tcherikover states that the conscious purpose of this ban was to prevent the growth of large estates worked by landless farmers. Finkelstein, on page 359 of *The Pharisees*, points out that among the early Hebrews, "their big houses are smaller, and their small houses larger, than those of their Canaanite predecessors". On many different levels, the laws of the Torah promoted a spirit of egalitarianism in Jewish life , whose most fundamental aspect was a rough equality in land holdings .

The Zealots fought to preserve equality, particularly equality in land,

against the Romans, whose entire doctrine aimed at inequality. Roman law and Roman practice both tended to favor the growth of large estates, worked by landless farmers or slaves for the benefit of a small class of wealthy "patricians". The driving force of the Zealot movement was the constant stream of Jewish farmers forced off their land by the Romans. These were the "bandits" and "robbers" of Josephus. Perhaps some landless farmers really did become bandits, but the great majority flocked to the cities in search of work. The Zealot movement seems to have been their way of trying to regain their land. To see the Zealots as they really were, it is necessary to see the revolutionary basis of the Hebrew tradition. On one level, the Zealots were great traditionalists, but traditionalists in a nation that had made a tradition of revolution. The chief symbol of this tradition was not the concept of "God", as so many have asserted, but the Torah. The Romans were well aware of this, for one of the main points in Hadrian's decrees of 130 CE banning Judaism had been to order the destruction of all copies of the Torah then in existence. When the Romans took Betar in 135 CE, they wrapped the young Jewish students in their Torah scrolls and set them on fire. How well the Romans succeeded in their efforts to ban the Torah may be measured by the number of copies of this work now in existence. But is it not time that the world now also gave some thought to the real life people of Judah, who died in the millions to uphold the Torah? That light that shines from its pages, is it not much like fire?

### Judah and Judaism

The religion now called Judaism was developed by the Pharisees about 2,000 years ago. Its core was the written Torah, which was then gradually surrounded with an increasingly dense body of legal commentary generally known as the Talmud. From the start, the religion of Judaism had an ambivalent relationship to the nation of Judah. On the one hand, Judaism was a cult of the laws and traditions of Judah. Yet on the other hand, the stronger Judah was as a nation, the less need it had to make a cult of itself. The "people of the land", as the Pharisees called the country people of Judah, were regarded by many of the Pharisees as hopelessly "unclean" due to their laxness in matters of religious ritual. Yet it was the day-to-day settlement of

differences among the people in such a way as to preserve equality that formed the real basis of Judaism in Judah itself. It was only after Judah was overthrown that the cult of Judah became so central. The main cause of the rise of Christianity and Islam was the rise of Judaism. Judaism succeeded so well in creating a cult of Judah that eventually it forced even the rivals and enemies of the Jews to assume a respectful attitude towards the Torah. But the main reason why the Jews were able to create a cult of Judah was because of the real life and death struggle of the Jewish nation to preserve itself against the Romans. It was not "God" that drew the attention of the world to Judah but rather the spectacle of millions of people struggling for centuries to preserve themselves against great odds. According to the Talmud, cited on page 255 of Bar-Kokhba by Yigael Yadin, when Akiba first met Simon bar Kochba, he is said to have exclaimed, "This is the king Messiah". Is it not time that the world began to see what Akiba saw?

## Chapter Four

### Classical Anti-Semitism

World recognition of the real role of Judah in human history has been blocked by an attitude conventionally described as anti-Semitism. The history of anti-Semitism is usually broken down into three phases, beginning with the "classical" anti-Semitism of the Greeks and Romans, continuing with the "religious" anti-Semitism of the Christian Middle Ages and culminating in the "racial" anti-Semitism of the modern Nazis. These distinctions conceal more than they reveal. Although they rationalized their actions differently at different times, the anti-Semites of every era were essentially alike in their murderous hatred of Jews. Their words varied but their practice remained much the same. Classical anti-Semitism has usually been treated in terms of the various accusations directed against the Jews by various Greek and Roman writers. But classical anti-Semitism did not begin with accusations, which followed only after the fact. It began with murder.

The first anti-Semites were Greek colonists living in Syria in the 2nd century BCE. Their leader was a man who wished to be known as Antiochus Epiphanes. In 175 BCE, Antiochus Epiphanes became the ruler of the Seleucid empire, the largest of the Greek Middle Eastern empires formed after the death of Alexander of Macedon. Judah had come under Seleucid rule around 200 BCE, having previously been subject to the Greek rulers of Egypt, the Ptolemies.

The Seleucid empire originated in the conquests of Alexander of Macedon during the 4th century BCE. During the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, large numbers of Greek colonists settled in the Middle East, founding cities in which knowledge of the Greek language and culture was a requirement for citizenship. But by the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the pace of Greek colonization had slowed. In order to preserve itself, the ruling class of the Greek cities embarked

on a program of forced "Hellenization" of the Middle Eastern peoples. Antioches Epiphanes was a leader of this trend, which was anti-Semitic in the full sense of the term, since it aimed at the suppression of all forms of Semitic culture and their replacement with Greek culture. The main instrument of forced "Hellenization" utilized by Antioches Epiphanes was the legal device of requiring each Middle Eastern city to reconstitute itself as a Greek "polis". In *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, Tcherikover shows that knowledge of the Greek language and culture was a formal requirement for citizenship in a Greek "polis". In most Middle Eastern cities, the main written and spoken language at this time was Aramaic. Reconstituting a city as a Greek "polis" had therefore the effect of disenfranchising most of its citizens. In order to regain their citizenship, the people had to learn Greek. Glorification of Greek culture and contempt for Semitic culture were integral elements of this policy.

Immediately upon coming to power in 175 BCE, Antioches Epiphanes resolved to inaugurate his program of forced "Hellenization" by reconstituting Jerusalem as a Greek "polis". Its name was to be changed to "Antioch" and schools and other facilities established for training its people in Greek culture. When the people of Jerusalem protested against these policies, Antioches Epiphanes ordered an attack upon the city by his army, resulting in the massacre of some 40,000 Jews in Jerusalem around 168 BCE. Many thousands more were killed by Greek troops elsewhere in Judah in an effort to force the people to become Greeks.

Following the massacres in Jerusalem, Antioches Epiphanes issued a series of edicts aimed at the suppression of Judaism and including banning the Torah, outlawing circumcision and forbidding observance of the Sabbath and other Jewish holy days. At the same time, the temple in Jerusalem was to be converted into a center for the worship of "Olympian Zeus", with whom Antioches Epiphanes identified himself. His chosen title, Epiphanes, meant "the god made manifest" in Greek. Antioches Epiphanes believed that he was the earthly incarnation of the Greek "god" Zeus and he expected the Jews to worship him as such. A statue of Antioches Epiphanes in the guise of Zeus was placed in the temple in Jerusalem for the Jews to worship. Those who refused were killed. This was anti-Semitism at its most "classical".

The classical anti-Semitism of Antiochus Epiphanes is perpetuated in many history books, which treat him at worst as a "bizarre" or "eccentric" figure. F.E. Peters in *The Harvest of Hellenism* will not even go that far. He states on page 252:

Antiochus IV was neither madman, playboy nor savior of Hellenism. He was an energetic and dedicated ruler who worked to save his kingdom under the ominous double threat of Rome and Parthia. We can see the hand of Antiochus at work in the modernization of the Seleucid army along Roman lines and in the traditional urbanization program. He founded few if any new poleis-the manpower was no longer available-but he did raise many older cities of predominantly non-Hellenic character to the level of poleis. Antiochus IV seems to have reinforced his father's innovation, under the rubric of Zeus Olympius, of an empire wide ruler cult which was intended to complement, not replace, the other local cults.

Hitler too could be called "energetic" and "dedicated". Peters, like most historians of "classical" Greece and Rome, sees nothing wrong with forced "Hellenization". The murder of tens of thousands of people in Jerusalem is glossed over with the bland phrase, "but he did raise many older cities of predominantly non-Hellenic character to the level of poleis".

Peters refuses to treat Antiochus Epiphanes as a "madman" because he recognizes that Antiochus Epiphanes was considered insane only because he lost. His program of the forced "Hellenization" of Judah was decisively defeated by the emergence of the guerilla armies of Judah the Hammer. In *The Apocrypha*, edited by Edgar Goodspeed, appears the following passage, from the second Book of Jfaccabees, describing the early phases of the uprising:

But Judas, who was called Maccabeus, and his followers secretly entered the villages and called on their kinsmen to join them, and by enlisting those who had clung to the Jewish religion, they mustered as many as six thousand. And they called upon the Lord to look upon the people who were oppressed by all men and to have pity on the sanctuary which had been profaned by the godless, and to have mercy on the city which was being ruined and would soon be leveled with the ground, and to hearken to the blood that cried to them, and to remember the lawless destruction of the innocent babies and the blasphemies uttered against his name, and to hate their wickedness. And as soon as

Maccabeus got them organized, the heathen found him irresistible, for the wrath of the Lord now turned to mercy. He would go unexpectedly to towns and villages and set fire to them, and in recovering advantageous positions and putting to flight not a few of the enemy, he found the nights especially favorable for such attacks. And the country rang with talk of his valor.

In the language of modern politics, this would be called a description of a revolutionary war of national liberation.

In 165 BCE, the guerilla armies of Judah the Hammer entered Jerusalem and rededicated the temple to the Jewish faith. By 163 BCE, Antiochus Epiphanes was dead. Judah the Hammer was killed in battle with the Greeks a few years later, but the struggle continued under the leadership of his brothers. In 141 BCE, the Seleucid empire, greatly weakened by similar revolts elsewhere, formally agreed to recognize the independence of Judah. By 85 BCE, an Arab army had taken Damascus and the Seleucid empire was no more. Its overthrow could be traced to many factors, the most obvious being the simple fact that the Greeks, although heavily armed, were numerically a minority in the Middle East as a whole. But because Antiochus Epiphanes had tried so hard to make an example out of the Jews, his defeat at their hands did play a key role in stimulating other movements for national independence throughout the Seleucid empire.

Classical anti-Semitism grew out of this sequence of events. Antiochus Epiphanes had tried to make an example out of Judah because he regarded it as a bastion of Semitic culture. There is no indication that Antiochus Epiphanes accused the Jews of anything other than refusing to go along with his program of forced "Hellenization". But just because of the defeat of this program and the subsequent fall of the Seleucid empire, those among the Greeks and Romans who still dreamed of ruling the Middle East began to feel a special animosity towards the Jews in particular. From this time forward, references to the Jews in the "classical" literature of the Greek and Roman upper classes became increasingly hostile and accusatory. The real cause of all the accusations was the one accusation they never made, that of helping to defeat Greek efforts to rule the Middle East.

In *The King Is Dead: Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism*, 334-41 B.C., Samuel Eddy notes on page 186 that the earliest Greek writers looked on the Jews as "unimportant hillbillies".

Incredibly, Eddy goes on to state: "This was not anti-Semitism; it was the attitude of certain Greeks that Asiatics existed to be exploited. " Eddy does not seem to realize that it was precisely this attitude which lay at the root of classical anti-Semitism. Just because they thought that "Asiatics existed to be exploited", the Greeks treated all the Semites with contempt. When the Jews distinguished themselves by their resistance to forced "Hellenization", the attitude of generalized anti-Semitism which was already there became tinged with a particular vindictiveness towards the Jews. From the start, classical anti-Semitism really was anti-Semitism.

## Iron

The "classical" Greek and Roman dream of empire in the Middle East was a dream of iron. Most Greek and Roman troops were armed with iron helmets, iron shields, iron body armor, iron swords and iron weapons of all kinds. The Romans used iron even more intensively than did the Greeks. In *Mining and Metallurgy in the Greek and Roman World*, John Healy notes that iron had been mined in Italy since at least 1100 BCE. The early Romans mined iron in large quantities on the island of Elba. By the time of the Caesars, the Romans were mining iron in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Austria and the entire Balkan region.

The Middle East is not rich in iron, which is found in some quantity only in the highlands of Turkey and Iran. These highlands were occupied by Indo-European invaders in the 2nd millennium BCE, who used the iron found there to establish the Hittite and Persian empires. The Persians were then overthrown by the Greeks, who had more iron than they did. Then came the Romans, who had the most iron of all. Throughout this long period, the Semitic peoples of the Middle East, with the partial exception of the Babylonians and Assyrians, were forced to rely almost entirely on weapons of bronze or even of stone. Most of the Jewish troops who fought Greek and Roman armies during this period were armed only with spears and arrows with bronze or stone tips. Only a small elite of Jewish troops had iron weapons of any kind. During the war of independence against the Seleucids, Judah the Hammer and his brothers began to build up an army of Jewish troops equipped in part with iron weapons taken from the Greeks. By the 1st century BCE, the kings of Judah had also begun to recruit foreign

mercenaries, who usually had iron weapons . Under Jonathan, king of Judah from 100 to 78 BCE, something like a professional army equipped with iron weapons did begin to take shape in Judah. But once this army had been defeated and dispersed by the Romans, the people of Judah had no access to iron weapons save those they could capture from the Romans. Most of the battles in the so-called "Jewish Wars" were fought between heavily armed professional soldiers on the Roman side and civilians armed with sticks and stones on the Jewish side.

The initial Roman invasion of Judah took place in 63 BCE, led by Pompey. From 63 to 37 BCE, the Romans fought a series of battles against the army of Judah, ending with the defeat and crucifixion of Antigonus, last of the kings of Judah of Maccabean descent, in 37 BCE. From 37 to 4 BCE, Judah was ruled by the Roman puppet king, Herod. From 4 BCE onwards , Judah was placed under direct Roman administration. By the beginning of the Common Era, the Romans had thus restored Indo-European rule over Judah to the point where it had stood under the Seleucids prior to 175 BCE. Judah was occupied by Roman troops and treated as a province of the Roman empire, but in the temple of Jerusalem and the institutions of the people, the Jewish way of life was still celebrated.

From this time forward, the figure of Antioches Epiphanes began to haunt the Roman imagination. The memory of his fate caused the first Caesars to deal cautiously with the temple in Jerusalem. Yet at the same time, the ambition to succeed where he had failed grew from one Caesar to the next. The more the Caesars came to think of themselves as "gods", the more they longed to be worshipped in Jerusalem. Around 40 CE, the Roman Caesar Caligula tried to force the Jews to place a statue of himself in their temple for the people to worship. This effort was halted only by his death.

Both Nero and Hadrian, who instigated the first and second "Jewish Wars" respectively, were admirers of Antioches Epiphanes. Hadrian began his campaign against the Jews by ordering the completion of a temple to " Zeus Olympios" in Athens, construction of which had been begun by order of Antioches Epiphanes and then abandoned after his death. Hadrian presided over the dedication of the completed temple in 128 CE and was accorded the title of "Olympian" by the Athenians. This was the same title that Antioches Epiphanes had claimed. Hadrian's deification by the Athenians was the direct prelude

to the series of decrees he issued around 130 CE, banning Judaism and thus provoking the second "Jewish War", which resulted in the death of 580,000 Jews according to the Roman historian Dio Cassius. The first "Jewish War", provoked by mass crucifixions in Jerusalem in 65 CE under Nero, had already resulted in the death of 1.356,460 Jews, according to the figures given by Josephus in T/1e Jewish War.

Nero and Hadrian were both leading members of what might be called the Greek faction in Roman life. Their admiration for Antiochus Epiphanes grew out of their admiration for Greek culture in general. Hadrian is constantly described by historians as one of the most "enlightened" of the Caesars, due to his patronage of numerous Greek writers and intellectuals. Nero too was noted for his love of Greek culture. Florus, the Roman commander in Jerusalem who ordered the mass crucifixions that provoked the first "Jewish War", was a Greek from Asia Minor, one of many persons of Greek origin advanced to high office by Nero. Greek allies of the Romans also played a prominent role in the siege of Jerusalem during the first "Jewish War". Indeed, among the Greeks who took part in the siege of Jerusalem was a contingent from the Roman puppet state of Commagene, headed by a man named Antiochus Epiphanes, as noted by Josephus on page 315 of The Jewish War.

From the start, the Roman occupation of Judah was characterized by a spirit of cruelty and vindictiveness which indicated that the Romans already viewed the Jews as troublemakers due to their earlier conflict with the Greeks. More so than in most places, the Romans were quick to resort to crucifixion in Judah. The crucifixion of Antigonus in 37 BCE was an unusual way for the Romans to execute a person of royal rank. By the time of the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Romans were treating Jewish captives, as described on page 314 of The Jewish War, as follows:

Scourged and subjected before death to every torture, they were finally crucified in view of the wall. Titus indeed realized the horror of what was happening, for every day 50 {}-sometimes even more-fell into his hands. However it was not safe to let men captured by force go free, and to guard such a host of prisoners would tie up a great proportion of his troops. But his chief reason for not stopping the slaughter was the hope that the sight of it would perhaps induce the Jews to surrender in order to avoid the same fate. The soldiers themselves

through rage and bitterness nailed up their victims in various attitudes as a grim joke, till owing to the vast numbers there was no room for the crosses, and no crosses for the bodies.

After the Romans took Jerusalem, many thousands of Jewish prisoners were carried away and publicly executed in arenas throughout the Roman empire, including in Rome itself.

In *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, William Westermann notes that crucifixion was a form of murder particularly associated in the Roman mind with the punishment of slaves. On page 75, Westermann states:

To the Roman mind of Livy's day a revolt of slaves was peculiarly heinous and to be met, "not solely in that spirit which we use toward other enemies" but with a special indignation and anger; and the state itself met the danger of their revolts by a system of rewards and punishments,

by rewards paid to slaves who might give advance information of threatened uprisings and by the lingering death on the cross as punishment for those who revolted. This form of death, which is but rarely met with in the Greek literature, came to be regarded by the Romans as a terrifying punishment particularly reserved for slaves. As such it appears as a threat often made against them in the Roman Comedy.

Westermann goes on to note that 6,000 ex-slaves from the defeated army of Spartacus were crucified by the Romans along the road from Capua to Rome in 71 BCE. The general in supreme command of the Roman troops that defeated Spartacus was Pompey, the same general who commanded the initial Roman invasion of Judah.

On some level, the Romans must have been aware that the Jews thought of themselves as the descendants of runaway slaves. In the Roman mind, opposition to slavery, opposition to "Hellenization" and opposition to Caesar-worship must have formed a single pattern, which defined the Jews as troublemakers. This was particularly true for the Caesars, who were, as Westermann notes, "the richest capitalists and largest slave-owners of the Roman world". Under Jewish law, murder of a slave was a crime, punishable by death. Under Roman law, slave owners had the right to torture and kill their slaves at will. In view of the fact that they murdered some 2 million Jews in Judah, is

it not apparent that the Romans perceived Jews, like slaves, as belonging to a special category of people, who were to be treated "not solely in that spirit which we use toward other enemies" but with, as Westermann puts it, "a special indignation and anger"?

Some writers have challenged the figures given by Josephus and Dio Cassius on the number of Jews killed by the Romans during the two "Jewish Wars". Yet even if these figures are exaggerated, which is far from certain, an estimate of 2 million Jews killed by the Romans during the era of the "Jewish Wars" is still a conservative figure. Joseph Klausner, in *Jesus of Nazareth*, estimates that 200,000 Jews had already been killed by the Romans during the first 100 years of their rule in Judah, from 63 BCE to 39 CE. Many hundreds of thousands of Jews are also believed to have been killed by the Romans in Syria, Cyprus, Egypt and Libya during the widespread Jewish uprising against Trajan from 115 to 117 CE. If the Jews killed by the Romans prior to or between the two "Jewish Wars" are also included, an estimate of 2 million Jews killed by the Romans during this era does not seem exaggerated.

A similar estimate is suggested by population figures for this period. In *Byzantine Jewry*, Andrew Sharf on page 3 gives the results of the census carried out by the Romans throughout the Roman empire in 42 CE, which reported roughly 7 million Jews then living under Roman rule. Jews at that time constituted about 10% of the population of the Roman empire. Michael Grant, in *The Jews in the Roman World*, estimates that there were also some 1 million Jews living in Parthian territory at this time. A total of some 8 million Jews in the world at the beginning of the Common Era is indicated by these figures. Of these 8 million Jews, most authorities believe at least 3 or 4 million were still living in Judah. Zeitlin, on page 261 of Volume 2 of *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State*, estimates that there were 4 or 5 million Jews in Judah prior to the start of the "Jewish Wars". Yet as Michael Avi-Yonah shows in *The Jews of Palestine*, there were only 750,000 Jews still living in Judah in 135 CE. Although many hundreds of thousands of Jews had fled or been sold into slavery by the Romans, there can be no doubt that a great proportion of the perhaps 3 million Jews who disappeared from Judah between 42 and 135 CE had been killed by the Romans during the "Jewish Wars".

## Caesarism

Both then and now, the Romans and their admirers attempted to justify these mass murders in the name of Caesarism. In Hadrian, published in 1961, Stewart Perowne finds Hadrian, on page 181, deserving of the "veneration and gratitude of mankind". On page 183, in the very last paragraph of the book, Perowne sums up his estimate of Hadrian's career as follows:

The interest of Hadrian to the contemporary world is that of a man who tried to see the problems of his age, political, social and spiritual, as a single problem, and to find a solution for it. He was, in part, successful, he bequeathed to later ages a magnificent treasure of achievement.

But in the realm of the spirit he failed, and it is the spiritual failures who are, always, the most tragic, and the most to be loved. It is hard to avoid making a connection between Perowne's talk of Hadrian's efforts to find a "solution" for a "single problem" and the Nazi talk of a "final solution" to the "Jewish problem". Vespasian and Titus, between them responsible for the murder of more than 1 million Jews during the first "Jewish War", are characterized by Perowne as "dull but reliable" and "athletic and affable".

Like almost all historians of "classical" antiquity, Perowne blames the Jews for the "Jewish Wars". The problem with the Jews, Perowne finds on page 137, is that they "felt themselves to be separate, different, and superior morally to others". He sums it all up on page 145:

Jesus had turned the direction of life, its moral goal, from the nation, that is his own Jewish nation, to the individual soul, which has no nationality.

From Paul to Pasternak, men of Jewish race have besought their brother Jews to heed the message. In Hadrian's day, as in later ages, their tragic inability to do so was to bring upon them unspeakable calamity.

Perowne tries to make it sound as if Hadrian had murdered all those Jews for failing to become Christians. He calls the Jews "patriotic scoundrels" on page 182 for trying to preserve their nation, while he "venerates" Hadrian for trying to impose the Greek and Roman nations on everyone else.

The essence of Caesarism is the cult of success. The Caesarists define success in terms of wealth and luxury; they achieve wealth and luxury by commanding the labor of others; they achieve the command by means of their weapons. It is the weapons which make the success possible, and from then to now, the weapons are always of iron. In the language of modern politics, the Caesarists would be called fascists. Indeed, the term "fascism" is directly derived from Caesarism. The root of the word is the Latin term, "fasces", meaning the battle axe bound in sticks carried by the Roman legions as a symbol. The first people to call themselves "fascists", the followers of Mussolini in Italy, consciously thought of themselves as reviving not only the symbols but the entire policy of the Caesars.

The chief symbol of this policy in "classical" times was the worship of the Caesars as "gods". From the time of Augustus to that of Constantine, a period of some 300 years, Caesar-worship was the official religion of the Roman state. Like Antiochus Epiphanes, the Caesars identified themselves with Zeus, but also with Jupiter, Sol Invictus, Mithra and many others. Their insistence that they were "gods" in human form was their way of asserting their right to kill and torture as they pleased. On this level too, they felt threatened by the Jews, whose entire culture was oriented around the belief that there was no such entity as a "god" in human form. Caligula's desire to place a statue of himself inside the temple in Jerusalem was no mere whim but an expression of the need of all the Caesars to be worshipped as "gods", including in Jerusalem.

Anti-Semitism became an integral part of Caesarism during the 1st century of the Common Era and has remained such ever since. Prior to the time of Nero, Caesarist policy towards the Jews had varied somewhat from one Caesar to the next. But after the first "Jewish War", the Caesarists had to develop an anti-Jewish ideology. They could not back away from so many murders. For the Caesars to be right, the Jews had to be wrong. Justification of the "Jewish Wars" has remained a fundamental goal of Caesarism right down to the present day. It was pursued not only by the pagan Caesars but also by the Christian Caesars, Kaisers and Czars and the modern fascists. Under the pagan Caesars, the main accusation usually directed against the Jews was that of "misanthropy" or hatred of the human race. The Jews were said to hate all other nations save their own. They were said to be clannish, secretive, intolerant of others. These accu

sations are repeated by most historians of antiquity , including many who claim to sympathize with the Jews. Edward Flannery, a Catholic priest, wrote a book called *The Anguish of the Jews* to expose what he calls "Twenty-three centuries of Anti-Semitism" . Yet throughout the book, Flannery accuses the Jews of provoking others to attack them. On page 23, he states:

In substance, Greco-Roman anti-Semitism was a reaction against Jewish separatism, and thus anti-Judaic, since this separatism was part and parcel of Jewish religion and mores. It was not truly theological , however.

The pagan world was tolerant and condescending toward alien theologies and cults in its midst. It was rather Jewish intolerance which, conversely, wounded Roman sensitivities and incited the ill will of an empire accustomed to compliance from captive nations.

Jewish "intolerance", it seems, was to blame for the "Jewish Wars" . In *The Jews in the Roman World*, Michael Grant develops the theme of Jewish " intolerance" right from the start. He divides ancient "Israel" into three parts. In Judah he finds "a stubborn concentration on values that care little for the values of others" , while Samaria is just as "particularistic, separate and censorious". In Galilee they are always "carrying bravery in Quixotic, seditious causes to violent and fanatical lengths". The relations of Jews and Samaritans "were generally disastrous", while both groups "were united in hating the men of Galilee, whose coarse, guttural dialect they like to mock". On page 34, after listing all of the nasty accusations of the Greeks and Romans against the Jews , Grant concludes: "But the real reason why these ignorant rumours arose was because the Jews kept so much to themselves, as many an ancient writer stressed."

All of these accusations of Jewish "separatism" and " intolerance" are predicated on the assumption that the Jews should have learned Greek or Latin. No one accuses the Jews of being "separate" from the other Middle Eastern peoples, for they were not. They spoke the same language as their neighbors, followed much the same customs, mingled easily with other Middle Eastern peoples outside of Judah . All the riots and accusations against Jews in Egypt and Syria under the Romans were not the work of Egyptians or Syrians but of Greeks, who looked on Egyptians, Jews and Syrians alike as "aliens" in their own land . It was only in relation to the Greeks and Romans

that the Jews were "separate", and even in relation to the Greeks and Romans, their "separateness" consisted largely in trying to speak their own language and follow their own customs in their own land.

Nor were the ancient Romans so "tolerant" as they are usually pictured. In *Religious Toleration and Persecution in Ancient Rome*, Simeon Guterman shows that most "alien" religions were banned in ancient Rome. On page 37, Guterman cites a speech by the consul Decius back in the days of the Roman Republic, who stated:

How often in the age of our fathers and our grandfathers was the task given the magistrates to forbid the practice of foreign rites, to prohibit sacrificers and diviners from the forum, from the circus, from the city, to seek out and burn all prophetic books, to abolish every type of sacrifice except that approved by Roman custom.

Under Roman law, no religious ceremony of any kind could be held without an official license from the Roman state. The Romans did eventually license a few foreign cults, most notably the worship of Cybele and Attis imported from Phrygia. But under the Republic, most foreign religions were banned. The penalty for violation of this ban, cited by Guterman on page 32, was as follows: "Those who introduce new kinds of worship, unknown to custom or reason, and thus disturbing weaker minds, are to be punished, if persons of rank, with deportation; if not rank, with death."

Prior to the time of Julius Caesar, Judaism too was banned in Rome. In 139 BCE, the small Jewish community in Rome was expelled from the city for "trying to infect customs". But due to the Roman invasion of the Middle East in the 1st century BCE, many millions of Jews came under Roman rule. In the course of his struggle with Pompey, Julius Caesar issued a decree formally recognizing Judaism as a "legal religion" within the Roman empire. This decree forms the main basis for the efforts of the historians to depict the Romans as "tolerant" of the Jews. Yet Caesar's relatively "tolerant" policy towards the Jews was predicated on Pompey's earlier conquest of Judah. It was because Caesar wished to rule the Jews that he offered to "tolerate" them. Praise of Caesar for "tolerating" the Jews is founded on the assumption that the Romans had every right to conquer Judah in the first place. Would the historians wish to be conquered, so that they could then be "tolerated" by their conquerors?

## Toleration

Caesar's policy of "toleration" of the Jews did not last long in any case. It was followed by his successor, Augustus, but abandoned under Tiberius during the early decades of the 1st century CE. Treatment of Judaism as a "legal religion" helped the Romans to consolidate their rule in Judah but had the great disadvantage, from a Roman point of view, of permitting the Jews to preach Judaism in Rome itself. In 19 CE, Tiberius ordered all Roman converts to Judaism banished from Italy. Speaking of the opposition to Judaism which arose in Rome at this time, Ernest Abel states on page 75 of *The Roots of Anti-Semitism*:

The opposition came from the upper classes: the aristocrats, the nobility, the conservatives, in short the ruling class. Entrenched in their senatorial seats or influencing those who were, such people viewed with suspicion any new religion that might arouse the masses to reconsider their plight.

Already in 29 BCE, Maecenas, an adviser to Augustus, had warned against those who "by bringing in new divinities persuade many to adopt foreign principles of law from which spring up conspiracies". By the time of Nero, whose wife, Poppaea, was drawn to Judaism, fear of Jewish influence in Rome itself had become an important motive for the growing desire of the Caesars to have done with the Jews once and for all.

Although the Romans devastated Judah during the first "Jewish War", they were still being "tolerant" according to most historians of antiquity. In *Titus of Rome*, Alice Desmond blames the Jews for the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Titus, she states on page 141, had wanted to save the temple: "Capturing it unharmed from an army of religious fanatics, however, would not be easy." On page 144, Titus is still trying to spare Jerusalem from destruction: "But the beaten Jews attempted to drive such a preposterous bargain with him that the gentle Roman turned indignantly away and ordered his chief of staff, General Tiberius Alexander, to burn Jerusalem to the ground." Finally, on page 145, Titus leaves Jerusalem, broken-hearted over the murders which the "intolerant" Jews had forced him to commit:

Titus had captured Jerusalem, as his father sent him to do; but because the Jews fought with such fanatical bravery, he had been forced to kill over a million of them and turn miles of beautiful Judaea into a desert. And he wept.

Desmond, like most writers on this period, never even considers the possibility that Titus might actually have wanted to kill Jews. Even the most pro-Jewish historians are blind on this point. Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism, by Rosemary Ruether, is an attack on Christian anti-Semitism. Yet On page 27, speaking of the "Jewish Wars", Ruether states:

However, these wars did not result in anything like a full-fledged persecution of the Jewish people, such as were later to afflict the Christians.

This appears to have been partly due to the fact that the messianic tradition, with its virulent antipathy to the "empires", was not well known to the Greeks and Romans.

As if mass murder were not "persecution" or evidence in itself that the Jewish "messianic tradition" was very well known indeed to the Greeks and Romans. On page 25, Ruether attributes Greek and Roman anti-Semitism to "the popular reaction to the religiously sanctioned exclusivity of the Jews".

This same accusation also appears in John Meagher's article, "As the Twig Was Bent: Antisemitism in Greco-Roman and Earliest Christian Times", appearing in Anti-semitism and the Foundations of Christianity, edited by Alan Davies. On page 4, Meagher states:

The cardinal sin of the Jews, to the minds of pagan antiquity, was what Sevenster felicitously calls their "strangeness". Hellenistic culture had fostered a new dream of a universal politeia, a great commonwealth of divers peoples, which was further elaborated under the aegis of the pax Romana, but, despite the obvious virtues and civilized advance of this great vision of fellowship, the Jews kept stubbornly apart.

And in what did the "strangeness" of the Jews consist? In speaking a Middle Eastern language and following Middle Eastern customs in a Middle Eastern land. How strange that Meagher does not find it strange of the Greeks and Romans to roam the world murdering people for failing to speak their language.

After 70 CE, although Jerusalem and much of Judah lay in ruins, the Romans did continue for some time to recognize Judaism as a "legal religion". Indeed, under Trajan around 110 CE, the Romans even opened negotiations with the Pharisees over the possibility of rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem on a smaller scale. But as Louis Finkelstein brings out in *Akiba*, these negotiations were but a prelude to Trajan's invasion of the Parthian empire and attack on the Jewish community of Iraq. Once the attack began in 115 CE, the negotiations were dropped. These actions on the part of Trajan sparked a widespread uprising of Jews in Syria, Cyprus, Egypt and Libya, which was put down with great cruelty by the Romans between 115 and 117 CE. Trajan died soon thereafter; his successor was Hadrian, who formally outlawed Judaism in 130 CE.

Contrary to the impression fostered by most historians of antiquity, Judaism remained outlawed under Roman law from that time forwards. Hadrian's successor, Antoninus Pius, did revoke Hadrian's decrees banning Judaism in 138 CE; but Hadrian's decrees were revoked only so far as the Jews themselves were concerned. Conversion to Judaism remained a crime under Roman law. In *The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms of Spain and Gaul*, Solomon Katz summarizes on page 47 the Roman law on circumcision instituted by Antoninus Pius in 138 CE as follows:

Whoever, whether Jew or non-Jew, circumcised a non-Jewish free man or slave, with or without his consent, was, according to his social status, to be put to death or deported and his possessions confiscated. The physician who performed the operation was to be put to death.

This legislation remained in effect under pagan and Christian Caesars alike and was later incorporated into the laws of the various Christian kingdoms of Europe. Right down to the 20th century, "toleration" of Jews in Europe never meant anything more than the right of Jews to raise their children as Jews. Conversion to Judaism remained a crime punishable by death in Europe throughout this entire period. How many historians would wish to be "tolerated" in this fashion?

Even the limited measure of "toleration" given the Jews by the Romans after 138 CE was granted grudgingly and unwillingly. The main reason for the decision of Antoninus Pius to revoke Hadrian's decrees banning Judaism so far as the Jews were concerned seems to

have been the heavy casualties suffered by the Romans in the second "Jewish War". When Hadrian and his troops returned to Rome in 135 CE, they did not celebrate a triumph as Vespasian and Titus had done. They even neglected to issue the customary address to the Senate declaring that they were in good health. In *The Jews of Palestine*, A vi-Y onah shows that the casualties suffered by the Romans in the second "Jewish War" were still remembered by them 50 years later. Avi-Y onah sees a definite shift in the Roman attitude towards the Jews after 135 CE, a new tone of respect born of fear.

There were, after all, still 750,000 Jews remaining in Palestine, mostly in Galilee, after 135 CE. Although the Romans had killed 2 million Jews and devastated Judah, they had not succeeded in their basic objective of stamping out Judaism. Hadrian had consciously assumed the title and program of Antioches Epiphanes, claiming the power to destroy the Jews as proof of his status as a "god". His failure to achieve his goals despite the mass murders and heavy Roman casualties marked the end of an era. That is why Perowne, who "venerates" Hadrian, nonetheless calls him a "spiritual failure". Hadrian's inability to stamp out Judaism proved that the Romans were not such great "gods" as they claimed to be. Although they never relate it to the second "Jewish War", many historians date the beginning of the decline and fall of the Roman empire from the time of Hadrian's death. The real purpose of the myth of Roman "toleration" of the Jews is to conceal the magnitude of the political defeat which the Romans suffered at the hands of the Jews at this time. What the historians, even many Jewish ones, will not see is that the Jews forced the Romans to "tolerate" them. Save for a brief interval under Julius Caesar and Augustus, Roman policy throughout the period from 63 BCE to 135 CE aimed at nothing less than the complete suppression of Judaism.

It was not for want of trying that the Romans failed in this effort. The "toleration" granted the Jews by Antoninus Pius in 138 CE amounted to little more than an admission on the part of the Romans that they were simply unable to kill all the Jews in the world. Yet for the Jews, after 200 years of Roman genocide, such an admission was a great victory.

Classical anti-Semitism and indeed the "classical" world as a whole received a death blow at the hands of the guerilla armies of Simon bar Kochba during the second "Jewish War". Recognition of Judaism

as a "legal religion" after so many murders ' was a fatal confession of weakness on the part of the Romans. The essence of classical anti-Semitism was an attitude of arrogant contempt towards the Jews. Judaism was treated by the "classical" writers as a strange perversion, of no possible interest to a " civilized" Greek or Roman. But after 135 CE, even the anti-Semites began to think of the Jews as powerful. They began to lose confidence in their own traditions and to toy with various adaptations of Jewish tradition for their own purposes.

This trend, which eventually led to the "religious" anti-Semitism of the Christian Europeans, was accompanied by a general loss of confidence in the Roman slave system. The rise of Christianity, the fall of Rome and the transition from slavery to serfdom were all aspects of the same process, symbolized after 135 CE in the opposition between Roman Caesar and Jewish Messiah.

## Chapter Five

### The Messiah

The English word Messiah is derived from the Hebrew word Mashiach, meaning "anointed". In Hebrew usage, Messiah originally was a term applied to anyone, whether king, priest or prophet, who had been literally anointed with oil as part of a ceremony consecrating them to the service of the people. Such persons were called "Anointed of the Lord".

Beginning in the 2nd century BCE, the term Messiah began to be used in the sense of an awaited leader who would arise to deliver the people from oppression. The first literary use of the term Messiah in this sense appears in the Book of Daniel, dating from the early 2nd century BCE. At first, other terms, such as "son of Man" or "new priest", were also used to describe an awaited leader, but by the 1st century CE, Messiah had become the most common term. In the Apocalypse of Baruch and the fourth Book of Ezra, both dating from around 100 CE, the awaited leader is called Messiah.

Although many circumstances contributed to the emergence of the concept of the Messiah, undoubtedly the most central was the decision of the "Great Assembly" of 140 BCE to entrust the office of High Priest to the Maccabees "until such time as a trustworthy prophet should arise". The Maccabees were of priestly descent but not of the line of Zadok; according to the tradition at that time, only the descendants of Zadok could be High Priests. There was considerable opposition to the election of Simon as High Priest at the "Great Assembly" in 140 BCE; therefore the decree making the office hereditary in his family was amended to include the qualification, "until such time as a trustworthy prophet should arise".

This clause in the decree of 140 BCE provided the legal basis for the movement led by the Pharisees to depose the Maccabees as High Priests and replace them with a less secular leader. Already under the son of Simon, John Hyrcanus, the Pharisees began to agitate for the

separation of civil and religious powers and the election of a new religious leader more in keeping with their own concept of Judaism. These were the circumstances which inspired the image of an awaited leader which began to emerge at this time. The awaited leader was to be the "trustworthy prophet" anticipated in the decree of 140 BCE. The Jewish writings of this period, generally known as "apocrypha" and "pseudepigrapha", may be found in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, edited by R.H. Charles. In *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, dating from around 100 BCE, the patriarch Levi predicts the coming of a "new priest"':

Then shall the Lord raise up a new priest.  
 And to him all the words of the Lord shall be revealed;  
 And he shall execute a righteous judgment upon the earth  
 for a multitude of days.  
 And his star shall arise in heaven as of a king.  
 Lighting up the light of knowledge as the sun the day,  
 And he shall be magnified in the world.  
 He shall shine forth as the sun on the earth ,  
 And shall remove all darkness from under heaven,  
 And there shall be peace in all the earth.

This "new priest" would rule together with the kings of Judah but rank higher than them. Thus the patriarch Judah declares, with reference to Levi: "For to me the Lord gave the kingdom, and to him the priesthood, and He set the kingdom beneath the priesthood. " The "new priest" of *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* was a literary image of the new High Priest whom the Pharisees wished to place along side of and even above the Maccabees.

Although not so blatantly as in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, all of the Jewish writings of this time which speak of the advent of an awaited leader were reflective of the spirit of the Pharisee movement for the election of a new High Priest. Little is known of the authors of these works, but there is every reason to suppose that most of them were Pharisees or close to the Pharisee movement. The concept of the Messiah which they developed was rooted in the Pharisee ideals of love, justice and humility as the basis of human relations. The more secular the Maccabean High Priests became, the the more spiritual, religious and other-worldly became the image of

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the awaited leader who was to replace them. As first developed during the 2nd and 1st centuries BeE, the concept of the Messiah was undoubtedly a Pharisee concept.

### The Pharisee Messiah

The Pharisee concept of the Messiah had deep roots in Jewish tradition. It reached at least as far back as the Book of Isaiah, begun during the 8th century BeE, which contains the celebrated lines:

And there shall come forth a shoot out of the  
stock of Jesse  
And a twig shall grow forth out of his roots  
And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and might,  
The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.  
And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord;  
And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes,  
Neither decide after the hearing of his ears;  
But with righteousness shall he judge the poor,  
And decide with equity for the meek of the land;  
And he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth,  
And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.  
And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,  
And faithfulness the girdle of his reins.  
And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid;  
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together,  
And a little child shall lead them.

This image of spiritual leadership was already well established in Jewish culture by the 2nd century BeE. It formed the basis for the Pharisee concept of the Messiah, which was to a large extent but a further elaboration and development of the image of the "shoot" in the Book of Isaiah.

The fullest statement of the Pharisee concept of the Messiah appears in the Book of Enoch, where he is called the "son of Man".

The Book of Enoch was begun around the middle of the 2nd century BCE but probably contains material dating from the 1st century BCE as well. In chapter 48, the "son of Man" is described as follows:

Yea, before the sun and the signs were created,  
Before the stars of the heaven were made,  
His name was named before the Lord of Spirits.  
He shall be a staff to the righteous whereon to  
stay themselves and not fail,  
And he shall be the light of the Gentiles,  
And the hope of those who are troubled of heart.  
All who dwell on earth shall fall down and worship  
before him,  
And will praise and bless and celebrate with song  
the Lord of Spirits.  
And for this reason hath he been chosen and hidden  
before Him,  
Before the creation of the world and for evermore.

Underlying the extravagant claims made for the "son of Man" in this passage was the need of the Pharisees to justify the overthrow of the Maccabean High Priests. Judah already had a High Priest; if a new one was needed, obviously he had to be someone very special. Perhaps the most original feature of the Book of Enoch was the association

of the advent of the "son of Man" with a "great judgment" of sinners. The " great judgment" is described in chapter 1 03:

Know ye, that their souls will be made to descend  
into Sheol  
And they shall be wretched in their great tribulation.  
And into darkness and chains and a burning flame  
where is grievous judgment shall your spirits  
enter;  
And the great judgment shall be for all the generations  
of the world.

Woe to you, for ye shall have no peace.

Those who will be judged are described in chapter 96:

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Woe to you who devour the finest of the wheat,  
And drink wine in large bowls,  
And tread under foot the lowly with your might.  
Woe to you who drink water from every fountain.  
For suddenly shall ye be consumed and wither away,  
Because ye have forsaken the fountain of life.

The tone of these lines suggests that the Pharisee-led movement against the Maccabees as High Priests had something of the aspect of a "plebeian" movement against "patrician" rule, just as Finkelstein says in *The Pharisees*.

The Messianic movement inspired by the Pharisees reached its height around 90 BCE with the outbreak of an uprising against the rule of Jonathan. This uprising was put down, but after the death of Jonathan, the Pharisees gained most of their major demands. The offices of king and High Priest were separated, with Aristobulus becoming king and Hyrcanus High Priest. Hyrcanus was not the "son of Man" but he was acceptable to the Pharisees, who now became part of the Jewish state as lawyers and judges. By the middle of the 1st century BCE, the interest of the Pharisees in the advent of a Messiah had begun to wane. Messianic speculation still remained an element in Pharisee culture, but not to the same extent as before.

In the Christian "New Testament", "Jesus Christ" is portrayed as the Messiah whom the Pharisees had awaited but were unable to recognize once he appeared. It is apparent that the image of "Jesus Christ" in the "New Testament" was designed to conform to the Pharisee image of the Messiah. The Book of Isaiah, the main source of the Pharisee image, is the only Jewish book cited with approval in the "New Testament". The authors of the "New Testament" were clearly familiar with the Book of Isaiah, which contains passages such as the following:

But he was wounded because of our transgressions, bruised because of our iniquities, the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All of us, like sheep we went astray, each man turned to his own way, and the Lord inflicted upon him the sin of us all. He was oppressed and tortured, and yet he opened not his mouth, as a lamb led to slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth.

Many of the claims made for the "son of Man" were also taken over by the Christians, who sometimes used this term in their writings.

By the time that the Christian image of the Messiah began to take shape during the 1st century CE, not only the Pharisees but most Jews had lost interest in this image because it no longer reflected the political realities of the day. The whole point of the Pharisee concept of the Messiah had been to evolve an ideal alternative to the Maccabean High Priests. But after the Roman invasion of Judah, the office of High Priest was gradually stripped of much of its prestige and dignity. By the 1st century CE, the High Priests had become Roman puppets, appointed and dismissed at will, neither Maccabees nor "trustworthy prophets" but wealthy Jewish allies of the Romans. There was little point under these conditions in continuing to agitate for an ideal High Priest, for the Romans obviously did not intend to appoint a "son of Man" to this position. Only by overthrowing Roman rule could the office of High Priest be restored to its former dignity; but the overthrow of the Romans could not be achieved by purely spiritual means. A new concept of the Messiah was needed under these conditions, one which drew on the Maccabean as well as the Pharisee tradition.

The model for this new concept, which did emerge during the 1st and 2nd centuries of the Common Era, was above all Judah the Hammer. Judah was a man who had arisen from the people to lead them to victory over the Greeks. He was of priestly descent and respectful of Jewish religious traditions, yet at the same time, he was also an effective military leader who repeatedly attacked and destroyed whole Greek armies. He was a leader of the same type as Moses, Joshua and David, men in whom qualities of spiritual and military leadership were combined. By the 1st century CE, the focus of Messianic agitation in Judah had begun to shift to a Messiah of this type and away from the earlier Pharisee image, which had assumed the existence of a Jewish state which had since been overthrown by the Romans. Perhaps the clearest literary image of the concept of the Messiah which began to spread during the 1st century CE appears in the work of Philo, a Jewish writer living in Egypt. Writing early in the 1st century CE, as cited by Raphael Patai on page 172 of *The Messiah Texts*. Philo stated:

For "there shall come forth a man" says the oracle, and leading his host to war he will subdue great and populous nations, because God has sent to his aid the reinforcement which befits the godly, and that

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is dauntless courage of soul and all-powerful strength of body, either of which strikes fear into the enemy, and the two if united are quite irresistible.

There can be little doubt which "great and populous nations" Philo hoped to see subdued. That Philo, who was far from unsympathetic to Greco-Roman culture, could have made such a statement suggests that by his time, the image of the Messiah as a military as well as spiritual leader was already widespread.

However this image may have developed on the literary plane, it is clear that the main force behind its spread was the rise of the Zealot movement. All of the Zealot leaders were acclaimed as Messiahs. Simon bar Kochba was recognized as Messiah by Akiba, the leading Jewish religious figure of his day. The name, "bar Kochba", was applied to Simon bar Kochba as a result of his recognition as the Messiah by Akiba. His original name, as shown in Bar-Kokhba by Yigael Yadin, was Simon bar Kosiba. Kochba means "star" in Hebrew; it was associated with the Messianic prophecy, "and a star shall come forth out of Jacob". Simon bar Kochba has been translated to mean, "Simon son of the Star" . It must have been a dark star, for few figures in human history have cast so much light yet been so little perceived as Simon bar Kochba. Did they but know it, he is the one whose return they await.

### The Zealot Messiah

In the 1960s, Yigael Yadin discovered a letter, written either by Simon bar Kochba himself or by a scribe writing in his name, to one of his guerilla lieutenants. The letter is now housed in a museum in Israel. It was found in a cave in the region of the Dead Sea, where its recipient, together with other Jews, had taken refuge from the Romans.

Their skeletons were also found in the cave: the Romans had trapped them in it and waited for them to starve to death. The letter was an appeal for reinforcements . It contains no pronouncements on religion or ethics but rather a threat to punish the lieutenant if he did not respond to the appeal. The recipient could not respond, nor could Simon bar Kochba carry out his threat. The only message that can be extracted from this last literary testament of the Messiah of the Jews is the message that was intended: send reinforcements.

It seems clear that Simon bar Kochba was feared by his followers only a little less than they feared the Romans. The Talmud contains several nasty little stories about him, which are collected by Yadin on pages 255-259 of Bar-Kokhba. He is said to have ordered his followers to cut off one of their fingers as a test of courage, for which he was reproached by the Pharisees. He is said to have beaten a rabbi to death, which was the cause of his defeat by the Romans. He is said to have bounced Roman missiles off his knees and hurled them back at the Romans. He is portrayed in the Talmud as a harsh military man. Even if exaggerated, this image must have a basis in fact, for the letter found by Yadin is written in a threatening tone.

No one wants such a Messiah, just as no one wants to be invaded and massacred by heavily armed foreigners. By the time of Hadrian, all the nice Messiahs were dead. Simon bar Kochba was a Messiah worthy of his time. That is why he was acclaimed as Messiah by Akiba, whose entire life was dedicated to promoting more peaceful, loving relations between human beings. What Akiba eventually recognized was that Jews would never enjoy such relations so long as the Romans felt that they could kill them at will. In Akiba, Finkelstein shows that the recognition of Simon bar Kochba as the Messiah by Akiba was the outcome of a long internal struggle within the Pharisee movement. Akiba had been the leader of a centrist faction, occupying an intermediate position between pro-Roman and anti-Roman tendencies. But in 132 CE, Ishmael, the leader of the anti-Roman faction, was executed by the Romans. This led Akiba to turn against the Romans, causing him to acclaim Simon bar Kochba as the Messiah. Simon bar Kochba was acclaimed as Messiah not only by Akiba but by most Jews still surviving in Judah. His followers not only fought the Romans but constituted themselves as a Jewish state which issued coins and governed at least part of the territory of Judah for several years. Although literally nothing is known of the relationship between Simon bar Kochba and the Zealots, the movement which he led must have grown out of the Zealot movement in one way or another. All of the Zealot leaders, beginning with Judah of Galilee, had also been acclaimed as Messiahs. During the first "Jewish War", the two main Zealot leaders were John of Gischala and Simon bar Giora. According to Josephus, most of the followers of Simon bar Giora were ex-slaves. The Zealots too had issued coins and governed as a Jewish state. The acclamation of Simon bar Kochba as Messiah was clearly

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the result of a long process, during the course of which the various Zealot factions came to recognize the necessity of uniting behind a single leader, something which they had not been able to do during the first "Jewish War".

On the literary level, the Zealot concept of the Messiah is reflected in at least one work from this period, the Apocalypse of Baruch, dating from around 100 CE. Baruch receives a vision of the advent of a time of terrible suffering, at the end of which the Messiah will appear. The last leader of the forces of evil will still be alive, and the Messiah will deal with him as follows:

The last leader of that time will be left alive, when the multitude of his hosts will be put to the sword, and he will be bound, and they will take him up to Mount Zion, and My Messiah will convict him of all his impieties, and will gather and set before him all the works of his hosts. And afterwards he will put him to death, and protect the rest of My people which shall be found in the place which I have chosen. And his principate will stand for ever, until the world of corruption is at an end, and until the times aforesaid are fulfilled. This is thy vision, and this is its interpretation.

Another echo of the Zealot movement on the literary plane appears in the fourth Book of Ezra, dating from around 120 CE, in which the advent of the Messiah is associated with the disappearance of a mysterious "Eagle":

Therefore shalt thou disappear, O thou Eagle,  
and thy horrible wings,  
and thy little wings most evil,  
thy harm-dealing heads,  
thy hurtful talons,  
and all thy worthless body.

The eagle, like the "fasces", was a well known symbol of the Roman legions.

Between the original Pharisee and the later Zealot concepts of the Messiah, there also existed a large middle ground. The pages of Josephus are filled with descriptions of would-be Messiahs. In the language of Josephus, Messiahs of the Pharisee type are called "religious frauds", while Messiahs of the Zealot type are called "bandit

chiefs" . On page 139 of *The Jewish War*, Josephus describes an uprising against the Romans around 54 CE in Judah as follows:

The religious frauds and bandit chiefs joined forces and drove numbers to revolt , inciting them to strike a blow for freedom and threatening with death those who submitted to Roman rule; men who willingly chose slavery would be forcibly freed. Then splitting up into groups they ranged over the countryside, plundering the houses of the well-to-do, killing the occupants, and setting fire to the villages, till their raging madness penetrated every corner of Judaea. Day by day the fighting blazed more fiercely.

No doubt there were many situations during which the "religious frauds" and " bandit chiefs" joined forces. On the popular level, there must have been many little groups in which Pharisee and Zealot concepts of the Messiah were both present to one degree or another. Although the Pharisees and Zealots formed clearly defined parties, who were often at odds with one another, their concepts of the Messiah had a common root. Both thought of themselves as restoring the nation of Judah, the one primarily in religious and spiritual terms, the other primarily in military and political. Both looked back to David as the founder of the nation of Judah, the Pharisees no less than the Zealots. The "shoot out of the stock of Jesse" of the Book of Isaiah was a reference to David , whose father was named Jesse. Pharisee and Zealot concepts of the Messiah were not mutually exclusive but rather opposite poles of a political spectrum in which military and spiritual opposition to Roman rule were inextricably bound up with one another.

The Romans themselves were well aware of this connection and treated the "religious frauds" quite as harshly as the "bandit chiefs". The uprising of 54 CE, described by Josephus on page 139 of *The Jewish War*, was touched off by a Roman massacre of the "religious frauds", or as Josephus puts it:

Cheats and deceivers claiming inspiration, they schemed to bring about revolutionary changes by inducing the mob to act as if possessed, and by leading them out into the wild country on the pretence that there God would show them signs of approaching freedom. Thereupon Felix, regarding this as the first stage of revolt, sent cavalry and heavy infantry who cut the mob to pieces.

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Felix was the Roman governor of Judah at this time. But the worst was yet to come:

A greater blow than this was inflicted on the Jews by the Egyptian false prophet. Arriving in the country this man, a fraud who posed as a seer, collected about 30,000 dupes, led them round by the wild country to the Mount of Olives, and from there was ready to force an entry into Jerusalem, overwhelm the Roman garrison, and seize supreme power with his fellow-raiders as bodyguard. But Felix anticipated his attempt by meeting him with the Roman heavy infantry, the whole population rallying to the defense, so that when the clash occurred the Egyptian fled with a handful of men and most of his followers were killed or captured; the rest of the mob scattered and stole away to their respective homes.

Whatever the truth behind these wildly slanted reports, there can be little doubt that the line between "bandit chief" and "religious fraud" was often a fine one.

Probably the main reason why Simon bar Kochba has remained so invisible is that he was so far over to the Zealot end of the Messianic spectrum. Even the Pharisees, at least in retrospect, could only see the "bandit chief" in him. Yet it was Simon bar Kochba, more than any other, who secured for the Messianic concept its great worldwide reputation. The political victory of the Jewish forces in the second "Jewish War" was achieved by killing enough Romans to make the Romans grow weary of killing Jews. For this task, no other Messiah could be found save the one who was found. More than any other, it was Simon bar Kochba who made the name of Messiah a legend not only in Judah but throughout the surrounding region. Simon bar Kochba was not the ideal Messiah; he was the real Messiah. No one wants a real Messiah, and yet there is no other kind. Ideal Messiahs only exist ideally.

## The Essene Messiah

The original authors of what eventually became the Christian version of the Pharisee concept of the ideal Messiah seem to have been a group known as the Essenes. Little was known of the Essenes save for a few lines in Josephus and Philo until the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1947. The scrolls were written by the Essenes, whose

headquarters was located near the Dead Sea at a place called Qumran. In the scrolls, which can be read in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, edited by Geza Vermes, the origin of the Essenes is traced to the teachings of a "Teacher of Righteousness". A great deal of speculation has been centered around this person, whose identity has not been clearly established.

In *The Message of the Scrolls*, Yigael Yadin advances the plausible theory that the "Teacher of Righteousness" was linked to the Pharisee-led movement against the rule of Jonathan. The scrolls speak of a "Wicked Priest", whom Yadin identifies with Jonathan, who persecuted the "Teacher of Righteousness" and forced him to flee into the desert. There he founded the community at Qumran, which remained in existence until it was destroyed by the Romans, probably around 70 CE. The Essenes of Qumran seem to have established branches in other parts of Judah and perhaps in Syria as well. Like the early Christians, they practiced the rite of baptism, which formed part of the process of initiation into their group.

The Essene rite of baptism is clearly described on page 75 of *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* in a passage from a scroll called the "Community Rule". Speaking of a person who wished to become an Essene, the rule stated:

He shall be cleansed from all his sins by the spirit of holiness uniting him to His truth, and his iniquity shall be expiated by the spirit of uprightness and humility. And when his flesh is sprinkled with purifying water and sanctified by cleansing water, it shall be made clean by the humble submission of his soul to all the precepts of God.

As Rosemary Ruether notes in *Faith and Fratricide*, the Essene rite of baptism was undoubtedly derived from the rite which the Pharisees had developed for converts to Judaism, which also included some kind of "cleansing" with water. On page 45, Ruether states:

In order to enter the covenant, they must pass through a proselyte baptism, just like a Gentile who was converted to Judaism. No practice could have been a clearer symbol of the sectarian self-understanding that the rest of Israel was apostate and .. gentilized".

The early Christians seem to have had much the same "sectarian self-understanding", which they also expressed through the rite of baptism.

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The "Teacher of Righteousness" and at least some of his early followers seem to have been of priestly descent, for there are many indications in the Dead Sea scrolls that the Essenes considered themselves a community of priests. It is very possible that the "Teacher of Righteousness" had been a candidate to replace the Maccabees as High Priest. It may have been the priestly orientation of the Essenes which originally distinguished them from the Pharisees, who made no claim to priestly status. But as time went on, the Essenes at Qumran began to diverge not only from the Pharisees but from most Jews on many points. They celebrated the Jewish holidays on different days from everyone else on the grounds that the official calendar had not been correctly calculated. They came to think of themselves as the purest of the pure, a community of the "sons of light" in the midst of a world of darkness and strife.

The Essenes were communists in the sense that they held all property in common. On joining the community, members had to surrender their property into the hands of the 'Bursar'. The land was tilled in common and the fruits shared by all. According to Philo, in a passage cited by Yadin in *The Message of the Scrolls*:

Not a single slave is to be found among them, but all are free, exchanging services with each other, and they denounce the owners of slaves.

They also denounced polygamy as "fornication" and insisted on strict monogamy on the part of the husband as well as the wife. Members were permitted but perhaps not encouraged to marry. Actions of the members were governed by a detailed set of rules, including an elaborate procedure for the punishment of infractions. The community at Qumran was governed by a hierarchy of priests led by a "Head Priest". A large part of the day was devoted to prayer, study and the observance of various rituals. It is apparent that on many levels, the Essene community at Qumran was the original model of the Christian concept of a monastery.

The only clear difference between the Essenes and the early Christians, at least as portrayed in the "New Testament", is that the Essenes were Jewish nationalists. Despite their 'sectarian self-understanding', the Essenes identified with and supported the Jewish national struggle against the Greeks and the Romans. In the scrolls, there are many references to the "Kittim", a term commonly used in Jewish

writings at this time to refer to the Greeks and Romans. In one of the scrolls, called the "War Rule", the entire procedure for the final battle between the "sons of light" and the "Kittim" is laid out in advance.

The "War Rule" is filled with passages such as the following:

On the day when the Kittim fall, there shall be battle and terrible carnage before the God of Israel, for that shall be the day appointed from ancient times for the battle of destruction of the sons of darkness. At that time, the assembly of gods and the hosts of men shall battle, causing great carnage; on the day of calamity, the sons of light shall battle with the company of darkness amidst the shouts of a mighty multitude and the clamor of gods and men to make manifest the might of God. Copies of Essene writings have been found among the remains of the last ditch Jewish defenders of Masada, which fell to the Romans in 73 CE, indicating that at least some of the Essenes also practiced what they preached.

The Essenes too believed in the advent of a Messiah, for in one of the scrolls, called the "Messianic Rule", the order of procedure at the dinner table when the victorious Messiah would come to celebrate at Qumran is described in complete detail. Naturally the Head Priest gives the first blessing, only then the Messiah. The Essenes evidently believed that the advent of the Messiah would coincide with the adoption of their form of Judaism, which was written up in a formal "Covenant", as the official religion of Judah. The Essenes did not think of their "Covenant" as a departure from tradition but rather as the genuine, old-time tradition which all the other Jews had abandoned to one degree or another. They thought of themselves as the most orthodox of the orthodox, yet in their actual practice they differed from all the other Jews. The early Christians seem to have had a very similar attitude.

Some writers have speculated on the possibility that "John the Baptist" may have been an Essene. The Essenes themselves established branches in other parts of Judah; "John the Baptist" could have been an Essene missionary, or he could have been a former Essene who broke away from the community at Qumran and tried to bring the Essene message directly to the people. No one really knows. What does seem clear is that the early Christians were familiar with the teachings of the Essenes and adopted many of them, particularly the rite of baptism.

There is no indication in the Dead Sea scrolls as to just what type of Messiah the Essenes expected. At least at first, their concept of the Messiah must have been very similar to that of the Pharisees. The "Teacher of Righteousness" may well have thought of himself as the "new priest" whom the Pharisees awaited. Later, after the Roman occupation of Judah, the Essene concept of the Messiah may have begun to take on certain Zealot features. The "War Rule" shows that the Essenes were not averse to doing battle with the "Kittim". As a practical matter, if the Essenes expected the Messiah to institute their "Covenant" as the law of the land, then he would have had to be an Essene Messiah. Perhaps the Essenes themselves could not agree on just who the Messiah was supposed to be, for otherwise they would have drawn up a rule governing that too.

Whatever the Essene concept of the Messiah may have been, it must have remained much closer to the original Pharisee version than to the later Zealot concept. Far more than the Pharisees, the Essenes were obsessed with the details of priestly ritual. While the issue of who was to become High Priest lost much of its significance for most Jews after the Roman occupation, the Essenes must have continued to be preoccupied with it. Their whole self-concept was based on the idea that they were the true priests of Israel. Inevitably, their Messiah would have had to be the true High Priest. In this too, the early Christians seem to have resembled the Essenes, for the actions of "Jesus Christ" as described in the "New Testament" make it seem that the main goal of his movement was to gain control of the temple in Jerusalem and elevate him to the position of High Priest. Such a movement would have been a natural outgrowth of Essene teachings. In view of the many points of resemblance between the Essenes and the early Christians, it appears very likely that "Jesus Christ" thought of himself as the Messiah of the Essenes.

### The Blind Spot

For thousands of years now, Christians have been berating Jews for their failure to recognize "Jesus Christ" as "the" Messiah. The great blind spot in the Christian mind is contained in that word, "the". Implicit in the word "the" is the assumption that if only the Jews had recognized "Jesus Christ" as "the" Messiah, then something great and wonderful would have happened. For some reason, Christians never

stop to wonder just what that something could have been. If they did, they would still be wondering.

Even if hundreds of thousands of Jews had flocked to the banner of "Jesus Christ", it would have made little impression on the Romans, who were long accustomed to dealing harshly with flocks of people led by "religious frauds". Even if "Jesus Christ" had been a "bandit chief", he could hardly have done more than all the others. Even if Jesus Christ was a Messiah, that would still make him only just another Messiah. There was no "the" Messiah.

"The" Messiah was the Messiah who succeeded. The whole point about "the" Messiah was that he was supposed to succeed. Different tendencies within the Messianic movement may have defined success somewhat differently, but however defined, success was what "the" Messiah was supposed to achieve. But in practice, none of the Messiahs succeeded. Even Simon bar Kochba was later repudiated as a "false" Messiah in the Talmud because he had not succeeded. In practice, the concept of "the" Messiah was shown to be a myth. The distinguishing feature of Christianity from the start was its refusal to abandon the myth. The basic underlying assumption of the Christian religion was that the legend of the Messiah would result in the advent of "the" Messiah. But this was not true; it was simply not true. No matter how many would-be Messiahs stepped forward, no matter how they turned and twisted, the simple truth was that the Romans at that time were too strong to be prevented from corrupting and destroying Jewish life in Judah. The Jews could not know this in advance; they could only discover it in the manner they did, by acclaiming one Messiah after another until 2 million Jews lay dead and still the Romans ruled in what they called Palestine. Never was there more bitter irony than in the Christian belief that the Jews would have been "saved" if only they had acclaimed "the" Messiah.

Why was the myth of "the" Messiah so much more important to the Christians than to the Jews themselves? For the Jews, the myth of "the" Messiah was but a means to an end. The goal of the Messianic movement was the liberation of Judah. The important point was not that Judah be liberated by "the" Messiah but that it be liberated. The myth of "the" Messiah worked to advance the liberation of Judah by inspiring leaders to arise and challenge the Romans, by promoting unity around a single leader, by generating a feeling of hope in the people. The myth of "the" Messiah was an important element

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in the Jewish liberation movement of this period, but it was only an element. The real basis of the movement was not faith in "the" Messiah but faith in Judah, faith in its culture, traditions and people. Why did the Christians care so little for Judah, yet so much for "the" Messiah?

The Christian blind spot originated as an Essene blind spot. For all their phantasies of a great battle with the "Kittim", the Essenes were cut off from the life of the Jewish people. To put it bluntly, they thought they were better than everybody else. They were devoted to the traditions of Judah, yet they found their fellow Jews so "unclean" that they had to be washed to join their group. They carried devotion to tradition to such a point that they turned it into a stick to beat the people with. Nobody was good enough for them.

This attitude generated a mentality which preferred ideal life to real life. The "War Rule" specifies which trumpets are to be blown during the last battle, in what order, by whom. Uniforms, equipment, organization, tactics and results are all treated in a similar manner. Everything is perfect, on paper. As Masada, it did not go quite like that. Real war and ideal war are very different. So are real Messiahs and ideal Messiahs. The Essene mentality generated a thirst for an ideal Messiah. This is what the Christian religion eventually came up with. And since the Christians were Greeks, their concept of an ideal Messiah was a Jew who gets killed and eaten by the Romans.

## Chapter Six

### Food For Thought

Most treatments of the question of Christian origins are distorted by excessive emphasis on the legend of "Jesus Christ". Even secular-minded or Jewish writers, who do not accept the Christian belief that "Jesus" was a "god", still see the Christian religion as an outgrowth of his exceptional character and ability.

For example, *Revolution in Judaea* by Hyam Maccoby seeks to approach the origins of Christianity from a Jewish point of view. Maccoby, like many others, sees "Jesus" as a part of the Zealot movement.

Yet although Maccoby treats him as one among many, he never doubts that he was a very important one. On page 115, Maccoby states: "For a short period in Jewish history Jesus became the sole hope of a great number, perhaps even the majority, of the Jewish people."

Most writers on the subject do not bother to make such assertions, simply assuming that the life and death of "Jesus Christ" was an event of tremendous significance for everyone concerned.

There is little evidence for this belief outside the pages of the "New Testament". Not one single Jewish source from the 1st century of the Common Era makes any reference to "Jesus Christ" whatsoever. This ignorance of the very existence of "Jesus" is particularly glaring in *The Jewish War*, written towards the end of the 1st century CE by Josephus. In his account of the origins of the first "Jewish War", Josephus narrates in detail the entire history of the Roman occupation of Judah. Josephus describes literally dozens of would-be Messiahs who arose during this period, but none who sounds like "Jesus Christ". The fact that Josephus made no mention of "Jesus" is so suggestive that later Christian copyists felt compelled to conceal it. In the Old Slavonic texts of *The Jewish War*, they inserted a number of passages referring to "Jesus" and "John the Baptist". The reference to "Jesus" in the Old Slavonic text begins:

It was at that time that a man appeared-if 'man' is the right word who had all the attributes of a man but seemed to be something greater. His actions, certainly, were superhuman, for he worked such wonderful and amazing miracles that I for one cannot regard him as a man; yet in view of his likeness to ourselves I cannot regard him as an angel either.

A similar passage also appears in the Greek edition of another work by Josephus, Jewish Antiquities. Both passages are entirely out of keeping with everything else written by Josephus on the subject of Messiahs, in whose claims to miraculous powers he had little faith. The Christian copyists took Josephus more seriously than most modern historians. If Josephus knew nothing of "Jesus", then "Jesus" could not have been a very well known leader in his own day.

Even the "New Testament" conveys this same impression, if all the talk of vast throngs drawn by great miracles is discounted. Minus the miracles, we are left with a tale of an obscure agitator who is arrested and crucified by the Romans, leaving a small handful of followers behind. Many such arrests and executions took place in Judah during this period. Only the famous agitators were remembered, those who had attracted a following in the thousands or tens of thousands. There was no more reason for Josephus to have heard of "Jesus Christ" than of any other relatively unsuccessful agitator.

The great question confronting the study of Christian origins is how such an obscure and little known individual could have given rise to such a large movement. The obvious answer is that he did not. As is recognized to some degree by many writers, the true founder and outstanding early personality of the Christian religion was Saul of Tarsus, known to the Christians as "Saint Paul". The very word, Christian, is derived from the teachings of Saul of Tarsus, which were usually uttered in Greek. Jesus Christ is a Greek term which would normally be given as Joshua Messiah in English, were it not for the strong preference of the Christians for the Greek. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Yeshua, which is always translated into English as Joshua except in this one case. Christ or Christos is the Greek word for the Hebrew term Mashiach, meaning Messiah.

The very name Jesus Christ is thus a polemical assertion on the part of Greek-speaking people that a certain Joshua of Galilee was the one and only true Messiah of the Jews. This assertion was made by people, beginning with Saul of Tarsus himself, who had never met

Joshua of Galilee, who had no first hand knowledge of him whatsoever, but only knew what they had heard of him from the small handful of Joshua's former followers living in Jerusalem. Saul of Tarsus hardly knew Jerusalem, let alone Joshua, having been born and raised in southern Turkey . Yet it is nonetheless from the speeches and writings of Saul of Tarsus that the legend of "Jesus Christ" is derived.

Joshua of Galilee was a little known and little remembered agitator, who was elevated into a "god" by Saul of Tarsus. The key to solving the problem of Christian origins is to try to understand why Saul of Tarsus wanted to make a "god" out of Joshua.

The whole weight of Christian tradition is directed towards repressing this line of thinking by obsessively calling attention to the uniqueness and unusualness of Joshua of Galilee. If there was anyone who was unique and unusual in early Christian history, it was Saul of Tarsus. There is nothing in the life and death of Joshua of Galilee as described in the "New Testament", minus the miracles, which could not also be found in the life and death of many other Jewish Messiahs far more popular and successful than he. The pages of Josephus are filled with arrests, betrayals, crucifixions, religious teachings, acts of courage and despair. Had it depended only on Joshua of Galilee and his original followers, their lives would today be no better known than the lives of all the other Jewish martyrs of that time. The only reason why Joshua of Galilee is remembered today is because Saul of Tarsus and his associates chose to make him the object of a cannibal cult.

## Flesh and Blood

It is remarkable how little attention has been directed by students of Christian origins to the problem of the source of the Christian ritual of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a dead Jew in effigy. Nothing could have been more alien to Jewish tradition than this cannibalistic practice. As is well known, Jewish law prohibited drinking even the blood of animals, let alone human beings. Moreover, few nations have ever made a ritual out of eating one of their own members. Cannibal cults tend to focus on foreigners, particularly those perceived as enemies. Only a non-Jew could relish the thought of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Joshua of Galilee.

Ritual cannibalism was a well-established practice among the Greeks by the time of Saul of Tarsus. It was a prominent feature of many of

the so-called "mystery religions" of the day. Many authors, beginning perhaps with James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, have drawn attention to the numerous points of similarity between Christianity and the "mystery religions", but rarely if ever mentioning that ritual cannibalism was one of the most characteristic features of both. Among the various "mystery gods" who were eaten in effigy in some manner by the Greeks at the time of Saul of Tarsus were Attis, Osiris and Orpheus-Dionysos. The cult of Attis, which originated in Turkey, featured the drinking of real blood, which was said to bring the gift of immortality from Attis. This cult was celebrated in Rome on the very site where the Vatican now stands. In fact, as Robert Grant points out on page 152 of *Early Christianity and Society*, at the time construction of the Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican began in 319 CE, the rites of Attis were still being celebrated "nearby".

In the one volume edition of *The Golden Bough* edited by Theodore Gaster appears a lengthy account of the rites of Attis. On page 309, Frazer states:

His birth, like that of many other heroes, is said to have been miraculous. His mother, Nana, was a virgin, who conceived by putting a ripe almond or pomegranate in her bosom.

The rites of the death and resurrection of Attis were celebrated at Rome every year in the spring from March 22 to March 27. On March 24 the Romans, after cutting down a pine tree to represent Attis, celebrated a "Day of Blood", at the end of which, described by Frazer on page 312, Attis was resurrected:

But when night had fallen, the sorrow of the worshippers was turned to joy. For suddenly a light shone in the darkness: the tomb was opened: the god had risen from the dead; and as the priest touched the lips of the weeping mourners with balm, he softly whispered in their ears the glad tidings of salvation. The resurrection of the god was hailed by his disciples as a promise that they too would issue triumphant from the corruption of the grave.

On the following day, the resurrection of Attis was celebrated by the Romans with a tasty sacramental meal of blood.

The oldest and best established form of ritual cannibalism in Greek culture was that practiced in the "Orphic Mysteries". In Orpheus and

Greek Religion, W.K.C. Guthrie traces the Origin of the "Orphic Mysteries" to Athens in the 6th century BCE. Led perhaps by a man named Onomakritos, the founders of the new "mysteries" created a religion based on the two previously separate cults of Orpheus and Dionysos. Both cults had the common feature that their hero was believed to have been killed by being torn apart. In the "Orphic Mysteries", Orpheus-Dionysos, called Bacchus by the Romans, was eaten in ritual form, commemorating the eating of Dionysos by the Titans.

This practice was said to confer immortality on the initiates, who also made a great show of abstaining from eating meat, apart from whatever they may have consumed during the "mysteries". This was actually a toned-down form of the original cult of Dionysos, which had featured real cannibalism, as reported in gruesome detail in Dionysus. Myth and Cult, by Walter Otto.

Both Dionysos and Orpheus, although usually described as Greek, were considered by the Greeks themselves to have been of Thracian origin. The Thracians were a people who lived just to the north of the Greeks, with whom the Greeks were often at war. The other "gods" who were eaten in effigy by the Greeks were also of foreign origin. Attis came from the Phrygians, Osiris from the Egyptians. These "gods" had many features in common. They were victim "gods", "gods" whose worship centered around the events leading up to their death. By eating their "god" in effigy, participants in the "mysteries" could be reborn unto eternal life. These "mysteries" were well known by the time of Saul of Tarsus and clearly exercised a powerful influence on the origins of the Christian religion.

Strong evidence of the Greek origin of Christian ritual cannibalism may be found in the "New Testament" itself. Of the four "gospels", the "Biblical scholars" are agreed that the Gospel of John was the last to be written, the most Greek in inspiration and the least Jewish. Whereas the other three "gospels" speak of "Jesus" disputing with specific Jewish factions such as "the Pharisees" or "the Sadducees", John speaks only of disputes with "the Jews". John is violently hostile to "the Jews", constantly accusing them as a people of plotting to kill "Jesus". John also differs on many details from the other three "gospels", leading "Biblical scholars" to speak of the other three as the "Synoptic Gospels", meaning that they tell the same story, unlike John's.

Yet although it was the last of the four "gospels" to be written,

usually dated about 100 years after the time of Joshua of Galilee, the Gospel of John contains by far the longest speech of "Jesus" advocating ritual cannibalism. Whereas the other three "gospels" only contain a few lines justifying this practice, the Gospel of John, in chapter 6, has "Jesus" launch into a veritable tirade on behalf of ritual cannibalism:

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

John is also the only one of the four "gospels" which constantly speaks of "the Father" and "the Son". As it so happens, Dionysos was believed to be the "Son of God", born of the rape of the human woman Semele by the "god" Zeus, the chief "god" of the Greeks.

In Dionysus, Myth and Cult, on page 70, Otto notes that in the writings of Pindar, Dionysos was called "the offspring of the highest father and of the Cadmeian woman". Semele was the daughter of Cadmus, the king of Thebes. Otto also notes: "The myth not only presents Semele as a mortal, but it lays the greatest emphasis on the fact that she was not a goddess and nevertheless gave birth to a god." As Guthrie puts it on page 267 of Orpheus and Greek Religion: "Both Christ and Dionysos were the sons of God, and both suffered, died and were resurrected." Perhaps most fundamentally, both linked ritual cannibalism with ascetic practices, including vegetarianism.

The relationship between ritual cannibalism and vegetarianism in the case of the "Orphic Mysteries" is shown very clearly in a fragment of verse from *The Cretans* by Euripides, cited by Samuel Angus on page 155 of *The Mystery Religions and Christianity*. Euripides refers to Dionysos under the name of Zagreus, the name by which he was known in the Cretan ritual:

Where midnight Zagreus roves, I rove;  
 I have endured his thunder cry;  
 Fulfilled his red and bleeding feasts;  
 Held the Great Mother's mountain flame;  
 I am set free and named by name  
 A Bacchus of the Mailed Priests.  
 Robed in pure white, I have borne me clean  
 From man's vile birth and confined clay,  
 And exiled from my lips away,  
 Touch of all meat where life hath been.

The reference to "red and bleeding feasts" suggests that in the time of Euripides, the manner in which Dionysos was eaten in the "Orphic Mysteries" was not yet all that symbolic.

The resemblance between Christianity and the other "mystery religions", particularly the "Orphic Mysteries", was clear at the time to all concerned. In *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, Guthrie reproduces on page 265 an amulet dating from the 3rd or 4th century CE depicting a crucified figure called Orpheus-Bacchus, meaning Orpheus-Dionysos. There was no legend of Orpheus-Dionysos having been crucified, but he was such a similar figure to "Jesus Christ" that it was obviously tempting to visualize him as having been crucified too. On page 117 of Volume 12 of *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, Erwin Goodenough shows that many of the characteristic symbols of the cult of Dionysos, particularly the use of the grape vine as a decorative image, were taken over by the early Christians. On page 266 of *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, Guthrie states that Justin Martyr, a Christian writer of the 2nd century CE, declared that the legend of Orpheus-Dionysos had been invented by "demons" in order to discredit the Christian religion, so similar were the two faiths. There is every indication that the truly original and novel feature of the Christian religion was the application of the theory and practice of ritual cannibalism, already well-established in Greek culture, to the

little known figure of Joshua of Galilee. And why did they pick Joshua? Most likely because his followers had been going around saying that he had not died. What probably attracted the interest of Saul of Tarsus and his cannibal-minded associates in the figure of Joshua of Galilee was the legend, first begun by Joshua's original followers, that Joshua had risen from the dead. Most of the "gods" of the "mystery religions" were also supposed to have risen from the dead. Attracted by the original Jewish legend of Joshua the Messiah who had not died, Saul of Tarsus and his associates created the Christian legend of "Jesus Christ" the "Son of God" who told his followers to eat of his flesh and drink of his blood so as to attain unto eternal life.

### The Nazarenes

In recent decades there has emerged a school of historians, centered chiefly in England, who have drawn a sharp line between the Christianity of Saul of Tarsus and the beliefs of Joshua of Galilee and his original followers. They speak of Joshua's original followers as "Nazarenes" or "Nazoreans", terms derived from Hebrew rather than Greek. The *Origins of Christianity* by Archibald Robertson and *Jesus and the Zealots* by S.G.F. Brandon are probably the leading works of this school. Robertson and Brandon show that there was strong opposition to Saul's teachings on the part of the Nazarenes, whose main leaders were Simon, called Peter by the Christians, and James, the brother of Joshua of Galilee. Brandon on page 13 of *Jesus and the Zealots* sees Saul's image of "Jesus" as the "Son of God" as "designedly different from the traditional one current among the original Jewish disciples of Jesus". The writers of this school portray the Nazarenes as Jewish revolutionaries who observed Jewish law, prayed in the Jewish temple and sought to overthrow the rule of Rome together with all the other Jewish Messianic groups.

Although more realistic than most Christian pictures of Christian origins, this image of the Nazarenes is still distorted by the general overestimation of the role of Joshua of Galilee in the history of this period. The Jewish sources from the 1st century CE are as silent on the subject of the Nazarenes as they are on the figure of Joshua of Galilee. The Pharisees did issue a statement against "sectarians" around 85 CE, but although most writers have assumed that this statement was directed against the Nazarenes, there is no real proof of this belief.

The Nazarenes seem to have been as little known to their fellow Jews as Joshua of Galilee had been . Even Brandon thinks that they disappeared as an organized group by 70 CE. In *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, Brandon states on page 180 that " the Jerusalem Church fell together with the Jewish nation in the catastrophe of A.D. 70". The Nazarenes do not seem to have ever numbered more than a few hundred people at most. Their only notable feature was the one which brought them undying fame, their insistence that their martyred leader had risen from the dead.

It was precisely the obscurity of the Nazarenes which allowed Saul of Tarsus and the Christians to reshape the image of "Jesus Christ" according to their own fancy. Brandon , Robertson and the other historians of this school are undoubtedly correct in their belief that the Nazarenes did not think of Joshua of Galilee as a "god". Nonetheless, they still fail to recognize the extent to which the Nazarene insistence that Joshua had not died separated them from the rest of the Jewish Messianic movement and isolated them politically. Instead of thinking of the Nazarenes as "saints" and "apostles", it might be more realistic to picture them as a tiny band of disgruntled ex-radicals who sat around in Jerusalem telling tall tales about their fallen leader. How did Saul of Tarsus become involved with this little group? It is strange that more historians have not considered the possibility that Saul of Tarsus may have been a Roman police agent. According to the Acts of the Apostles in the 'New Testament', Saul of Tarsus was a Roman citizen. Few persons of Jewish origin were Roman citizens at this time, even if Greek speaking . When Saul came under attack from the Nazarenes in Jerusalem around 62 CE, he appealed to the Romans for help and was rescued by them and sent to Rome, where he lived for several years. This was an unusual way for the Romans to treat a Jewish agitator on the eve of the first " Jewish War". Saul 's well known account of setting out to persecute the Christians only to become one instead may have been his version of what began as an attempt to penetrate the Jewish Messianic movement on behalf of the Romans. It is easy to imagine how Saul, who was a stranger to Jerusalem, might have been attracted to the loud-talking, little-acting ex-followers of the dead Joshua. Thinking at first to betray them to the Romans, he may have decided that the Romans would be even more pleased if he could use the Nazarenes to set up a police-inspired alternative to the Jewish Messianic movement. There can

be no doubt that Saul of Tarsus and his associates travelled about the Roman empire preaching a form of Jewish Messianism which they fully expected the Roman authorities to sanction and tolerate. It is hard to see how they could have done this without some kind of understanding with the Romans.

Saul of Tarsus was nonetheless executed by the Romans in Rome around 65 CE. Christian historians treat the execution of Saul of Tarsus and a number of other Christians in Rome at this time only as a sign of Roman hostility to the early Christian movement. Yet it was also in 65 CE that the first "Jewish War" began with mass crucifixions in Jerusalem and anti-Jewish riots in many parts of the Roman world. The execution of Saul of Tarsus and the Christians in Rome took place in the context of the start of a general Roman offensive against the Jews. Saul and his associates were also of Jewish origin, and although they may not have thought of themselves as Jews, to the Romans they must have looked much like all the others. Their execution came in the wake of a shift in Roman policy in the direction of all-out war against the Jews. This shift rendered tricky relations with Jewish pseudo-Messianic sects unnecessary, since the aim of the Romans was no longer to conciliate the Jews in any way but to kill as many as they could. Saul of Tarsus would not have been the first or the last police agent who was eventually eliminated by the police themselves.

Whatever the truth of the matter, there can be little doubt that Brandon and Robertson are right in their essential contention that Saul of Tarsus was the author of the Christian doctrine of "Jesus" the "god". The Nazarenes could not have considered themselves Jews, as they clearly did, and still maintained a belief in a "god" in human form. It was precisely on the denial of this belief, as expressed in the ancient Jewish law against the worship of graven images, that much of Judaism was founded. Yet by declaring that Joshua had risen from the dead, the Nazarenes were nonetheless flirting with the assertion that he had been a "god". Saul of Tarsus and the Christians were only taking the next step down a path on which the Nazarenes had already embarked by telling so many tall tales about Joshua of Galilee. Robertson, in *The Origins of Christianity*, discusses the Roman attitude towards the Jews in a way which helps to bring out why the Romans might have looked for a time with favor on the teachings of

Saul of Tarsus. Unlike most writers, Robertson takes the trouble to analyze the motives which led the Romans to adopt such a repressive attitude towards the Jews. On page 60, he states:

What above all alarmed Roman rulers was the propaganda carried on by Pharisaic Jews outside Palestine. The Jews in Palestine could hardly be called a menace to the empire: their Zealots could be dealt with by the procurator of Judaea or, if necessary, by the governor of Syria. But an empire-wide organization, with synagogues in every great Mediterranean city, preaching to the dispossessed classes the nullity of all gods and cults but one, the abolition of usury, the liberation of runaway slaves, a weekly day of rest for slaves equally with freemen, and the imminence of a day when the kingdoms of the earth should be broken and dominion given to the saints of the Most High—that was an altogether different thing.

The practical effect of the activities of Saul of Tarsus was to create another "empire-wide organization", whose teachings resembled those of the Jews on many points, but nonetheless rejected Judaism and denounced the Jewish people. Whatever the precise nature of their relations with Saul of Tarsus, it is easy to see why the Romans might have wished to tolerate or even encourage such a movement.

Although he was eventually executed by the Romans, Saul of Tarsus laid great emphasis on acceptance of Roman rule in his teachings. His letters in the "New Testament" are filled with exhortations to this effect, such as the famous injunction to "obey the powers that be" in the Epistle to the Romans. The image of the Messiah which he presented to his Greek listeners was one which constantly stressed his peaceful, law-abiding character, as contrasted no doubt with the violent and rebellious deeds of other Jewish Messiahs. There is every indication that Saul of Tarsus preached the cult of a "good" Messiah, as against the "bad" Messiahs of the Jews. At the time of the first "Jewish War", the Romans evidently decided that even a "good" Messiah was one too many. But after 70 eE, when the Jewish Messianic movement only grew in strength and prestige instead of disappearing, the Romans gradually began to see Saul's point.

## The Gnostics

Little is known of the history of the Christian movement between the death of Saul of Tarsus around 65 CE and the end of the second

"Jewish War" in 135 CE. The "Biblical scholars" are agreed that it was during this period that most of the books of the "New Testament" were composed, but there is no evidence apart from the "New Testament" itself as to who wrote these works or even where they were written. All of the books of the "New Testament" were originally written in Greek. Some Christian writers, notably Charles Torrey in *Our Translated Gospels*, have argued that the "gospels" were translated into Greek from Aramaic. Yet no Aramaic or Hebrew language accounts of the life and death of Joshua of Galilee dating from the 1st century CE have ever been found. While some of the "gospels" may contain material translated from Aramaic, it is clear that the main impulse behind the composition of the "gospels" and the rest of the "New Testament" came from the Greek-speaking Christians rather than the Aramaic-speaking Nazarenes.

Two distinct tendencies took shape within the Christian movement during the obscure period between the two "Jewish Wars". One was associated with two books of the "New Testament", the Epistle of James and the Book of Revelations, which are markedly more hostile in tone to the rich and powerful of the world than the rest of the "New Testament". The Epistle of James and the Book of Revelations are the only books of the "New Testament" which speak of a return of "Christ" to judge the world in terms which suggest the condemnation of the rich, including the Romans. The Epistle of James is also the only book of the entire "New Testament" which contains no denunciations of the Jews. These works reflect the emergence of a tendency within the Christian movement after 65 CE that was far more hostile to the "powers that be" than Saul of Tarsus had been.

During the 2nd century CE, Christians of this type became known as "Montanists". W.H.C. Frend on page 219 of *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* describes the teachings of the 2nd century CE Montanist prophet Maximilla. She preached of a coming era of "universal war" and "revolutions" in which Roman rule would come to an end. The main stronghold of the Montanists was in Turkey, a region where resistance to Roman rule had been long and bloody. Frend shows that Montanism flourished during periods of Roman persecution of the Christians but declined during periods of Roman toleration. The Montanists were the first in a long series of Christian groups which sought to revive the Messianic spirit of Joshua of Galilee, which they perceived, as through a glass darkly, in the legend of "Jesus Christ".

Ranged against the Montanists in the factional struggles within the Christian movement of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE were the Gnostics. Gnosticism was a general trend within Greek society at this time, which appeared both within and outside the Christian movement. The Gnostics were Greeks who claimed knowledge, "gnosis" in Greek, of the "mysteries". Elaine Pagels links the Gnostics on page 63 of *The Gnostic Gospels* to "rich or what we would call bohemian circles". The Gnostics frequented all the "mystery religions" of the day, including Christianity. They formed a well recognized and highly organized faction within the Christian movement of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.

Pagels sees the Gnostics as feminists. She shows that women played an important role among them and that they were attacked as female-dominated by other Christians. What Pagels barely mentions is that the Gnostics were also noted for their violently anti-Jewish attitude. In *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, edited by J. Philip Hyatt, there is an article by Hans Jonas directed to this very point. Responding to G. Quispel's "Gnosticism and the New Testament", which also ignores the anti-Jewish stance of Gnosticism, Jonas describes the "anti-Jewish animus with which it is saturated". In his book, *The Gnostic Religion*, Jonas also notes many examples of anti-Jewish attitudes on the part of the Gnostics. Marcion, the best known Gnostic leader of the 2nd century CE, taught that Christians should reject the "Old Testament", which had been inspired by a Jewish "God of Hate", and accept only "Jesus", whose teachings were inspired by a non-Jewish "God of Love".

The Gnostics were the authors of the Gospel of John. This is recognized even by Christian historians. On page 426 of Volume 1 of *The Cambridge History of the Bible* it is noted that the Gospel of John first circulated among Gnostic Christians. Pagels on page 119 of *The Gnostic Gospels*, calls the Gospel of John a "remarkable book that many gnostic Christians claimed for themselves and used as a primary source for gnostic teaching". The Gnostics also circulated many other "gospels" which later Christians rejected as false or inaccurate. These "gospels" described the life and death of "Jesus Christ" in terms which were even more far-fetched, imaginative and implausible than the three "Synoptic Gospels" and the Gnostic Gospel of John. On page 293 of *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, it is also noted that the first Christian to actually attempt to compile a new set of "Holy

Scriptures" or "New Testament" was Basilides, a Gnostic leader in Egypt. The whole concept of the "New Testament" was introduced by the Gnostics and then taken over by the other Christians. Until the rise of the Gnostics, the only "Holy Scriptures" which the Christians had used had been the "Old Testament". It was the Gnostics, who were prolific writers, who first called for the compilation of an entirely new "Holy Scriptures", written in Greek and composed in large part by themselves. In self-defense, the other Christians put together the "New Testament" as it now stands, including some Gnostic material and rejecting the rest.

Christian Gnosticism was right in the tradition of Saul of Tarsus. Saul had no direct knowledge of Joshua of Galilee whatsoever and drew freely on the resources of his own imagination for the image of "Jesus Christ" the "Lamb of God" which he presented to his Greek audiences. The Gnostics simply went Saul one better, continuing to imagine new miracles and complexities, while the other Christians were satisfied with the ones that had already been invented. As one of their Christian critics, Irenaeus, put it, as cited by Pagels on page 21 of *The Gnostic Gospels*:

They imagine that they themselves have discovered more than the apostles, and that the apostles preached the gospel still under the influence of Jewish opinions, but that they themselves are wiser and more intelligent than the apostles.

Yet in reality, even the three "Synoptic Gospels" contain many wild and exaggerated tales. The Nazarenes had begun with the tall tales, Saul of Tarsus had picked up where they left off, and the Gnostics no doubt felt fully justified in building on this foundation. It is hard to escape the implication that even Joshua of Galilee must have been somewhat given to exaggeration.

Since the Gnostics were drawn to all the "mystery religions", not only Christianity, it is apparent that the concept of "Jesus Christ" the "Lamb of God" was central to their understanding of Christianity. The Gospel of John is heavily oriented in this direction, with its constant stress on the theme of the "Son" offered by the "Father" to be crucified and eaten. To put it crudely, the Gnostic Christians were wealthy Greeks who had developed a taste for a Jewish, as opposed to Thracian or Phrygian or Egyptian, victim "god". Whereas the

Montanists were those for whom the Jewish, Messianic element in Christianity was primary, the Gnostics were consciously hostile to Judaism.

What they wanted , and to a large extent eventually achieved, was a Greco-Roman cult of the ritual sacrifice of and cannibal feast on the Messiah of the Jews.

The cutting edge of the Gnostic offensive within the early Christian movement was provided by the concept of "the Father and the Son". This formula reeked of Caesarism , since the Caesars too laid great emphasis on such a concept in their own cult of Caesar-worship. Each new Caesar proclaimed himself the " Son" of the previous "Father" Caesar, regardless of what their actual biological relationship may have been. In *Early Christianity and Society*. on page 29, Robert Grant cites the 2nd century CE Christian writer Athenagoras addressing the Roman Caesars as follows:

As all things have been subjected to you, a father and a son, who have received your kingdom from above . . . so all things are subordinated to the one God and the Word that issues from him whom he considers his inseparable Son.

This passage shows that the early Christians were fully conscious of the resemblance between their own concept of "the Father and the Son" and that of the Caesars. This resemblance could not have been entirely coincidental.

In *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*. Frend shows that Gnosticism made rapid strides within the Christian movement during the period from 135 to 165 CE, when Christianity was tolerated and even favored by the Roman Caesars. On page 4, Frend cites Irenaeus describing the Gnostics of Lyons as "rich women" who were "finely dressed". When the Christians of Lyons were caught up in the renewed persecutions by the Romans in 177 CE, the Gnostic faction, followers of Marcus , was not arrested . In other parts of the Roman empire, when Gnostic Christians were threatened with persecution, they often recanted their beliefs. On page 183 Frend cites a polemic against the followers of Basilides for believing that "there was no harm in eating things offered to idols or in light-heartedly denying their faith in times of persecution" . Even Pagels admits that the Gnostics often recanted their beliefs. In fact , she shows that they invented a doctrine to justify these recantations, declaring that "Jesus",

as a "god", had not really suffered on the cross, and therefore they didn't have to suffer either. Grant, in *Early Christianity and Society*, on page 68, also notes that the Gnostics frowned on work and maintained that the "perfect Father" had lived in idleness while the evil "demiurge" of the Jews advocated work.

Pagels is undoubtedly correct in treating the Gnostics as feminists. All of the "mystery religions" had strong matriarchal associations. The very concept of a victim "god" was of matriarchal origin. Dionysos was first worshipped almost entirely by women. Attis was believed to have been the lover of the 'Great Mother' Cybele; his worship was associated with hers, as was the worship of the "god" Osiris with that of the "goddess" Isis. But many of the Montanists too seem to have been feminists. In her article, "Word, Spirit and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities", appearing in *Women of Spirit* edited by Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, Elisabeth Fiorenza shows that women played a key role in the Montanist movement.

Since the Montanists and the Gnostics were otherwise so different, it seems very likely that feminism provided the main basis of unity within the early Christian movement.

### Christian Feminism

On page 36 of her article in *Women of Spirit*, Elisabeth Fiorenza states: Paul's letters indicate that women were among the prominent and leading missionaries in the early Christian movement. They were co-workers with Paul but did not depend on him or stand under his authority.

They were not excluded from any missionary function. They were preachers, teachers and leaders of the community.

In her article on "Mothers of the Church" in *Women of Spirit*, Rosemary Ruether shows that the influence of Jerome in the 4th century CE Christian church was linked to that of a wealthy Roman woman named Marcella and "a band of likeminded noblewomen who met for Scripture study at her home". All these women were members of the Senatorial nobility. Constantine, the first Roman Caesar to convert to Christianity, was induced to take this step by his mother, Helena. Friend, in *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, notes on page 237 that "there is no evidence that men of the new or old

senatorial aristocracy became Christians in any numbers before Constantine, but during the whole of the second century conversions of aristocratic women were numerous".

Most feminist writers on the subject of Christianity have recognized the feminist current within the early Christian movement. While critical of the patriarchal elements in Christian tradition, which they usually ascribe to the influence of Judaism, they see that Christian doctrine reflected the influence of women. Mary Daly, in *Beyond God The Father*, agrees that "Jesus was a feminist" but argues: "So what?" He was not feminist enough for her. Daly sees no relationship between the "feminism" of "Jesus" and Judaism. To the contrary, she sees the Jews as aggressive and violent, declaring on page 120 of *Beyond God The Father* that American Jews were indifferent to the fate of the Vietnamese in the 1960s "for the mentality of rape is also embedded in the Hebrew tradition itself".

Daly's attitude is characteristic of that of most feminist writers, who have developed a whole analysis blaming Judaism for Christian patriarchy. Merlin Stone in *When God Was A Woman* argues that the early Hebrews were so cruel to women, they must have been Aryans. Elizabeth Davis in *The First Sex* can find no feminism in early Christianity at all but only Jewish patriarchy. Her book is filled with passages such as the following, from page 230:

As the Jewish disciples, like Paul, radiated out of Palestine into the more civilized worlds of Greece, Rome, and southern Gaul, their Semitic souls were outraged at the freedom and authority granted to Western women.

Even Rosemary Ruether, in *Faith and Fratricide* on page 83, feels that "we should probably think in terms of a left-wing Pauline church" as contrasted with a "reactionary" Jewish church headed by James, the brother of "Jesus". Ruether sees James as "reactionary" because he advocated circumcision.

If Jewish culture at this time was really so male-dominated as the modern Christian feminists believe, then why were their Greek predecessors so attracted to it? Even if the Greek feminists were hostile to the patriarchal side of Judaism, there must have been a feminist current within it to account for their interest in the first place. And in fact, Jewish culture during this period did reflect a strong feminist

influence, as shown by the transition from polygamy to monogamy in Judah. Moreover, it was precisely the Pharisees, the Jewish group most vilified in the "New Testament", who were mainly responsible for this transition. Although the Essenes went even further than the Pharisees in their condemnation of polygamy as "fornication", it was primarily Pharisee support for monogamy which led to the gradual abolition of polygamy in Jewish life. In general, the Pharisees exhorted men to form a loving, equitable relationship with their wives. Nor could it have been a complete coincidence that the Pharisees were brought into the Jewish state under the rule of Salome, one of the few reigning queens in Jewish history.

Advocacy of monogamy, sexual restraint and non-violence in relations between men and women was undoubtedly the main point of contact between Jewish and Christian feminism. Feminists today do not regard monogamy as a feminist ideal, believing that they can do even better. But in the context of Greco-Roman society at the beginning of the Common Era, with its well known glorification of rape, male homosexuality and upper class sexual license of every kind, monogamy must have appeared to many Greek and Roman women as a feminist ideal. Monogamy and non-violence in sexual relations were strongly advocated by the Pharisees, who were the main exponents of Judaism within the Greco-Roman world. Use of Judaism as a means of legitimizing their own desire for a more secure and peaceful family life was clearly a major factor behind the rise of the Christian feminists.

In *Religion and Sexism*, edited by Rosemary Ruether, appears an article by Phyllis Bird on "Images of Women in the Old Testament". She summarizes the male image of women in traditional Jewish culture on page 71 as follows:

Man in the Old Testament recognizes woman as one essentially like him, as a partner in pleasure and labor, one whom he needs, and one who can spell him weal or woe. From his point of view-the only point of view of the Old Testament texts-the woman is a helper, whose work as wife and mother is essential and complementary to his own. In a sense she completes him-but as one with a life and character of her own. She is his opposite and equal.

The attitudes described by Bird may not have been feminist, but they are still a far cry from the unbridled male domination pictured as the

essence of the Jewish tradition by writers like Merlin Stone, Mary Daly and Elizabeth Davis. The Pharisees, moreover, interpreted traditional Jewish law on marriage and divorce in such a way as to permit Jewish women somewhat more freedom than had previously been the case. The Greek feminists no doubt felt that the Pharisees had not gone far enough, yet relative to prevailing Greco-Roman standards of male rights in sex and marriage, Pharisaism must nonetheless have appeared to them as a feminist trend.

The novel feature of Christian feminism was that, at the same time as it used Judaism to condemn the violence of Greco-Roman men, it also used the Greco-Roman "mysteries" to victimize Jewish men. The Christian and specifically Gnostic image of "Jesus" the "Lamb of God" served this dual purpose. Alive, "Jesus" was the embodiment of quiet, respectful treatment of women; dead, he was available as a Jewish victim "god" for the "mysteries". Incredibly, Mary Daly in *Beyond God The Father* speaks on page 75 of "Jesus and the Scapegoat Syndrome", declaring that the worship of "Jesus" creates a tendency to make scapegoats of others, only to conclude that this is a problem "particularly for women". That Christians, herself included, might have a tendency to make scapegoats out of the Jews, beginning with "Jesus" himself, never occurs to her.

Ancient and modern feminism clearly have much in common. Daly recognizes this, speaking on page 105 of the "Dionysian feminist ethic", which she extols as an alternative to patriarchal ethics. At the core of this "Dionysian feminist ethic" lies a tendency in patriarchal religion to treat men as scapegoats and victims. It is just because he is a scapegoat and a victim that the Christian feminists like "Jesus". Behind "Jesus", the perfect momma's boy, they see a perfect momma, the so-called "Virgin Mary". All of the Christian feminists are very strong on the point of Mary's virginity. Daly in *Beyond God The Father* sees it as a "rejection of religion's Fall into servitude to patriarchy", or again as "reflecting the power and influence of the Mother Goddess symbol which Christianity was never able to wipe out entirely". Christian feminism was primarily a reaction against the extreme militarism of Greco-Roman society. In *The Subordinate Sex*, Vern Bullough shows that Greek and Roman ruling class culture was filled with a spirit of hatred for women. On page 50, Bullough states: "Though attitudes toward women differed over the long course of

Greek history, during the period about which most is known, that of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., the status of women seemed to have achieved some kind of nadir in Western history . " Centuries of rape and glorification of male homosexuality must have bred in Greek women a spirit of revenge against all forms of male sexuality. "Jesus Christ" became the instrument of this revenge, which was originally directed primarily against the Greco-Romans, but which from the start also victimized the Jews as well.

At the heart of Christian feminism lies a negative attitude towards sex between men and women. As is well known, this attitude is generally more prevalent among women than among men, due to the fact that it is women rather than men who must bear the children resulting from sex. Among the women of Greco-Roman society, this negative attitude towards sex between men and women must have been greatly reinforced by the violent practices of many Greco-Roman men . Pharisaism, with its teachings of marital love and non-violence, attracted the Greek feminists, but they were too proud of being Greeks as well as feminists to consider becoming Jews. Christianity gave them what they wanted, a way of having their Judaism and eating it too.

### Rich and Poor

Of all the articles in the Christian creed of the greedy, nasty Jews who killed "Jesus", there is none more cherished than the Christian legend of the "rich Jews". Christians love to portray the Jews as possessing secret wealth, as being avid for money, as always cheating the Christians out of their money. The popularity of this legend in Christian lands is shown by its presence in *The Foundations of Christianity* by Karl Kautsky. Kautsky, a Marxist writer in pre-Hitler Germany, saw Christianity as a proletarian trend in Judaism, rejected by the majority of Jews because they were rich merchants. It is apparent that most Christians believe the same.

Victor Tcherikover in *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* shows in great detail just why there were so many Greek-speaking people in the Middle East at the time of Saul of Tarsus. Knowledge of Greek was mainly fostered by the fact that it was a requirement for citizenship in the Greek cities. The citizens of these cities made up the upper and middle classes. They were the rich landowners, wealthy merchants, shop keepers and the more prosperous artisans. Only citizens

could vote in municipal elections, hold municipal office or serve in the municipal police. The main requirement for entry into this urban elite was knowledge of Greek.

In Judah, Syria and Iraq, the majority of the population at this time was composed of Aramaic-speaking Semites. Joshua of Galilee was such a person; so were millions of others. It was on the denial of the nationhood of these Aramaic-speaking Semites that Greek "civilization" in the Middle East was founded. Semites who spoke only Aramaic were excluded from citizenship in most of the cities of their own land. In these cities, they were relegated to the lower end of the social scale, as day laborers or poor artisans. In the countryside, where they formed the great majority of the people, they were farmers, but in the process of losing their land to Greek absentee landlords. Bands of landless farmers roamed the countryside throughout the Middle East, forming the nucleus for movements of rebellion against Greek and Roman rule. In the Middle East 2,000 years ago, Greek meant rich, Aramaic meant poor.

The Roman conquest of the Middle East served if anything to reinforce Greek domination of the region. Unable to force anyone in the Middle East to speak Latin, the Romans at first adopted the policy of granting Roman citizenship to the citizens of the Greek cities.

Knowledge of Greek was the original requirement for Roman citizenship in the Middle East. Themselves great admirers of Greek culture, the Romans generally tended to favor anything Greek in the Middle East, and treated the Greeks as their main allies in the region. The Roman administration in the Middle East became in time primarily Greek-speaking, giving rise eventually to the Eastern or Byzantine Roman empire, which was exclusively Greek-speaking.

Of the perhaps 8 million Jews in the world 2,000 years ago, at least 6 or 7 million were Aramaic-speaking people, primarily of Semitic descent, living in Judah, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Judah at that time was the main center of Semitic resistance to Greco-Roman military and cultural imperialism in the Middle East. The main goal of the mass murders by the Romans in Judah was to crush this resistance in order to bring about the complete "Hellenization" of the region.

Most of the people murdered by the Romans in Judah were Aramaic-speaking farmers. Farmers and artisans together formed at least 95% of the population of Judah. Most merchants in the Middle East at that time were Greek.

There were of course some merchants and shop keepers in Judah, but few wealthy ones . Wealthy merchants soon became Greeks if they had not been Greek to begin with.

The knowledge of Greek and possession of Roman citizenship displayed by Saul of Tarsus were no casual accomplishments but a badge of membership in the ruling elite of the Middle East. The Christian belief in the defeat and martyrdom of the Messianic movement in Judah went hand in hand with the Christian cultural doctrine of Greek supremacy. Original Christianity, the Christianity of Saul of Tarsus, was a self-justifying stance on the part of persons of Jewish descent who were trying to explain to themselves and others why they had turned their backs on their own people in its hour of need. In truth, they did it to get rich and save their skins; but they could not live with this knowledge. So they made up a story in which it was they, the poor Christians, who really upheld the best in Jewish tradition, while the Jews themselves had gone astray by rejecting "Jesus", the only good Messiah of the lot.

No doubt Joshua of Galilee was a poor man, but no poorer than Simon bar Giora, who led an army of ex-slaves against the Romans during the first "Jewish War", was captured by the Romans after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE and executed by them in the Forum in Rome after prolonged torture to celebrate their victory. If the Christians love the poor so much, why don 't they love Simon bar Giora? If the Christians really loved the poor, they would love all the Messiahs of the poor, the Jewish ones and the non-Jewish ones too. But the Christians only love one Messiah of the poor, the one they can kill and eat.

The great majority of early Christians, simply by virtue of being Greek-speaking, belonged to the upper classes of Middle Eastern society.

That early Christianity was much less "proletarian" than it is usually pictured is recognized even by many Christian historians. Robert Grant in *Early Christianity and Society* sees early Christianity on page 11 "not as a proletarian mass movement but as a relatively small cluster of more or less intense groups, largely middle class in origin". Grant also notes that the early Christians, contrary to the popular stereotype, held slaves and opposed the general emancipation of slaves. On page 91, Grant cites the early Christian writer Athenagoras as stating, in response to some accusation:

We have slaves, some many, some few, and it is impossible to escape their observations. Yet not one of them has ever told such monstrous lies about us.

Most early Christians were probably from prosperous artisan or merchant families, many no doubt of Semitic origin, who had become citizens of the Greek cities of the Middle East and were seeking an ideological vehicle to facilitate their continued rise within the violently anti-Semitic world of Greco-Roman imperial culture.

The whole concept of worshipping "gods" and "goddesses" was intimately associated with wealth and privilege. Worship of "gods" and "goddesses" was strongly favored by the Greeks and Romans. No doubt "Jesus" was a proletarian "god" by Greek standards, but he was a "god" nonetheless, and hence socially acceptable to the Greeks and Romans in a way that Judaism could never be. Judaism was well known for its opposition to the worship of "gods" and "goddesses"; indeed, the Jews were often accused of "atheism" by the Greeks and Romans. "Jesus" was a good "god" for poor Semites trying to get ahead in Greco-Roman society, and an even better one for their wealthy Greek friends. Christianity arose from the union of these two groups, Semitic social climbers and Greek bohemians. But isn't it a shame that they had to get together over the dead body of a Jewish man?

## Chapter Seven

### Heresy

According to Ramsay MacMullen on page 105 of Constantine, the first use of the term "heretic", as opposed to "catholic", appeared in a decree issued in 313 CE by the Roman Caesar Constantine. Constantine had just become a Christian. In his decree of 313 CE, he ordered that a man named Caecilian be reinstated as the "catholic" bishop of Carthage in North Africa. Caecilian had been ousted as bishop of Carthage by Christians whom Constantine called "heretics", headed by a man named Donatus. By the terms of Constantine's decree, Caecilian was reinstated as bishop and cash grants and other privileges were offered to Christians who would accept him as such.

The Donatists, as the followers of Donatus were called, were the first in a long series of "heretics" uncovered by the "catholic" or "orthodox" faction within the Christian church. Constantine does not receive the credit he deserves as the founder of this faction. As soon as he became a Christian around 313 CE, Constantine began to intervene directly in church affairs. Caecilian had been deposed as bishop of Carthage by the Donatists because he had recanted his faith during the "Great Persecution" under Diocletian, Constantine's predecessor. The first "catholics" were those who had collaborated with the Romans during the persecutions under Diocletian, while the first "heretics" were those who had remained firm in their faith.

Constantine's policy as a Christian Caesar was to ally himself with the "catholic" wing of the church to isolate and crush the wing, now labelled as "heretical", which had previously formed the hard core of Christian opposition to Roman rule. The culmination of this policy came in 325 CE when Constantine convoked and personally helped to preside over a council of Christian bishops at Nicaea, in Turkey. This council adopted the "Nicene Creed", the first "orthodox" formulation of Christian doctrine, which placed a heavy emphasis on the slogan, "the Father and the Son." Opponents of this move, headed

by a man named Arius, were dubbed Arians and also branded as "heretics".

During the next few centuries, efforts to uphold the "Nicene Creed" by the "orthodox" and "catholic" faction gave rise to a bewildering variety of "heresies". After the Donatists and the Arians came the Nestorians, the Monophysites and the Jacobites. All these "heresies" are presented in the history books primarily as they were perceived by their "catholic" or "orthodox" opponents. Thus we are told that the Monophysites believed that "Christ" had only one nature, while the Nestorians denied that Mary was the "mother of God". These were the points on which the "catholics" attacked the "heretics", but while they may have loomed large in "catholic" eyes, they were not necessarily so important to the "heretics" themselves. What were all these "heresies" really about?

## Donatism

The original "heresy" was Donatism. Constantine's edict of 313 CE reinstating Caecilian as bishop of Carthage was ignored by the Donatists, who continued to elect their own bishops and to retain the support of most Christians in North Africa throughout the 4th century CE. Around 400 CE, the Donatists began to decline in popularity, eventually disappearing as an organized group. Augustine, the noted Christian theologian, began his career in Christian circles as the leader of the "catholic" attack on the Donatists in North Africa. The "catholics" were supported by Roman troops throughout their struggle with the Donatists, who were at first much more popular with the people. Jamil Abun-Nasr in *A History of the Maghrib* sees the defeat of a popular uprising against the Romans in 398 CE as the main cause of the subsequent decline of the Donatists.

Abun-Nasr traces the origins of the Donatists to the influence of the 3rd century CE Christian theologian, Tertullian. Tertullian became a Christian around 195 CE and went on to become the leader of the Montanist faction of North African Christians. According to Archibald Robertson in *The Origins of Christianity*, Tertullian was hostile not only to the Gnostics but even to Saul of Tarsus. Tertullian's teachings extolled the virtues of martyrdom in times of persecution. These teachings of Tertullian were cited by the Donatists in their polemics with Caecilian and the "catholics". Abun-Nasr sees

the Donatists primarily as a nationalist reaction against Roman domination of the North African Christian church.

Abdallah Laroui presents the Donatists in a somewhat similar light in *The History of the Maghrih*. On page 35, he states:

It was precisely when the episcopacy made its peace with the empire at the beginning of the fourth century that the majority of Christians in Africa, faithful to their tradition of independence from Rome, enthusiasm for martyrdom, and absolute opposition to the Emperor-Antichrist, rushed into the Donatist schism, ignoring the concept of catholicity central to all brands of Christianity that accommodate themselves to social inequalities, and giving their church a distinctly nationalist coloration.

Yet as Laroui also points out, Christianity in North Africa "was Roman before it was Berber, urban before it was rural, and espoused by the rich before the poor". The Donatists were Latin-speaking North Africans, mainly of Berber origin, who wished to become citizens of the Roman empire but were unwilling to accept Roman domination of the Christian church. They were primarily of middle class origin, or as Laroui puts it on page 47 of *The History of the Maghrih*: "There is reason to believe that first Christianity, then Donatism was propagated largely among the African bourgeoisie."

Laroui sees Donatism essentially as a protest on the part of upwardly mobile Berbers against the refusal of the Romans to treat them as equals. But what neither Laroui nor Abun-Nasr so much as mentions is that among the Berbers of North Africa who were still Berber-speaking, and who were at this time in open revolt against Roman rule, there was a strong tendency towards Judaism. In *Between East and West: A History of the Jews of North Africa*, Andre Chouraqui shows that many Berber tribes, including the Jerawa in the Aures mountains and the Behlula and Fazaz in the western Maghrib, converted to Judaism during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. On page 21, Chouraqui points out that Tertullian, the founder of the Donatist tradition, "reported that the Berbers observed the Sabbath, the Jewish festivals and fasts, and the dietary laws".

In *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, Frend sees Tertullian himself as a Judaizer, describing his doctrines on page 279 as "baptized Judaism". Frend sees the whole Christian movement in North Africa as Jewish-inspired. He states on page 268, speaking of

North Africa: "Evidence suggests that the first Christian communities were closely allied to the Jews, and not only used Jewish cemeteries. but also adopted some elements of the practices and organization of the synagogue. " Yet Tertullian did not think of himself as a Judaizer: to the contrary, he wrote polemics against the Jews. He is treated as a Judaizer by Frend because he was so hostile to Roman domination in North Africa; yet from a Berber point of view, he was a Romanizer, as were the Donatists in general .

On page 41 of *A History of the Maghrib*, Abun-Nasr brings out the connection between the Donatists and a group called, by the Romans, the "Circumcellions". The Circumcellions were Berber-speaking rebels who attacked the Romans and the rich generally. It was the defeat of the Circumcellions by the Romans in 398 CE which led to the decline of the Donatists according to Abun-Nasr. The Circumcellions and Donatists had been loosely allied. Since Judaism was at this time so popular among the Berber tribes of the interior, just out of reach of the Romans, it seems very likely that it was also popular among the Circumcellions, who were based on the Berber-speaking lower classes of the Roman cities along the coast. There is every indication that it was the strength of the anti-Roman and pro-Jewish movement among the Berbers which was primarily responsible for the strength of the Donatist tendency among North African Christians of Berber origin. Additional evidence of the influence of Judaism on the Berbers of North Africa is brought out by Andrew Sharf in *Byzantine Jewry* . Sharf shows on page 34 that Jewish influence remained strong among the Berbers during the 5th and 6th centuries CE. In 535 CE, the Byzantine Caesar Justinian issued a complete ban against the practice of Judaism in North Africa, which Sharf sees as a reaction against the popularity of Judaism in this area. Sharf also describes a Judeo-Christian sect, the 'Caelicists', which arose in North Africa during this period, and which practiced both baptism and circumcision. As late as 688 CE, Jewish Berber tribes defeated an Arab army on the banks of the El Meskyana river and drove the Muslims out of most of North Africa. They were led by a Jewish priestess named Dahyah al-Kahina, leader of the Jerawa tribe of the Aures mountains. Only after the death of al-Kahina around 700 CE did most of the Berber tribes adopt Islam. On page 116 of *The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms of Spain and Gaul*, Solomon Katz states: " In his translation of *Al-Makkari*, Pascual de Gayangos says that among the

Arab invaders of Spain there were many Berbers of the Jewish religion, and that this explains their sympathy for the Jews." The Arab invasion of Spain, which saved the Spanish Jews from severe persecution at the hands of the Catholic Visigoths, took place in 711 CE, only about 10 years after the death of al-Kahina and the conversion of most of the Jewish Berber tribes to Islam. Chouraqui, in *Between East and West*, estimates that at least half of the Jews living in North Africa in the 20th century were descendants of the Berber Jews who had not converted to Islam. Many of these Jews were still exclusively Berber-speaking, after more than 1,000 years of Arab rule.

In most histories of the early Christian movement, these Berber Jews are like the shadow of a shadow. They are concealed behind the Donatists, who are themselves almost completely ignored. The "great" achievement of North African Christianity of this period is usually presented as the work of Augustine, who was the gravedigger of the Donatists. Even Augustine was, by "catholic" standards, rather critical of the Romans. In his *City of God*, he characterized the Roman empire as a glorified pirate kingdom. But this was mild stuff compared to the writings of Tertullian and the Donatists; and they in their turn could be seen as pro-Roman relative to the Jewish Berbers, who were in open revolt against the Romans and spoke no Latin. It was this pro-Jewish, anti-Roman movement among the Berbers which was the real driving force of the historical process which has been reduced in most studies of this period to praise for the literary excellence of Augustine's *City of God*.

Could it be that all the "heresies" of this period were products of essentially the same historical process? Donatism, Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism and Jacobitism were all of Middle Eastern origin. They flourished in the Middle East during the 300 year period between the conversion of Constantine and the rise of Islam. Indeed, as A.A. Vasiliev points out on page 207 of Volume 1 of his *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Islam too was at first treated as a "heresy" by the "orthodox" Christians. Vasiliev says that early Christian polemics against Islam treated it "as a kind of Arianism" and "placed it on a level with other Christian sects". These polemics continue in *The Great Heresies* by Hilaire Belloc, which contains a whole chapter on "The Great and Enduring Heresy of Mohammed". But could it be that all these "heresies", including Islam, were inspired by the ultimate "heresy", Judaism? It could.

## Arianism

Frend, in *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, shows that Donatism and Arianism were linked. He traces the origin of the teachings of Arius to the influence of Meletius, an Egyptian Christian leader of the late 3rd century CE. Meletius and his followers upheld a position similar to that of Donatus, criticizing those Egyptian Christian leaders who had recanted their beliefs during the "great Persecution" under Diocletian. Arius was originally a follower of Meletius but later tried to make his peace with the "catholic" party. Frend shows that Meletius and his followers were based primarily in the more heavily Coptic-speaking region of Upper Egypt, while the "catholics" were strong in predominately Greek-speaking Alexandria. Arius seems to have tried to uphold the views of Meletius within the "catholic" camp until the condemnation of Arianism at Nicaea in 325 CE. Egypt was the original center of the Arian movement, but Arianism eventually became established primarily among the Germans. Most of the "Gothic" or German tribes which invaded the Roman empire in the 5th century CE were led by followers of the Arian form of Christianity. Arian Ostrogoths, Visigoths and Vandals ruled over most of France, Italy, Spain and North Africa during the 5th and early 6th centuries CE. Perhaps the most famous of the Arian kings of this epoch was Theodoric the Ostrogoth, ruler of Italy from 493 to 526 CE. But during the mid-6th century CE, the Arian kingdoms of the western Mediterranean region were overthrown under the combined attack of the "Greek Orthodox" Byzantines and the "Roman Catholic" Franks. Arianism declined rapidly from this time onwards. Although it is never mentioned by historians of the period, the Arians were much more tolerant of the Jews than their 'Greek Orthodox' or "Roman Catholic" opponents. Ernest Abel in *The Roots of Anti-Semitism* brings out many examples of the relatively pro-Jewish policies pursued by the Arian kings of the 5th and 6th centuries CE. Under the rule of Theodoric in Italy, Christians who burned a synagogue in Ravenna were forced to rebuild it. Speaking of the Arian kings of Spain, Abel states on page 205: Under the Arians, the Jews seemed to have lived amidst the Christians in relative peace, possibly because there were no attempts at this time to unite the kingdoms religiously. Intennarriage between Jews and

## Heresy

Christians was common, as was the sharing of meals. Their religion, which had enjoyed a certain tolerated status in the empire, continued to be tolerated by the Arian kings and there is no evidence that the Jews were molested in any way during this period.

But in 587 CE, Reccared, the Arian king of Spain, converted to Catholicism, which, as Abel notes, altered the position of the Jews of Spain "quite drastically". In *Between East and West*, Chouraqui states on page 26 that the Arian Vandals in North Africa treated the Jews as allies and freed them from all oppressive laws.

Little is known of the real beliefs of Arius or of the reasons for their popularity among the Germans. The teachings of Arius were introduced to the Germans by contacts between the "Goths" and the Byzantines in the Black Sea and Balkan regions during the 4th century CE. In "catholic" and "orthodox" eyes, Arianism was chiefly associated with opposition to the formula, "the Father and the Son", adopted as the main slogan of the Christian church at Nicaea. Arius was accused of failing to understand this slogan correctly, of believing that the "Son" had been created "out of nothing" by the "Father".

Walter Nigg, in *The Heretics*, sees Arius as advocating "an almost Jewish monotheism". Whatever Arius may actually have believed, it had the effect of causing his followers to treat the Jews far more favorably than did the "orthodox" or "catholic" faction.

Moreover, as is often forgotten, it was the Arians who sacked Rome, first under Alaric the Visigoth in 410 CE, then again behind Gaiseric the Vandal in 455.

The "great" architect of the overthrow of the Arian kingdoms of the western Mediterranean region was the Byzantine Caesar Justinian. Vasiliev points out on page 149 of Volume 1 of his *History of the Byzantine Empire* that the main basis of Justinian's religious policy was pursuit of a close alliance with the Roman Popes. Although ruler of the Eastern or Byzantine Roman empire, Justinian declared that the Roman Pope ranked even higher than the "Greek Orthodox" Patriarch of Constantinople. Through the Roman Popes, who were allied in their turn with a German tribe, the Franks, who had just become "Roman Catholics", Justinian put together a united "catholic" and "orthodox" offensive against the Arians. This offensive resulted in the overthrow of the Arian kingdoms of Italy, France and North Africa.

Justinian's offensive against the Arians was part of a larger policy, which also included an offensive against the Jews. Justinian's decree banning Judaism in North Africa, which was issued following the defeat of the Arian Vandals in North Africa by his troops, was only one of a number of harsh measures on his part against the Jews. Justinian was Caesar of the Byzantine empire from 527 to 565 CE. His attacks on both Jews and Samaritans in Palestine resulted in a Samaritan revolt in 529 CE and a combined Jewish and Samaritan uprising in 556. Moreover, as Avi-Yonah notes on page 249 of *The Jews of Palestine*, earlier Roman decrees treating Judaism as a "legal religion" were omitted from Justinian's new law code, having the effect of tacitly outlawing Judaism throughout Byzantine territory. Justinian issued other anti-Jewish decrees, including one banning Jews from public office, and encouraged the numerous attacks on synagogues and Jewish communities which took place under his rule.

Hostility to the Jews was as central to the Papal concept of Christianity as it was to that of Justinian. In Spain, Reccared's conversion to Roman Catholicism in 587 CE was followed by a whole series of repressive measures against the Jews. These included a 613 CE decree of king Sisebut ordering forced conversion or exile of the Jews; a decree of the mid-680s by king Erwig again ordering forced baptism or exile for all Jews; and a final outburst under king Egica in 694 CE, shortly before the Arab conquest of Spain, declaring all Jews in Spain, whether baptized or not, reduced to "perpetual slavery". In France, as Abel points out on page 232 of *The Roots of Anti-Semitism*, when Sigismund, king of Burgundy, became a Catholic in 516 CE, he immediately issued laws 'that actually forbid the Jews to protect themselves if attacked by a Christian, no matter what the cause'. These actions were strongly encouraged by the Roman Catholic church, particularly the Popes.

A typical example of Papal pressure on the Catholic rulers of Western Europe to persecute the Jews is given in *The Popes and the Jews in the Middle Ages* by Edward Synan. On page 62, Synan cites a letter from Pope Steven 4 written in 768 CE to the archbishop of Narbonne, complaining that the king of the Franks was not treating the Jews harshly enough. The Pope wrote:

For this reason are We touched by sorrow, anxious even unto death, since We have known through you that the Jewish people, ever rebellious

against God and derogatory of our rites, within the frontiers and territories of Christians, thanks to some rules or other of the Kings of the Franks, own hereditary estates in the villages and suburbs, as if they were Christian residents.

Synan, a Catholic writer, finds this concern on Pope Steven's part perfectly natural. On page 41, after describing a letter from Pope Gregory "the Great" to king Reccared in Spain praising him for resisting Jewish influence in Spain, Synan states:

In a situation in which the Catholicism of the Visigothic king represented a precarious option against powerful Arian interests, the Pope was ready to give the King fulsome praise for this evidence of his concern for Catholicism in his kingdom.

In Synan's mind as well as Gregory's, "concern for Catholicism" and hostility to Jews and Arians were intimately linked.

The real basis of this link was the desire of Roman Popes and Byzantine Caesars alike to pursue a policy of Greco-Roman military and cultural imperialism under a Christian guise. Until the time of Gregory "the Great", Pope from 590 to 604 CE, it was generally the Byzantine Caesars who took the lead in this policy, with the Popes as their allies and supporters. But in large part due to the efforts of Justinian to enhance the power and prestige of the Papacy, Gregory "the Great" and later Popes succeeded in throwing off Byzantine tutelage and advancing their own claim to be the rulers of "Christendom".

So far as Jews and Arians were concerned, the growing rivalry between the "Roman Catholic" and "Greek Orthodox" churches was of little significance. Roman Popes and Byzantine Caesars were as one in their efforts to destroy both Jews and "heretics", ultimately because Pope and Caesar alike looked back to the Roman imperial tradition as their chief source of political authority.

## Christology

The most enduring of the early "heresies" were those arising from the so-called "Christological" controversies of the 5th and 6th centuries CE, the Nestorians, Monophysites and Jacobites. Churches deriving from these "heresies" still exist today in many parts of the Middle East. During the 5th and 6th centuries CE, they probably in

cluded the majority of Christians in the Middle East. The Nestorians eventually became centered in Iran, the Monophysites in Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia, the Iacobites in Syria. The one point which all these "heresies" had in common was that they used a language other than Greek or Latin in their liturgy. They were non-Greek-speaking offshoots from what was originally an exclusively Greek-speaking movement in the Middle East. The more Middle Eastern and the less Greek they became in language, culture and belief, the more "heretical" they appeared to the "orthodox" and "catholic" coalition.

[In *The Harvest of Hellenism*, on page 506, Peters notes that all Christian writings were in Greek until the 3rd century CE, when the first Latin and Coptic Christian works began to appear. After Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire in the 4th century CE, it began to spread to a much greater degree than before among Coptic and Aramaic-speaking people in the Middle East. From Coptic and Aramaic language sources, Christianity was spread in turn to Nubian, Ethiopian and Persian speakers. It was the Middle Eastern Christians speaking a language other than Greek who were eventually condemned as Nestorians, Monophysites or Iacobites by the "orthodox" and "catholic" forces.

The Nestorians were the first to be accused. They derived their name from the teachings of Nestorius, whose views were condemned as "heretical" at the council of Ephesus in 431 CE. According to the "orthodox" critics of Nestorius, whose arguments are echoed by Adrian Fortescue in *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, the Nestorians denied that the "Virgin Mary" was the "mother of God". Fortescue states that Nestorius had been brought up in the dominant late 4th century CE school of Christian theology in Antioch, which held that the "Logos" or "word of God" had only entered "Christ" as a young man.

Following the condemnation of these teachings in 431 CE, the Nestorians fled from Antioch to Edessa, where they remained until the late 5th century CE. Continued "orthodox" persecution finally forced them to flee to Persian territory, which became their main base.

Edessa, the first refuge of the Nestorians, was a caravan city between Syria and Iraq. It was a traditional center of Aramaic language culture in the Middle East. In 136 BCE, it had become the capital of an Aramaic language Syrian kingdom, which retained its independence until 216 CE, when it was annexed by Rome. Even under Roman rule, Edessa remained primarily Aramaic-speaking. Fortescue,

on page 32 of *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, sees Edessa as a major center of Jewish influence in the region. He states that the first Christians in Edessa were closely allied with the Jews. Later, under Roman influence, a "catholic" faction also became established in Edessa: At first, maybe, there was friction between these two parties. St. Ephrem notes that at one time the Catholics were called Palutians, as if they were a new sect. However, ultimately Palut and his party remain in possession as the official Church of Edessa; others become mere sects. The fact that the Nestorians fled to Edessa after being driven out of Antioch suggests that their views may have had much in common with those of the original, Judaizing Christians of Edessa.

Edessa was only one of a number of caravan cities located near the boundary between the Roman and Persian empires in which both Jewish and "heretical" Christian groups flourished in an Aramaic language environment. Another such city was Palmyra. Paul of Samosata, a 3rd century CE Christian bishop of Palmyra, was condemned by a Christian council in 268 CE for teaching that "Jesus" had been but a human being. Arius and Nestorius were also accused of this same teaching. But Paul of Samosata was protected by Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra, until she was overthrown by the Romans in 272 CE. Zenobia was also noted for her toleration of the Jews in Palmyra; according to Avi-Yonah in *The Jews of Palestine*, she is characterized in some Christian sources from this period as "the Jewess". This characterization persists in *The Arians of the Fourth Century* by John Newman, a prominent 19th century English Catholic writer, who speaks on page 5 of the teachings of Paul of Samosata as "a kind of Judaism in doctrine, adopted to please his Jewish patroness".

On the "Christological" level, the Monophysites were the direct opposites of the Nestorians. Cyril of Alexandria, regarded by Fortescue as the founder of the Monophysite tendency in Egypt, was one of the leaders of the opposition to Nestorius within the church councils. Cyril and his followers insisted that "Christ" had been born as "God"; indeed, they maintained that he had always been "God" for all eternity. Cyril's successor as bishop of Alexandria, Dioscor, was condemned for these "Monophysite" beliefs at the council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. The leader of the opposition to the Monophysites was the Roman Pope Leo I. According to the "catholic" and "or

thodox" forces , the Monophysites or "One-naturists" had erred in stressing too heavily the purely divine nature of "Christ". The "catholic" and "orthodox" coalition united around the doctrine that "Christ" had two natures , one human and one divine.

The real error of the Monophysites seems to have been speaking Coptic . The line between the "orthodox" and Monophysite factions in Egypt coincided more or less exactly with the line between Greek-speaking and Coptic-speaking Christians. This was also a class line.

In his article, "The Byzantine Church", in *Byzantium*, edited by Baynes and Moss, Henri Gregoire states that the Monophysites were backed by the " lower classes", while the "bourgeoisie" was "orthodox". Monophysite Christianity became the dominant form of Christianity in Egypt by the end of the 5th century CE. and during the 6th and 7th centuries CE it spread to Nubia and Ethiopia too. The Monophysites called the Greek-speaking Christians "Melkites", meaning "royalists". When the Arabs invaded this region in the 7th century CE, they initially tolerated the Monophysites but moved immediately to suppress the " Mel kites" , who soon disappeared as an organized force in the region.

The Jacobites were the last "heretics" to appear in the Middle East prior to the rise of Islam. They were named after Jacob Baradai, a bishop of Edessa accused of Monophysite beliefs , who died in 578 CE. The Jacobites, like the Nestorians , were Aramaic-speaking; they too were mainly based in the caravan cities between the Roman and Persian empires. According to Hitti in his *History of Syria*, the Jacobites to this day dislike the term Jacobite, which was applied to them by their "orthodox" foes, and prefer to be known as "Old Syrians". It is apparent that Syrian and Egyptian nationalism in Christian guise was the original driving force behind the Nestorian , Monophysite and Jacobite " heresies" alike.

In *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, Newman sees the whole early Christian movement in Syria, not only in Edessa and Palmyra but even in Antioch, as permeated with Jewish influence. After a long discussion of Judaizing tendencies in the bishopric of Antioch, Newman states on page 18:

The evidence, which has been adduced for the existence of Judaism in the Church of Antioch, is not without its bearing upon the history of the rise of Arianism. I will not say that the Arian doctrine is the direct

result of a judaizing practice; but it deserves consideration whether a tendency to derogate from the honour due to Christ, was not created by an observance of the Jewish rites, and much more, by that carnal, self-indulgent religion, which seems at that time to have prevailed in the rejected nation.

This same accusation of "Judaizing" tendencies was brought against all the Middle Eastern "heresies" by their "orthodox" and "catholic" opponents. Yet what is so Jewish about saying that "Christ" had been "God" for all eternity or that "Jesus" had been entered by a "god" named "Logos" as a young man?

At the root of the "orthodox" and "catholic" concept of the "godman" was the assumption that "God" had become the "Father" of "Christ" by having what amounted to sex with Mary. It followed from this that Christ was half "God's" and half Mary's, hence half "god" and half man, hence a "god-man". But the 'heretics', without exception, consistently denied the need for "God's" affair with Mary by claiming that "Christ" had always been "God" (Monophysites), or was made into a "god" by his "Father" out of nothing (Arians), or only became "God" after being born (Nestorians). The whole debate between the "orthodox" and the "heretics" over "Christology" really boiled down to the fact that the Greco-Romans were much more prone than the Middle Easterners to think of "God" as the biological father of "Christ". Were not all these "Christological heresies" at heart but a Middle Eastern reaction against centuries of rape of Middle Eastern women by Greco-Roman men?

It was just this sensitivity to Middle Eastern feeling which the "heresy" hunters immediately recognized as a "Judaizing" tendency. Most of the Middle Eastern "heretics" did not think of themselves as "Judaizers". Many of them were in fact quite hostile to the Jews and sympathetic to Greco-Roman tradition. Yet as Middle Easterners, they could not help but interpret Christian doctrine in a somewhat more pro-Jewish spirit than the wealthy Greco-Roman "orthodox" and "catholic" coalition. They were Judaizers within a Christian context, while at the same time, they were Greco-Romanizers within their own Coptic, Aramaic, Persian, Nubian or Ethiopian language communities. It was their attraction to Greco-Roman culture which prevented the "heretics" from ever uniting behind a rival version of the "Nicene Creed". They remained divided into so many ways of

not saying, "the Father and the Son", because at heart they still wanted to be Greco-Romans, and therefore did not dare to repudiate the "Nicene Creed" altogether.

## Islam

The first "heretic" to come right out and say it was Mohammed. In the Koran, Mohammed explicitly denounced the Greco-Roman concept of the "Son of God" . In "Mary", a chapter of the Koran , Mohammed stated:

Those who say: " The Lord of Mercy has begotten a son, " preach a monstrous falsehood, at which the very heavens might crack, the earth break asunder, and the mountains crumble to dust. That they should ascribe a son to the Merciful , when it does not become Him to beget one!

In another chapter, "Ornaments of Gold", Mohammed also has Allah declare: "Jesus was no more than a mortal whom We favored and made an example to the Israel ites." In various references to " Jesus" in the Koran, Mohammed expressed his belief that " Jesus" had been a great "prophet" whom the Jews should have followed, but only a "prophet" and not the "Son of God" .

Was Mohammed just another "heretic"? Not really. The fundamental difference between Mohammed and the other " heretics" was that Mohammed was not a Christian. As S.D. Goitein points out on page 54 of *Jews and Arabs*, if the chapters of the Koran are arranged in chronological order, it will be seen that the name of "Jesus" does not even appear in the first 57, out of 114, chapters. The references to "Jesus" which do appear in the later chapters of the Koran make little or no mention of his teachings. Their main intent seems to be to establish a Muslim position on "Christ", to show that Mohammed regarded "Jesus" with respect and took his side against the Jews, yet also to make it clear that the Muslims rejected the Christian doctrine of " Jesus" the " Son of God". In the early chapters of the Koran, where Mohammed's teachings were first expressed, there is no "Christ" at all.

As many writers have pointed out, Mohammed's early teachings differed but little from those of the Jews. Joel Carmichael, in *The Shaping of the Arabs*. stresses this point. He shows that the earliest

Muslim form of prayer was adapted from the Jewish ritual; that the Muslims adopted Yom Kippur as an Islamic holiday; that Mohammed and his followers in Medina first prayed in the direction of Jerusalem , only later in the direction of Mecca. Carmichael sees Mohammed in close alliance with the Jews of Arabia until around 624 CE. At this time, Mohammed turned on the Jews, ordered the massacre of many and began a campaign to stamp out Judaism in Arabia. It was during this period , from roughly 624 to the time of Mohammed's death in 632 CE, that the later chapters of the Koran were composed, the ones in which favorable references to "Jesus" appear.

These later chapters are also filled with negative statements concerning the Jews, including a bizarre version of the Christian charge that the Jews killed " Jesus" . In "Women", Mohammed stated, with reference to the Jews:

They denied the truth and uttered a monstrous falsehood against Mary . They declared: 'We have put to death the Messiah Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of Allah.' They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him , but they thought they did .

How Mohammed learned all this some 600 years after the fact, he did not say. The later chapters of the Koran contain many such statements,

alleging various failings and wrongdoings on the part of the Jews, all uttered in a tone of pontifical authority without supporting evidence of any kind.

Why did Mohammed break with the Jews? Most students of Islam do not even bother to raise this question, as if Mohammed's assault on the Jews of Arabia was a natural action on his part requiring no particular explanation. If they do raise the question, then they usually answer it by repeating Mohammed's own charge that the Jews of Medina mocked him and failed to support him against the Meccans in the battle of Badr. And if they go beyond this point, then they do so in the manner of M.A. Shaban in *Islamic History: A New Interpretation*.

On page 12 of Volume 1, Shaban speculates that Mohammed may have broken with the Jews not only because of their treachery but because they were trying to profit from his war with Mecca to build up a rival trading network. Shaban advances no evidence for this contention beyond a citation designed to show that the Jews were active in trade.

Universally ignored by historians of Islam is the fact that Mohammed's break with the Jews came in the context of a sharp and dramatic reversal in the historic struggle of the Jewish people to regain control of Jerusalem. Although most historians of Islam never even mention it, Jerusalem was ruled from 614 to 617 CE by Jews. It was the capital of a revived Jewish state in Palestine which controlled a large part of this region for about five years. The Jewish state, headed by a man named Nehemiah, was established in 614 CE as a result of the conquest of Jerusalem by a combined Jewish and Persian army. But in 617, the Persians withdrew their support from the Jews in Palestine and had Nehemiah killed. By the mid-620s, the Persians themselves had been driven out of Palestine by a renewed Greek offensive. By 628 CE, the year in which Mohammed ordered the massacre of the Jews of Khaybar in Arabia, the Greeks had regained control of Jerusalem. Around 630 CE, with the Greeks now invading Persian territory, the Byzantine Caesar Heraclius ordered all Jews in the Byzantine empire forcibly baptized or killed.

Seen against the background of these events, Mohammed's break with the Jews around 624 CE appears in a very different light than the one in which it is usually pictured. Mohammed first began to preach in Mecca around 610 CE. It was just at this time that a Persian offensive, with Jewish support, was moving into Syria. Avi-Yonah, in *The Jews of Palestine*, gives a detailed account of the Judeo-Persian offensive. Antioch fell in 610 CE after a rebellion of Jews within the city walls with the Persians at the gates. On page 262, Avi-Yonah cites the Armenian chronicle of Sebaeus describing the next phase of the offensive:

When the Persians approached the Holy Land the remains of the Hebrew nation rose against the Christians. They committed great crimes out of national zeal and did many wrongs to the Christian community. They went and joined the Persians and made common cause with them. From 614 to 617, the "Holy Land" remained in Jewish hands. Avi-Yonah believes the Persians withdrew their support from the Jews after 617 CE because of the failure of a Jewish army to take Tyre after a protracted siege.

Throughout the period from 610 to around 620 CE, while the Jews with Persian support were on the offensive in Palestine, Mohammed

seems to have liked the Jews very much. His teachings during this period differed but little from theirs. But once the Jews started losing, Mohammed turned against them. His break with the Jews around 624 CE coincided, perhaps exactly, with the Christian reconquest of Jerusalem.

The actions he took against the Jews of Arabia coincided with a general wave of assaults against Jews throughout the Mediterranean

region stimulated by the successful Byzantine offensive under Heraclius during the 620s. This wave reached as far as France, where Dagobert, the last Merovingian king of Gaul, issued a decree in 624 CE ordering forced baptism or exile of all Jews in France. Abel, in *The Roots of Anti-Semitism*, shows that this decree was instigated by Heraclius, the Byzantine Caesar, who wrote to Dagobert urging him to take some action against the Jews.

The real reasons for Mohammed's break with the Jews are suggested by a passage in the Koran itself. In "The Imrans", Mohammed says of the Jews:

If they harm you, they can cause you no serious harm; and if they fight against you they will turn their backs and run away. Then there shall be none to help them. Ignominy shall attend them wherever they are found, unless they make a covenant with Allah or with man. They have incurred the wrath of Allah and have been utterly humbled: because they disbelieved His revelations and slew His prophets unjustly; and because they were rebels and transgressors.

What all this really boils down to is the charge that the Jews were losers. The Jews were indeed losers at this time. In the wake of their unsuccessful attempt to regain control of the "Holy Land", Heraclius and the Byzantines were leading an all-out attack upon them. Had Mohammed not turned on them, he might well have been forced to share their fate. A rebel himself, he was really blaming them not for being rebels but for being unsuccessful rebels.

Mohammed's real attitude towards the Jews is shown by the fact that immediately after composing the passage cited above, he evidently felt so guilty that he had to add the following lines:

Yet they are not all alike. There are among the People of the Book some upright men who all night long recite the revelations of Allah and worship Him; who believe in Allah and the Last Day; who enjoin justice and forbid evil and vie with each other in good works. These

are righteous men: whatever good they do, its reward shall not be denied them. Allah knows the righteous.

Mohammed's respect for the Jews is also shown by a passage, from "The Prophets", in which he has Allah tell him:

The apostles We sent before you were no more than men whom We inspired. Let them ask the People of the Book if they do not know this. The bodies We gave them could not dispense with food, nor were they immortal.

Even after rejecting the Jews, Mohammed evidently still thought of them as the real authorities on apostles .

Islam did not originate as a " heresy" of Christianity but rather as an outgrowth of Judaism. The one individual mentioned far more often than any other in the Koran, and always in a positive sense, is Moses. According to Dwight Donaldson in *The Shi'ite Religion*, Mohammed even compared himself to Moses, declaring: "Ali is to me what Aaron was to Moses." Mohammed seems to have thought of himself as the Moses of the Arabs, the prophet destined to raise them up as a people, just as Moses had raised up the Hebrews. The Koran was intended to be, and did indeed become, the Torah of the Arabs . Yet without the struggle led by the Jews of Mohammed's day , there never would have been any Islam, or "heresy" of any kind, or for that matter any type of Christianity, even "catholic" and "orthodox".

### The Shadow of a Shadow

The Jewish struggle to revive Judah which culminated in 614 CE in the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine is like the shadow of a shadow in Christian and Muslim historiography alike. Although the Jewish reconquest of Jerusalem in 614 CE is a well documented event fully described in Jewish histories of this period, it is hardly ever mentioned, much less discussed, by Christian or Muslim historians. Both Christian and Muslim historians invariably strive to give the impression that there were no Jews in Palestine after 135 CE, that Jews in general formed a scattered minority of negligible importance after this time and above all that both Christianity and Islam evolved quite independently of anything the Jews might have been doing at the time.

Quite a different picture emerges from Jewish studies of this period, such as Shmuel Safrai's article, "The Era of the Mishnah and Talmud (70-640)", in *A History of the Jewish People*, edited by Haim Ben-Sasson. Speaking of Palestine after 135 CE, Safrai states on page 309:

For many generations after the destruction, the Jews and Samaritans together formed the majority of the population, not only in the interior parts of the Land of Israel, but also in some of the border areas.

There were still hundred of thousands of Jews living in Palestine in the 5th and 6th centuries CE. There were also millions of Jews living elsewhere in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, whose Jewish community dated back to the Babylonian exile of the 6th century BCE and numbered at least I million people throughout the period from 135 to 635 CE. Most of the Middle Eastern Jews were still Aramaicspeaking, as were a large proportion of people in the Middle East at this time.

In Palestine itself, the strength of the Jews after 135 CE was reflected in Roman recognition of the head of the Sanhedrin as "Patriarch" of the Jews. The Sanhedrin or High Court, dominated by the Pharisees since the middle of the 1st century BCE, was allowed by the Romans to continue hearing cases as a court of law after 135 CE. Most civil and even criminal cases involving Jews were judged by the Sanhedrin, which remained in existence in Palestine for many centuries after 135 CE. The president of the Sanhedrin was treated by the Romans as the "Patriarch" of the Jews; he was recognized as the leader of the Jewish community and for a time treated as if he was of royal status.

It was the effort of the Sanhedrin and the "Patriarchs" to assert their sovereignty over Palestine which lay behind the compilation of the Talmud. The "Patriarchs" of the Sanhedrin after 135 CE were all but one descendants of Hillel. They sought so much as possible under conditions of Roman occupation to assume the status of secular rulers of Palestine. Their power reached its height under Judah the Prince during the early 3rd century CE. The concept of the Talmud took shape at this time; it was originally conceived as a record of the legal opinions of the members of the Sanhedrin. The main point of making this record was to invest the deliberations of this body with

something of the status of a governmental agency. To this same end, "Patriarchs" such as Judah the Prince claimed the power to punish offenders against the law and demanded from the Romans the same status as a secular head of state.

During the 3rd century CE, pressure also began to rise among the Jews of Palestine for a new attempt to drive out the Romans. In *The Jews of Palestine* on page 131, Avi-Yonah cites a 3rd century rabbi who declared that the advent of the Messiah was imminent: "According to Rabbi Levi the Messiah from the House of Joseph will, after rebuilding the Temple, march upon Rome and conquer it as Joshua conquered Jericho." The revival of Messianic agitation in Palestine during the 3rd century CE was undoubtedly linked to the establishment of the Sassanid dynasty in Iran around 226 CE. The Sassanids were much more aggressive in their attitude towards the Greco-Romans than their Parthian predecessors and deliberately encouraged Jewish hopes for the restoration of Judah as part of their broader program for the revival of the Persian empire of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. The Sassanids were supported in this policy by the large Jewish community of Iran, many of whose members were enrolled in the Persian army as semi-autonomous Jewish detachments.

The intensification of the Jewish drive to restore Judah from about the middle of the 3rd century CE onwards was also linked to the rapid spread of Judaism during this period. Almost entirely ignored by historians of Islam is the fact that during the 5th and 6th centuries CE, Yemen, the most populous part of Arabia, had become a Jewish stronghold. In Yemen, Robert Stookey states on page 20 that by 375 CE, Judaism had become the state religion of Yemen. It remained the state religion for most of the next 150 years, until 525 CE, when Yemen was invaded by the Christian Ethiopians. There was still a large Jewish population in Yemen at the time of the rise of Islam. Medina, the city to which Mohammed fled from Mecca in 622 CE, was also known as a Jewish stronghold; about a third of its population was Jewish at the time of Mohammed. Judaism at this time was not an obscure sect but a powerful movement commanding the support of millions of followers in Palestine, North Africa, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Arabia. The major weakness of the Jewish national movement at this time lay in its dependence on Persian support. The Persians generally aided the Jews in their drive to restore Judah, but there were many sharp turns and twists down the road, as in 617 CE when the Persians with

drew their support from the Jewish state in Palestine and killed Nehemiah. Certain Sassanid kings, such as Piruz, called "Piruz the Evil" in contemporary Jewish accounts, persecuted the Jews in Iran and Iraq. Most of these persecutions were inspired by the Zoroastrian clergy, who wanted the Persian kings to ban all other religions, just like the Christians did in their empire. In exchange for somewhat unreliable Persian support, the Jews had to pay the political price of identifying themselves with Persian rule in the Middle East. This proved a political advantage for the Muslims, who were much freer to play the Greeks and Persians off against one another than the Jews, who were pretty much stuck with a pro-Persian, anti-Greek stance.

Despite its dependence on Persian support, the Jewish national movement of this period was a true movement of national liberation, reflecting primarily the culture and traditions of the Semitic peoples of the Middle East, who were at that time mainly Aramaic-speaking. This movement had traditionally been supported by the Persians largely because the Persian empire in the Middle East had originally used Aramaic rather than Persian as the official language of its administration. It was because some of the Sassanid kings and Zoroastrian clergy wished to reverse this policy and Aryanize the Middle East that they too began to persecute the Jews. Judaism remained closely identified with Aramaic language culture in the Middle East throughout the period of more than 1,000 years from the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century BCE to the rise of Islam in the 7th century CE. Only after Arabic replaced Aramaic as the majority language in this region did Judaism shrink to the position of a relatively small minority in the Middle East.

If the 500 year period from 135 to 635 CE is viewed as a whole, it will be seen that it was characterized by successive efforts to establish one version after another of Judaism as the ideology of the Middle East. These efforts began with the rise of the Christian movement, whose Montanist wing was openly pro-Jewish and anti-Roman. The rise of Christianity eventually forced the Caesars to ally themselves with the Gnostic wing of the Christian church in order to isolate and crush the Montanists. But the same pressures which had led to the rise of Christianity in the first place now generated a whole series of new "heresies", all of them tending in some manner in the same pro-Jewish, anti-Roman direction as the Montanists. And when the Greco-Romans, now all tricked out in Gnostic garb, attempted to

crush the new "heresies", they only succeeded in stimulating the rise of yet a greater "heresy", Islam. From first to last, the whole progression was in the direction of ever closer approximations of Judaism, Islam being the closest approximation of all.

What was the motor that drove this great historical process? Is it not evident? Why would they have tried to approximate Judaism unless they feared that the real thing might come to power? It was because the Jews themselves were continually striving to reassert their sovereignty over Palestine that all others who wished to rule in this region were eventually compelled to try to look Jewish. Even the Pope wears a yarmulka. But as the first approximation of Judaism to come to power, "catholic" and "orthodox" Christianity was also the most anti-Jewish. In revenge for being forced to bow down before icons of a crucified Jew, the Christian Caesars and their Gnostic allies picked up where Hadrian had left off. They forced the Jews to fight for the restoration of Judah by initiating a new campaign to stamp out Judaism, particularly in Palestine itself.

Constantine, the very first Christian Caesar, initiated both the campaign against "heresy" and the campaign against the Jews. Avi-Yonah in *The Jews of Palestine* shows that Constantine's private letters are filled with attacks on the Jews, who are characterized as "the lawless Jews", "the perjured Jews" and "the impure ones". The first major anti-Jewish decrees by a Roman Caesar in 200 years were issued by Constantine's successor, Constantius, who was also a Christian. In 339 CE, Constantius issued a series of edicts banning intermarriage and other social relations between Christians and Jews. The edicts were couched in harshly abusive language, calling the Jews "savage" and "abominable". The edicts were based on a similar set of decrees which had already been adopted as church law by the council of Elvira in 306 CE under the leadership of Hosius, bishop of Cordova, later one of Constantine's main advisers on religious policy.

Rosemary Ruether in *Faith and Fratricide* shows how Christian church and Christian state worked together from this time onwards in an attempt to suppress Judaism completely. On page 189, she states: By the late fourth century, new types of laws began to be added which drastically reduced Jewish social standing. Jews were excluded from all civil and military rank and were gradually excluded from holding any type of public office. Later, they were also excluded from acting

as lawyers or judges. Their right to testify in court against Christians was also to be a subject of continual restrictions. This demotion of the Jew from all civic status in the imperial *cursum honorum* was summarized in the Theodosian Code by the principle that a Jew is not to hold any authority over a Christian.

These anti-Jewish laws were accompanied by a wave of mob violence against Jews openly instigated by Christian officials of both church and state.

Shmuel Safrai, in Ben-Sasson's *A History of the Jewish People*, shows that the church was often even more violent in its assault on the Jews than the state. On page 354, he states:

Characteristic of these and later times was an incident that occurred in 388. The bishop of a town on the bank of the Euphrates was among those responsible for the burning of a synagogue by a Christian crowd. The governor did not dare to punish the rioters and referred the matter to the emperor, who reprimanded him and ordered him to demand that the bishop build a new synagogue. At this stage, however, Ambrosius, the bishop of Milan and one of the leaders of the Church, intervened and forced the emperor to publicly withdraw his orders. This event occurred under Theodosius I, who was one of the strongest emperors. Around 430 CE, Theodosius I carried the campaign against the Jews one step further by abolishing the office of "Patriarch" of the Jews. Justinian in the 6th century and Heraclius in the 7th century CE further intensified the attack, which culminated in the decree issued around 630 CE by Heraclius formally banning Judaism everywhere in Byzantine territory.

The Christian campaign to stamp out Judaism led to a whole series of Jewish and Samaritan uprisings in Palestine during the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries of the Common Era. There was a Jewish uprising, centered in Galilee, in 351 CE, which was eventually suppressed by Roman troops under the command of Gallus, the nephew of Constantius. There were also Samaritan revolts in 484 and 529 CE, a combined Jewish and Samaritan uprising in 556 CE and another combined Jewish and Samaritan revolt in 578 CE. A Jewish outlaw band led by a man named Cyriacus remained active in Palestine after the suppression of the uprising of 578 CE and may have played a role in the liberation of Jerusalem in 614 CE. All of these uprisings were pro

voked by anti-Jewish measures on the part of the Byzantines, who openly proclaimed their intention of eliminating all traces of Jewish influence from the "Holy Land" .

The Jewish struggle for the restoration of Judah which developed in response to this campaign led directly to the rise of Islam and the Arab conquest of Palestine during the decade of the 630s CE. Not only did the Jewish liberation of Jerusalem in 614 CE help to inspire the rise of Islam, but even after Mohammed's break with the Jews, many Jews still continued to fight together with the Arabs against the Byzantines. Moreover, there is reason to believe that ex-Jews formed a large part of the Arab army which conquered Jerusalem from the Byzantines around 638 CE. In his *Islamic History*, Shaban points out that the bulk of the Muslim army which drove the Byzantines out of Palestine was composed of troops from Yemen. Goitein in *Jews and Arabs* notes that troops from Yemen formed the first Muslim garrison of Jerusalem. Many of them must have been ex-Jews, for a large part of the population of Yemen had been Jewish for hundreds of years prior to the time of Mohammed.

The extent to which the overthrow of Byzantine rule in the Middle East during the 630s of the Common Era was perceived at the time as a Jewish as well as Arab victory is brought out by Andrew Sharf in *Byzantine Jewry*. On page 52, Sharf cites an Armenian chronicle which describes how the Jews of Edessa, after being driven from the city by Heraclius in 628 CE, joined forces with the Arabs . As the ancient Armenian chronicle put it:

All the remnants of the children of Israel joined the Arabs to form a mighty army . They sent the Greek king the following dispatch: "God gave our father Abraham this land for an inheritance and, after him, to his offspring; as for us, we are the sons of Abraham; you have possessed our land long enough; depart from it peacefully; then we will not invade your land; otherwise we shall seize it from you by force ." Were not all the Middle Eastern "heresies" ultimately expressions of this same creed?

## Chapter Eight

### The Golden Age Of Judaism

In some accounts of Jewish history, the period from the rise of Islam to the time of the Crusades is called the "Golden Age" of Judaism. This same period is often called the "Dark Ages" in textbooks of European history. It was a period of roughly 450 years duration, from about 640 to 1090 CE. What made it "Golden" for the Jews yet "Dark" for the Europeans?

The dominant characteristic of this age for Jews and Europeans alike was the rapid growth in the power of Islam. After centuries of European rule of North Africa and the Middle East, suddenly the tide turned and the North Africans and Middle Easterners were in Spain and besieging Constantinople. In 846 CE, an Arab fleet sailed up the Tiber to the gates of Rome. While Muslim warships controlled the Mediterranean, Muslim armies ranged as far east as China, spreading Islam throughout Central Asia. The Europeans, long accustomed to invading others, were suddenly thrown back onto the defensive and forced to rely on their own resources. This, for them, was the 'Dark Ages'.

For the Jews, the rise of Islam was "Golden" because it brought relief from Christian persecution. In most Muslim countries during the "Golden Age" of Judaism, Jews had roughly the same status under law as Christians. Both Jews and Christians were called "dhimmis", meaning "protected", as opposed to outright "infidels", who were offered only Islam or the sword. The "dhimmis", both Jewish and Christian, were treated as autonomous communities headed by their own officials and responsible for collecting their own taxes and judging their own people according to their own law. They could not bear arms, ride on horseback or say anything against Islam; they were subject to special taxes not levied on Muslims. Towards the end of the "Golden Age" of Judaism, they were also subjected to an increasing number of humiliating restrictions on their clothing, homes

and places of worship. The "dhimmis" were openly treated as second-class citizens by the Muslims, yet as compared with the previous efforts of the Byzantines to eliminate Judaism altogether, achievement of "dhimmi" status represented an improvement for the Jews. Acceptance of "dhimmi" status by the Jews ushered in the "Golden Age" of Judaism. On the one hand, it freed the Jewish people from the constant fear of immediate destruction, leading to an era of increased material prosperity. On the other hand, it also weakened the traditional orientation of the Jewish people towards the restoration of Judah. So long as the Jews had been threatened with destruction by Christian persecution, the restoration of Judah continued to appear as an immediate and pressing goal. But from about 750 CE onwards, most Jews seem to have abandoned the hope of the revival of Judah in the near future and tried to make the best of their new status as "dhimmis" in a Muslim world. Acceptance of exile helped to usher in the "Golden Age", but it did not suffice to make it last.

## The Exilarch

Acceptance of exile came slowly and was never complete. For about 100 years after the Muslim conquest of Palestine, one Messianic movement after another arose among the Jews of the Middle East seeking to bring about the immediate restoration of Judah. The largest of these movements emerged in Iraq around 685 CE under the rule of the Caliph Abd al-Malik. It was led by Isaac Obadayah, a tailor from Isfahan in Iran. Obadayah took the name Abu Issa; he is also sometimes called al-Isfahani. He accepted the Muslim belief that "Jesus" and Mohammed were great prophets but insisted that the fulfillment of their mission was the restoration of Judah. He raised a large army of Jews with the intention of marching on Palestine but was defeated and killed by a larger Muslim force.

One of Obadayah's followers, Yudgan of Ramadan, built up a smaller movement, which was also defeated. Salo Baron, in Volume 5 of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, concludes that Iranian Jews formed the core of these movements, which continued for some time even after the defeat of Obadayah and Yudgan. In the early 700s CE, Mushka, a follower of Obadayah and Yudgan, was killed with 19 followers at Qumm. In *Byzantine Jewry*, Andrew Sharf shows that a Messianic sect based on the teachings of Obadayah, Yudgan

and Mushka maintained itself in Syria and Palestine until at least the 10th century CE. "It preached a militant, Palestinian-centered nationalism" Sharf states on page 63.

Sharf also describes other Jewish Messianic movements of this period. In 645 CE, a Jew named Pallughtha from Pumbeditha in Iraq led an unsuccessful uprising of Jewish "weavers, barbers and fullers" in the name of the Messiah. Around 720 CE in Syria, a Christian convert to Judaism named Serenus tried to raise a Jewish army to invade Palestine. He too was defeated. In Volume I of *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, on page 36, Eliyahu Ashtor describes how many Jews from Spain travelled all the way to Syria to join in this movement. These unsuccessful struggles for the restoration of Judah found an echo in literary form in the *Apocalypse of Rabbi Simeon ben Yo}wi*, dating from around 750 CE in Iraq. It predicted the revival of Judah in the near future by a "Messiah ben David". But by 750 CE, the active military struggle of Jews to restore Judah had pretty much come to an end.

Indicative of the shift in Jewish attitudes was the adoption of Arabic as the spoken language of Middle Eastern Jews, which Simon Dubnov, in Volume 2 of his *History of the Jews*, dates from around 800 CE. Aramaic, the spoken language of Middle Eastern Jews prior to this time, had also been the spoken language of Judah. The less the Jews themselves spoke Aramaic, the less real the restoration of Judah must have appeared to them. The decline of Jewish Messianism was part of the general decline of Aramaic as against Arabic language culture in the Middle East. The Jewish Messianists were well aware of this connection and made a point of preserving some knowledge of Aramaic as well as Hebrew even in later times.

Abandonment of Judah was symbolized after 750 CE in the rise to prominence of the Exilarch of the Jews. The Exilarchs belonged to the house of Bustanai, a family of Jews in Iraq claiming descent from the ancient kings of Judah, "with some justice" according to Baron, who calls them "the longest-lived dynasty in history". The house of Bustanai was the leading family of the Jewish community of Iraq, which by 750 CE was far larger and more powerful than what remained of the Jewish community of Palestine. Even in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, when there had still been a fairly large Jewish community in Palestine, the rabbis of Iraq had claimed almost equal authority to those of Palestine. Around 750 CE, the house of Bustanai

took the lead in an effort to revive the position of " Patriarch" of the Jews, abolished by the Byzantines around 430 CE, but now to be centered in Iraq rather than in Palestine.

This effort received the backing of the Abbasid Caliphs of Islam. Between 661 and 750 CE, the Arab empire was ruled by Caliphs of the Omayyad dynasty, which was descended from a family of the merchant oligarchy of Mecca which had originally opposed Mohammed and only converted to Islam under extreme duress. Following the Arab conquest of the Middle East, the Omayyads had established themselves in Syria, where they formed close ties with the Christians. In his History of Syria, Hitti points out that Mu'awiyah, the Omayyad governor of Syria and later Caliph, married a Jacobite Christian woman. His personal physician and court poet were also Christians. His son, Yazid, who succeeded him as Caliph in 680 CE, was raised by Christians . Christians still formed a large minority, possibly a majority in Syria at this time, and it was the policy of the Omayyad Caliphs to favor them over the Jews .

In 750 CE, the last Omayyad Caliph was overthrown by As-Saffah, "The Bloodletter", founder of the Abbasid dynasty of Caliphs.

The Abbasids were also descended from the Meccan merchant oligarchy but had their main base of support in Iran and Iraq rather than Syria. The Jews were much stronger than the Christians in Iran and Iraq, which had long been under Persian rule. It was therefore the policy of the Abbasid Caliphs, if not to favor the Jews, then at least to give them a more equal status with the Christians. Just as the Christians had their "Patriarchs" , so the Jews should have theirs. Under the Abbasid Caliphs , the "Exilarchs" of the house of Bustanai were officially recognized by the Muslims as the legitimate "princes" of the entire Jewish people. They were treated as of royal rank and married into the former ruling family of the Persian empire.

In return for this recognition , the Caliphs expected the Exilarchs to oppose any new attempt to restore Jewish rule in Palestine. The rise to prominence of the Exilarchs thus assumed Jewish acceptance of the status of "dhimmis" in a Muslim world. This was the real issue behind the emergence of the Karaite movement around 765 CE. At this time, Anan, a defeated candidate for the position of Exilarch, turned on the succeeding Exilarchs and began to accuse them of betraying Jewish tradition. He moved to Palestine and encouraged his followers to do likewise. Eventually Anan and his followers became known as

Karaites, meaning "Men of Scripture" . Anan and his successors as the leaders of the Karaite movement in Palestine called themselves "princes of the captivity", in contrast to the Exilarchs, whose name meant "princes of the exile".

On page 223 of volume 5 of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Salon Baron states:

By the beginning of the tenth century these Ananite "princes of captivity" had become so well entrenched in the Holy City that they could venture to cause the arrest and flagellation of the outstanding Rabbanite leader, Aaron Ben Meir. Jerusalem itself had by then become the world center of the new movement, and it was from there that its leader, David al-Qumisi, issued his memorable appeal for Jewish mass immigration to the ancestral land.

The Rabbanites were the followers of the rabbinical academies in Iraq, which generally supported the policies of the Exilarchs against those of the Karaite "princes of the captivity". The Karaites had few real differences with the Rabbanites on the level of religious practice. Their main criticism of the Rabbanites was that they had abandoned the hope of returning to Palestine, thus accepting their second-class status as "dhimmis". As al-Qumisi put it in his 10th century appeal for Jewish settlement in Palestine, cited on page 451 of Ben-Sasson 's *A History of the Jewish People*, "all Israel constantly pursue their profits and earnings . . . therefore they have forgotten Jerusalem" . But although the Karaite movement remained in existence right up to the 20th century, it lost most of its impetus towards settlement in Palestine after the time of the Crusades.

The great majority of Jews both in the Muslim world and beyond accepted the authority of the Exilarch and the Rabbanite academies in Iraq. The heads of the academies of Sura and Pumbeditha were called "Gaonim". They received innumerable letters and appeals from Jews as far away as Christian Europe asking them to judge fine points of Jewish legal doctrine. Their law code, the "Babylonian Talmud", was the one generally used by Jews throughout the world. Jewish and even Muslim and Christian scholars came to study at Sura and Pumbeditha from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Baghdad, the residence of the Exilarchs, was also the capital of the Muslim world under the Abbasids . The Exilarchs of Baghdad and the Gaonim of Sura

and Pumbeditha regarded themselves and were regarded by others as the unquestioned leaders of the entire Jewish people.

During the heyday of the Exilarchs, from about 750 to 950 CE, the Jewish people experienced a considerable improvement in its material situation. It was at this time that merchants, bankers and money lenders first began to play an important role in Jewish economic life. Yet while acceptance of "dhimmi" status strengthened the Jews in one way, it also weakened them in another. The less the Muslims feared the Jews as a military threat, the more contempt they showed for them. Starting around 950 CE, as the Muslims themselves began to come under increasing military pressure from the Christians, their attitude towards the Jews began to harden. In the long run, relaxation of the Jewish drive to restore Judah led only to renewed persecution of the Jews as hopeless losers by Muslims and Christians alike.

### Money Lenders

Jews first became merchants and money lenders on any scale during the "Golden Age" of Judaism. During the early centuries after the fall of Judah, most Jews in the Diaspora had been artisans, small traders or farmers. In many places, Jews first arrived as slaves. In The Jews of Ancient Rome, Harry Leon states on page 4: "According to Philo the nucleus of the Jewish community of Rome was made up chiefly of enslaved prisoners of war." On page 234, Leon notes: "Other references in the Roman writers indicate that the Jews of Rome were despised for their poverty and beggary rather than envied or hated for their wealth."

Starting around the 4th century CE, persecution of the Jews by the Byzantine Christians forced many of them to adopt dirty and unpopular trades that no one else wanted. A large number of the Jews in Constantinople were tanners, a trade requiring the constant use of strong and smelly dyes. In Italy and southern Europe, according to Israel Abrahams in Jewish Life in the Middle Ages on page 219, the tax on the Jews was called the "Tignta Judaeorum" because "it was levied as an impost on dyed goods". Many Jews also worked as dyers in the Muslim world, as shown by Leon Poliakov in Volume 2 of The History of Anti-Semitism. On page 48, Poliakov cites the 9th century Muslim writer Jahiz on the relative status of Jews and Christians in Baghdad. Jahiz reported that the Christians were regarded as of much

higher status than the Jews for various reasons, including the following:

Another cause for the admiration accorded by the masses to the Christians is the fact that they are secretaries and servants to kings, physicians to nobles, perfumers, and money changers, whereas the Jews are found to be but dyers, tanners, cuppers, butchers, and cobblers. But by the 10th century CE, the Arab traveller Moqadassi in Syria was writing, as cited by Poliakov on page 49: "Most of the bankers, the money changers, the dyers and the tanners are Jews; most of the doctors and officials are Christians. "

Jewish involvement in banking and money lending grew out of the emergence of a large and prosperous Jewish merchant class during the 8th and 9th centuries CE. The more money handled by Jewish merchants, the greater the need and the possibility for a special class of persons dealing primarily in money. The first bankers were money changers, people who specialized in weighing and valuing coins one against another. Loans at interest only gradually became an important part of banking. Taking interest on a loan was forbidden equally by Muslim, Christian and Jewish law. In time, bankers of all three groups found ways of first evading and then changing the law. Yet in *A Mediterranean Society*, a study of the mass of business documents dating in large part from the period 950-1250 CE discovered in modern times in the Geniza or storeroom of a synagogue in Old Cairo, S.D. Goitein states on page 258 of Volume I that "money-lending to Gentiles has found hardly any mention in the mass of private and business letters, court records, and accounts preserved in the Geniza". Most loans by Jewish bankers during this era were to other Jews at low interest. Money lending was not the source of Jewish wealth but only its ultimate symbol. Jewish banking in general was made possible only by the growth of the Jewish merchant class. Most writers on this subject have stressed the dispersion of the Jews as the main cause of the growth of Jewish commercial activity. No doubt the Diaspora was a major factor in the rise of Jewish commerce. It led to the emergence of an international trading network stretching eventually from Spain to Central Asia. But the Muslims and the Christians also had their international networks, nor were they at all averse to competing with the Jews as merchants, bankers and money lenders. Dispersion made

possible international Jewish business enterprise but by no means guaranteed it.

The key role in the rise of the Jewish merchant class was played by the rise of the Jewish skilled crafts . In the silk trade, Jews came to predominate in selling finished silk goods because they predominated in every phase of the industry, from the original cultivation of the silk worms to weaving the silk fabric to manufacturing the silk goods. Mark Wischnitzer in *A History of Jewish Crafts and Guilds* shows that silk culture was brought to Italy and southern France by the Jews , who had previously practiced it in Spain and Byzantine territory as well as throughout the Muslim world. Roger 2, a Norman ruler of Sicily, seized 2,000 Jewish silk workers at Thebes in Byzantine territory in 1147 CE and brought them to Palermo to establish a silk industry for him. In *A Mediterranean Society*, Goitein shows that the main item handled by Jewish merchants in Egypt at this time was silk.

In Spain, southern France, northern Italy and the Rhineland, Jews during this period were widely known for making wine as well as selling it. In *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*. Abrahams states on page 224:

The Jews took a very active part in the manufacture of wine everywhere. In Asia and southern Europe they owned mills and vineyards and the manufacture of wine was carried on by Jews in Germany and France when permitted.

Many vineyards in Europe which eventually became the property of Christians were started by Jews. In northern Arabia, as Itzhak BenZvi shows on page 143 of *The Exiled and the Redeemed*. Jews pioneered the development of agriculture, draining the marshes of Wadi al Kureh and Khaybar and introducing the cultivation of fruit trees. In Khaybar and Medina, the orchards of the Jews were seized by the Muslims. In Medina, originally called Yathrib, many Jews had been armorers; according to Wischnitzer in *A History of Jewish Crafts and Guilds*, their tools and weapons were seized by the Muslims and used to equip their armies.

Many examples of Jewish skilled crafts later appropriated by Muslims or Christians could be cited. Perhaps the most memorable is described on page 187 of Volume 2 of *The History of Anti-Semitism* by

Poliakov. He shows that the main accusation made against the "Marranos" or secret Jews during the Spanish Inquisition of the 15th and 16th centuries CE was that of cooking with olive oil instead of lard. It was on this evidence of adherence to Jewish law that thousands were burned to death at the stake. Yet within a century or two, the Christian Spaniards were themselves cooking with olive oil, with no thanks to the Jews.

The ultimate cause of the growing Jewish prosperity during the "Golden Age" of Judaism was the relative tolerance of the Jews shown by Muslim and Christian rulers, particularly during the period from about 750 to 950 CE. Jews during this period were still allowed to own land, making possible Jewish silk culture, wine growing and fruit orchards. In *A History of the Jewish People* on page 395, Haim BenSasson notes that Jews in the Muslim world at this time were not only tanners and dyers but also "blacksmiths, gold and silversmiths, harness-makers and shoemakers". Jews dressed much the same as their Muslim or Christian neighbors and mingled with them socially in many different situations. Jews did tend to concentrate in certain districts, but there were still no ghettos in the sense of a part of the city officially assigned to the Jews. Jews spoke the same language as their neighbors, whether Arabic, Persian, Ethiopian, Greek, Italian, French, German or Spanish, while retaining Hebrew as a written language spoken mainly during religious ceremonies. The majority of Jews at this time were probably artisans, with a considerable minority both of merchants and farmers and a small upper class of wealthy merchants, bankers and money lenders.

Towards the end of the "Golden Age" of Judaism, Jews began to come into prominence as bankers and money lenders for Muslim rulers. In *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Medieval Islam*, Walter Fischel sees the appointment of Joseph ben Phineas and Aaron ben Amran as "Court Bankers" for the Caliph al-Muqtadir around 912 CE as an important step in this direction. Fischel links the wealth of these bankers, whose main duty was to lend money to the Caliph, to Jewish trade and industry, particularly in the Iranian province of Ahwaz, which included the heavily Jewish city of Isfahan. Jews also functioned as bankers and money lenders for Muslim rulers in North Africa and Spain in the 10th and 11th centuries CE. These loans were usually given at low interest and were not always entirely voluntary. Yet despite the growth of Jewish commerce and banking during the

"Golden Age" of Judaism, Jews during this period were still generally regarded as occupying a low social status. The trade most frequently mentioned in connection with Jews both in Byzantine and Muslim lands was that of tanner and dyer. After silk and linen, "dyeing and varnishing stuffs" formed the third most common item handled by the Jewish merchants in Egypt. Wi schnitzer states that Jews were classified among the poorest category of tax-payers by Muslim officials. It was only towards the end of the "Golden Age" that some Jews began to be perceived as rich, and this perception was a major cause of the growing persecution of the Jews by Muslims and Christians alike, which soon brought the "Golden Age" of Judaism to an end.

### The Khazars

An important factor in the toleration shown the Jews during this period was the existence of a large and powerful Jewish kingdom in southern Russia. Although little mentioned by historians of the "Dark Ages", most of southern Russia was ruled from about 750 to 950 CE by Turkish nomads called Khazars, whose king and nobility had converted to Judaism around 740 CE. The Khazar army numbered many hundreds of thousands of men. In The History of the Jewish Khazars. D.M. Dunlop states on page 70 that 300,000 Khazar troops took part in the defeat of an Arab army near Ardabil in Azerbaijan in 730 CE. During the 9th and 10th centuries CE, the Khazars ruled over a large territory embracing the entire region from the Caspian to the Black Seas. Their capital, Itil, was located on the Volga river, not far from the site of the later city of Stalingrad.

The Khazars first arrived in southern Russia in the 5th or 6th century CE. They were of Turkish origin, closely related to the Magyars and Bulgars who began to enter the Balkan region in Europe around this same time. But whereas the Magyars and Bulgars became Christians, the Khazars became Jews. According to legend, the king of the Khazars invited a Christian, a Muslim and a Jew to dispute before him the merits of their respective religions. He saw that both the Christian and the Muslim preferred Judaism over each other's religion, and so he decided to become a Jew. Dunlop doubts whether the legendary debate ever took place . Yet there was an intense rivalry

between Christians and Muslims at this time, which must have played some role in the decision of the Khazars to become Jews.

Khazar territory in southern Russia bordered on both the Byzantine and Arab empires. Dunlop shows that when the Khazars first arrived in this region, they allied themselves with the Byzantines against the Arabs. The Khazars and Arabs fought many bloody battles over control of Armenia and the Caucasus. Khazar relations with the Byzantines were better, but the Khazars were not sufficiently in awe of the Greeks to wish to become Christians. Yet at the same time, the Khazars were former nomads who had become the rulers of a large kingdom and felt the need for some kind of monarchical ideology such as Christianity or Islam to consolidate their rule. They must have seen Judaism when they converted to it as a monarchical ideology of equal or greater rank to Islam and Christianity.

By 800 CE, the Khazars were in regular contact with Jews in the Muslim and Christian worlds. They were aware when persecutions of Jews elsewhere took place and took steps to help bring these persecutions to an end. In Byzantine Jewry, Sharf describes how the Byzantine Caesar Romanus ordered the forced conversion of all Jews to Christianity in 932 CE. Many Byzantine Jews fled to Khazar territory, and the Khazars, in retaliation, "slew many of the uncircumcised". Knowledge of the existence of an army of up to 300,000 men under Jewish command must have influenced more than one Christian or Muslim ruler in the direction of greater toleration of Jews. The Khazar Jews accepted the authority of the rabbinical academies of Iraq and Jewish law and considered themselves "orthodox" Jews from about 800 CE onwards.

The Khazar kingdom also played a role in the development of international Jewish commercial activity. Itil, situated on the Volga near the point where it flows into the Caspian Sea, was a cosmopolitan center attracting merchants from many parts of Central Asia. Arab travellers in Khazaria reported meeting many Muslims, Christians and "pagans", meaning followers of ancient tribal beliefs, as well as Jews. But Jews formed the largest group, nor were all of them recent converts. In *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, Ben-Zvi shows that well into the 20th century, there were perhaps 35,000 Jews living in mountain villages in the Caucasus region and speaking Georgian, Persian or Turkish dialects. Ben-Zvi states on page 50:

Jewish penetration into Armenia and Georgia came mainly from the Parthian-Jewish kingdom of Adiabene, whose King Monobaz and Queen Helena adopted the Jewish faith in the days of the Second Commonwealth.

Armenia and Georgia formed an important part of the Khazar kingdom. The fact that Judaism had been established in the Caucasus since at least the 1st century BCE may have played a role in the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism.

The overthrow of the Khazar kingdom by the Russians of Kiev after 950 CE was a major reason for the rapid decline in Jewish status which took place after this time. Dunlop dates the fall of the Khazars from the sack of Itil by the Kievan Russians, which he believes took place around 965 CE. Kiev had originally formed part of Khazar territory but was occupied by the Russians in 878 CE. The Russians of Kiev built up a large army and during the second half of the 10th century occupied most of the former territory of the Khazars. By about 1000 CE, the Khazar kingdom had been overthrown, and its disappearance was immediately reflected in increased persecution of Jews everywhere, culminating in the outbreak of mass murders of Jews set off by the first Crusade in 1096 CE.

There is some indication that the Khazar kingdom was the original model for the later Turkish empire. The Khazars were the first Turkish nomads to rule over a large kingdom bordering on Christian and Muslim lands. Their successors were the Seljuk Turks, who gained control of a large part of Turkey during the 11th century CE. The Seljuk Turks were nomads who first established themselves south of the Caspian Sea and then invaded Turkey. In *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, Tamara Rice shows that Seljuk was a Jew. He was the son of Tuquq or Timuryalik (Iron Bow), a general in the Khazar army. After the death of Tuquq, Seljuk and his followers moved south into Muslim territory. Seljuk was still a Jew at this time, as is shown by the fact that he named one of his sons Israel.

During the generation of the grandchildren of Seljuk, the Seljuk Turks, who were now ruling over Muslims, converted to Islam. Under Tugrul Beg (The Falcon) starting around 1030 CE, they began to move into Turkey, occupying the greater part of the country after defeating the Byzantines at the battle of Manzikert in 1071 CE. The Seljuks were merely the ruling family of a large kingdom dominated

by Turkish nomads who had converted to Islam. But the fact that the legendary founder of the ruling dynasty had been a Khazar and a Jew could not have been entirely without significance. The ambition of the Seljuks was to rule over a kingdom similar in size and prestige to that formerly ruled by the Khazars. The later empire of the Ottoman Turks was in turn founded on that of the Seljuks, and although it did not claim Jewish descent, it did welcome Jewish refugees from Christian persecution throughout its history.

Echoes of the Khazar kingdom may also be found in the later history of the Jews of Eastern Europe. The king of the Khazars was called a Khagan, a title that was also used by other Turkish nomads. Kagan or Cagan is a common last name among Eastern European Jews. The Soviet Minister of Heavy Industry under Stalin was a Jew named Kaganovich, "son of the Khagan". In *The Thirteenth Tribe*. Arthur Koestler argues that the majority of Eastern European Jews were of Khazar descent. Koestler's theory is not very plausible since if it were true, the Eastern European Jews would not have been primarily Yiddish-speaking. But many Jews later living in southern Russia were undoubtedly of Khazar descent. In *The Exiled and the Redeemed*. Ben-Zvi suggests that a large Karaite community in the Crimea may have originated from the Khazars.

Memories of the Khazar kingdom were still fresh among Jews in 1135 CE when Judah Halevi in Spain wrote *The Kuzari*. It is an imaginary dialogue in which a Jewish spokesman convinces the Khazar king of the superiority of Judaism over Christianity and Islam.

*The Kuzari* is the last literary reminder of an era in which Judaism could still compete with Christianity and Islam on something like equal terms. Khazar recognition gave Judaism the backing of a military power second to none in its time. There was undoubtedly a connection between the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism, which took place around 740 CE, and the recognition of the Exilarchs of Baghdad by the Caliph around 750 CE. In 730 CE, Khazar armies had penetrated into Iraq as far south as Mosul, only a short distance from Baghdad. Without the Khazars, the "Golden Age" of Judaism would not have been possible.

## The Fatimids

The "Golden Age" of Judaism reached its height during the 10th century CE. Judaism at this time enjoyed a legal status almost every

where and was the official religion of the Khazar kingdom. The persecution of Jews in the Byzantine empire by Caesar Romanus, checked by Khazar retaliation, was finally brought to an end around 945 CE by the intervention of Hasdai ibn Shaprut, the Jewish chief minister of the Muslim ruler of Spain, Abd al-Rahman 3. Hasdai ibn Shaprut was a major figure in the large and powerful Jewish community of Spain. He was in regular correspondence with the great heads of state of his day, including the Khazar king, and his intervention with the Byzantines seems to have resulted in the lifting of the decree of 932 CE of Romanus ordering the forced conversion of Byzantine Jews to Christianity.

In other Christian countries, Jews at this time occupied a position far different from what it was to become after the start of the Crusades. In A Jewish Princedom in Feudal France, 768-900, Arthur Zuckerman shows that Jews in southern France during the "Dark Ages" enjoyed almost complete self-government under their own "prince" or "king". Zuckerman believes that Natronai ben Habibai, a member of the house of Bustanai from Iraq, was brought to Narbonne in 768 CE to be crowned "prince" of a large Jewish territory in southern France. In 791 CE, the independence of the Jewish kingdom of Narbonne was confirmed by decree of the king of the Franks, Charlemagne. Narbonne was ruled by Jewish "princes" until 918 CE and Jews continued to own much land in this region until shortly before the start of the Crusades.

During the 10th century CE, there also took place a definite strengthening in the Jewish position in Palestine. Around 970 CE. Palestine came under the rule of the Fatimid dynasty of North Africa and Egypt. The chief minister of the Fatimids at this time was a former Jew who had converted to Islam named Yaqub ibn Killis. Yaqub ibn Killis became the Grand Vizier of the Fatimid empire in 977 CE and retained the position until his death in 991 CE. Jews occupied key positions on many levels of the Fatimid administration, leading to an increase in Jewish influence in Palestine after it came under Fatimid rule. On page 62 of Volume 2 of The History of Anti-Semitism. Poliakov notes that the Fatimids set aside a regular portion of their budget for the upkeep of the rabbinical academy of Jerusalem. The Fatimids were Shi'ites, meaning "partisans" of Ali. Ali, an early follower of Mohammed, was the great rival of the Omayyads for the position of Caliph until his death in 661 CE. The Shi'ites up

held the claims of Ali's descendants, of whom there were many, to the title of Caliph . From the start, the Shi'ites seem to have been much more Jewish identified than the followers of the Omayyads. In *The Shi'ite Religion*, Dwight Donaldson points out that the first major Shi'ite prophet was a former Jew named Abdallah ibn Saba. It was ibn Saba who developed the Shi' ite doctrine of the " hidden Imam " . He declared that the " Divine Spirit" had passed from Mohammed to Ali and would continue to pass to Ali 's descendants. In each generation, the Shi'ites came to believe, there would be a "hidden Imam", the recipient of the spirit of Mohammed and Ali .

There are many indications that ex-Jews formed a substantial proportion of Ali 's followers. In *The Jewish Mind*, Raphael Patai points out on page 100 that most of the Jews expelled from northern Arabia after the rise of Islam settled in Kufa in Iraq. Kufa was a Muslim garrison town; it was Ali's main base of support. Salo Baron, on page 180 of Volume 5 of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, states: "Jewish refugees from Khaibar, established in the military camp of Kufa, greatly contributed to the rise of the Kharijite and other Muslim sects." The Kharijites were ultra-Shi ' ites, who broke with Ali after he began to vacillate in his struggle with the Omayyads. All the early centers of Shi'ite influence, not only Iraq but also Medina and Yemen, had formerly been major centers of Jewish influence. Shi' ism was perceived as a Judaizing tendency by the Omayyads , who made a big point of the Jewish origins of Abdallah ibn Saba in their polemics against him.

In 910 CE, Ubaidalla Sa'id, the "hidden Imam" of a North African Shi'ite sect, the Ismailis, became the ruler of a small state in eastern Tunisia. He took the title of Mahdi , meaning that he had revealed himself as Imam. His descendants were called Fatimids, after the name of Fatima, Mohammed's daughter and Ali's wife. All the "hidden Imams" stressed their descent from Fatima since this made them descendants of Mohammed as well. In 969 CE, Egypt fell to the armies of the Fatimid ruler al-Mu' izz, who by this time was claiming the title of Caliph. Berbers occupied a prominent position in the Fatimid annies , suggesting that the Shi' ite movement in North Africa was led by Berber converts to Islam. Many of the Berber Shi' ites were undoubtedly descendants of the Berber Jews who had been forcibly converted to Islam around 700 CE.

The rise to power of the Fatimids was part of a general trend to

wards increased Shi'ite influence in the Muslim world. The Shi'ites had played an important role in the overthrow of the Omayyads around 750 CE, but the Abbasids persecuted them almost as much as the Omayyads had done. Nonetheless the Shi'ites gained ground, coming to power in part of Yemen in 893 CE under Yahya al-Hadi, leader of the Zaidi sect of Shi'ites. In the 10th century, Yemen came under Fatimid rule. For a time, the Fatimids also held the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and much of Syria. During the 10th century CE, it seemed that the Fatimid Caliphs might succeed in gaining general recognition as the legitimate Caliphs of Islam. They were at first even more inclined to cooperate with the Jews than the Abbasid Caliphs, and with Palestine in their hands, anything was possible.

Jacob Mann in *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine Under the Fatimid Caliphs* brings out many examples of cooperation between the Jews and the early Fatimid Caliphs. He notes that al-Mu'izz, the first Fatimid Caliph in Egypt, was particularly favorable both to the Jews and the Samaritans. It was al-Mu'izz who elevated the ex-Jew ibn Killis to the position of Grand Vizier of the Fatimid empire. After the death of ibn Killis in 991 CE, Menasse b. Ibrahim became the leading Jewish official of the Fatimids. According to Jewish sources cited by Mann, his authority extended to Damascus, Aleppo, Tyre, Sidon and Ramlah. He was long remembered by Jews in this region for his support and encouragement. Also known under the name of Ibn alKzaz, Menasse b. Ibrahim was the deputy Vizier of the Fatimid empire till around 1000 CE.

Yet even as the height of the "Golden Age" of Judaism was reached, it slipped away. The Fatimids came to power in Egypt and Palestine at almost exactly the same moment as the Khazars were being overthrown by the Russians of Kiev. Although Jews still occupied positions of prestige and influence well into the 11th century, the rise of the Fatimids coincided with the start of a decline in the position of Jews in most areas. The Jews had come too close to succeeding to be tolerated any longer. By the 11th century, even the Fatimids began to turn away from them. Around 1006 CE, the Fatimid Caliph alHakim launched a campaign aimed at the forced conversion of both Jews and Christians to Islam. Cruel and humiliating restrictions were placed on the "dhimmis". These measures were relaxed somewhat after al-Hakim was assassinated in 1021 CE, but they were never completely reversed. Attacks on Jews everywhere became increasingly

common during the 11 th century CE, ending with the massive outbreak of anti-Jewish violence sparked by the first Crusade in 1096 CE.

The changing status of Jews in the 11 th century CE, still powerful but under heavy attack, can be seen clearly in Spain, home of the largest Jewish community in Europe at that time. In the 10th century, Hasdai ibn Shaprut had openly used his position as chief minister for the Muslim Caliph of Spain, Abd ar-Rahman 3, to advance Jewish interests around the Mediterranean region. Samuel ibn Nagrela, the leader of the Jewish community of Granada, became the chief minister for the Muslim rulers of Granada in the 11 th century CE. But there was considerable Muslim opposition to his authority, and after his death in 1058 CE, many Muslims protested violently against the appointment of his son, Joseph ibn Nagrela, to succeed him. In 1066 CE, Joseph ibn Nagrela was crucified by a Muslim mob in Granada; many other Jews were also killed at this time.

In *Islam in History*, Bernard Lewis reprints a poem by an 11 th century Muslim jurist in Granada attacking the appointment of Jewish ministers by the Muslim rulers of Granada. On page 160, the poet, named Abu Ishaq, expressed his outrage at the king's toleration of the Jews:

Oh why did he not deal with them, following  
the example set by worthy and pious leaders?

Put them back where they belong  
and reduce them to the lowest of the low,  
Roaming among us, with their little bags,  
with contempt, degradation, and scorn their lot,  
Scrabbling in the dunghills for colored rags  
to shroud their dead for burial.

Addressing the king, the poet exclaimed:

Turn your eyes to other countries  
and you will find the Jews there are outcast dogs.  
Why should you alone be different and bring them near  
when in all the land they are kept afar?

Poetry of this kind did much to create the climate which resulted in the crucifixion of Joseph ibn Nagrela in Granada in 1066 CE. It was

at this time , during the decade of the 1060s CE, that Count Raymond of Toulouse and Archbishop Guifred of Narbonne obtained the approval of the king of France for their plan to expropriate the lands of the Jews of Narbonne. The "Golden Age" of Judaism was over.

## The Dark Ages

In textbooks of European history. the " Dark Ages" are pictured as a time of trouble and confusion. We are told that trade fell off, cities declined, nomadic invaders ravaged the land. Yet trade and cities and culture did exist in Europe all through the "Dark Ages". It was only in contrast to the previous period of European domination that the "Dark Ages" marked a decline. During the era of Muslim domination, Christian merchants still played an important part in the commercial economy of the Mediterranean region . Christianity was a powerful force during this period, but not a dominant one. It was the loss of dominance which the Europeans experienced as unbearable. and which finally drove them to the Crusades.

As experienced by the Jews, the "Dark Ages" was a time of relative peace and prosperity. Judaism enjoyed a status, if not equal to that of Christianity and Islam, then at least competitive with them. In 838 CE, Bodo, the religious adviser to the Frankish king Louis the Pious, converted from Christianity to Judaism, took the name of Eleazar and fled to the Jewish community in Spain. Many other Christian and Muslim clerics studied at this time at Jewish rabbinical academies. For their part, as Raphael Patai shows in *The Jewish Mind*, the Jewish poets and philosophers of Muslim Spain were steeped in Arabic culture. For those who were open to it, the "Dark Ages" was a time of great intellectual ferment, in which Judaism, Christianity and Islam exerted considerable reciprocal influence on one another.

The " Dark Ages" only became a " Golden Age" for the Jews in retrospect. During the long centuries after the start of the Crusades. the Jews looked back to the "Dark Ages" as the last time during which they had enjoyed something like a normal status in the world. The institutions and values of this era became a standard by means of which the Jews of later times could judge how far they had fallen. But the Jews of the " Dark Ages" were themselves fallen from the position

## The Golden Age of Judaism

formerly held by the Jews of Judah. Their struggle to survive was no less difficult than that of the Christians or Muslims. They did not think that they lived in a "Golden Age" but in a fallen age. Little did they know what lay ahead.

## Chapter Nine

### The Poor Jews

Jews are often associated with money. This association dates from the time of the "Golden Age" of Judaism . It became established during the " Middle Ages" in Europe as Jews came to be widely known as money lenders. During the 19th century, with the emergence of the Jewish Rothschilds as symbols of "high finance", belief in Jewish wealth became an article of faith for many. Karl Marx did much to spread this belief with his essay, On The Jewish Question, in which he maintained that the essence of Judaism was love of money. Many other statements to this same effect could be cited. Jews are still associated with money today and have been for about 1,000 years. Obviously the association of Jews and money must have some basis in fact. No doubt there have been many Jewish bankers , money lenders and wealthy merchants over the centuries. Yet it is strange that Jews are so widely associated with money when so many have been so poor. At the very time that Karl Marx wrote On The Jewish Question, most Jews were living under conditions of extreme poverty in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. Marx himself came from a fairly well to do Jewish family in Germany, but the middle class Jews that Marx knew were only a small part of the Jewish people of his day. Most Jews in Marx's time were poor, but Marx did not care to see them.

The myth of the rich Jews is founded on the invisibility of the poor Jews. This myth evolved during the "Middle Ages" in Europe, a time of widespread persecution and massacre of Jews, and served from the start as a pretext for persecution. To relieve their mind of any tendency to dwell on the sufferings of their Jewish victims, the European persecutors of the Jews and their later imitators around the world developed a tradition of stressing the great wealth of the Jews. This tradition always had a certain basis in fact, and yet it was still a myth because it grossly distorted the real situation of the Jewish people.

Even if some Jews were rich, still the great majority of Jews over the past 1,000 years have been very poor. Moreover, it was the deliberate intent of those who called them rich to keep them poor.

## The Ghetto

The main cause of Jewish poverty during the past 1,000 years has been the persecution to which Jews have been subjected during this period. Beginning with the start of the first Crusade in 1096 CE, there is hardly a century that has passed without mass murders of Jews in some part of Europe. Jews were murdered in the hundreds of thousands in Spain, France, England and Germany all through the "Middle Ages". In the 17th century, many hundreds of thousands of Jews, perhaps a third of the total Jewish population of Poland, were murdered by Ukrainian Cossacks. In the 20th century, 6 million Jews, a large part of the Jewish population of Europe, were murdered by the Nazis and their allies.

The first mass murders of Jews in Europe since Roman times were carried out by Christian Crusaders in the Rhineland in 1096 CE. The murderers wore crosses sewed to their clothing and demanded that the Jews convert to Christianity on the spot or be killed. For many centuries thereafter, virtually every Crusade launched by the Christian Europeans against the Muslims was accompanied by some kind of mob violence against the Jews. Christian priests and officials from the Pope on down played a prominent role in this campaign of mass murder, which was originally touched off by a speech of Pope Urban 2 to the Crusaders assembled at Clermont in France in 1095 CE. In *The Jews and The Crusaders*, edited by Shlomo Eidelberg, appear several contemporary Jewish chronicles of the first and second Crusades. The chronicle of Solomon bar Simson shows how the first Crusade appeared to the Jews at that time. The following passage appears on page 26 of *The Jews and The Crusaders*:

And Satan-the Pope of evil Rome-also came and proclaimed to all the nations believing in that stock of adultery-these are the stock of Seir-that they should assemble and ascend to Jerusalem so as to conquer the city, and journey to the tomb of the superstition whom they call their god. Satan came and mingled with the nations, and they gathered as one man to fulfill the command, coming in great numbers

like the grains of sand upon the seashore, the noise of them clamorous as a whirlwind and a storm. When the drops of the bucket had assembled, they took evil counsel against the people of the Lord and said:

"Why should we concern ourselves with going to war against the Ishmaelites dwelling about Jerusalem, when in our midst is a people who disrespect our god-indeed, their ancestors are those who crucified him.

Why should we let them live and tolerate their dwelling among us? Let us commence by using our swords against them and then proceed upon our stray path ."

The Crusaders killed 800 Jews in Worms; they were all buried naked. In Mainz, 1, 100 died in the bishop's courtyard where they had come to take refuge. The "Middle Ages" had begun.

These attacks affected the position of the Jewish people not only in the Christian world but also in the Muslim. Seeing the Jews so despised and victimized by the Christians, the Muslims too began to adopt a much more repressive attitude. In Volume 2 of *A Mediterranean Society*, on page 287, Goitein cites the following description.

from a contemporary Jewish source, of the persecution of Jews that began in 1121 CE in Baghdad:

The vizier decreed that they should wear two yellow badges, one on the headgear and one on the neck . Furthermore each Jew should have hanging on his neck a piece of lead weighing one dirhem on which the word dhimmi was engraved. He should also wear a belt around his waist.

On the women two distinctive signs were imposed. They should wear one red and one black shoe and have a small brass bell on their necks or shoes in order to distinguish them from Muslim women. The vizier appointed brutal Muslim men to supervise the Jewish males and brutal Muslim women to watch over the females and to harm them with curses and humiliations. The Muslims were mocking the Jews , and the mob and their youngsters were beating them up in all the streets of Baghdad. A Messianic movement arose among the Jews of Baghdad in response to these attacks. In fact, as Raphael Patai notes on page 155 of *The Messiah Texts*. there were at least 9 separate Messianic movements in various parts of the Jewish world between 1087 and 1172 CE, the period of the first and second Crusades .

By the late 13th century, primarily as a result of the Crusades, the Jewish community in Palestine had been almost wiped out. Abrahams

in *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* on page 219 cites the Jewish writer Nachmanides, who visited Jerusalem towards the end of the 13th century CE and could find but one Jewish home, that of a dyer:

At his house gather great and small, when they can get Minyan. They are wretched folk, without occupation and trade, consisting of a few pilgrims and beggars, though the fruit of the land is still magnificent and the harvests rich.

Most of the edifice of Jewish legal authority which had been built up by the rabbinical academies of Iraq and Palestine during the "Golden Age" of Judaism was also destroyed. There was no longer an Exilarch, or a Sanhedrin, or any generally recognized center of Jewish legal authority anywhere in the world.

During the course of the 12th and 13th centuries CE, as attacks on Jews multiplied everywhere, the Roman Catholic church instituted the ghetto system. The main step in this direction was taken at the fourth Lateran council of the church in 1215 CE under the papacy of Innocent 3. Innocent was a fanatical anti-Semite who openly proclaimed his desire to torture the Jews. In Volume 3 of his *History of the Jews* on page 23, Simon Dubnov cites a letter written by Innocent 3 in 1208 CE in which he stated:

The Jews are condemned just like the fratricidal Cain, to roam the earth like fugitives and wanderers; and their faces have to be covered with shame. Christian rulers should not protect them under any circumstances, but should rather reduce them to slavery.

The intent of the fourth Lateran council was to do just this. Jews were required to wear different clothing from everyone else, were barred from holding public office and subjected to numerous restrictions on their actions. As the "Middle Ages" continued, the Roman Catholic church evolved a whole body of legislation, all directed against the Jews and tending to segregate them in ghettos under conditions of great poverty.

A major point of the ghetto system was to impoverish the Jews.

By decree of the Roman Catholic church, European Jews during the "Middle Ages" and well into the 19th century were forbidden to own land, join a guild, follow a profession or live outside the ghetto. The

gates of the ghetto were guarded by Christian soldiers and locked at night. There were so many regulations against contact between Christians and Jews as to make it very difficult for the Jews to earn a living.

The only Jewish economic activity which the Roman Catholic church generally tolerated was money lending. In many areas, money lenders were the only Jews that the Christians ever saw. The poor Jews, who were the great majority, were either barred completely or kept invisible behind ghetto walls.

Around 1700, while the ghetto system was still in full force, an Italian doctor named Bernardino Ramazzini wrote a treatise on the diseases suffered by artisans. In a passage cited on page 147 of *A History of Jewish Crafts and Guilds* by Mark Wischnitzer, Ramazzini spoke of the health problems of Jewish artisans:

Nearly all Jews, especially the lower classes, to which most of them belong, are employed in work at which they must sit or stand. They are mostly given to sewing and furbishing up old clothes; the women, above all, whether married or single, make their living by needlework . . . Hence they incur all the disorders due to a sedentary life and moreover, in the course of time, they suffer from serious weakness of vision; by the time they are forty they are purblind or very short-sighted. Besides, in most cities the Jews live miserably, shut up in narrow alleys, and their women at all seasons stand during their work by open windows to get what light there is; this causes them to incur various afflictions of the head, such as headache, earache, toothache, cold, sore throats, and sore eyes. Many of them, especially of the poorer class, are hard of hearing and blear-eyed.

This picture of half-blind women hunched over their sewing is at sharp variance with the images of wealthy merchants and money lenders which fill most treatments of the history of the Jews in Europe. The merchants and money lenders existed, but most Jews in the ghetto were very poor.

The whole point of the ghetto system was to reduce the Jews to such conditions of degradation and misery that they would be forced to become Christians. When the Jews nonetheless failed to convert, the Christians consoled themselves with the thought that at least the misery of the Jews proved the superiority of Christianity. On page 39 of Volume 3 of *The History of Anti-Semitism*, Poliakov cites a Catholic writer of the late 18th century, G.B. Roberti, who stated that "one

ghetto of Jews is better proof of the truth of the religion of Jesus Christ than a school of theologians" .

In A History of the Jewish People, on page 567, Haim Ben-Sasson cites the following description, from a 15th century Jewish writer named Obadiah of Bertinoro, of the ghetto of Palermo:

Palermo . . . has about eight hundred and fifty Jewish householders all gathered in one street, very well situated. And they. . . are poor craftsmen of different kinds, copper and iron smiths and porters and men engaged in all kinds of heavy work. They are despised by the gentiles, being all ragged and filthy. And they must wear a red cloth as broad as a gold piece on their hearts as a sign.

On page 612, Ben-Sasson cites another 15th century Jewish writer, Abraham Bivach in Spain, who stated:

The Jewish nation stands among the nations like the intellect among the elements of the soul, and as this intellectual element cannot establish its superiority over them , likewise the Jewish people is in poverty and degradation , among the other nations .

This was another way of saying that the Jews were poor because they would not become Christians.

In the ghetto of Rome, which was under the direct personal supervision of the Popes, most Jews were "ragpickers" . They emerged from the ghetto during the day to hunt through the streets for rags, which they then sewed together and refurbished to make old clothes for sale. Hunting for rags and sewing them together to sell as old clothes was the most common occupation of Jews in a large part of Europe for many centuries. On page 196 of Volume 1 of The History of Anti-Semitism, Poliakov notes that in France, professional rag-pickers were called " Jews" for many centuries after all Jews had been expelled from France in the 14th century. The rag-pickers guild in Paris eventually lodged an official protest against this usage, which was based on a widespread association between Jews and hunting for rags.

In Western Europe, the ghetto system was abolished during the 19th century, but in Eastern Europe it remained in existence right up to the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917. In A History of Zionism, Walter Laqueur describes an official American report on the Jewish ghettos of Russia issued in 1892:

In the early 1890s the American government sent two emissaries to Europe to investigate the reasons for the sudden rise in immigration to the United States. Messrs. Weber and Kempster were not professional do-gooders but hard-boiled immigration officers; in their report, published in 1892, they declared flatly that they had never seen such incredible conditions of poverty and misery in their lives, nor did they ever hope to witness them again. The majority of Russian Jews lived in conditions even worse than the poorest Russian peasants and workers. Many families were crammed into one small house, infant mortality was high, and labour productivity low. If the breadwinner fell ill this usually spelt doom for the whole family. Even antisemitic Russian newspapers admitted that the bulk of Russian Jewry was exposed to slow death by starvation.

These conditions were created by the deliberate policy of the Czarist government, which crammed the Jews into a relatively small area and then tried to deny them all means of earning a living.

By the end of the "Middle Ages", Jews in the Muslim world had also been reduced to a ghetto-like existence. In *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, Jacob Landau cites the following description of the Jewish quarter of Cairo written by a visiting Jewish journalist around 1920:

Our people are crowded and clustered into houses about to collapse, in dark cellars, narrow alleys and crooked lanes choked with mud and stinking refuse, earning their meagre living in dark shops and suffocating workshops, toiling back to back, sunscorched and sleepless. Their hard struggle for existence both inside and outside the home is rewarded by a few beans and black bread.

Conditions in the Jewish quarters of Morocco, called "mellahs", were even worse. On page 124 of *Between East and West*, Chouraqui cites a description of a mellah in Morocco by Pascal Saisset:

The houses are leprous, the ground is muddy, the filth in the dark and narrow lanes is repulsive. Long lines of beggars fill the streets, assailing the passers-by with their wailing, displaying their clothes in shreds, their sores covered in vermin, or asleep dressed in their tom burnouses in the dust and refuse which have accumulated alongside the houses.

Even Karl Marx was aware of the misery of the Jews in the Muslim world, stating in an article for the New York Tribune in 1854 that "nothing equals the misery and the sufferings of the Jews at Jerusalem", who are "the constant objects of Mussulman oppression and intolerance". The article is cited by Saul Padover on page 170 of the unabridged edition of Karl Marx: An Intimate Biography.

Joseph Schechtman, in *On Wings of Eagles: The Plight, Exodus, and Homecoming of Oriental Jewry*, shows that oppression of Jews was general throughout the Muslim world. On page 41, Schechtman describes the conditions under which Jews lived in Yemen right into the 20th century:

Meeting a Moslem in the street a Jew had to salute him and inquire about his "exalted health". Jews were not permitted to walk on the same side of the street as the Moslems or to touch food to be used by Moslems; not permitted to wear colored clothes (only black or darkblue smocks that leave the legs bare), or shoes; not permitted to stir from the ghetto at night or to have any lights on the streets of the Jewish quarter. A Jew was prohibited from entering a public bath except to stir the fires of the Arabs' bathhouses—a duty usually imposed on Jews. He could be called from the synagogue on his most holy day and ordered to perform the most degrading task, for which he would not be paid. A particularly degrading practice was the obligation of the Jewish community of San'a to clean the city latrines.

And on page 241, Schechtman provides the following description of the Jewish community of Teheran in Iran in the 20th century:

But the overwhelming majority live in utter poverty. Their main occupation is in petty trade, dealing in carpets, textiles, antiques and luxuries.

They rank from the peddler, who goes from house to house, from town to town, up to the shopkeeper operating stalls in the bazaar. Jews are also engaged in all kinds of handicraft: they are coppersmiths, shoemakers, joiners, tailors, weavers, and manufacturers of hosiery. Almost all of them live in the Mahal al-Juhad, the ghetto, and form a pathetic unity of misery, illness and superstition. Their lodgings are narrow, dark, overcrowded and lacking sunlight and air. Carpets take the place of chairs and tables; fingers and hands are used rather than knives and forks. In 1945, of the 25,000 Teheran Jews, at least 12,000 had to be supported by the community.

In Isfahan at this same time, Schechtman adds on page 242, " A recent survey of 960 Jewish families found 700 so poor that they are barely able to meet the most primitive necessities; 50 families were occupationally classified as 'scavengers' ."

## Torture

From the time of the Crusades onwards, treatment of the Jews in the Muslim and even more in the Christian world was characterized by a maliciousness almost beyond belief. Neither the Muslims nor the Christians were content simply to murder the Jews and reduce the survivors to conditions of terrible poverty . They felt a strange need to humiliate the Jews, to turn them into objects of ridicule and scorn, to torture them in every conceivable way. In *The Pope's Jews*, starting on page 138, Sam Waagenaar describes how the Jews in Rome were tortured during the Roman " carnival", usually held in February. From 1466 to 1667, a group of Jews was forced each year to eat a heavy meal and then run, nearly naked, between crowds of jeering people , pursued by riders on horseback. A minimum of 8 Jews had to participate each year.

The Muslims were not much better. In *Between East and West*, Chouraqui cites on page 114 a description by the American consul in Algiers of the treatment of Jews in Algiers during his stay there from 1816 to 1828:

The Jews suffer frightful oppressions. They are forbidden to offer resistance when they are maltreated by a Moslem, no matter what the nature of the violence. They do not have the right to bear arms of any sort, not even a cane. Only on Wednesdays and Saturdays are they allowed to leave the city without asking permission. When there is arduous or unusual labor to be performed it falls on the Jews. In the summer of 1815 the country was covered by an immense swarm of locusts which destroyed all growth in its path. Several hundred Jews were given the order to protect the gardens of the Pasha against them; night and day they watched and suffered for as long as the country suffered from these insects . A number of times, when the janissaries revolted, the Jews were pillaged indiscriminately; they are still tormented by the fear of similar occurrences. Even the children run after them in the streets, and the course of their lives is nothing but a fearful mixture of debasement, oppression and outrage. I believe that today the Jews of Algiers are perhaps the most unhappy remnant of Israel.

Most of the anti-Jewish laws enacted by Christians and Muslims alike were characterized by this same spirit of deliberate vindictiveness. Jews were made to wear pointed hats, bells, strange costumes. Everything was done to make them seem less than human.

The Christians took particular delight in these tortures because they professed to believe that they were avenging the sufferings of "Christ" at the hands of the Jews. In *A Jewish Principality in Feudal France*, on page 352, Zuckerman describes how the Christians in one French town in the region of Toulouse had already begun to torture the Jews during the "Dark Ages". Each year the Jews had to bring 30 pounds of wax to the local church in payment for the 30 pieces of silver received by "Judas" for betraying "Christ". The Jewish bearer of the wax to the church was to receive a "wounding blow" to the throat. Around 880 CE, as a result of Jewish pressure on the Carolingian court, the annual wax payment was reduced to 3 pounds and the "wounding blow" to a blow to the ear. The annual blow to the ear was dignified with a Latin title, the "colaphus", and was continued for centuries until the expulsion of the Jews from France.

The need of the Christians to think of themselves as the avengers of "Christ" led them in some twisted directions. Starting during the second Crusade in 1146 CE, massacres of Jews began to be accompanied by the charge that the Jews had "profaned the Host", meaning attacked in some manner the little cookies which the Christians believed turned into "Christ" when they ate them. In 1298 CE, some 140 Jewish communities in Bavaria and Austria were sacked by German rioters incensed by the accusation that the Jews had "profaned the Host" at Rottingen. The Jews were charged with sticking knives in the sacred cookies and making them bleed. For this tens of thousands of Jews were murdered in the biggest wave of anti-Jewish violence in Germany since the first Crusade. A monument to the martyred cookies was then erected at a church in Bavaria.

Starting around this time and continuing right up to the 20th century, the Christians also began to accuse the Jews of "ritual murder". The Jews, it was alleged, needed the blood of a Christian to make their matzohs for Passover. Whenever a Christian would disappear or die under mysterious circumstances around Passover time, the Jews were immediately suspected of "ritual murder". For centuries, Jews were tortured, murdered and terrorized all over Europe on these grounds. In 1475 CE, 13 Jews were burned to death or be

headed at Trent in Italy for the alleged "ritual murder" of a two year old Christian boy named Simon Unverdorben. The boy was officially proclaimed a Christian saint under the name of Saint Simon and retained this status until 1961, when the Roman Catholic church decided that it might have made a mistake.

Although the Christians did not care to notice it, their own religion was permeated with something very like a tradition of "ritual murder". It was, after all, the Romans who had actually crucified "Jesus Christ"; and it was also the Romans who, in later years, laid the heaviest emphasis on maintaining the tradition of eating the flesh and drinking the blood in ritual form of the Jew whom they had killed. It was the Christians, not the Jews, who had to have blood with their cookies. Just for this reason, the Christians obviously suspected the Jews of being like them. They seized on the Jewish matzohs, the closest thing to their own sacred cookies, and built up around them a whole mythology of blood sacrifice, which was really based on their own practice.

In Volume 3 of *The History of Anti-Semitism*. on page 463, Leon Poliakov brings out the connection between Christian accusations of "ritual murder" against the Jews and the Christian rite of "Holy Communion". Speaking of the Jews. Poliakov notes:

A direct connection can in fact be seen between the propagation of legends of their ritual murders and profanations in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the propagation and dogmatic sanction by the church of the idea of Jesus as actually present in flesh and blood in the consecrated wafers.

Having made such a point of their own imagined cannibalism, the Christians evidently decided that the Jews must do in secret what they themselves so solemnly pretended to do in public.

The more the Christians tortured the Jews, the more fertile the Christian imagination became. In 1321 CE, thousands of Jews were massacred in southern France on charges of inciting lepers to poison the local streams and wells. In 1348 CE, 300 Jewish communities in France, Switzerland and Germany were devastated by rioters aroused by the charge that the Jews had caused the "Black Plague". The easier it became to kill Jews, the more capricious and arbitrary the charges against them. In Prague in 1389 CE, literally hundreds of Jews were killed because a Jewish child allegedly threw sand at a priest.

The Christian need to torture the Jews was also manifested in the way in which the Christians killed the Jews. On page 121 of Volume 1 of *The History of Anti-Semitism*, Poliakov notes: " In cases of capital punishment, it was an established custom by the end of the fourteenth century to hang a Jew by the feet and sometimes to hang beside him a fierce wolf-dog as well ." Jews who were publicly executed by whatever means were generally subjected to prolonged torture first in the hope of inducing them to convert to Christianity or make some accusation against their fellow Jews . During massacres, Jews were subjected to terrible outrages. On page 656 of *A History of the Jewish People* edited by Ben-Sasson appears the following account, from a contemporary Jewish chronicle, of the treatment of the Jews by the Ukrainian Cossacks during the massacres of 1648 in Poland:

Some of them had their skins flayed off them and their flesh was flung to the dogs . The hands and feet of others were cut off and they were flung unto the roadway where carts ran over them and they were trodden underfoot by horses. And some of them had many non-fatal wounds inflicted on them, and were flung out into the open so that they should not die swiftly but should suffer and bleed until they died. Children were slaughtered in their mothers' bosoms and many children were tom apart like fish . They ripped up the bellies of pregnant women, took out the unborn children, and flung them in their faces. They tore open the bellies of some of them and placed a living cat within the belly and left them alive thus, first cutting off their hands so that they should not be able to take the living cat out of the belly.

It is very doubtful whether any people has ever been tortured in such a cruel manner for such a prolonged period of time as the Jewish people was tortured by the Christian Europeans and their Muslim imitators.

The Christians regarded Jew-torture as their religious duty . Erasmus, a well known " Christian humanist" of the 16th century, is cited by Poliakov as saying: "If to be a good Christian is to detest the Jews, then we are all good Christians ." Indeed, no one who sincerely accepts the "New Testament" as a truthful account of real history could help but suspect the Jews of something. But who has ever sincerely believed in babies without sex? From the beginning, the Christian stance of moral indignation in relation to the Jews reeked of bad faith . The Christians knew very well who was killing whom, but they professed to believe otherwise, the better to kill the Jews all the more.

By no group was the Christian cult of Jew-torture upheld more zealously than by the Roman Catholic church. Throughout the "Middle Ages" and well into modern times, the Roman Catholic church constantly and openly proclaimed its desire to torture and humiliate the Jews to punish them for their alleged murder of "Christ" and subsequent failure to become Christians. Over and over again, Popes, church councils and local bishops or priests brought pressure on the secular authorities to deal with the Jews more harshly. Local priests and clerical students often played a leading role in inciting violence against the Jews. Speaking the same language as the ancient Romans and living in the same palaces, the Roman Popes were in many ways the direct heirs of the Caesars, whose traditional war on the Jews they continued with a vengeance.

In *New Woman, New Earth*, Rosemary Ruether shows that Jews were placed in the same category as witches by the Roman Catholic church. On page 106, Ruether notes:

There is a certain interchange of images between Jews and witches whereby each is defined by being associated with the proven demonic character of the other. Witches are mocked on the way to execution by being exposed in the pointed hat that the Church made Jews wear. Terms, such as the Sabbath and synagogue for witches gatherings, are drawn from the Church's demonization of Jewish worship. Even more peculiar is the way Jews become defamed by being associated with the demonic properties of the female. In the anti-Semitic lore developed in Spain during the mass persecution of Jews and Marranos in the fifteenth century, it is said that the Jewish male has been cursed for his refusal to accept Christ by being afflicted with menstruation.

There was a real link between Judaism and witchcraft too, in that witches were often followers of earlier, "pagan" European religions which the Roman Catholic church wished to stamp out no less than Judaism. Judaism in a sense was but a more organized form of "witchcraft", with a large body of written material to maintain continuity from one generation to the next.

### Milking the Jews

But what about the money lenders? If the Jews were really so poor and oppressed, why did they become so widely associated with money lending?

In the wake of the massacres touched off by the first and second Crusades, the legal status of Jews throughout Western and Central Europe rapidly declined. Jews were expelled from many towns; their farms, shops and property were generally confiscated. At the same time, financial demands on the Jews by various authorities, including town councils, lords, kings and church officials, greatly increased. These pressures pushed the Jews of Europe in the direction of becoming a nomadic people with a great need for ready cash.

During the 12th century, the concept began to spread among the ruling classes of Europe that the Jews could be "milked". "Milking the Jews" was a term widely used in Germany during the "Middle Ages" to describe the technique used by the German Kaisers and other officials to extort money from the Jews.

The key to "milking the Jews" was to claim the Jews as "serfs" or "slaves". In Ben-Sasson's *A History of the Jewish People*, on page 478, is cited a decree issued by the city of Teruel in Spain in 1176 CE stating that "the Jews are the serfs of the king and the absolute property of the royal treasury". This was one of the first statements of the doctrine of Jewish serfdom, which was later also proclaimed by the kings of England, France and Germany. On page 479 of BenSasson's book is cited another decree, issued in France in 1230 CE and signed by the king and by "Jew-owning" princes and dukes, which stipulated: "Nobody whosoever may keep the Jew of another Lord; and wheresoever a man shall find his Jew, he shall be entitled to seize him by right, as being his slave and property. " In 1237 CE, Frederick 2, the Kaiser of the German empire, informed the city of Vienna that he was the owner of all the Jews in the Holy Roman Empire "since Imperial authority imposed everlasting servitude on these Jews from ancient times". The "Imperial authority" to which Frederick 2 was referring was that of the "pagan" Caesars, whose heirs the German Kaisers imagined themselves to be. Frederick 2 further stated in his edict, cited on page 479 of Ben-Sasson's *A History of the Jewish People*, that this "servitude" had been imposed on the Jews due to their "unbearable sin" of crucifying "Christ". From this time forwards, the German Kaisers made a special effort to assert their "ownership" of the Jews, which they came to regard as proof of the legitimacy of their claim to be the true heirs of the Caesars. In German miracle plays of this period, as pointed out on page 128 of Volume 1 of Poliakov's *The History of Anti-Semitism*, German identification with the "pagan" Caesars was carried to the

point of presenting a scene called "Entertainment on the Destruction of Jerusalem", in which Titus was portrayed as a Christian knight, destroying Jerusalem to avenge the "Mother of God".

The doctrine of Jewish "serfdom" was the legal reflection of a policy directed at forcing the Jews to become money lenders for the benefit of the kings and princes. In a situation where Jews were already being murdered, harassed and expelled in large numbers, various kings and princes moved in to "protect" the Jews, whom they claimed as their "property", in return for large sums of money. Jews were allowed, indeed encouraged by the kings and princes to become money lenders in order to get the money to pay to their "owners" for "protection". By the 13th century, these pressures had created a situation in many parts of Western and Central Europe where the only Jews who were clearly visible were money lenders.

The close link between Jewish money lending and European ruling class interests is brought out on page 478 of Ben-Sasson's history, where it is noted that in England, the Jewish money lenders had to make 2 copies of all loans. One copy had to be deposited in a special royal strong box located in all major cities, so that in case the Jewish copy was destroyed, the loan could still be collected by the king. In most parts of Europe, loans made by Jews "belonging" to a given king or prince were considered legally due to the Jew's "owner" as well as to the Jew. But once the Jews had been "milked" dry, the same kings and princes who had previously "protected" them turned around and had them killed or expelled. In England, many of the Jewish money lenders were eventually tortured in jail by agents of the crown to make them reveal where every last penny was hidden, then expelled entirely from the country at the end of the 13th century.

In Germany, the struggle for "ownership" of the Jews raged into the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1356 CE, the German Kaiser Charles 4 issued the famous "Golden Bull", partially relinquishing Imperial control over the Jews to the local German authorities. This decree is often cited as indicative of the decline of Imperial authority during this period. The "Golden Bull" was followed by a long wave of local persecutions of Jews throughout Germany, during which one town, lord or bishop after another claimed the Jews, "milked" them and then murdered or expelled them. From time to time, the Kaisers also reasserted their traditional claim over the Jews, as shown by the following statement made in 1462 CE by the Margrave Albert 3 of

Brandenburg, cited on page 5 of Volume II of Baron's *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*:

Upon his coronation each Roman king or emperor may take away from the Jews throughout the Empire all their goods, even their lives, and kill them all, except for the few who ought to be preserved for remembrance.

Hence all the Jews in the lands of the German Empire had been granted the opportunity to avoid such an eventuality by giving each new emperor a third part of their possessions, in order thus to redeem their bodies, lives and property .

But by this time, not too many Jews remained in Germany.

Quite a few of those who did remain had begun to do some "milking" of their own. Poliakov in Volume 1 of *The History of Anti-Semitism* brings out many details concerning the rise of Jewish banditry in Germany in the late "Middle Ages". A German book on banditry, published in 1499 CE, contains a little lexicon of underworld slang, in which many of the words are of Hebrew derivation. Poliakov continues, on page 233, as follows:

In the following centuries we find records of organized gangs, some exclusively Jewish, others mixed Judeo-Christian, about which the police officers made some remarkable statements. Jewish bandits, we learn from these, were good fathers and husbands , often led a settled family life, showed exemplary piety, and never robbed on Saturdays and holidays.

Though they constituted only a tiny minority within the German criminal classes, they set the tone.

Domian Hessel , the most famous German highwayman of the 18th century, asked for a rabbi on the scaffold. In *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870*, Jacob Katz cites the 18th century German writer Michaelis, who charged that the number of "Jewish beggars, vagabonds and miscreants" exceeded the number of Germans in a similar position "by twenty-five to one".

Michaelis was of course exaggerating, yet his accusations do suggest that many Jews survived the "Middle Ages" in Germany only by becoming outlaws of one kind or another.

By the end of the 'Middle Ages', few Jews remained anywhere in Western or Central Europe. Money lending was not a settled vocation of the European Jews but a phase in the process whereby they

were gradually driven from West to East. Simon Dubnov summarizes this process on page 250 of Volume 3 of his History of the Jews. Speaking with reference to Germany in the "Middle Ages", he states: The enchanted circle from which there was no outlet for Jews was becoming tight. To seek protection, the Jews were driven to the princes and masters; but that protection was costly, and since sources of income were restricted, the Jews were forced into moneylending. This pursuit caused new dissatisfaction among the Christians; economic hostility towards Jews combined with religious hatred, which was fanned by the clerics. This led to massacres, which in turn rendered the Jews even more dependent upon the rulers.

The driving force of this cycle was provided by the murder or expulsion of the majority of the Jews. Only when a small minority remained did money lenders come to form a large proportion among them. And even this was usually only a temporary condition, since in time most of the money lenders were sucked dry and eliminated by their "protectors".

In later centuries, in Eastern Europe, this same cycle was also played out, with similar consequences. At no time, in no place was there ever any large Jewish community composed primarily of money lenders. Money lending was characteristic of Jewish communities only when they were small and weak, either in the wake of massacres or because a few Jewish money lenders had been invited by some local authority to settle. In some areas, such as northern Italy, Jewish money lenders did manage to survive, under ghetto conditions, for many centuries. The leaders of the Roman Catholic church would point to them with horror, all the while extorting large sums from them by the constant threat of even harsher treatment. In all times and places, the chief beneficiaries of Jewish money lending were the European ruling classes, who "milked" the Jews of the greater part of their legendary wealth.

### Beautiful Paintings

Few historians have even thought to estimate the total number of Jews killed by Europeans professing the Christian religion. An estimate of 1 million Jews killed by Christian Europeans during the "Middle Ages" and early modern period would be on the conservative side. On page 100 of Volume 1 of The History of Anti-Semitism,

Poliakov cites a contemporary Christian chronicler who stated that 100,000 Jews were killed in the massacres of 1298 CE arising from the charge of "profanation of the Host" by the Jews of Rottingen. Many hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed in the massacres of 1648 in Poland. Jews were killed in the tens or hundreds of thousands in the massacres inspired by the Crusades, by the "Black Plague", by the Spanish Inquisition, by the mass expulsions from Spain, France and Germany. And during the "Middle Ages", hardly a year passed in which Jews were not killed here and there on one charge or another. In 1171 CE, 38 Jews were burned at the stake on charges of "ritual murder" at Blois in France. In Brussels in 1370 CE, 20 Jews were burned for "profaning the Host" . If all the Jewish victims of Christian persecution could be counted, they would certainly total more than 1 million Jews.

At the same time as they committed these terrible crimes, the Christian Europeans went to great lengths to degrade the image of the Jewish people in their culture. In *Essays on Anti-Semitism*, edited by Koppel Pinson, appears an article by Joseph Reider on "Jews in Medieval Art" in which he notes that it was customary to include an allegorical engraving of Judaism in the form of a pig on the walls of medieval cathedrals. Such figures appeared on the cathedral of Magdeburg at the end of the 13th century, at Regensburg in the 14th and at Freising and Wittenberg in the 15th, from where they spread also to France and the Low Countries. And Raphael Mahler, in his article in the same collection on "Antisemitism in Poland", cites the Polish poet Jarzemski berating the Jews of Warsaw in 1643 for living so cheaply:

Miserly in his life:

What clothing! Enter his house

And behold! He gnaws at his little radish,

His little cucumber and carrot

And thus contented is the dirty Jew

While he gathers the coins, the ugly fellow.

These lines were written five years before the massacres of 1648, in which one third of the Jews of Poland were murdered.

The position of the Jewish people in Christian Europe after the start of the Crusades is symbolized very well by an anecdote recounted on page 557 of Ben-Sasson's history of the Jewish people. In some de

bate with the Jews during the "Middle Ages" , the Christians supposedly asked the Jews, " Why are most of the gentiles white and handsome, while most of the Jews are black and ugly?" The Jews are said to have replied that when the Christians had sex, "they are surrounded by beautiful paintings and give birth to their likeness" . The Jewish people of Europe also became, in large measure, the image of the fate which the Christians had painted for them. Clothed in rags, driven from town to town, they were indeed living proof of the danger of defying the authorities. And yet still they lived, and defied. The basis of Jewish survival throughout this period is shown in Mark Wischnitzer's A History of Jewish Crafts and Guilds. Wischnitzer shows that wherever there was a large Jewish community in Europe, whether in Western Europe during the early "Middle Ages" or in Eastern Europe in the modern period, artisans formed its core. But throughout the later "Middle Ages" in Western and Central Europe and the early modern period in Eastern Europe, continual murders and other persecutions on a large scale prevented the establishment of any large community of Jews for any length of time.

In the dispersed and scattered communities characteristic of this period, artisans were still a major group, but not so central as in larger and more settled communities. Under the ghetto system, a large proportion of Jews survived either by gaining the " protection" of local rulers or as peddlers, beggars and vagabonds of all kinds. Jews served kings and lords not only as money lenders but later, in Poland, as rent collectors and liquor dealers . Only a minority of Jews could pursue a settled trade. From these circumstances arose the characteristic European stereotype of the Jews as "black and ugly" yet possessed of secret wealth. Of course, all the "beautiful paintings" , as well as the homes and palaces that housed them, belonged to the Christians; yet still they envied the Jews their hidden coins . Was this "fair"?

## Chapter Ten

### La Boheme

Possibly the best kept secret in European history is the existence of a tradition of social and sexual contact between Jews and Christians. The whole thrust of the legislation enacted by the Roman Catholic church ghettoizing the Jews was to ban all contact between Jews and Christians. Even when this ban failed to operate in practice, it continued to operate in print. References of any kind to sexual contact between Jews and Christians were considered "pornographic" by Europeans right into the 20th century. This taboo was strongly upheld by the Roman Catholic church, which long taught that intermarriage between Jew and Christian was a crime punishable by death. The nearest thing to an open recognition of a tradition of close relations between Jews and Christians in Europe is the concept of "Bohemianism". As it is commonly used today, the term "Bohemian" does not necessarily carry an implication of Jewishness. It simply implies an "artistic" or "radical" life style. Nonetheless, Jews are often to be found in "Bohemian" circles. The concept of Bohemian as it originally evolved in Europe carried the distinct implication of a cultural trend open to Jews. Bohemians did not have to be Jews, but Jews could be Bohemians.

Perhaps the best known representation of Bohemian life in Europe is the opera, *La Boheme*, written by Giacomo Puccini in 1895. It depicts a world of poor students, artists and sociable women. No one is Jewish. Yet Puccini, who based *La Boheme* on his own experience, was strongly drawn to Jewish women. In 1904, he formed a close relationship with a woman named Sybil Seligman, of Sephardic Jewish descent. In *Monsieur Butterfly*, a biography of Puccini, Stanley Jackson cites Sybil's sister, Violet Schiff, as stating that "it began as a passionate love affair and only with the years developed into one of the few genuine friendships which Puccini was able to form; it lasted to his death". Sybil died in 1934. "Among her private papers",

Jackson states on page 258, "were hundreds of letters from Puccini. each bundle be-ribboned and meticulously arranged in chronological order. "

The concept of a Bohemian life in the modern sense of the term first attained wide popularity in Paris during the 19th century. But for many centuries before that, the term Bohemian was used by Europeans to signify a radical or revolutionary on all levels, not only cultural but also social and religious. This earlier usage of the term was derived from the role played by the country of Bohemia in the movement against the rule of Popes and Kaisers in Europe which eventually resulted in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. The first Bohemians were the people of Bohemia, whose heroic stand against the forces of Pope and Kaiser was inspired at least in part by a desire to protect the Jews of Bohemia against Papal and Imperial persecution.

## Bohemia

The country known to the ancient Romans as Bohemia is that which now forms the western part of Czechoslovakia. Its traditional capital is the city of Prague, today the capital of Czechoslovakia. In the late 8th century CE, Bohemia came under the rule of the Premysl family, who established a dynasty lasting to 1306 CE. The kings of the Premysl line were ambitious rulers who dreamed of a greater Bohemia uniting all the Slavic lands from the Baltic to the Adriatic under one king in Prague. They tried to this end to build up Prague and Bohemia as the main commercial center for this entire region, and perhaps for this reason, they adopted a policy of tolerance of the Jews as compared with most European rulers of their day.

In Prague, The Mystical City, Joseph Wechsberg traces the Premysl tradition of tolerance of the Jews back to Premysl's wife, princess Libuse. Libuse was a prophet. In a dream she received a vision which led her to tell her husband "to summon the Jews that were expelled from Moscovia by the Wends". Under Wenceslas 1, ruler of Bohemia from 1230 to 1253 CE, Jews were given weapons by the government to arm themselves against attacks by Crusaders. In 1254 CE, Wenceslas was succeeded by his son, Ottokar 2, who issued an edict permitting Jews to hold public office and instituting penalties for false accusations against the Jews.

As Simon Dubnov shows in Volume 3 of his History of the Jews,

these decrees of Ottokar 2 led to a violent campaign against the Bohemian king on the part of the Roman Catholic church. Church councils were convened in Bohemia, Silesia, Poland and Austria to condemn Ottokar's decrees and call for complete segregation of the Jews as stipulated by the fourth Lateran council in 1215 CE. At one church council the demand was made that a new edict be added requiring the Jews to wear horns. Nonetheless, in 1268 CE Ottokar reconfirmed his previous decrees on behalf of the Jews . After the fall of the Premysl dynasty in 1306 CE, the position of the Jews in Bohemia began to deteriorate, but it still remained somewhat more secure in Bohemia than in neighboring lands throughout the "Middle Ages". On page 63 of *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, Israel Abrahams notes, "on the whole the inhabitants of the Prague Judenstadt had a freer and fresher life than was possible in other compulsory ghettos". They had their own town hall and flag, conferred on them in 1357 CE "for their patriotic services".

Around 1402 CE, a young priest named John Hus became the preacher of the Bethlehem Chapel, one of the main churches in Prague. Hus began to question Papal authority over the church, leading to his eventual arrest and execution in 1415 CE. The followers of Hus, known as Hussites, soon became the dominant faction among Bohemian Christians . They went to war with the forces of both Pope and Kaiser, and for most of the 15th century maintained Bohemia as an independent country under Hussite rule. It was the Hussites who first gave Bohemia a European-wide reputation for rebelliousness and radicalism.

Their church was the first in Europe to free itself from the rule of the Roman Popes and establish itself as a national Christian church. In the 16th century, many other countries in Europe were to follow Bohemia's example, giving rise to the Protestant Reformation. Resistance to Papal pressure to persecute the Jews of Bohemia was an important element in the Hussite struggle for a more democratic church. In *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks*, R. W. Seton-Watson states on page 73 that the Hussites "were often reproached for the relative tolerance which they showed towards the Jews". And Matthew Spinka in *John Hus' Concept of the Church* brings out a revealing passage on this point from the works of Hus himself. On page 161, Spinka refers to a tract by Hus in which he attacked certain "doctors" of Catholic doctrine for asserting that Papal orders had to be followed no matter what. Spinka continues:

Hus further argues that since the doctors deny such a right to the critical examination of the papal commands and profess to obey the papal or royal orders without a demur or scrutiny, they would have to obey even if they were ordered to kill all the Jews in Prague, as they accepted the command to exterminate the Christian Neapolitans.

The clear implication was that Hus himself would not obey such a command.

The importance of the issue of toleration of the Jews in the struggle between the Hussites and the Roman Catholic church is shown by the mission of John of Capistrano to Bohemia in 1450 CE. The Hussites were already in control of Prague at this time but the Roman Catholics were still strong in Breslau . John of Capistrano arrived in Breslau in 1453 CE. He had been sent to Bohemia as a direct representative of the Pope to preach against the Hussites. John of Capistrano was a member of the Papal staff of the Inquisition; he was also noted as a forceful and fiery preacher.

On page 80 of *George of Bohemia*, Frederick Heymann tells what happened after John of Capistrano arrived in Breslau:

But the act that was perhaps most instrumental in making Capistrano's stay in Breslau noteworthy and memorable through the ages was the way in which he helped to bring about and to direct the great persecution of the local Jewish community. Fierce attacks against the Jews were a standard element of his sermons. It was in this atmosphere of a boundless religious antisemitism largely created or at least whipped up by Capistrano that accusations of repeated debasements of hosts (which began to bleed when wounded, or jumped out of the fire into which they had been thrown) as well as charges of ritual murder were laid to several members of the old and well-established Jewish community of the city. The ensuing trial was largely master-minded by Capistrano, who even instructed the hangman how most effectively to torture the "criminals" . As a result of confessions thus obtained, fortyone Jews were burned at the stake , while the rest of the members of the Jewish community had to leave Breslau.

These actions were a deliberate challenge to the Hussites in Prague , who were being dared by John of Capistrano to show their true colors by intervening on behalf of the Jews. In 1454 CE, George of Po debrad, a Hussite leader, took up the challenge, obtaining an order to

force John of Capistrano to leave Bohemia. In 1458 CE, George of Podebrad was elected king of Bohemia by a Hussite assembly. Seton-Watson in *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* calls George of Bohemia "the first heretic and elected king in the Europe of his day". When some objected that George was not of royal blood, the Hussite leader John of Rokycan declared, states Seton-Watson on page 78, that "it would be better to follow the example of the judges of Israel and transform Bohemia into a Republic, if there were no native worthy to bear the royal crown". Thinking big, just like the Premysls, George of Bohemia evolved a plan for a "League of Princes" intended to replace Pope and Kaiser as the ruling body of Europe. George viewed alliance with France as the key to the establishment of the "League of Princes", anticipating on many levels the policy which resulted in the formation of modern Czechoslovakia in alliance with France through the "League of Nations" in the 20th century. Under the rule of George of Po de brad from 1458 to 1471 CE, Bohemia by the beginning of the 16th century had acquired a Europeanwide reputation for radicalism. Most Hussites were not Bohemians in the later sense of the term; they did not embrace a radical life style. They were seen as radicals for their open defiance of Pope and Kaiser, their stress on democratic values in church and state and their willingness to tolerate Jews. They were not merely the forerunners of the Protestant Reformation, as they are often called, but in some ways its cause. They showed that Pope and Kaiser could be successfully defied by a united people, thus inspiring others to do as they had done. This was admitted even by Luther, whom Seton-Watson cites on page 87 of *A History of the Czechs and Slovaks* as stating in 1520: "Fool that I am, without knowing it, I have taught and held all the teachings of John Hus. We are all Hussites without having been conscious of it. "

## Reform

The issue of toleration of the Jews had the same significance for the early Protestants as it did for the Hussites. Although rarely at the center of public debate, it was highly charged with emotion and played an important role on a deeper level. In Germany, toleration of the Jews was the issue around which the Reformation first began. The German Reformation was precipitated by a decree issued in 1509 CE

by the Kaiser Maximilian ordering destruction of all Jewish books considered subversive by the church . An official invitation to join in the book burning was issued to John Reuchlin, author of a treatise published in 1505 urging more humane treatment of the Jews. Reuchlin refused, leading to a major controversy in which most of the early leaders of the Reformation in Germany, including Luther, joined forces to support Reuchlin. The controversy around Reuchlin and the Jewish books led directly to the formation of the first organized Protestant groups in Germany.

Reuchlin and his defenders in Germany were part of a broader, European-wide movement in favor of Hebrew studies on the part of Christian intellectuals. Salo Baron in Volume 13 of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* calls these people "Christian Hebraists". He shows that they were active in France, Italy and other parts of Europe as well as Germany. One of the people who introduced Reuchlin to Hebrew studies was Pico di Mirandello, an Italian intellectual of the period, usually treated as a "Renaissance" thinker. Kaiser Maximilian's decree of 1509 CE banning Jewish books was aimed at the Christian Hebraists no less than the Jews themselves. It forced the Christian Hebraists in Germany to organize themselves into a party from which Luther drew much of his early support.

Luther too at this time wrote tracts in defense of the Jews. But once the Lutherans began to come under heavy pressure from Pope and Kaiser, they turned on the Jews and became rabid Jew-baiters themselves. Even during their earlier, relatively pro-Jewish phase, most of the German Protestants had been only a little less hostile to the Jews than the Roman Catholics. In *The Life and Times of John Reuchlin*, Francis Barham points out that in the treatise of 1505 CE calling for more humane treatment of the Jews, Reuchlin had nonetheless called the refusal of the Jews to become Christians "so great a sin that its equal was never committed". In Volume 1 of *The History of Anti-Semitism*, on page 223, Poliakov cites an even more vicious remark by Luther. Upon learning that Protestants in Bohemia were celebrating the Jewish Sabbath and circumcising themselves, Luther is said to have declared: "I hope I shall never be so stupid as to be circumcised! I would rather cut off the left breast of my Catherine and of all women." In Germany, even the "Reformers" were deep in the "Middle Ages".

The pro-Jewish current in German Protestantism, central at the start

but soon betrayed by the Lutherans, was kept alive by the Anabaptists. Eventually suppressed by bloody massacres led by the Roman Catholic church, the Anabaptist movement at one time had a large following in Austria, Bavaria, Switzerland and Holland. The Anabaptists were far more radical than the Hussites, openly preaching doctrines of common ownership and questioning the divinity of "Jesus Christ". Some Anabaptists became Jews. In *The Radical Reformation*, George Williams describes a group of Anabaptist "Judaizers" active in Strasbourg in the 1520s. They were led by two local artisans, Saltzmann and Hess. On page 252, Williams states: The Judaizers would accept only the Pentateuch as divinely binding. denied the Trinity. insisted that there was but one God. and considered Jesus a false prophet who was rightly put to death. For this Saltzmann was decapitated shortly before Christmas 1527.

On page 189, Williams describes the followers of Augustin Bader in Augsburg, who "sought out Jewish communities, tried to learn Hebrew, and interpreted the Old Testament and the Apocrypha with the help of rabbis". Bader was tortured to death by Catholic troops in 1530 CE.

In 1534 CE, after thousands of Anabaptists had already been killed by the Roman Catholics. the Anabaptists established a "new Jerusalem" in the city of Munster in Holland. Under Anabaptist rule. Munster became a symbol of Bohemian radicalism in every sense of the term. The Anabaptists of Munster preached and practiced doctrines of communism and free love. They called Munster "new Jerusalem", "new Zion" or "new Israel" and looked to the early days of the Hebrews, before the monarchy had been established, as the model for their new state. After the fall of Munster to Catholic troops, the Anabaptists were tracked down and slaughtered in the tens of thousands all over Europe.

As if to show that they had learned their lesson, later generations of German radicals kept alive the memory of the Anabaptists. except insofar as their relationship to the Jews was concerned. In the late 19th century, the German Marxist writer Karl Kautsky published a whole book on the Anabaptists called *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation*. It contains no hint of any relationship between the Anabaptists and the Jews and refers to the Jews only a

few times, always in relation to money. Yet most of the early Anabaptist groups were openly pro-Jewish, associated with Jews, derived their teachings from the Jews and called for toleration of the Jews on the part of church and state. Kautsky too was part of this tradition. but he did not dare to admit it.

Judaizing currents appeared in many countries during the early phases of the Protestant Reformation. In Russian Intellectual History, Dmitry Tschizewskij reveals the existence of a Judaizing movement in Russia in the late 15th and early 16th centuries derived directly from the Hussites. Tschizewskij states on page 67:

The doctrines of the ludaizers are known from the polemics directed against them. In these they are accused of holding views that could be termed " Protestant" : they neglected or ignored external ritual forms; they put "inner prayer" above the liturgy; they rejected the worship of icons and saints and allegedly even doubted the divinity of Christ. Taken together, these accusations form a picture which strongly resembles radical Hussitism, the fifteenth-century Czech precursor of Protestantism. When one considers that the heresy was introduced to Novgorod by a Kievan prince and that in Moscow one of the most zealous adherents to the doctrine was F. Kuritsyn , a diplomat who had formerly served in Hungary, it seems quite probable that there was a connection between the ludaizers and the Hussites. At the time Kiev was a part of Poland-Lithuania, where for a time the Hussites threatened orthodox Catholicism; many adherents of radical Hussitism fled from Bohemia to Hungary; and Novgorod maintained close ties with the West, including the Slavic West-in fact, some of the Novgorod saints appear to have been Slavs from the West.

During the 1570s, another Judaizing trend appeared in Poland and Lithuania in the form of the Minor church headed by Simon Budny. Williams in *The Radical Reformation* says that Budny denied the divinity of "Christ" and altered the Gospel of Luke in his Polish translation of the " New Testament" to state that Joseph was the real father of "Jesus" .

In his article, "Antisemitism in Poland" , appearing in Pinson's *Essays on Anti-semitism*, Raphael Mahler describes how the Catholic "Counter-Reformation" in Poland in the 17th century was directed simultaneously at Protestants and Jews. Mahler states on page 151:

But in many instances attacks on Jews went hand in hand with assaults upon Protestant sects. The anti-Jewish pamphlets issued by churchmen to demonstrate the "errors" of the Talmud also strike at the Protestants, "who are not a whit better than the Jews." Riots against Jews often ended with similar attacks upon Lutherans and Calvinists, while profanation of churches and cemeteries of Protestants would often end with pillaging the Jewish sections.

It was precisely because they were so afraid of being attacked as "Judaizers" that the more conservative Protestants such as the Lutherans and Calvinists became so negative in their attitude towards the Jews. Calvin in Geneva in 1553 CE condoned the burning of Servetus at the stake for questioning the Trinity and displaying an "affinity with Jews and Turks".

All Protestants were Judaizers to one degree or another. By questioning the authority of Pope and Kaiser, they were attacking the main enemies of the Jews in Europe at that time. By distributing the "Old Testament" in large quantities, they enabled Europeans to develop a more favorable image of the Jewish people than they could knowing only the "New Testament", which was all that the Roman Catholic church then allowed them to read. And many Protestants, particularly in the 16th century, went much further in their Judaizing, abandoning the concept of the divinity of "Jesus Christ" and seeking to establish closer ties with the Jews as worshippers of the "one God". The earliest English pamphlet calling for religious freedom for Protestants, written by Leonard Busher in 1614 CE, also called for religious freedom for Jews, who were still not permitted to settle in England at this time.

The main reason for the close affinity between early Protestantism and Judaism was that they both represented democratic tendencies relative to the Roman Catholic church. Both Jews and Protestants thought it normal to elect their leaders, whereas the Catholics were strong supporters of the Roman tradition of autocratic rule. What the Protestants sought above all in the 'Old Testament' was a model of a more democratic way of life than that upheld by the Roman Catholic church. Many Protestants also sought such a model in the society of the Jews of their own day, who were long accustomed to elect their leaders, decide important questions through discussion and debate and permit differences of opinion within their ranks. The more pro-dem

ocratic the Protestant tendency, the more pro-Jewish. It was the extreme democrats such as the Anabaptists who formed the closest ties with the Jews, while the more autocratic Protestant leaders such as Luther and Calvin were the least sympathetic to the Jews.

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century paved the way for the modern Bohemian movement by popularizing the concept of the conscience of the individual as the supreme authority in matters of right and wrong. Freedom of the individual became the Protestant rallying cry, leading already in the 16th century to Bohemian tendencies in the modern sense of the term, such as were displayed by the Anabaptists of Munster in the 1530s. Most Protestants would not go so far, but they helped to create the climate for those who did. Bohemian tendencies towards a radical life style based on theories of communism and free love were also prominent in the English Revolution of the 17th century among such radical Protestant sects as the Levellers, Diggers and Ranters. These organized Bohemian sects paved the way for the more individualistic and purely cultural Bohemianism of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Early Bohemianism, before it became a middle class and even aristocratic life style, was primarily a working class movement, whose leading element was probably made up of artisans. The relative pro-Jewishness of early Bohemianism was linked to its working class character, for only the poorer Europeans had much to do with the Jews. In Volume 9 of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, on page 24, Baron notes: "In contrast to Jewish converts to Christianity. Christian proselytes to Judaism seem to have been recruited almost exclusively from the lower classes." Only a person who was already of relatively low status in the Christian world was not necessarily afraid of associating on friendly terms with Jews. This remained true right into the 20th century, as noted by Moshe Bejski in his article, "The 'Righteous Among the Nations' and Their Part In The Rescue of Jews". appearing in *The Catastrophe of European Jewry*, edited by Yisrael Gutman and Livia Rothkirchen. Speaking of his work on the Yad Vashem "Commission for the Designation of the Righteous", Bejski states on page 592:

My distinct impression from years of work on the Commission has been that while the "Righteous" came from all sectors of the population the majority were from the lower classes- poverty-stricken common folk.

poor people who had difficulty providing for their own families yet found it possible to share their meager fare with those they took under their protection .

Many of the early Bohemians must have been just such people as the "Righteous" of the 20th century Holocaust, Europeans who were themselves so oppressed by the European ruling classes as to sympathize to some degree with the Jews. The underlying continuity of the pro-Jewish movement in Europe from the late "Middle Ages" right through to the 20th century is also shown by the fact that the only country in the world that would openly sell arms to Israel during the War of Independence in 1948 was Communist Czechoslovakia.

## Romance

The link between the original Hussite and Protestant Bohemians and the modern Bohemian movement was supplied by the Romantics. The term "Romanticism" is used to describe a well defined trend in European cultural life during the 18th and 19th centuries. The height of the Romantic era is usually seen as the early 19th century. The European Romantics made a cult of emotion. Like many people who speak of "romance" today, they talked of love but dreamed of sex. They were drawn to tales of passionate but unhappy love affairs, usually ending in the death of one or more of the participants. They delighted in descriptions of nature, in expressions of joy or sorrow or dread, in the world of the unusual and the bizarre. They are conventionally described as affirming the supremacy of the emotions as the basis of human life.

Romanticism ended as a cultural trend, but it began as something very like a political movement. Almost all of the early Romantics were strong supporters of the French Revolution of 1789. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, generally described as the main ideologist of the French revolutionaries, is also generally seen as the first major Romantic writer in Europe. It was Rousseau who first began to wave the concept of the supremacy of the emotions as something like a political banner. The early Romantics saw the French Revolution of 1789 as a liberating force , breaking down the barriers of custom and prejudice and permitting a freer expression of feeling in society. Only gradually as the 19th century progressed did European Romanticism lose its orig

inal revolutionary political associations and become defined as a more and more purely cultural trend.

Early Romanticism, like early Protestantism, was generally linked to a sympathetic attitude towards the Jews. In Volume 3 of *The History of Anti-Semitism*, Poliakov cites a passage from Rousseau which reveals an understanding of the Jewish predicament in Europe rare even among pro-Jewish Europeans. On page 101, Poliakov cites a speech which Rousseau put into the mouth of his Vicar of Savoy: Do you know many Christians who have taken the trouble to inquire what the Jews allege against them? If anyone knows anything at all about it, it is from the writings of Christians. What a way of ascertaining the argument of our adversaries! But what is to be done? If anyone dared to publish in our day books which were openly in favor of the Jewish religion, we should punish the author, publisher and bookseller. This regulation is a sure and certain plan for always being in the right . . . At the Sorbonne, it is plain that the Messianic prophesies refer to Jesus Christ. Among the rabbis of Amsterdam it is just as clear that they have nothing to do with him. I do not think that I have ever heard the arguments of the Jews as to why they should not have a free state, schools and universities where they can speak and argue without danger. Then alone can we know what they have to say. Rousseau was still fighting the "battle of the books", around which Reuchlin and Luther had first rallied the Gennan Protestants 200 years before. But unlike the Gennan "Reformers", Rousseau did not expect the Jews to become Christians in return for his support. He was willing to see them remain Jews, in a "free state" even.

In 1791, an assembly of French revolutionaries, most of them inspired by the teachings of Rousseau, voted to grant French Jews, of whom there were very few, full civic rights in the new French nation. In the years that followed, French revolutionary soldiers tore down ghetto walls all over Europe. Those who supported the French Revolution were inevitably also supporters of Jewish "Emancipation", as it was then called. This included the early Romantics, many of whom were quite open in their sympathy for the Jews. Even Byron, who later turned against the Jews, wrote a collection of poems called "Hebrew Melodies". And in Germany, most of the leading lights among the early Romantics frequented literary salons conducted by

Jewish women, often coming to know their hostesses in more than a purely literary way.

It all began with philosophy. Lessing, the first major German Romantic writer, created a sensation in 18th century Germany by treating the Jewish scholar, Moses Mendelssohn, as a genuine "philosopher".

It became fashionable for young German "philosophers" to visit Mendelssohn, who had a number of attractive daughters. One of Mendelssohn's daughters, Brendel Mendelssohn, eventually married Friedrich Schlegel, a major Romantic leader in Germany, and ended up a Catholic. Four of Mendelssohn's six children eventually converted to Christianity. By the early 19th century, literary salons run by Jewish women had become all the rage in German Romantic circles. On page 103 of *The Origins of the Modern Jew*, Michael Meyer describes the salon of Henriette Herz:

The young Jewish women possessed a strange fascination. They were educated, open-minded, sometimes of easy virtue, often intelligent, and occasionally, as in the case of Henriette Herz, very beautiful. Born into bourgeois Jewish families, but in revolt against both the perfunctory religion and practical business orientation of the older generation, they were exceptionally sympathetic to the new world of the inner personality unveiled to them by the young romanticists.

Nothing could have been more "Bohemian" in the Germany of this time than these relationships between Romantic writers and Jewish women.

The existence of a "romantic" attraction to Jewish women on the part of European men has a long literary history in Europe. Speaking of the portrayal of Jews in the European theater, Abrahams states on page 257 of *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*:

The Jewess enjoyed an extraordinary immunity from attack; she was as much lauded as the Jew was reviled. The stage Jewess was always beautiful, and was always intended to be lovable. Shakespeare's Jessica and Marlowe's Abigail were evidently drawn as foils and contrasts to Shylock and Barabas. Partly this sympathetic treatment was designed to lead up to the conversion of these Jewesses to Christianity, but one may feel justified in attributing the kindness of dramatists to their generosity and gallantry.

Poliakov, on page 326 of Volume 3 of *The History of Anti-Semitism*, brings out another example of Christian "generosity and gallantry" in relation to Jewish women. He notes that the early 19th century French Romantic writer Chateaubriand once wondered "why the women of the Jewish race are more beautiful than the men", and concluded that the reason was that "the women of Judea believed in the Savior, loved him, followed him, comforted him in his afflictions". Heinrich Heine, generally regarded as the greatest of the German Romantic poets, was himself of Jewish origin. Heine converted to Christianity but treated his conversion very lightly, openly describing it as a "ticket of admission" to European society. Heine was too much of a Bohemian to be tolerated in Germany, spending the latter part of his life in Paris, the main Bohemian center in Europe. Heine was also a Bohemian in the original sense of the term, in that he was a strong supporter of democracy and national liberation. In his essay, "Emancipation-The Great Task of the Day", appearing in *The Poetry and Prose of Heinrich Heine* edited by Frederic Ewen, Heine stated: And what is the great task of our day? It is emancipation. Not simply the emancipation of the Irish, the Greeks, Frankfurt Jews, West Indian blacks, and all such oppressed peoples, but the emancipation of the whole world, and especially of Europe, which has now come of age, and is tearing itself loose from the apron-strings of the privileged classes, the aristocracy.

Heine himself was a product of "Emancipation", for no writer of Jewish origin prior to the French Revolution of 1789 could have hoped to win a Christian audience except by writing denunciations of the Jews.

Perhaps the most famous product of the Romantic movement was Karl Marx. Marx in his youth wrote Romantic poetry and was steeped in Romantic lore. About the age of 19, Marx wrote a poem called "The Player". The following English translation appears in *As They Were* by Tuli Kupferberg and Sylvia Topp:

The player strikes up on the violin,  
His blond hair falling down.  
He wears a sword at his side,  
And a wide, wrinkled gown.

"O player, why playest thou so wild?  
Why the savage look in the eyes?  
Why the leaping blood, the soaring waves?  
Why tearest thou thy bow to shreds?"  
"I play for the sake of the thundering sea  
Crashing upon the walls of the cliffs,  
That my eyes be blinded and my heart burst  
And my soul resound in the depths of Hell."  
"O player, why tearest thou thy heart to shreds  
In mockery? This art was given thee  
By a shining God to elevate the mind  
Into the swelling music of the starry dance."  
"Look now, my blood-dark sword shall stab  
Unerringly within thy soul.  
God neither knows nor honors art.  
The hellish vapors rise and fill the brain,  
"Till I go mad and my heart is utterly charged.  
See this sword-the Prince of Darkness sold it  
to me.  
For me he beats the time and gives the signs.  
Ever more boldly I play the dance of death.  
"I must play darkly, I must play lightly,  
Until my heart, and my violin, burst."

"The Player" is filled with imagery typical of German Romantic poetry, including the blond hair of the hero, which Marx himself lacked. Marx in fact was quite dark in complexion; his friends called him "The Moor". The allegiance of "the Player" to "the Prince of Darkness" could be interpreted on many levels.

Marx played out the Romantic dream in his life, beginning with his marriage to Jenny von Westphalen. Marx was of Jewish origin; his father had converted to Christianity in order to gain admission to the bar as a lawyer. Jenny came from an aristocratic German family, many of whose members did not approve of her marriage to Marx. The reaction of Karl and Jenny was to break with family convention on both sides, becoming Romantics and Bohemians. In Karl Marx, Padover shows that they continued to live in a Bohemian manner for much of their life. On page 155 of the paperback edition, Padover cites a re

port delivered to the German police by one of their agents in London sent to find out what Marx was doing in exile. The agent reported: In private life he is a highly disorderly , cynical person, a poor host; he leads a gypsy existence. Washing, grooming , and changing underwear are rarities with him; he gets drunk readily. Often he loafs all day long, but if he has work to do, he works day and night tirelessly . He does not have a fixed time for sleeping and staying up; very often he stays up all night, and at noon he lies down on the sofa fully dressed and sleeps until evening, unconcerned about the coming and goings around him.

Although he was to become the poet of the proletarian revolution. Marx never held a regular job in his life. He earned little by his writing and was mainly supported by others, including his Jewish relatives. But although Marx long remained a Bohemian in his lifestyle, he did not remain one in his thinking. Like many others, Marx lost his taste for Romanticism after the failure of the European-wide revolutions of 1848. The Romantic dream of a middle class revolution that would liberate the world of emotion was shown in 1848 to be incapable of realization in Europe. It was just this which made Marx famous, for he was the first to produce a convincing analysis of the reasons for the failure of political Romanticism. Marx showed that when push came to shove, the middle class would forget all about "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" and side with the aristocrats in order to keep the workers in their place. The middle class only enjoyed its emotions because it was rich enough to afford them. Political Romanticism, Marx argued, was a fraud, a mask for the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Only a party devoted to the class interests of the workers could truly achieve 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'.

Once he had rejected political Romanticism, Marx also gradually began to reject cultural Romanticism. He buried himself in business journals, became somewhat more regular in his habits , adopted something of the air of a German "Herr Professor" , a title to which he could easily lay claim , having obtained a degree from Jena University. Marx thought of his rejection of cultural Romanticism as a way of becoming more "scientific" in his thinking. During the latter part of the 19th century, a growing number of European radicals joined Marx in moving towards a more "scientific" stance. It was at this

time that Romanticism lost much of its earlier political force and became defined more and more as a purely cultural trend. Bohemianism is the term now commonly used for the cultural Romanticism which arose in the late 19th century in Europe out of the collapse of political Romanticism.

Marx's "scientific" socialism had great appeal in Germany, where "scientific" doctrines of all kinds were extremely popular in the late 19th century. Not only Marx but most Germans rejected Romanticism at this time; and this rejection had more than a hint in it of German national chauvinism. Romance was considered a French concept; the Germans were good at "science". Marx was more of a German than he cared to admit. That German national chauvinism played a certain role in his repudiation of Bohemianism is shown by his attitude towards Bohemia itself. On page 16 of Prague, The Mystical City, Joseph Wechsberg cites an article by Marx in the New York Tribune in 1852 in which Marx stated that the Czechs were "a dying nation. . . in a land that can only exist as part of Germany". Marx felt much the same way about the Jews, at least in part for the same reasons. Despite Marx's hatred of German militarism and personal experience of German anti-Semitism, he tended to see the Eastern Europeans, both Jewish and non-Jewish, through German eyes. They were not "scientific" enough for him. Had Marx known where "science" was going to lead the Germans, he would have recognized that a German with a heart, even a fake heart, was better than a German with no heart at all.

## Science

Science turned out to be a code word for murder. At the root of the late 19th century German and European cult of "science" was the revolution in weaponry brought about by the scientific and technological advances of the 19th century. During the late 19th and 20th century, a whole new arsenal of weapons, including explosive shells, tanks, airplanes and rapid fire machine guns, was made available by "science" to the European nations. Thanks to "science", the Europeans in the 20th century were able to murder more than 1 00 million people, many of them other Europeans. Among the victims of "science" were the 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis and their allies.

The one point which Marx did not want to see about the failure of the revolutions of 1848 was that it also meant the failure of Jewish "Emancipation" in Europe. "Emancipation" had been the great promise of Romanticism, and when Romanticism failed, so did Emancipation. Even though the legal status of Jews in Europe continued to improve for some time after 1848, pro-Jewish sentiments became much less fashionable. During the second half of the 19th century, anti-Semitic movements began to spring up all over Europe calling for the repeal of Jewish Emancipation and new and even more severe measures against the Jews.

The strength of the anti-Jewish current in European society after 1848 was reflected in the weakness of the pro-Jewish current. The great weakness of the Bohemian tradition in Europe throughout its history was its inability to admit and openly champion its sympathy for the Jews. The Bohemians were always afraid of being Jew-baited. Only the daring few, such as the Anabaptists in Strasbourg in the 1520s, were willing to be taken for Jews. Most Bohemians held on to Christianity in some form as their "ticket of admission" to European society.

Jews who became Bohemians were also expected to become Christians to some degree. Bohemian culture was pro-Jewish relative to Catholic or Nazi culture, but even the Bohemians, for the most part, would not accept Jews as Jews. As Jacob Katz notes on page 202 of *Out of the Ghetto*: "Jews, even in countries where they had obtained political freedom, were economically advanced, and assimilated culturally, remained separate, even conspicuously so." A good indication of the strength of the taboo against being too Jewish among the Bohemians is the attitude towards the Jews shown by Karl Marx. Marx was baptised as a Christian but as an adult rejected all religion and professed himself an "atheist", "dialectical materialist" and "scientific socialist". Yet both in private and in public, Marx affected a typically Christian attitude towards the Jews. In *The Jewish Question*, Marx said that Judaism was just what the Christians had always said it was, a cult of money and greed. Marx's private letters, particularly those to Engels, who was of German Christian background, are filled with anti-Jewish expressions of the most vulgar and nasty kind. Marx was so eager not to be taken for a Jew that, as Padover relates in *Karl Marx*, he threatened to break off all relations with Charles Longuet, his son-in-law, for having written

in a French paper that Marx had suffered from "race prejudice" due to his Jewish origins.

Yet Marx must have suffered from something, for he continually inspired reactions of violent hostility in others. How strange that Marx, the great "scientific" thinker, could not perceive any connection between his problems in life and the fact that he was visibly of Jewish origin. Marx was so determined to succeed as a European that he simply refused to notice that he looked Jewish. Marx's great problem was his great gift, his unusual intellectual ability. Perhaps that is why he already felt himself condemned to a life in hell at the age of 19. Marx could not attain widespread recognition for his remarkable mind without denying his Jewishness; yet having denied himself, he had to deny others as well. Marx expressed this attitude not only in poems such as "The Player" but in his later writings, which revel in the theme of "the negation of the negation". Like Heine, whom he knew and admired, Marx was a great master of the art of mockery. Both Marx and Heine took themselves lightly, for deep in their hearts they must often have felt like traitors to their own people.

The fate of Jewish Bohemians who were perceived as too Jewish was that of Moses Hess. At one point a friend of Marx, who later mocked him as the "communist rabbi", Hess was a Bohemian of Jewish origin who never learned to turn up his nose at his own people. While Marx went on to become famous, Hess became more and more isolated. In 1862, he published a book called Rome and Jerusalem, declaring that Jews in Europe would never be free until they had a country of their own. The book was largely ignored because Hess had no standing in either Christian or Jewish society. Hess died poor and unknown in 1875, by which time Marx was already world famous as the leader of the first International.

The deep-seated ambivalence of even the most pro-Jewish Europeans towards the Jews is symbolized by an incident which occurred at the Brussels congress of the second International in 1891. The socialists of the second International were on record as favoring Jewish Emancipation. In *The Downtown Jews*, Ronald Sanders recounts how Abraham Cahan, a delegate to the Brussels congress from the United Hebrew Trades of New York City, attempted to put before the congress the question, "What shall be the stand of the organized workers of all countries concerning the Jewish question?" Pogroms or mas

sacres of Jews had begun again in 1881 in Russia, and Cahan thought that in view of the socialist stand in favor of Jewish Emancipation. the congress would vote at least a resolution condemning the pogroms in Russia.

Cahan was in for a rude awakening. As soon as he submitted his motion, he was approached by Paul Singer, head of the German socialists, and Victor Adler, leader of the Austrian socialists, and asked to withdraw it. Both Singer and Adler were Jews. When Cahan persisted, he was then approached by the chief rabbi of Brussels, who also asked him to withdraw his motion. Cahan refused to be deterred: but once debate began on his motion, he soon realized what Singer, Adler and the chief rabbi of Brussels were afraid of. Most participants in the discussion attacked the Jews, and the congress finally voted a resolution condemning " both anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism" . There is an old Jewish saying which goes: with friends like these. who needs enemies?

Bohemianism turned out to be a cult of youth. It is the natural tendency of young people to wish to define themselves as different from those who have gone before them. Only as people age do they begin to see themselves more and more as resembling previous generations. Differences in family background which are easily ignored by young lovers may nonetheless loom large in later life. European Bohemianism was open to love between Christian and Jew, but only as young people love, without tomorrow. When tomorrow came, it turned out to be the same old story. The Jews were expected to become Christians. When they did not, they were first isolated, then denounced. then killed. By the time of Auschwitz, there were few Bohemians left in Europe, and fewer Jews.

## Chapter Eleven

### The Holocaust

For seven long years, the Holocaust burned like a dark star in the mind of the human race. Everyone knew, yet no one knew. Only in retrospect did the Holocaust become fully visible; and even in retrospect, it is still difficult to understand. Why on earth should the Nazis have wanted to murder all those Jews?

The most obvious and fundamental answer is that the Europeans were already in the habit of killing Jews . Many tens of thousands of Jews were murdered by the pro-Czarist White armies during the Russian civil war of 1918-20. During the "Middle Ages" and early modern period in Europe, Jews had often been murdered in the tens or even hundreds of thousands. The streets and homes and public buildings of Europe were filled with images of a tortured, murdered Jew. The Nazis would never have conceived of attempting to kill all of the Jews in Europe had there not already existed a long tradition of European torture and murder of Jews .

Until the 19th century, the dominant ideology of Jew-torture and Jew-murder in Europe was Christianity, particularly of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox varieties. The Nazis came out of the Christian tradition and drew heavily upon it for their accusations against the Jews. Indeed, in his own mind, Adolf Hitler was a good Christian. On page 423 of the edition of *Mein Kampf* published in New York in 1940, Hitler declared that Judaism was alien to "true Christianity". Hitler went on to speak of the " Sublime Founder of the new doctrine" who "even took to the whip" to drive the Jews from the "Lord's temple". On page 365, Hitler called for a return to the, "dogmatic fundamentals" of the Christian faith.

That Hitler saw himself as continuing the traditional Christian campaign against the Jews is shown very clearly by Rosemary Ruether in *Faith and Fratricide*. On page 223, she states:

The Christian background to the Aryan laws is illustrated by an incident reported in Hitler's Table Talk. Here, he reports that two bishops came to confront him on the issue of Nazi racial policy. Hitler replied that he was only putting into effect what Christianity had preached and practiced for 2000 years.

Nor was the link between traditional Christian anti-Semitism and Nazi anti-Semitism only in Hitler's mind. Many Christians, particularly of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox varieties, actively collaborated with and assisted the Nazis in their efforts to murder the Jews of Europe. Most Nazis, including Hitler himself, had at one time been practicing Christians. Their hatred of Jews was rooted in the traditional Christian hatred of Jews, but went beyond it.

Christianity was even more an ideology of Jew-torture than it was of Jew-murder. No matter how anti-Jewish the Christians became, they could never quite forget that their "god" was a Jew. They were too dependent on Judaism to be really whole-hearted and thorough-going in their efforts to stamp it out. A crucified Jew was an appropriate symbol for the ghetto system, under which Jew-murder was but an element in a larger program of Jew-torture, whose ultimate reward was supposed to lie in the eventual conversion of the Jews to Christianity. But the Nazis had no such ambitions. They saw that the ghetto system had failed. By 1919, the year in which the Nazi party was founded, Jews were escaping from the ghetto even in Russia. It was the collapse of the ghetto system which was the immediate and specific cause of the Holocaust, for it confronted European society with a choice that it had not previously faced.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 precipitated this choice by extending Jewish Emancipation to the former territories of the Czarist empire, where most European Jews lived at this time. By 1919, Jews were theoretically free to live anywhere in Europe. Jewish influence on European society, which had previously been held in check by ghetto walls, had increased to the point where the Nazis perceived it as overwhelming. It was this perception of Jewish influence sweeping over Europe which lay behind the intense Nazi hatred of the Jews. They felt that if they did not get the Jews, the Jews would get them. They saw Jewish influence as working against them, and since the traditional technique of isolating and containing Jewish influence within the ghetto had failed, they saw no other way of eliminating Jewish influence in Europe than by eliminating the Jews altogether.

Most writers on the Holocaust, not wishing to appear to agree with the Nazis, have dismissed their charges of Jewish influence in Europe as "paranoid" and "irrational". No doubt the Nazi image of Jewish influence contained many paranoid and irrational features, to say nothing of just plain dishonesty. The Jews were not so powerful as the Nazis said they were, nor was their influence the outcome of a secret conspiracy, nor was it exercised for primarily negative and destructive purposes. Yet no matter how distorted, exaggerated and malicious the Nazi image of Jewish influence in Europe may have been, it did have a certain basis in fact. Jews did exert considerable influence on European society at this time, and on the whole this influence was exercised in a direction which ran counter to that in which the Nazis wished to go. The Nazis would not have hated the Jews so much if they did not fear them; and they would not have feared them entirely without reason.

### Jewish Influence

The Nazis were not the only ones who noticed Jewish influence at work in Europe in 1939. England had just issued the Balfour Declaration in favor of a Jewish National Home in Palestine; Trotsky, a Russian Jew, stood at the head of the Red Army of the Soviets; Socialist and Communist parties, many of them under Jewish leaders, were contending for power everywhere in Europe. Most fundamentally, the Czarist empire, which had been the main bulwark of the ghetto system in Europe ever since the French Revolution of 1789, had just been overthrown. Jewish writers, artists, scientists, politicians and bankers were appearing in prominent roles in many European countries. In Germany, where the Kaiser had just been deposed and a Republic proclaimed, the main author of the constitution of the new Weimar Republic was a Jew named Hugo Preuss.

Although a small minority in Germany, forming less than 1 % of the population, Jews did play an important role in German cultural and political life. Jewish influence in Germany as elsewhere was generally exercised in a "liberal" or "progressive" direction. In *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, Karl Schleunes cites on page 35 a 1966 study by Jacob Toury which shows that "nearly 90 percent of Germany's politically conscious Jews identified themselves with liberal or progressive parties after 1870". Jews were among the leaders of

all the "left wing" parties in Germany, from the Communists to the National Liberals. Rosa Luxemburg, the main founder of the German Communist party, was of Jewish origin. Edward Lasker and Ludwig Bamberger, the founders of the National Liberals, were also of Jewish origin.

The largest "left wing" party in Germany, the Social Democrats, was also the most Jewish-identified. Ferdinand Lassalle, the founder of the German Social Democrats, was not only of Jewish origin but, at least in his youth, an ardent Jewish nationalist. In *Revolutionary Jews From Marx to Trotsky*, Robert Wistrich cites on page 47 the following passage from Lassalle's diary, written in 1840 when he was 14 years old:

I could risk my life to deliver the Jews from their present crushing condition. I would not even shrink from the scaffold could I but once more make of them a respected people. Oh, when I indulge in my childish dreams, so it is ever my favorite idea to stand armed at the head of the Jews and make them independent.

And George Brandes, in his biography *Ferdinand Lassalle*, cites an even more fiery passage from the same diary:

Again the preposterous story appears, that the Jews make use of the blood of Christians. The same story, in Damascus, in Rhodes and in Lemberg. The fact that every corner of the world makes the same charge seems to me an indication that the time is ripe for us to help ourselves in reality by the shedding of Christian blood. God helps those who help themselves. The dice are on the board, and only the players are wanted.

Although Lassalle toned down his Jewish nationalism in later life, he was still sufficiently Jewish-identified for Marx to call him, in a letter to Engels, "the most barbarous of all the Yids from Poland". This remark is cited on page 425 of Volume 3 of Poliakov's *The History of Anti-Semitism*, along with many others in the same vein, such as Marx's assertion regarding Lassalle that "the shape of his head and his hair show that he is descended from the Negroes who joined Moses' flock at the time of the exodus from Egypt".

Marx himself was on the dark side and had no doubt heard many such remarks directed at him. Despite his baptism as a Christian and

public stance of hostility to the Jewish people, Marx was nonetheless perceived as a Jew by most Europeans. Another of the founders of the German Social Democrats was Moses Hess, the author of *Rome and Jerusalem*, calling for the return of the Jewish people to the land of Palestine. The closing paragraph of *Rome and Jerusalem* reads as follows:

The age of race dominance is at an end. Even the smallest people, whether it belongs to the Germanic or Romance, Slavic or Finnic, Celtic or Semitic races, as soon as it advances its claims to a place among the historical nations, will find sympathetic supporters in the powerful civilized Western nations. Like the patriots of other unfortunate nations, the German patriots can attain their aim only by means of a friendly alliance with the progressive and powerful nations of the world. But if they continue to conjure themselves, as well as the German people, with the might and glory of the "German Sword", they will only add to the old unpardonable mistakes, grave new ones; they will only play into the hands of the reaction, and drag all Germany along with them .

After the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, Hess wrote another book in which, according to the introduction to *Rome and Jerusalem*, "he advocated an alliance of all nations against Prussianized Germany" . It was hardly "paranoid" on the part of the Nazis to perceive such teachings as hostile to their cause.

In *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, Donald Niewyk analyzes the political attitudes of Jews in Germany during the period of the rise of Hitler to power. Niewyk shows that during the 1920s, most German Jews voted for the German Democratic party, a relatively small "progressive" party standing somewhere between the National Liberals and the Social Democrats. After 1930, when the German Democratic party began to fall apart, the Jewish vote shifted to the Social Democrats. At no time did any significant number of Jews support the "right wing" or "conservative" parties. This was in large part because these parties were overtly anti-Semitic, but also because most German Jews did not agree with their basic outlook . The German Jews were not anti-German but they were anti-imperialist, and German imperialism was what all the "right wing" parties, including the Nazis, stood for. Nazi propaganda distorted the true nature of German Jewish opposition to German imperialism by presenting it as the outgrowth of

a secret Jewish conspiracy against the German nation. In reality the German Jews were proud to be Germans. They fought in the German army during the first World War, sustaining casualties at a higher rate than non-Jews, because they managed to convince themselves that it was a defensive war on the part of Germany against Russian Czarism. But it is true that after the Czar was overthrown in Russia in 1917, many German Jews played a prominent role in the movement to end the war and overthrow the Kaiser. The German Jews had no desire for a "Greater Germany", a German empire in which military and autocratic values would be supreme. They wanted a Germany at peace with other nations, living under a democratic and republican form of government. This is just what the Nazis did not want, for they saw that in a peaceful , democratic Germany, there would be little place for them.

The Nazis liked to think of themselves as German nationalists, but they were above all German imperialists. It was the German Jews, to their sorrow, who loved Germany as it was; the Nazis only loved Germany as it would be once they had conquered the world. They cared little for the actual Germans, whose lives they did not hesitate to sacrifice in the millions in pursuit of their ambitious schemes of world domination. Had the Nazis really wanted that German unity of which they spoke so much, they could have had it. But for them, German unity was but a stepping stone to a German empire, and a German empire was simply not a realistic goal. Not enough Germans, too many Russians, too many nations yearning to be free . The Nazis would have been better off listening to Moses Hess, for they did indeed "add to the old unpardonable mistakes , grave new ones" . Niewyk in *The Jews in Weimar Germany* brings out the link between pro-imperialism and anti-Semitism in Germany. On page 46, Niewyk points out that the largest anti-Semitic organization in Germany prior to the rise of the Nazis was something called the "German Popular League for Defense and Defiance". Founded in 1919, this group used the swastika as its emblem and had a membership of 200,000 prior to 1922, when it was broken up by the Weimar Republic. Most of its founders were former members of the Pan-German League, "which had been established twenty-five years earlier by supernationalist elements to spur the Kaiser on to a more belligerent foreign policy". Heinrich Class, the founder of the "League for Defense and Defiance", had also been the chairman of the Pan-German

League; he had written a book in 1912 under a pseudonym urging the Kaiser to strip the German Jews of their citizenship. All the German imperialists, not only the Nazis, hated the Jews, whom they perceived, basically accurately, as foes of German imperialism.

The attitude of the German imperialists towards the Jews is typified by a remark cited on page 54 of *The Catastrophe of European Jewry* edited by Gutman and Rothkirchen. In a tract written in 1922, the German anti-Semite Hans Blüthner said of the Jews: "Their task is to prevent the Empire. Every Jew, of high position or low, shares in this task ." This remark is "paranoid" and "irrational" in the sense that it associates Jewish opposition to German imperialism with some kind of mysterious conspiracy to which every Jew was supposed to belong. Yet despite its "paranoid" and "irrational" features, it is not fundamentally false. Most German Jews did want "to prevent the Empire" , and with good reason. The Nazis murdered at least 40 million people in their efforts to achieve "the Empire", and still they did not succeed . The only problem with Jewish influence in Germany was that there was not enough of it. Now the Germans would be glad to live in a peaceful, united Germany, but it is doubtful that they ever will.

### Self-Determination

The "paranoid" and "irrational" character of anti-Semitic propaganda was due in large part to its dishonesty . The Nazis always had to ascribe negative motives to the Jews in order to portray them in the worst possible light. If the Jews were hostile to German imperialism, it could not be because they favored peace and democracy instead but only for some negative motive. And since these negative motives for the most part did not exist, the Nazis were forced to invent them. Hence they were always accusing the Jews of secret conspiracies. Had they wished to, they could easily have recognized the real reasons for Jewish opposition to German imperialism. The Nazis were not really so "paranoid" and "irrational" as they appeared, just dishonest and murderous.

Jewish opposition to German imperialism was rooted in the traditional Jewish way of life , which had stressed the ideals of peace, democracy and national self-determination, as contrasted with those of war, dictatorship and empire. Peace, democracy and national self-de

termination were closely related ideals. They were the ideals, not only of the Jews, but of the entire "liberal" and "progressive" movement in Europe. They were associated with the French Revolution of 1789, with the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848 and with the Russian Revolution of 1917. Above all, they were associated with the Versailles treaty of 1919, which established the "League of Nations" on the basis of the concept of national self-determination.

No group in European society was more strongly committed to these ideals than the Jews. As a small nation, the Jews had always championed the concept of national self-determination. As the descendants of runaway slaves, the Jews had always favored a more democratic and egalitarian social order. Throughout the "Middle Ages" and the early modern period, the Jews had been one of the few groups in European society which continued to champion these ideals. Traditional Jewish culture in Europe may have seemed authoritarian and stifling to later generations of "Emancipated" Jews, but relative to traditional Christian culture, it was a hotbed of democracy. In *Life Is With People*, Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog show how traditional Jewish culture fostered a democratic and critical spirit among European Jews. On page 120, they state:

The spirit of the talmudic training is the spirit of the shtetl itself. The same elements are present in the attitudes towards scholastic authority and in the attitudes towards social status. In any area, recognition of a clearly defined and minutely graded hierarchy is combined with an equally clear assumption that potentially all men are equal. The man at the top of the social or economic scale is subject to question and disapproval on the part of the poor and humble. The deeds and words of any leader are subject to criticism and discussion, if not openly then secretly, at home or in the besmedresh [shu I or house of study]. For every individual the final appeal must be to his own judgment; if the subject matter itself is beyond him, then he must debate with himself the reliability of conflicting authorities.

It was no accident that the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution, which popularized democratic values in Europe, should have adopted a relatively sympathetic attitude towards the Jews. The French Revolution also deepened the Jewish commitment to democratic values by linking these values with Jewish Emancipation. At the same time, the French Revolution also held out to the Jews,

for the first time in European history, the possibility of European support for Jewish national aspirations. Not only did the French revolutionaries favor Jewish Emancipation, but at least in certain circles, there also existed some support for Jewish Zionism. In *Napoleon and the Jews*, Franz Kobler shows that during the French invasion of Egypt and Syria in 1799, Napoleon actually toyed with the idea of calling upon the Jews of Europe to return to Palestine with French aid. On page 57, Kobler gives the text of a proclamation to this effect which Napoleon drafted but then decided not to issue. The proclamation concluded:

Hasten! Now is the moment which may not return for thousands of years, to claim the restoration of your rights among the population of the universe, which had been shamefully withheld from you for thousands of years, your political existence as a nation among the nations, and the unlimited natural right to worship Yehovah in accordance with your faith, publicly and in likelihood for ever.

A similar proclamation, but addressed only to "the Jews of Africa and Asia", was in fact published by Napoleon, in France, at this time. Although Napoleon was only toying with Zionism, many European Jews nonetheless believed that a French victory in the Napoleonic wars would usher in the Messianic era. In *The Golden Tradition*, Lucy Dawidowicz reprints some of the tales told about Menahem Mendel, the "Seer of Lublin", who was always praying for Napoleon to defeat the Czar. One passage reads:

But Menahem Mendel of Rymanow, while baking matzohs for Passover, prayed hard for Napoleon to win the war, and that very day Napoleon won. At that time, the sainted rebbe of Ropshits happened to be present. He wept and said to the rebbe of Rymanow, "I foresee, if it will be so, that many Jews will be killed and blood rise to the feet. The time of redemption will arrive and the Messiah will come." Something like this did in fact happen in the 20th century after the Czar was overthrown in 1917.

In *Rome and Jerusalem*, published in 1862, Moses Hess still looked to the French as the main supporters of the concept of national self-determination in Europe, including Jewish national self-determination.

On page 129 of *Rome and Jerusalem*, Hess wrote:

When political conditions in the Orient shape themselves so as to permit the organization of a beginning of the restoration of a Jewish State, this beginning will express itself in the founding of Jewish colonies in the land of their ancestors, to which enterprise France will undoubtedly lend a hand.

On page 148, Hess even went so far as to state:

It is to the interest of France to see that the road leading to India and China should be settled by a people which will be loyal to the cause of France to the end, in order that it may fulfil the historical mission which has fallen to it as a legacy from the great Revolution.

Hess saw French and Jewish interests as closely aligned because he associated both with the principles of the French Revolution. Hitler made this same association, in his "paranoid" and "irrational" manner, when he declared on page 907 of Mein Kampf that France was "the most terrible enemy" of Germany because her national interests tied in with those of the Jews.

The only reason this was true was because the Germans had given both groups good cause to fear them. The Germans were the most imperialist-minded group in Europe because they had won the most battles. The very name France was of German origin, after the Franks. German invaders who conquered Gaul in the 6th century CE. The name England comes from the Angles, also Germans, who invaded the Celtic isles at this same time. There is no country in Europe that has not been invaded by Germans from time to time. Imperialist culture was stronger and democratic culture weaker in Germany than anywhere else in Europe. Through historical experience, the French learned that the only way they could survive as a nation was by uniting the other nations of Europe around the concept of national self-determination. The French alliance with the Jews was symbolic of their readiness to unite with all the oppressed nations of Europe. It was not "paranoid" of Hitler to perceive this alliance as directed against German imperialism, only dishonest to forget why.

The policy which triumphed at Versailles in 1919 was one which had long been identified both with the French and with the Jews. The Balfour Declaration, the creation of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia and the Baltic states, the formation of the "League

of Nations" and the establishment of the Weimar Republic in Germany all formed part of a single policy, whose guiding thought was the concept of national self-determination. If ever there was a Jewish concept, this was it. Hitler was not being "paranoid", simply malicious, when he stated on page 196 of *Mein Kampf*: "Actually the Mosaic religion is nothing but a doctrine of the preservation of the Jewish race." Yes, and it works too. By surviving, the Jews of Europe helped to inspire all the other oppressed nations of Europe to survive. It was not "paranoid" or "irrational" for the Nazis to perceive the Jews as central to the policy of Versailles.

On page 58 of *Rome and Jerusalem*, Moses Hess presents a very similar view of Judaism to that uttered in a spiteful manner by Hitler with his "doctrine of the preservation of the Jewish race". Moses Hess put it this way:

It is the Jewish conception of the family which gave rise to the vivid belief in the continuity of the spirit in human history. This belief, which is one of the fairest blossoms of Judaism, the roots of which are to be found in Jewish family love and the trunk in Jewish patriotism, has, in the course of ages, shrunk to the belief in the atomistic immortality of the individual soul; and thus, torn from its roots and trunk, has withered and decayed.

Hitler hated the Jews for loving each other, for he did not love the Germans. His last thoughts, in his final will and testament, were not of the Germans but of the Jews, with whom he was obsessed.

The fundamental element of dishonesty in Hitler's perception of the Jews did not lie in his belief that they stood in his way. It lay in his insistence that they wished to stand in his way. It was not to spite Hitler that the Jews of Europe had struggled for so long to survive. They loved each other for the same reason as most people love each other, because it is the nature of people to love each other. But those who are consumed with hate are unable to love. Hitler was widely thought to be sexually impotent. His image of the Jews was grossly distorted by hatred and dishonesty, generated in large part by fear and envy, but it was not fundamentally "paranoid" or "irrational". The Jews did represent a formidable obstacle to German imperialism. It was the imperialism itself that was "irrational", not the Nazi perception of the Jews as opposed to it.

## Communism

In *Essays on Anti-Semitism*, Koppel Pinson notes that it "remains a fact that during the entire period between 1918 and 1939 the blazing fire of antisemitism in the world was fed with more fuel from the bogey of 'Jewish Bolshevism' than from any other single charge against the Jews". The Nazis were convinced that the Jews were responsible for Communism. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler called Marxism a "Jewish doctrine", declaring on page 83: "The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle in nature; instead of the eternal privilege of force and strength, it places the mass of numbers and its deadweight." Pointing to Marx, Trotsky, Luxemburg and other Jews prominently identified with the origins of Communism in Europe, the Nazis were constantly proclaiming that Communism was a Jewish plot. Most writers on the Holocaust have reacted to these charges by attempting to disassociate Communism and Judaism as much as possible.

It is true that most Communists were not Jews, nor did most Jews support the Communists. Yet many of the founders of the Communist movement in Europe were indeed of Jewish origin. Communism in Europe was not a Jewish plot, but it did have something to do with the Jews, particularly in Russia.

Communism in the 20th century began as the ideology of the Bolshevik or "Majority" faction of the Russian Social Democrats. Within the Russian Social Democratic movement, the Bolsheviks were far less Jewish-identified than their rivals, the Menshevik or "Minority" faction. Most of the Menshevik leaders were Jewish, and they maintained close relations with the Yiddish-speaking Bund, the main organization of Jewish workers in Russia. Most of the Bolshevik leaders were non-Jewish, and they adopted a hostile attitude towards the Bund, which they constantly accused of "separatist" tendencies, as if the Jewish workers were not already separated from the Russian workers by being confined in a ghetto. On the other hand, the Bolsheviks did have some Jewish leaders and, like the Mensheviks, they favored Jewish Emancipation in Russia. In the eyes of most Russians, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks alike were perceived as Jewish-identified, because they supported Jewish Emancipation at a time when the Czarist authorities were trying to instigate pogroms or massacres of the Jews.

In *Trotsky and the Jews*, Joseph Nedava shows that Leon Trotsky,

one of the main Russian Communist leaders for a time after 1917, was far more Jewish-identified than he is usually pictured or cared to picture himself. As leader of the Red Army, Trotsky agreed to the formation of all-Jewish units, but his orders were revoked as a result of opposition from within the Communist party. Trotsky even attended the 1903 Zionist congress in Basel, though only as an observer. And at the 1903 congress of the Russian Social Democrats, Trotsky declared that although many Jewish Social Democrats were critical of the Bund, they "regarded and still regard themselves as representatives of the Jewish proletariat". "Among whom they have never worked", shouted a Bundist in response, well aware that Trotsky like most Jewish Social Democrats outside the Bund could not speak Yiddish, the language of the Jewish working class in Russia. Yet Trotsky was still more Jewish-identified than most Russian Communists, calling himself at one time the "Russian Lasalle". Communist support for Jewish Emancipation in Russia was a major issue in the Russian civil war of 1918-20, during which tens of thousands of Jews were massacred by the anti-Communist White armies. The Communists in Russia made anti-Semitism a crime, abolished all legal restrictions on the Jews and elevated many persons of Jewish origin to high positions in their government. Compared with what the Russians were used to, Communism in Russia, particularly at first, was indisputably pro-Jewish. Indeed, on a fundamental level, it was far more pro-Jewish than anything which had yet been seen in Europe. Jewish Emancipation in Western and Central Europe had only applied to a relatively small, largely middle class minority of European Jews. Jewish Emancipation in Russia after 1917 applied to a large proportion of European Jews, most of them workers or poor peddlers. It was just this which the Nazis, and many others too, found so shocking.

Nazi propaganda linking Communism with the Jews played a major role in pressuring the Communists to retreat from their original pro-Jewish stance. This retreat began during the 1920s with the start of a campaign against "Trotskyism" in the Soviet Union. In Germany, where the Communists felt particularly vulnerable to Nazi charges of Jewish influence, the shift was especially dramatic. Although most of the early leaders of the German Communist party were of Jewish origin, by the early 1930s the party leadership was entirely non-Jewish. In *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, Niewyk notes on page

32: "Not a single Jew was among the one hundred Communists sent to the last freely elected Reichstag." In fact , as Niewyk brings our on page 69, by 1933 the German Communists had gone so far as to issue a leaflet containing the lines: "SA and SS! You have shot enough workers. When will you hang the first Jew?"

Following the rise to power of Hitler in Germany in 1933, the Communists in the Soviet Union began to retreat even further from their previous pro-Jewish stance. During the 1930s, most of the Jewish Communist leaders in Russia were executed and Jewish cultural institutions sharply restricted. This trend culminated in the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. The anti-Jewish trend in the Soviet Union was closely associated with Stalin , leader of the Russian Communists from the late 1920s onwards, who was one of the least sympathetic to the Jews of all the Russian Communist leaders. Yet even Stalin , by Czarist standards, would have to be considered pro-Jewish. Jews did play a certain role in his government, nor was there any repetition of the Czarist pogroms under his rule.

Moreover, following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Stalin and the Communists became the most deadly and effective enemies of the Nazis in the world. It was, after all, Russian troops under Stalin's ultimate command who finally caused the suicide of Hitler as they closed in on Berlin in 1945 . And at the time of the birth of the state of Israel in 1947-48 , the Soviet Union played a key role in bringing about United Nations recognition of Israel. In The u.s. and Israel: 1945-1973, Herbert Druks points out that it was the Soviet Union, not the United States, which was the first country in the world to give Israel "de jure" recognition. On page 50, Druks shows that United States support for Israel was in large measure prompted by prior Soviet support:

Israel had proclaimed independence , and the Soviet Union supported her. Truman had no wish to see the Soviets establish bases there and , regardless of what the old guard State Department and Defense Department establishment may have had against the Jewish State, Truman extended his recognition. He would not tolerate any potential for the breeding of Soviet influence in Israel.

Stalin was still the head of the Soviet government at this time.

Stalin, like Napoleon, with whom he had much in common, was personally unsympathetic to the Jewish people yet driven by historical

circumstances to aid the Jewish cause in many ways. Before he was a dictator, Stalin was a revolutionary. He too wrote youthful poetry. Robert Tucker in *Stalin As Revolutionary* on page 131 cites the following lines from a poem which Stalin wrote in 1895 at the age of 16:

Know this: He who fell like ashes to the ground,  
He who was ever oppressed,  
Will rise higher than the great mountains  
On the wings of a bright hope.

However little he may have loved the Jews, Stalin was much like them in his sense of identity with the poor and oppressed. Even as dictator, Stalin remained a revolutionary on a world scale, and just for this reason, was often led to make common cause with the Jews.

Communism as it developed in the Soviet Union during the time of Stalin could be described as an anti-Jewish trend within a pro-Jewish movement. The Bolsheviks from the start were much less Jewish identified than most other Russian socialists. This was undoubtedly one reason why they ultimately proved more popular with the Russian people than the Mensheviks, who were the most clearly Jewish identified socialist faction. The Communists were about as pro-Jewish as they could be and still remain in power in Russia. They did not turn against the Jews primarily because of an inherently anti-Semitic attitude, but rather due to pressure from the Nazis and from their own people, who did not prove able to shake off centuries of Czarist propaganda as quickly as had first appeared.

Although the Nazis loved to link up the Communists and the Jews in their propaganda, the real aim of this propaganda was to drive a wedge between them. Nazi policy in relation to the Communists and the Jews is symbolized by an incident recounted in *They Fought Back*, edited by Yuri Suhl. On page 137, Reuben Ainsztein describes how the Nazis tortured the Jews of Bialystok prior to murdering them: On July 30, thousands of Jews were driven through the streets to the accompaniment of the Polish anti-Semites' howling: "Judeo-Communists."

Forced to dress in their best clothes, the large crowd of Jewish men and women were driven to the Jewish cemetery and there compelled to behold busts of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin and then to bury them. The spectacle was staged by the Germans to mark the end of the "Judeo-Commune" in the city.

A major point of the spectacle was to make it impossible to be a "Judeo-Communist". "Judea-Communism" was not a figment of the Nazi imagination; it was a real possibility within the European revolutionary movement which the Nazis, to a considerable degree, succeeded in suppressing by making it so difficult to be a "Judea-Communist".

## Anti-Semitism

The Nazis stressed the link between the Jews and the Communists in their propaganda because they wished to alarm the European middle and upper classes against the Jews. Nazi propaganda also played on the traditional anti-Semitism of the European middle and upper classes, which had only been somewhat modified under the influence of Romanticism and Jewish Emancipation. The Nazis, sometimes sincerely, sometimes insincerely, constantly held out their hand to the "conservative" forces in European society on the basis of their mutual anti-Communism and anti-Semitism. This policy brought the Nazis the active collaboration and support of most "right wing" elements in Europe until around 1943-44, when the military balance of power began to shift perceptibly against them.

Nazi anti-Semitism grew out of and remained closely linked to Christian anti-Semitism. In *Christians and Jews in Germany*, Uriel Tal shows that the first "racial" anti-Semites in Germany, who began to emerge during the 1880s, came right out of earlier Christian anti-Semitic groups. On page 240, Tal states:

These first cells of political and racial anti-Semitism regarded themselves as organizations that were primarily concerned with the preservation of Christian society, economy, morality and nationalism .

On page 305, Tal concludes that "the racial anti-Semites, despite their antagonism toward traditional Christianity, learned much from it".

Indeed, right up to the time of the first World War, the "racial" anti-Semites were still trying to hold on to "Christ" by publishing numerous books and articles devoted to proving that "Jesus" was actually a German from the Rhineland.

Nor did Christian anti-Semitism disappear merely because of the emergence of the even more murderous "racial" anti-Semitism of the Nazis . As Jules Isaac notes on page 113 of *The Teaching of Con*

tempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism, the Roman Pope Pius 11, in a 1937 pronouncement directed at Germany, spoke of "Christ, who received his human nature from a people which was to crucify him" . And Alan Davies, in Anti-Semitism and the Christian Mind, on page 70, cites a similar statement made in 1933 by Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich, who told his flock:

After the death of Christ Israel was dismissed from the service of Revelation.

She had not known the time of her visitation. She had repudiated and rejected the Lord's Anointed, had driven Him to the Cross.

Then the veil of the Temple was rent, and with it the covenant between the Lord and His people. The daughters of Sian received the bill of divorce, and from that time forth Assuerus wanders, for ever restless, over the face of the earth.

Yet Faulhaber is treated in most histories of the period as a protector of the Jews, and was in fact called the "Jewish Cardinal" by the Nazis because of his opposition to certain of their policies.

Many Christian leaders during the time of the rise of Hitler spoke a language hardly distinguishable from that of the Nazis so far as the Jews were concerned. In *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, Niewyk cites on page 57 a German Franciscan theologian, Erhard Schlund, who published a book in 1925 attacking "the destructive influence of the Jews on religion, morals, literature, art, and in political and social life" and calling the Jews an "alien race". Niewyk, speaking of Germany in the 1920s, states on page 55 that "the Christian churches spawned much of the Judeophobia of the time". Nor were the Catholics the only offenders, for as Niewyk notes on page 58, the Jews themselves considered the Protestant Evangelical Christians even more anti-Semitic than the Catholics.

The Christian basis of Nazi anti-Semitism is clearly shown by the manner in which the Nazis used the term "Aryan". The original Aryans were the Indo-European invaders who swept over Europe in the 2nd millenium BCE, merging with the existing population but imposing their language on the people in most areas. There was no way in the Europe of the 20th century for anyone to know who was or was not of Aryan descent, or even what the original Aryans had looked like. In practice, the Nazis used "Aryan" as a code word for Christian. Almost all Europeans were classified as "Aryans" for legal purposes by the Nazis, provided that they were not Jews. Even the Hungarians,

who were of Turkish origin and had only arrived in Europe during the "Dark Ages", were classified as "Aryans" by the Nazis. simply because they were Christians. Conversely, a person of Jewish origin, no matter how closely they may have conformed in their physical appearance to the Nazi concept of an "Aryan", was considered a "Semite". Despite all the Nazi talk of "race", when it came right down to it, the Nazi distinction between "Aryan" and "Semite" was a religious distinction between Christian and Jew.

Christian anti-Semitism was fundamental to Nazi anti-Semitism because it was responsible for the atmosphere of blame and hostility which already surrounded the Jews. Christian anti-Semitism created the context in which the Nazis could think that if the Jews stood in their way. then it was only logical to kill them. Other groups also stood in the way of the Nazis, but towards none of them, not even the Communists, did the Nazis direct such intense hostility as they directed towards the Jews . They felt this hostility above all because they had already been conditioned by Christian anti-Semitism to think of hostility towards the Jews as a legitimate and natural emotion. Even without the Christian influence, the Nazis would still have perceived the Jews as enemies; but Christianity led them to think of the Jews not only as enemies but enemies of a special type, enemies whom it was legitimate to hate and kill.

Christianity generated this attitude not only through its tradition of blaming and killing Jews but even more through its treatment of "Jesus" himself. Centuries of symbolic torture, crucifixion and eating of "Jesus" had bred in the Christian Europeans an insatiable need to do likewise with all Jews. The real situation of the Jewish people in Christian Europe was brought out with terrible clarity by the Jewish writer Y.L. Gordon following the outbreak of the pogroms in Russia in 1881. In a poem called "The Herd of God" , cited on page 120 of The Origins of Zionism by David Vital , Gordon wrote:

Who are we, you will ask, what is our life,  
 Are we a nation like the nations round about us  
 Or just a community of men of one religion?  
 Let me tell you the secret . . .

We are not a nation, not a community, only-a herd .  
 The herd of God , the holy cattle are we,  
 The earth is an altar set before us  
 To be a sacrifice we were created . . .

## The Holocaust

In the Holocaust, Jews were literally treated like cattle, shipped in cattle cars to specially prepared slaughterhouses. Seen in the light of the Holocaust, the Christian celebration of "Jesus Christ" as the "Lamb of God" takes on a truly diabolical appearance.

In *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945*, Lucy Dawidowicz states on page 30: "Modern German anti-Semitism was the bastard child of the union of Christian anti-Semitism with German nationalism." Nazi anti-Semitism represented an attempt to give German imperialism an ideological basis. The French fought for the Republic, the Russians fought for Communism-what did the Germans fight for? The Nazis answered that they fought to kill the Jews. The Nazis gave this answer because they thought it would be popular, just as the Republic or Communism were popular. That is why the Nazis were so deadly serious in their efforts to kill the Jews. Anti-Semitism was as fundamental to them as the Republic to France or Communism to the Russians. The Holocaust was not a private whim of Hitler or a few Nazis; it was an unspoken promise to the people of Europe, on which the Nazis fully intended to deliver.

## Chapter Twelve

### Zion

What the Nazis undoubtedly did not realize was that the Holocaust would provide the impetus for the birth of Israel. Knowledge of the murder of 6 million Jews in Europe was the main reason for the wave of agitation and armed struggle by Jews in Palestine which resulted in the birth of Israel in 1948. As had also happened with Antiochus Epiphanes and many others, the Nazi attempt to stamp out Judaism had just the opposite effect.

Zionism did not arise yesterday. The descendants of the Hebrew exiles in Iraq who returned to Judah in the 6th century BCE were Zionists. Indeed, the Hebrews who fled from Egypt under the leadership of Moses were already Zionists, in that they thought of themselves as returning to the land which had been promised them in Canaan. In every generation since the overthrow of Judah by the Romans, there have been Zionists, some many, some few, who actively sought to return to Palestine and help build a Jewish center there.

The deep roots of modern Zionism have been concealed by the mystification of Jewish history in Christian, Muslim and Marxist historiography alike. Zionist movements on a mass scale have appeared in almost every century since the overthrow of Judah by the Romans. The Jews actually did take Jerusalem in the 7th century and achieved a strong presence in Palestine in the 10th century and again in the 16th century. In the 17th century, hundreds of thousands of Jews in the Mediterranean region held mass demonstrations in favor of a would-be Messiah, Sabbetai Zevi, who had promised to win the approval of the Sultan for a Jewish state in Palestine. Many of the early Hasidim were former followers of Sabbetai Zevi. The modern "political" Zionism of the 19th and 20th centuries was nothing other than traditional Jewish Messianism, whose time had come.

Modern political Zionism was able to come to power in the land of Israel because it linked its efforts with the efforts of a number of

countries, most notably England but also France, Russia and the United States, to dominate the world on the basis of some kind of revolutionary ideology. As it so happened, all the revolutionary ideologies involved were linked to Judaism and the Jews in some manner. Largely for this reason, the powerful leaders of these countries acted from time to time to aid the Zionists in Palestine. The most dramatic of these actions occurred in 1917, when the English government, speaking through Balfour, the Foreign Minister, pronounced itself in favor of the establishment of a Jewish "National Home" in Palestine.

In his *History of Zionism: 1600-1918*, Nahum Sokolow traces the origins of English support for Zionism to the English Revolution of the 17th century. Sokolow shows that pro-Zionist views were fairly common among the English Puritans. On page 43 of Volume 1, Sokolow cites the English Puritan, Thomas Brightman, writing in 1641

of the Jews: "What! Shall they return to Jerusalem again? There is nothing more certain: the prophets do everywhere confirm it." And on page 92 of Volume 1, Sokolow cites another English Protestant, Thomas Witherby, writing in the early 19th century as follows: Previous to the great and most conspicuous return of the Jews to their own land there will be a partial restoration of many of them to their land, which will probably be effected by the Protestant powers who may renounce their prejudices against them, and see that the non-acceptance of the Christian doctrines is not the bar to their restoration to the favour of God.

Sokolow cites many such statements by English Protestants, some of them in high places, appearing throughout the entire period from the English Revolution of the 17th century to the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

There were few Jews in England throughout most of this period. Jews had been banned from England at the end of the 13th century and were not permitted to return, and then only in small numbers, until the late 17th century. Indeed, many of the statements by Protestant writers favoring Zionism appeared in tracts by them which also favored the readmission of Jews to England. A full scale debate on this issue was held by the Protestants in the English Parliament under Oliver Cromwell; a Jewish spokesman from Holland, Manasseh ben Israel, was invited to present the Jewish position. On page 54 of Vol

ume of his History of Zionism. Sokolow notes that Puritan support for Zionism and for the readmission of Jews to England were related: Whoever studies Manasseh's writings and the Puritan literature of that epoch will have no difficulty in recognizing that the idea of national justice to the Jews underlies all the discussions and controversies and is common to all schools of thought. Thus Zionism has but brought to light and given practical form and a recognized position to a principle which had long consciously or unconsciously guided English opinion. The ideas of Readmission and Restoration originally formed a single stream in England before they separated to flow in distinct but parallel channels. Readmission, however, became an immediate practical result, whilst Restoration was left for the future.

Puritan support for "the idea of national justice to the Jews" grew in large part out of the fundamentally pro-Jewish orientation of all of the more radical Protestant groups.

This was true not only in England but also in the United States. where many Protestant sects began to adopt a pro-Zionist stance during the 19th century. In American Protestantism and a Jewish State. Hertzl Fishman notes on page 21 that the Mormon Council of Twelve passed a resolution in 1845 stating "that the Jews among all nations are hereby commanded, in the name of the Messiah, to prepare to return to Jerusalem in Palestine". In 1891, William Blackstone, author of *Jesus Is Coming*, presented a petition to President Harrison bearing the names of 413 prominent Christians and Jews and calling for the restoration of Israel. "Let us now restore them to the land of which they were so cruelly despoiled by our Roman ancestors", the petition stated. On page 59 of Volume 1 of his *History of Zionism*. Sokolow cites John Adams writing to a Jewish politician in the United States in the early 19th century: "I really wish the Jews again in Judea, an independent nation ."

Also underlying the pro-Zionist trend among the English Protestants was the bitter rivalry between English and Spanish imperialism. The Spanish empire was closely identified with the Roman Catholic church and the "orthodox" dream of European rule over the "Holy Land". Protestant support for Zionism aimed at undercutting the ideological foundations of the Spanish and Roman Catholic rule. At the same time, it formed a part of a new English and Protestant dream of empire, in which the restoration of the Jews to the "Holy Land" would

symbolize and legitimize the power of the English to dispense justice for the entire world. Sympathy for the Jews and dreams of empire were inextricably bound up together in the policy which resulted in the Balfour Declaration. This was also true of French, Russian and American policy, in which the same mix of genuine sympathy for the Jews and cold calculation of imperial advantage was also present. Yet although imperialist aid, particularly that of the English, played an important role in the rise of modern Zionism, the Muslim and Marxist image of Israel as an imperialist plot is fundamentally false. Zionism did not arise out of imperialism but out of the heart of Judaism itself. Nor were the Jews the only ones to take advantage of imperialist assistance in the Middle East. Imperialism aided the Zionists but also hindered them and aided their enemies. Despite the Balfour Declaration, when the chips were down, the English closed Palestine to Jewish immigration all through the Holocaust and even afterwards refused to permit the survivors to go there. Israel was born in struggle against the English; indeed, the Jews were the first to drive the English out of the Middle East. No imperialist power aided the Zionists on a consistent basis, but only from time to time, fitfully and with many reservations.

The Zionists who came to power in the land of Israel in 1948 were not imperialist agents but Jewish revolutionaries. They looked back to the Zealot movement of the early centuries of the Common Era as their main source of inspiration, and consciously associated their struggle for a Jewish nation with their struggle for a whole set of "progressive" ideals. Zionism was permeated with liberal, democratic, socialist, communist, feminist and pacifist ideals, which gave it a revolutionary character relative not only to traditional Christian and Muslim society but also to traditional Jewish society. Modern Zionism was no less revolutionary than earlier forms of Jewish Messianism; indeed, it was more revolutionary than most, because more successful.

### The Lovers of Zion

The key step in the transition from traditional Jewish Messianism to modern "political" Zionism came with the formation of the "Lovers of Zion" in Russia in the early 1880s. David Vital, in *The Origins of Zionism*, shows that the Lovers of Zion were responsible for the

formation of the first agricultural settlements by Jews in Palestine in the 1880s and 1890s. The very first agricultural commune was formed in 1882 by a group of Jewish students from Kharkov, members of a small organization called BILU, short for "Oh house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord" . These students thought of themselves as radicals and saw their commune, which proved shortlived, as a model of a revolutionary way of life. Most of the other settlements established in Palestine by Jews during the 1880s and 1890s were founded with the aid of the Lovers of Zion, which was organized in 1883 in Odessa.

By the 1890s, the Lovers of Zion had branches in most major Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. The members of the Lovers of Zion were rooted in traditional Jewish culture, but most of them were also familiar with the main trends in the secular European culture of their day. Something of their outlook is revealed by the following passage from an article by Ahad Ha'am, cited by Ben Halpern on page 74 of *The Idea of the Jewish State*. Ahad Ha'am, who was one of the leaders of the Lovers of Zion , contrasted himself with the typical "Emancipated" Jew as follows:

I may not be emancipated; but at least I have not sold my soul for emancipation. I at least can proclaim from the housetops that my kith and kin are dear to me wherever they are, without being constrained to find forced and unsatisfactory excuses. I at least can remember Jerusalem at other times than those of "di vine service": I can mourn for its loss, in public or in private, without being asked what Zion is to me, or I to Zion. I at least have no need to exalt my people to Heaven. to trumpet its superiority above all other nations, in order to find a justification for its existence. I at least know " why I remain a Jew" or rather, I can find no meaning in such a question. any more than if I were asked why I remain my father's son. I at least can speak my mind concerning the beliefs and opinions which [ have inherited from my ancestors , without fearing to snap the bond that unites me to my people. I can adopt that "scientific heresy which bears the name of Darwin," without any danger to my Judaism. In a word, I am my own. and my opinions and feelings are my own.

There appears in this passage a much more secular and critical spirit than was then prevalent in Jewish religious circles. This spirit was characteristic of the Lovers of Zion and reflected much the same blend

of nationalism and "enlightened" opinion as was then found among middle class revolutionaries everywhere in Europe. Indeed, in *Seeking Zion*, an early Zionist work published by Hirsch Kalischer in Posen in 1862, Italian, Polish and Hungarian nationalists were specifically mentioned as models for the Zionists.

From about 1900 onwards, the dominant trend among the Zionists of Eastern Europe became Labor Zionism. The Labor Zionists stood in much the same relation to the Lovers of Zion as the early socialist parties in Russia to the populist movement of the 1880s and 1890s. Labor Zionism was overtly socialist, stressing the formation of agricultural communes as the path both to socialism and a Jewish state in Palestine. Ya'akov Hurwitz, in his article, "The Kibbutz-Its Socialist and National Roots", appearing in *The Left Against Zion*, edited by Robert Wistrich, shows that the socialist and communal movement among the Russians played a major role in the rise of Labor Zionism. The Russian commune Krintza, which became widely known through the publication of a book called *The Sons of Krintza*. was a particularly important model. Hurwitz notes on page 36 that *The Sons of Krintza* was translated into Hebrew "and became a source of inspiration to young Jews dreaming of a better world".

The Labor Zionists became the dominant faction within the world Zionist movement during the 1930s under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion.

Ben-Gurion, who was one of the first Labor Zionists, was also one of the first Zionist leaders to insist on speaking only Hebrew and not any European language in Palestine. It was also Ben-Gurion, as pointed out by Michael Bar-Zohar in *Ben-Gurion: The Armed Prophet*. who was responsible for the formation of the first Jewish self-defense units, at Sejera in 1908. Among the Labor Zionists, revolutionary ideals and national feeling went hand in hand. The agricultural communes were conceived as models of a socialist and communal life, but also as the main base of a future Jewish army and Jewish state.

In *A History of Zionism*. Walter Laqueur shows that hostility to the revolutionary ideals of the Labor Zionists was one of the main reasons for anti-Jewish sentiment on the part of many Arab leaders. On page 246, Laqueur cites Jamal Husseini, secretary of the Arab Higher Committee, testifying before a British royal commission in 1937 against further Jewish immigration into Palestine on the following grounds:

As to the Communistic principles and ideas of Jewish immigrants, most repugnant to the religion, customs and ethical principles of this country, which are imported and disseminated, I need not dwell on them as these ideas are well known to have been imported by the Jewish community.

Speaking of the Jewish immigrants to Palestine, Laqueur himself states on page 222: "There is no doubt that their communal living, their radical political and social ideas, and the ostentatious equality they observed between the sexes among the new immigrants, shocked and dismayed most Arabs."

Arab accusations of a conspiracy between Zionism and Communism persisted well into the 1950s. In Arab Attitudes To Israel, Y. Harkabi notes on page 237:

Allegations of ties between Communism and the Jews and Zionists in Egypt may be found in Nasser's speeches during the early days of his rule. In the middle of 1954, for example, there was labour unrest in the country (several workers were hanged in Kafr al-Dawar). Nasser accused the Communists of organizing the disturbances and denounced Communism for its ties with Zionism.

Similar accusations were made in a book called Communism and Zionism are Twins published in Damascus by Ibrahim al-Hilu around this same time. Joseph Schechtman, on page 195 of On Wings of Eagles, reports that as late as 1955, the Egyptian embassy in Washington was handing out literature containing the lines: "Zionism and Communism are two distinctive forces with one political objective world domination. Both powers cooperate secretly and in public without friction since the power in the end will eventually go to Zionism."

The close relationship between revolutionary and national feeling in the birth of Israel is shown most clearly by the origins of the Palmakh. The Palmakh was the striking arm of the Labor Zionist selfdefense forces, the nucleus of the future Israeli army. In From Diplomacy to Resistance: A History of Jewish Palestine, 1939- 1945, Yehuda Bauer traces the origin of the Palmakh to the time of the Holocaust. He shows that the Palmakh was the creation of the "proletarian" wing of the Zionist movement. On page 341, Bauer states:

From the first, classical forms and models of practice were taken by the Palmakh from the so-called popular armies. The leftist, socialist coloration, the fruit of kibbutz influence, was clearly discernible in this

regard. Palmakh Bulletins from the World War II years are full of stories, examples, and current events from the popular-revolutionary armies in Spain, Titoist Yugoslavia, the Chinese Communist Army, the Irish Sinn Fein, and above all the Red Army.

Palmakh troops were dispersed in work teams around the country and had to work as laborers while training as soldiers. They were recruited primarily from socialist kibbutzim or working class neighborhoods and consciously thought of themselves as building a working class army in alliance with other revolutionary nationalists around the world.

The whole evolution of modern Zionism from the Lovers of Zion to the Palmakh closely paralleled the evolution of revolutionary movements elsewhere in the world. Like so many others, Zionism went from a populist phase during the late 19th century to a socialist phase during the early 20th century to a phase of revolutionary armed struggle at the time of the second World War. In most parts of the world, the phase of revolutionary armed struggle was led by the Communists. In Palestine, it was led by the Labor Zionists, in large part because the Communists did not accept Jewish nationalism as a legitimate form of revolutionary nationalism. Only Arab nationalism was considered legitimate by the Communists in Palestine. Jewish nationalism was a fact which they had to deal with, but it did not fit in with their theories. This was hardly surprising, considering what had been the attitude of Marx himself towards the Jews as a people. In their efforts to brand Jewish nationalism as "petit-bourgeois" and "reactionary", the Communists stressed the role of the Revisionists in the Zionist movement. The Revisionist Zionists split off from the main Zionist organization during the 1920s and 1930s under the leadership of Vladimir Jabotinsky. In Palestine, they played a leading role in the revolt against British rule through their underground fighting organization, the Irgun, headed by Menachem Begin. Most of the Revisionists were of middle class origin, and they tended to place much more emphasis on the national aspect of the struggle than on the social. The Communists and even the Labor Zionists sought to picture them as "fascists" because they were so militant and Jewish-identified. The Revisionists did hold many "right wing" political attitudes, but they were far from being "fascists". For one thing they modeled

themselves after the Zealots, who had been born in struggle against the original "fascists", the Romans. It was Jabotinsky, founder of the Revisionists, who wrote: "In blood and fire Judah fell! In blood and fire Judah will arise!" Betar, the Revisionist youth organization, was named after the last stronghold of Simon bar Kochba. Moreover, as Yehuda Bauer notes in *From Diplomacy to Resistance*, the Irgun in Palestine was much more successful than the Labor Zionists in recruiting Jews of Middle Eastern origin to their ranks. Bauer states on page 358: "Irgun, the largest of the dissident groups, was particularly successful in attracting Yemenites, who unhesitatingly risked their lives in the battles for Jewish freedom." Had the Revisionists in Palestine been such big "racists" as they are pictured, they would not have been so open to Middle Eastern Jewish participation in their movement. The Revisionists were middle class nationalists of the type whom the Communists were glad to cooperate with in other lands but branded as "fascists" in Palestine because they fought for a Jewish nation, which the Communists did not consider a legitimate goal.

## Herzl

The effort to conceal the revolutionary roots of Israel on the part of friends and foes alike has resulted in a widespread exaggeration of the role of Theodore Herzl in Zionist history. Herzl did not, as is commonly stated, convene the first Zionist congress. Many Zionist congresses had already been held in Eastern Europe under the auspices of the Lovers of Zion prior to the convocation of the congress of Basel by Herzl in 1897. The congress of Basel was notable only because it was the first Zionist congress in which Western European Jews participated in considerable numbers. Herzl himself, before his conversion to Zionism, had been the very type of the Western European "Emancipated" Jew with whom Ahad Ha'am had contrasted himself. As Desmond Stewart points out on page 127 of *Theodor Herzl*, when Herzl's son was born in 1891, a few years before Herzl became a Zionist, Herzl named him Hans and refused to let him be circumcised. Herzl was able to assume the leadership of the Zionist movement after he did become a Zionist because he was a well known journalist and playwright with numerous high-placed connections in European Christian society. His participation and that of others like him lent an

air of respectability and prestige to a movement which had already been meeting for 15 years in the ghettos of Eastern Europe and sending out settlers to Palestine. Herzl and his circle provided a link between the Zionists of Eastern Europe and the various European governments which hoped to win control of Palestine away from the Turks.

They loom large in most histories of Zionism because it was they who set in motion the complex series of negotiations which resulted in the Balfour Declaration in 1917. They were no doubt influential figures but hardly typical of most Zionists.

Herzl did display many imperialist and elitist attitudes, much as the Marxist and Muslim critics of Zionism have charged. Yet even Herzl was somewhat to the left of the typical middle class nationalist of his day. In *The Jewish State*, he placed a strong emphasis on the slogan of a 7 hour working day in the new Jewish state as a "world-wide rallying cry for our people" . His proposed flag for the new state was to be white with 7 gold stars, symbolizing the 7 hour day . These proposals were advanced by Herzl at a time when socialists and trade unionists in Europe were agitating for the 8 hour day; Herzl obviously intended to go the socialists one better.

In *The Herzl Paradox*, Joseph Adler shows that Herzl was strongly influenced by the European socialist movement. In 1893, he proposed the title, "journal of the liberal-socialists", for a newspaper he wanted to write for. In *Altneuland*, his last work, Herzl saw the future Jewish state governed by, in Adler's words, "a giant cooperative association called the New Society" . On page 92 , Adler states: "Two principles regulated the economic growth of the commonwealth: the belief in modern technocracy and the practical application of the cooperative idea to all phases of economic life." Herzl called his cooperative system "mutualism", a term derived from the socialist theories of Proudhon. On page 121 of *The Herzl Paradox*, Adler also shows that Herzl did not view the Jewish national struggle entirely in isolation from that of other oppressed peoples. Adler cites the following passage from a speech delivered by a character in *Altneuland*:

There is still one problem of racial misfortune unsolved. The depths of that problem, in all its horror, only a Jew can understand. I mean the negro problem . . . Now that I have lived to see the restoration of the Jews, I should like to pave the way for the restoration of the Negroes.

Herzl may not have been a revolutionary, but he was not a hopeless reactionary either.

The main difference between Herzl and the Lovers of Zion lay in Herzl's attitude towards traditional Jewish culture. Herzl's writings show little concern for Jewish identity, Jewish values or Jewish culture, the major themes in the work of the Lovers of Zion. The whole argument of *The Jewish State*, Herzl's most famous work, is couched in purely negative terms: the Jews must find a home of their own because the Europeans don't want them. This was a realistic and even prophetic argument but one which showed little sympathy for or even awareness of traditional Jewish Messianism and Zionism. It was this same indifference to Jewish tradition which later led Herzl to seriously consider an English proposal to establish a Jewish state in Uganda. Few of the Eastern European Zionists would follow Herzl on this issue, leading to his growing political isolation within the Zionist movement prior to his death in 1904.

Louis Brandeis, perhaps the best known American Zionist leader, was in many ways a similar type to Herzl. Brandeis was already a prominent figure in American politics at the time of his turn towards Zionism around 1912. Yonathan Shapiro, in *Leadership of the American Zionist Organization, 1897-1930*, sees Wilson's decision not to appoint Brandeis as U.S. Attorney General in 1912 as a key factor in the conversion of Brandeis to Zionism. Like Herzl, Brandeis became a major Zionist leader as soon as he became a Zionist, due largely to his prestige and connections outside the Zionist movement. Brandeis was consciously hostile to the Labor Zionist movement and sought to promote the immigration of Jewish capitalists and small business owners to Palestine. Within the Zionist Organization of America, Brandeis was aligned with the more wealthy German Jews and treated with considerable suspicion by Jews of Eastern European origin, who eventually ousted him from the leadership of the movement.

Yet Brandeis, like Herzl, was still a radical by the standards of his class and profession. The Pittsburgh program of the Zionist Organization of America, drafted by Brandeis in 1918, stressed the themes of democracy and social justice in Palestine as the basis of Zionism. Point 1 called for "political and civil equality irrespective of race, sex or faith of all the inhabitants of the land"; other points called for ownership of the land "by the whole people", application of "the co-operative principle" and free public education. Point 6, calling for

the use of Hebrew in the schools, was the only plank in the whole platform with a specifically Jewish national content. As a lawyer, politician and Supreme Court justice, Brandeis was generally associated with "progressive" positions, including support for trade union rights. The same views which defined Brandeis as a right winger within a Zionist context made him a "progressive" within the broader spectrum of American politics.

Zionist politics were skewed to the left because the great majority of Jews in Europe were very poor. Most settlers, particularly prior to the rise of Hitler, were from working class or lower middle class backgrounds. They were poor in Eastern Europe and poor in Palestine, but in Palestine they were poor with a future. The entire apparatus of the Zionist organization led by men like Herzl and Brandeis was mainly designed to raise money to send poor Jews to Palestine and bargain with various "Powers" to permit them to do so. Neither Herzl nor Brandeis had any intention of settling in Palestine themselves. They were engaged in political charity, the traditional vocation of the Jewish upper middle class.

During the 1930s, the money-raising wing of the Zionist movement lost control of the movement as a whole to the Palestinian wing, headed by Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionists. This shift in the balance of forces within the Zionist movement reflected the increase in Jewish settlement in Palestine as well as the general radicalization of the entire world Jewish community in the face of the Nazi offensive and the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Zionist movement that came to power in the land of Israel in 1948 was as proletarian in its composition, as revolutionary in its traditions and as steeled in battle as any revolutionary nationalist movement in the world at that time. Like all the other revolutionary nationalist movements that came to power after the second World War, it looked to the victorious Allies, including both the Soviet Union and the United States, for aid and assistance. It received less than most and came to power largely through its own efforts, supported primarily only by other Jews elsewhere in the world.

## The Jewish Revolution

Jewish revolutionary nationalism was not fundamentally different from other forms of revolutionary nationalism, but it did have a

somewhat different relationship to the world revolutionary movement out of which all forms of revolutionary nationalism had emerged. The revolutionary ideals of the Zionists in Palestine were much the same ideals as were upheld by revolutionary nationalists elsewhere; but more than most groups, Jews had played a key role in the formulation of these ideals. Not only as Zionists but as European and American liberals, democrats, socialists, communists, feminists and pacifists, Jews had figured prominently in all the "progressive" movements of modern times. The larger revolutionary process out of which Israel emerged was itself, in some sense, a Jewish Revolution.

Understanding of the Jewish role in the great revolutions of modern times has been obscured by excessive focus on the influence of "Emancipated" Jewish intellectuals such as Marx, Luxemburg and Trotsky. "Emancipated" Jews tended to play a radical role in whatever circles they sought to assimilate to in Europe because they were driven by the far more profound radicalism of the Jewish masses in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. It was the ghetto that formed the core of the Jewish revolutionary movement of modern times. The "Emancipated" Jewish radicals such as Marx, Luxemburg and Trotsky played much the same role in relation to the radicalism of the ghetto as the Zionism of Herzl in relation to the Zionism of the Lovers of Zion. In both cases, the role of the "Emancipated" Jews was that of translating the values of the ghetto into a respectable European ideology. By ghetto standards, all the "Emancipated" Jews, even Marx, Luxemburg and Trotsky, looked like bourgeois careerists.

By the early 20th century, both socialism and Zionism were mass movements in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. The Jewish Bund, a socialist organization of Yiddish-speaking workers, had tens of thousands of members, many more than the Russian-speaking Social Democrats at that time. In *While Messiah Tarried: Jewish Socialist Movements, 1871-1917*, Nora Levin states on page 319, speaking of the Russian socialists, including both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks:

At the beginning of 1905, the entire Russian party (not including the Poles and Letts) numbered only 8,400, while the Bund, representing Jewish workers alone, could claim a membership of 30,000. Its leading groups were not invariably composed of intellectuals, but substantially of workers.

The Russian socialists themselves were much more Jewish than is generally realized. Out of 45 delegates to the founding congress of the Russian Social Democrats in 1903, 25 were Jews. In Trotsky and the Jews, Joseph Nedava cites Czarist police statistics showing that of 4,500 Russians deported to Siberia for their participation in the revolution of 1905, 37% were Jews. Nedava also cites figures showing that Jews formed 20-30% of the leadership of all the revolutionary parties in Russia in 1917.

Both then and now, the Marxists sought to deny their own Jewish roots through the doctrine that the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe could not be true revolutionaries because they were not true proletarians. Jewish socialism, according to the Marxists, was "petit-bourgeois" because the Jewish workers were too "middle class". Yet in reality, the Jewish workers of Eastern Europe were one of the poorest, most oppressed groups of workers anywhere in the world. They were not considered "working class" by European workers only because Jews had been traditionally excluded from the main organization of European workers, the guilds. From the "Middle Ages" onwards, all the guilds in Europe had a clause requiring their members to be Christians. Jews who attempted to follow trades also pursued by the members of the guilds were attacked, beaten up and killed. Contrary to the impression fostered by the Marxists, the main effect of this policy on the part of the guilds was not to make the Jewish workers "petit-bourgeois" but to proletarianize them. On page 199 of *A History of Jewish Crafts and Guilds*, Mark Wischnitzer describes a petition submitted to the municipal council of Amsterdam by the Christian guild of diamond cutters, complaining about Jewish competition in this trade. Wischnitzer states:

In a memorandum to the council, the Christian cutters declared that they could not, like their Jewish competitors, be satisfied with a low living standard nor would they complement their earnings, as the Jews did, by cleaning shoes and selling combs, spectacles and old clothes. Many of the old clothes which the Jews sold everywhere in Europe were put together by them out of rags picked from the garbage of the Christians. It was more, not less difficult to make clothes in this way than as was done by the Christian guilds, yet the Christians prided themselves on their good workmanship, while the Jews were considered swindlers for selling shoddy goods.

In *On The Edge of Destruction*, Celia Heller shows how the distinction between "Christian work" and "Jewish work" was carried through right into the 20th century in Poland. On page 20, Heller states: Also, to win over the Polish clients, the Jews began to produce more standardized and lower-priced goods. This led to further resentment by Polish artisans who looked down on these products as shoddy. (The term "Jewish work" became synonymous with cheap and trashy products.)

"Jewish work" was not "cheap and trashy" by choice, but only because the Jews were forced by poverty and discrimination to work primarily with cheap and trashy materials. Speaking of Poland, Heller states on page 10 1: "In the 1920s, about 80 percent of the total Jewish population lived in what was then considered poverty."

The Marxists in Eastern Europe simply reformulated the traditional Christian prejudice against "Jewish work" in a new way. In *The Jewish Problem In The Soviet Union*, on page 212, B.Z. Goldberg cites a statement made by the Soviet leader Khrushchev in 1958 which reflects the typical Marxist attitude towards Jewish workers:

The Jews have always preferred the artisan crafts—they are tailors, they work with glass or precious stones, they are tradesmen, druggists, carpenters.

But if you take construction or metallurgy, where people work as a team, you would not find a single Jew—to my knowledge. They don't like collective work, group discipline. They have always preferred to be dispersed. They are individualists.

As if it was by choice that the Jews worked with cloth in small shops while the non-Jews worked with metal in large groups. Did not Khrushchev know who it was that had dispersed the Jews, made them afraid to venture out of their shops or congregate in large groups, cut them off from access to land, tools and weapons? Would the Marxists have preferred to work in cloth, and let the Jews work in steel?

Anyone seeking to understand the "material basis" of Jewish life in Eastern Europe should read *Polish-Jewish Relations During the Second World War* by Emmanuel Ringelblum. Ringelblum, who was tortured to death by the Nazis in Warsaw in 1944, was one of the last Jews still alive in Warsaw at that time. A Labor Zionist with a PhD in history from a Polish university, Ringelblum evaded the Nazis long

enough to write a history of the Warsaw ghetto. On page 64, he describes how the people of the ghetto kept alive after the Germans had encircled them in barbed wire:

Everything that had been manufactured for the Aryan market before the war was being produced now as well. The weaving plants produced excellent woolen fabrics with wool stolen from factories in Czestochowa, the "Wola" factory in Warsaw and from other towns. Prayer shawls were dyed and made into scarves, sweaters, etc. Production was started of women's kerchiefs, jerseys, peasant's overcoats, etc. These were made out of old clothes that could be bought wholesale on the enormous square on Gesia Street . . . The production of fancy articles made from wool, cotton and leather also flourished. Cardboard made from various kinds of castoff packaging and the covers of old account books was pressed and made into fibre suitcases. The brush industry was greatly developed. Apart from real bristle, the brushes were made from old carpet beaters, goose feathers and similar refuse, which was assiduously collected in the Ghetto. This industry employed several thousand workers. Mattresses made from all sorts of materials were produced for the army and for the Aryan side. Illegal tanneries processed the leather that was being smuggled into the Ghetto. Children from the age of ten, even six, made mass-produced toys in private flats, lofts, cellars, etc. An aluminum industry-bowls, spoons, etc.-was developed, utilizing fragments of planes imported into the Ghetto. In addition, the Ghetto produced stoves, hinges and other metal articles. House-slippers with wooden soles and cardboard tops were produced in mass quantities. Beautiful pipes, cigarette holders and fancy articles in general were made from wood.

The Jewish working class tradition was more, not less proletarian than the Christian. It was precisely the proletarian character of Jewish labor which led the Christian workers to perceive it as not really "working class", meaning that the Jews did not do "good" work, were too "cheap":.

In the vanguard of the Jewish revolutionary movement of the early 20th century were the Jewish workers in the innumerable sweat shops, particularly in the clothing trades, which proliferated in the ghetto. These workers were invisible to the Marxists, as they were to Marx himself, for the same reason that they are invisible to everyone else because they spoke Yiddish, lived in the ghetto and had little contact with Christian workers. A large percentage of them were women. In

these circles, socialist, Zionist, feminist and Messianic beliefs were all part of a single culture, a single ideology, a single set of beliefs. These beliefs were rooted in Jewish tradition but took shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in conscious struggle against the prevailing "orthodox" definition of Jewish culture. They aimed at a revolutionary redefinition of Judaism. An integral part of this struggle was Zionism. As Sokolow notes on page 38 of Volume 2 of his History of Zionism, after the Czar was overthrown in Russia in 1917.

150,000 Jews marched through the streets of Odessa bearing banners which read: "Liberty in Russia, Land and Liberty in Palestine".

Mass demonstrations took place at this time throughout the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe in favor of a whole set of related demands. By 1919, Jewish "national councils" formed in support of these demands had appeared everywhere in Eastern Europe. Completely ignored by Marxists and conventional historians alike, these councils are described by Shmuel Ettinger in his article, "The Modern Period", in A History of the Jewish People edited by Ben-Sasson. On page 940, Ettinger states:

The programme of these councils was generally uniform in outline. The assumption was that the principle accepted for all nations—namely, the right to national self-determination—also applied to the Jewish people. Hence they demanded that, simultaneously with the granting of equal rights to Jewish citizens as individuals, their right to national group representation and autonomy should also be recognized. In other words, the Jews as a national group should be represented in central government institutions and be permitted to organize their internal life as they saw fit, particularly in the sphere of religion, education and social aid. The national councils also supported the establishment of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. They all pinned great hopes on the Peace Conference that was due to open in Paris and hoped for official sanction for their demands. Several councils even raised the demand that the Jewish people be granted representation in the projected League of Nations as one of the liberated nations.

The socialists and Zionists were the two main Jewish parties in the leadership of these councils. Socialists and Zionists also led the resistance to the Nazis in the ghettos at the time of the Holocaust.

Within the Jewish ghettos at the time of the Holocaust, the Zionists were the leading advocates and main organizers of armed resistance

to the Nazis. This is shown by Yitzhak Arad in his article, "Jewish Armed Resistance in Eastern Europe", in *The Catastrophe of European Jewry*. On page 497, Arad states:

The Zionist youth movements in most of the ghettos of Eastern Europe were the first groups who preached armed resistance and gave this idea an organizational framework. The Jewish identity of the members of the Zionist youth movements, and the absence of illusions concerning the non-Jewish environment, made them the pioneers of armed Jewish resistance.

Yitzhak Arad was himself a member of the Zionist youth movement in Eastern Europe in the late 1930s who eventually became an anti-Nazi guerilla in the forests under Red Army command. Arad recognizes the role of the socialists and communists in the struggle against the Nazis but shows that the Zionists were the only ones to make a major effort to organize the Jews in the ghetto for armed struggle. Socialism and Zionism were both rooted in the Jewish revolutionary tradition. On page 909 of his article, "The Modern Period", Ettinger cites Peter Lavrov, a 19th century Russian revolutionary, who once stated with reference to the Jews: "A nation which, in the nineteenth century, produced Karl Marx and Lassalle, surely has a natural, or a historically developed tendency to absorb socialist principles." Nedava, in *Trotsky and the Jews*, describes a pamphlet written in Hebrew around 1921 in Russia by Eliezer Steinman called *The Hebrew Communist*. It contains the lines: "And peace unto you, my brethren, although unknown to you, also from the ancient Hebrew, who is completely painted crimson, purple and red from the blood of hero-martyrs, and whose tongue is strange to you." In *Blessed Is The Match*, a book about the Jewish resistance to the Nazis, Marie Syrkin brings out another aspect of this same tradition. On page 76, she states: One of the songs chanted in the ghettos of Poland and in the extermination camps consists of a single statement reiterated over and over: "I believe the Messiah will come. Though his coming be delayed, I believe that he will come." Even on the way to the slaughterhouse the need to believe could not be crushed.

The Jewish revolutionary tradition could be described in many different ways, but all the "isms" into which it might be divided are really just so many reflections of the same underlying reality.

## Auto-Emancipation

Leon Pinsker, the main founder of the Lovers of Zion, summed up the position of the Jews of Eastern Europe in his pamphlet, *Auto-Emancipation*, when he wrote: "A people without a territory is like a man without a shadow." This haunting line reflects the sense of foreboding which Jews in Europe began to feel after the start of the pogroms in 1881 in Russia. In 1884 at the age of 10 in Poland, Chaim Weizmann, who became a major Zionist leader in the 20th century, wrote in his diary, as cited on page 181 of *A History of Zionism* by Laqueur: "All have decided: the Jew must die, but England will nevertheless have mercy upon us." In his poem, "The Song of the Slaughtered Jewish People", Yitzhak Katzenelenson, who was eventually murdered by the Nazis, wrote:

Alas, I knew it and my neighbors too.  
 All of us, big and small, we knew the truth;  
 But not a word was said. . . hush, not a word,  
 Before each other nor in our inmost thoughts;  
 We kept the secret buried in our breasts.

Awareness of impending doom formed a growing part of Jewish consciousness in Europe from the 1880s onwards .

Zionism was above all a reaction to this awareness. The Lovers of Zion were formed in direct response to the start of the pogroms. BILU, the student group that formed the first kibbutz, grew out of a memorial service for the victims of the pogroms. Herzl was converted to Zionism by the spectacle of French mobs chanting, "Kill the Jews", in the wake of the Dreyfus affair. Even though most of the Eastern European Zionists were steeped in traditional Jewish culture, few of them would have set out for Palestine were it not for the growing threat of being murdered in Europe. European anti-Semitism provided the negative stimulus which, together with traditional Jewish Messianism, gave rise to the modern Zionist movement. This combination of factors was itself traditional, for Jewish Messianism had always flourished in periods of persecution.

The Holocaust proved that the Zionist analysis of the Jewish situation in Europe was essentially correct. When the moment of truth came, the Jewish people stood alone. In his article, "Jewish Armed

Resistance in Eastern Europe", Yitzhak Arad points out that the Jewish underground in Europe was "the only anti-Nazi underground in occupied Europe which did not receive weapons from any outside source". During the Holocaust, the British, Americans and Russians alike told Jewish leaders that it was not militarily worthwhile for them to attempt to bomb the rail lines leading to Auschwitz . In this manner was the Jewish people taught the correctness of the concept of "AutoEmancipation".

The birth of Israel was the direct result of the Holocaust.

## Chapter Thirteen

### The Judeo-Islamic Tradition

Many speak of a "Judeo-Christian" tradition, but what of a Judeo-Islamic tradition? Do Jews and Muslims feel no kinship with one another? Have they no common ground?

Jews and Muslims must have something in common, for both claim to be the children of Abraham. Judaism and Islam both differ fundamentally from Christianity in that they are rooted in a Middle Eastern ethnic identity. The Jews and Arabs claim not only to follow the doctrines of Abraham but to be his actual descendants. The Christians would not eat "Jesus" if they thought they were related to him. Their attitude towards Middle Eastern ethnic identity is shown by their ostentatious disapproval of Middle Eastern customs such as circumcision and not eating pork. The Christians identify ethnically as Europeans, which is why, for the most part, they do not worship Semitic "gods" such as Adonai or Allah but only European ones, like Deus or "God".

The Middle Eastern ethnic identity of both Judaism and Islam grew out of the role of both religions in the Middle Eastern national liberation struggle. In the 7th century CE, the Arabs took over from the Jews the role of leadership of the Middle Eastern national liberation movement, a role which the Jews had played for the previous 1,000 years. It was for this reason that Islam took so much from Judaism, to demonstrate that the Muslims intended to carry on the same struggle that the Jews had led. Judaism and Islam both arose as forms of Middle Eastern nationalism: this is the common ground between them. The Judeo-Islamic tradition is really but a part of a broader tradition of Middle Eastern nationalism. This tradition encompasses not only Judaism and Islam but also Zoroastrianism and many older forms of religious and cultural nationalism from different parts of the Middle East. The central concept in all these traditions was that of the holy leader-Messiah, prophet, apostle-who would arise to liberate

the people from foreign rule and restore the ancient traditions which had been trampled in the dust by foreigners. The legend of Osiris in Egypt undoubtedly had a Messianic aspect. In *The King Is Dead*, Samuel Eddy shows that Messianic traditions of one kind or another existed in many different parts of the Middle East. But it was not until the Middle East as a whole began to come under foreign domination that these many separate traditions of Middle Eastern nationalism began to fuse into a single tradition. A key role in this process was played by the Persians, first as conquerors of the Middle East, then as leaders of the Middle Eastern opposition to the Greek conquerors who came after them. At the root of the Judeo-Islamic tradition lies a Persian connection.

### The Persian Connection

Eddy, in *The King Is Dead*, shows that the Persians too had a Messianic tradition of their own. Eddy believes that many of the images in the Jewish Book of Daniel were derived from a Persian apocalyptic work, the *Bahman Yasht*. Composed or revised after the Greek invasion of the Persian empire, the *Bahman Yasht* refers to the Greeks as the 'Demons with Disheveled Hair of the Race of Wrath'. It predicts the coming of a Messiah named Peshyotanu who will save the Middle East from the "Evil Race of Wrath". Jewish and Persian .. Messianic traditions came into contact with one another in Iraq, the main center of the Persian empire in the Middle East, where a large Jewish community remained from the time of the Babylonian exile. From the 6th century BCE onwards, Jewish and Persian Messianism exerted considerable reciprocal influence on one another.

The Persians influenced not only Jewish Messianism but Judaism as a whole. Isidore Epstein, in *Judaism: A Historical Presentation*, fully recognizes the importance of Persian influence in the development of Judaism after the Babylonian exile. On page 86, Epstein states: Outside Judea in the places of dispersion, with their main centres in Babylon and Egypt, the Jewish communities in close relation with the Judean community in Jerusalem developed a spiritual unity, founded on the Torah and a common body of traditions, ideals, hopes and aspirations.

A factor contributory to the welding of this spiritual unity

was the influence of Ezra and Nehemiah at the Persian Court, which enabled them to impose on all the Jewries throughout the Persian Empire a uniform pattern of Jewish faith and practice. Illustrative of this influence is the military order of the year 419 BC, discovered at Elephantine,

given by Darius to the local Jewish military garrison to observe the Passover in accordance with the requirements of their religion.

A. T. Olmstead in his *History of the Persian Empire* characterizes Ezra as a kind of "secretary of state for Jewish affairs" of the Persian empire. Ezra the Scribe, as he is often called, is generally credited with a key role in the compilation of the written Torah in the form in which it now exists. Both Ezra and Nehemiah were high Persian officials as well as the main leaders of the drive to restore Judaism in Judah in the 5th century BCE.

Ellis Rivkin in *The Shaping of Jewish History* shows how the Persians strengthened one tendency within Judaism at the expense of another.

Rivkin distinguishes between the priestly "Aaronides", the followers of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the "Davidites", who wished to overthrow Persian rule in Judah and restore the Jewish monarchy.

On page 37, Rivkin states:

And as for the interests of the Persian emperor, the stronger the Aaronides the weaker the Davidites; the more absolute Pentateuchal power, the less threatening the discords and disruptions of prophecy. The Pentateuch was thus tailored to serve the interests of a coalition of priestly families, a disgruntled and disillusioned peasantry, and an imperial sovereign eager for an effective and loyal leadership in Judea. It was also at this time that the fast of atonement, Yom Kippur, was instituted, replacing the traditional Hebrew harvest festival or Feast of Booths as the main religious celebration of the fall season. In general, Jewish culture developed a more "religious" tone during this period, while the military traditions of the early Hebrews were played down to accommodate the Persians.

The Messianic movement which emerged in Judah at the time of the Greek and Roman invasions was based to a considerable degree on hopes of Persian support. Many of the Messianic prophecies in the Talmud contain references to the Persians. On page 59 of *The Mes*

siah Texts, Patai cites rabbi Yose ben Qisma, who is described in the Talmud as stating:

Dig a deep grave for my coffin, for in the wars of Gog and Magog there will be no palm tree in Babylon to which the Persians will not tie their horses, and no coffin in the land of Israel from which a Persian horse will not eat straw.

The "wars of Gog and Magog" were widely believed to herald the advent of the Messiah.

Expectations of Persian support on the part of the Jewish Messianic movement had a basis in fact. As R. Ghirshman notes in Iran , on page 272:

During the great Jewish revolt of the second century A.D. , which set all the Roman Orient ablaze, the rebels received aid from the Parthians, a fact which gave rise to the well-known saying: 'When you see a Parthian charger tied up to a tombstone in Palestine, the hour of the Messiah will be near'.

The Parthians were the rulers of the former Persian empire at this time. The Parthians also aided the last of the kings of Judah of Maccabean descent, Antigonus, to regain control of Jerusalem for a brief interval between 40 and 37 BCE. The "great Jewish revolt" to which Ghirshman refers was the uprising of 115 CE against Trajan, which was touched off by Trajan' s invasion of Parthian territory and attacks on the Jewish community of Iraq. Many historians credit the Jewish uprising

of 115 CE in Syria and North Africa with responsibility for the defeat of Trajan's invasion of the Parthian empire.

Speculation on the reasons for the close alliance between Jews and Persians in the Middle East has tended to focus on the links between Judaism and the official religion of the Persian empire, Zoroastrianism. George Carter in Zoroastrianism and Judaism brings out the main points of resemblance between the two religions, which include belief in a supreme ruling spirit, angels, an after life and a " Last Judgment". Most of these beliefs only entered Judaism after the rise of the Persian empire and the development of a close relationship between Jews and Persians. The belief in angels, an after life and a " Last Judgment" was incorporated into Judaism primarily through the Pharisees. The Sadducees explicitly denied most of these beliefs, par

ticularly the concept of an after life. Although the term, Pharisee, was derived from the Hebrew *Peru shim*, meaning "Separatists", it is hard to believe that the resemblance between Pharisee and Parsee, meaning Persian, was entirely coincidental.

Little is known of the life and times of Zoroaster. Most Western scholars believe that he lived during the 6th century BCE, but the Zoroastrians themselves, who are found today chiefly in India, claim that he was born many centuries before that time. Zoroaster is thought to have been a member of the Magi, the priestly class of the Medes, an Iranian people closely related to the Persians. He is thought to have fled from Media to eastern Iran at some point, finding refuge with a mysterious king Vishtaspa, whom no one has been able to identify. Kenneth Guthrie has published in English under the title *The Hymns of Zoroaster* all the writings that have been attributed to Zoroaster. These hymns were handed down by word of mouth for centuries before being written down, so no one is sure to what extent they were in fact composed by Zoroaster himself.

Although the origin of *The Hymns of Zoroaster* may be obscure, their meaning is clear. They express a sense of identification with oppressed humanity, symbolized by the "ox soul", the soul of patience, humility and suffering. In Hymn 29, the "ox soul" cries out to Ahura Mazda, the "Wise Lord" or "God" of Zoroaster:

The soul of the Bovine creation complained to You:  
For whose benefit did You fashion me? Who shaped me?

Fury rages against me; violence and cruelty, maltreatment and roughness oppress me;

I have no herdsman except You: therefore it is You  
I beg to procure me good pasture.

It is not a far cry from these lines to the Hebrew, "He leadeth me to lie down beside green pastures". Who influenced whom is not so clear, but the connection is apparent.

In *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, R. C. Zaehner shows that the revival of the Persian empire by the Sassanids during the 3rd century CE was associated with a radical form of Zoroastrianism known as Zurvanism. The Zurvanites held that both Ahura Mazda, the "Wise Lord", and Ahriman, the "Devil", who were thought of by the Zo

roastrians as the leaders of the armies of good and evil respectively, were but emanations of a higher entity. This was Zurvan, whose name meant "Infinite Time". On page 186, Zaehner notes that the Zurvanites were accused of "atheism" by the orthodox Zoroastrians. Similar accusations were often made against the Jews by the Greeks and Romans, and for similar reasons. The Zurvanite concept of "Infinite Time" was much like the Hebrew concept of "I am that I am" in its resolute abstraction from any physical image. The Zurvanites too had their troubles with the authorities, eventually being suppressed by the later Sassanids on the grounds that their doctrines encouraged peasant unrest.

Eddy, in *The King Is Dead*, sees a reluctance to worship images as deeply rooted in Persian culture. He states on page 38: "The early Persians, as known from both classical writers and the results of archaeology, did not erect temples to house cult-statues nor use images themselves, and they condemned persons who did so." Persian and Jewish culture evidently had much in common to begin with, and once they came into close contact with one another, they began to resemble each other even more so. The tradition of Middle Eastern nationalism and revolutionary Messianism which they promoted was not exclusively associated either with Jews or Persians but with both. This ... merging of Jewish and Persian traditions was greatly facilitated by the fact that both Jews and Persians in Iraq, the main point of contact between them, were Aramaic-speaking. Judeo-Persian beliefs in an Aramaic language form constituted the main expression of Middle Eastern nationalism for 1,000 years prior to the time of Islam. Everyone has their own version of the "well known" Talmudic saying about a Persian or Parthian horse. In *The Jews of Palestine*, on page 66, Michael Avi-Yonah attributes it to rabbi Simeon bar Yohai, who lived in hiding for 12 years after the end of the second "Jewish War" in 135 CE. He was supposed to have said: "When you see a Persian horse tethered in the Holy Land-prepare for the coming of the Messiah." Whoever may have said it, it reflected a widespread conviction among Jews that the fate of Judah and Persia was intertwined. In *The Jew and His History*, on page 27, Lionel Kochan cites Abraham Ibn Daud, a 12th century Jewish writer in Spain, who maintained that "as Persia favoured Israel, so did it prosper and, conversely, when it persecuted Israel so was it struck by divine retribution". Ibn Daud was the author of a work trying to analyze the

necessary conditions for the advent of the Messiah, whom he expected around 1188 or 1189 CE. But by this time, the Persian connection had been broken by the rise of Islam.

## Jews and Arabs

The rise of Islam undermined the basis of the Persian connection by supplanting Aramaic with Arabic as the main spoken language of the Middle East. Throughout the entire history of Judeo-Persian cooperation, it had been the Aramaic language that had made possible a continual exchange of ideas between Hebrew and Persian language cultures. The Persian alliance with the Jews was in many ways but an aspect of a broader Persian policy of alliance with all Aramaic-speaking peoples. But Islam had arisen in competition with the Jews; hence the Koran, the main instrument for the dissemination of Arabic language culture under the Muslims, was filled with anti-Jewish remarks.

Arabic language culture did not foster cooperation with the Jews in any part of the Middle East, but to the contrary, served only to isolate the Jews and turn them into a small and often persecuted minority.

The rivalry of Jews and Arabs went back at least as far as the wars between the Hebrews and Arameans. By the beginning of the Common Era, the main Arab neighbors of the Jews were the Nabateans.

The Nabateans spoke Arabic but wrote in Aramaic, and seem to have had much in common with the Jews, at least at first. Moshe Pearlman on page 151 of *The Maccabees* characterized the Nabateans as "the one neighboring people who had been little affected by hellenism, who were at odds with the Seleucids and who were accordingly sympathetic to the Jews". It was the Nabateans who overthrew the last remnants of the Seleucid empire in 85 BCE by taking Damascus. But once the Romans arrived, it was the aspect of rivalry between Jews and Arabs which came to the fore.

The Romans deliberately played off the Jews and Nabateans against each other. The Romans helped the Nabateans to build up their capital, Petra, as a major commercial center for Roman imports from Arabia and India. Playing no doubt on traditional rivalries between Jews and Arabs, the Romans succeeded in enlisting the Nabateans as allies during the first "Jewish War". Having crushed the Jews, the Romans then turned on the Nabateans, overrunning and destroying

Petra at the beginning of the 2nd century CE. In his *History of Syria*, Hitti notes that the Arabic script later used by the Muslims was derived from the script used by the Nabateans to write Aramaic.

From the time of the Nabateans onwards, Arab hostility towards the Jews was often a response to European pressure. This remained true right down to modern times. In *Islam in History*, on page 143, Bernard Lewis points out that accusations of ritual murder against Jews in the Arab world were "almost invariably" instigated by Christian Arabs. The most famous such case, which took place in 1840 in Damascus, was based on accusations which were initially made by Franciscan monks acting in concert with the French embassy. Neville Mandel, in *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I*, shows that Christian Arabs were also primarily responsible for inciting the early anti-Zionist agitation among Arabs in Palestine. On page 121, Mandel cites an article, written by an Arab anti-Zionist in Palestine in 1911, which stated:

In all eyes the Jew is becoming the anti-patriot, the traitor prepared to plunder his neighbor to take possession of his goods. The Christian excels in these accusations, but the Muslim follows on his heels.

Mandel also notes that the Christian Arabs in Palestine may have been incited against the Jews in their turn by European missionary groups, particularly the Jesuits.

European pressure exaggerated and inflamed elements of national rivalry which were already present between Jews and Arabs. Aramaic and Arabic language culture were rivals in northern Arabia. Mohammed's hostility to the Jews was in part a concession to Byzantine pressure, but in part an expression of Arab national pride, a refusal to accept Jewish and Aramaic cultural domination. Islam became the vehicle whereby Arabic culture established its supremacy over its predecessor and rival. Rejection of the Jewish nation was but an aspect of the broader Muslim rejection of the Aramaic nation and assertion of Arabic cultural hegemony in the Middle East.

Within the early Muslim movement, the main advocates of a somewhat more cooperative relationship with the Jews were the Shi'ites.

On page 221 of *Islam in History*, Lewis traces the origin of the Shi'ite movement to the "mawali", converts to Islam who were not of Arab origin. Lewis states:

Their aspiration was for an order in which all Muslims would be equal and Arab birth would no longer carry privileges. Their religious doctrines were adapted from their previous faiths, Judaeo-Christian and Persian messianism and legitimism prepared them to accept the claims of the descendants of the Prophet, who promised to overthrow the Empire of tyranny and injustice and establish an Empire of equity and justice.

The Kharijites, who split off from the Shi'ites during the time of Ali, went even further in this direction, upholding the concept of an elected Caliph, who did not have to be a descendant of Mohammed or even an Arab. Both Shi'ite and Kharijite teachings spread primarily among non-Arab Muslims, particularly Berbers and Persians. It was largely because they were not so heavily Arab-identified that the early Shi'ites were more open to cooperation with the Jews than their 'orthodox' opponents.

The main weakness of the early pro-Jewish current within Islam was that it lacked any written authority comparable in prestige to the Koran. As time passed, a negative stereotype of the Jews became as firmly established in Arabic literary culture as it was in Christian literary culture. Ibn Khaldun, who lived in the 14th century, is often called the "greatest" Arab historian. In *The Muqaddinah: An Introduction to History*, as translated by N. J. Dawood, on page 185, he stated:

The Jews envied Jesus and declared him a liar. Their king, Herod, wrote to the Roman Emperor, Augustus, and incited him against Jesus. The Roman Emperor gave the Jews permission to kill him, and the story of Jesus as recited in the Qur'an occurred.

The story to which Ibn Khaldun referred was that in which Mohammed alleged that the Jews had tried to kill "Jesus" but killed another man instead. Not one single statement in Ibn Khaldun's account of "Jesus" and the Jews was factually correct.

Arab hostility to the Jews as a nation was expressed above all in Arab opposition to large scale Jewish settlement in Palestine. Even under the Fatimids, the Arabs of Palestine had harassed the Jews who tried to settle there. On page 154 of *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine Under the Fatimid Caliphs*. Jacob Mann cites a letter written in the 11th century by Jews in Palestine complaining that the Arabs

had cut off their water supply . "How should Arabs drink the same water as Jews", the leader of the Arabs had exclaimed. In the 1570s, a large Jewish settlement in Tiberias was devastated by Arab attacks. In *Jerusalem: A History of Forty Centuries*, on page 219, Teddy Kollek and Moshe Pearlman describe how rabbi Yehuda He'Hassid led 1,000 Jews from Poland to Jerusalem in 1700, only to have their synagogue burned and to be driven out by the Arabs.

Those Jews who did manage to settle in Palestine from time to time did so despite Arab harassment. In 1491 , Martin Kabtanik, a pilgrim from Bohemia, visited Jerusalem. In his account of his pilgrimage, cited by Martin Gilbert on page 19 of *Exile and Return: The Struggle for a Jewish Homeland*, Kabtanik stated:

There are not many Christians but there are many Jews, and these the Moslems persecute in various ways. Christians and Jews go about in Jerusalem in clothes considered fit only for wandering beggars. The Moslems know that the Jews think and even say that this is the Holy Land which has been promised to them and that those Jews who dwell there are regarded as holy by Jews elsewhere, because, in spite of all the troubles and sorrows inflicted on them by the Moslems, they refuse to leave the land .

Throughout the period of Turkish rule of Palestine, opposition to Jewish settlement on the part of the Arabs of Palestine was a major factor barring the way to the emergence of a large Jewish community in the area. The Turks at various times were ready to accept Jewish immigrants into Palestine, but a considerable percentage of those who did arrive were soon killed or driven out by the Arabs.

The national basis of Arab hostility to the Jews is brought out by Raphael Patai in *The Jewish Mind*. On page 398, Patai contrasts the attitude of the Arabs towards the Jews with that shown towards Arabic-speaking Christians:

These Arabic-speaking Christian minorities, to varying extents and degrees, were considered Arabs; they were "Christian Arabs." In no Arab country, on the other hand, were the Arabic-speaking Jews considered Arabs to any extent or degree; and never were they referred to as "Jewish Arabs." This is the more remarkable since the purely religious differences between Islam and Judaism were much smaller than those between Islam and Christianity, and it was considered less

objectionable for a Muslim Arab man to marry a Jewish than a Christian woman.

Arabic-speaking Jews were not considered Arabs because they were perceived as members of a different nation, a Jewish nation, whose claims to sovereignty in Palestine conflicted with those of the Arab nation. Christians might conceivably worship "Jesus" while accepting Arab sovereignty in Palestine, but the Jewish religion was inseparably bound up with the concept of Jewish rule in the "Holy Land" .

Not only Jewish immigrants from Europe but also Arabic-speaking Jews, whose ancestors had lived in the Middle East long before the rise of Islam, were therefore treated as foreigners by the Arabs, who could never overcome their fear that the revival of the Jewish nation would mean the collapse of Arabic cultural hegemony in the Middle East.

The ultimate cause of this fear lay in the Judea-Persian roots of Islam. The Muslims took over almost the entire Judeo-Persian tradition intact. The belief in a ruling spirit, more or less abstractly defined; the belief in heaven, hell and a "Last Judgment"; the belief in angels, ghosts and devils-all this and more went directly from Judeo-Persian culture into Islam. Yet just for this reason, the Arabs adopted a stance of implacable hostility in relation to both Jewish and Persian nationalism, which they could never see except as rivals. That hostility to the concept of a Jewish nation is not truly essential to Islam was shown by the rivals of the Arabs, the Turks.

## The Turks

Although never mentioned by either Christian or Muslim historians, the Ottoman empire of the Turks at its height during the 16th century pursued a policy of fairly strong support for Jewish national aspirations in Palestine. The extent of Turkish pro-Zionism in the 16th century is brought out by Cecil Roth in his biography, *The Duke of Naxos*. Joseph , later the duke of Naxos, was a Jew who fled to Turkey in 1554 with the rest of his family in order to escape the Inquisition in Europe. Joseph and his family were "Marranos". wealthy Portugese Jews who had become nominal Christians but continued to practice Judaism secretly. In Turkey, they became open Jews and ardent Zionists . With the accession of Selim 2 as Sultan of the Ottoman

empire in 1566, Joseph, who was a close friend of Selim, became an important figure at the Turkish court . It was at this time that he received the title of duke of Naxos , a small Mediterranean island then held by the Turks.

In 1561, Joseph had received the city of Tiberias in Palestine as a fief from the Sultan. Working closely with his aunt, Dona Gracia, who settled in Tiberias, Joseph began a campaign to attract Jewish settlers to Tiberias and the surrounding region. By 1563, the French ambassador to Istanbul was accusing Joseph in his diplomatic reports of planning to become the "King of the Jews". Mulberry trees were planted by the settlers; a contemporary visitor, cited by Roth on page 118 of *The Duke of Naxos*, declared that in Tiberias, "the habitations of the wilderness have been turned to a garden of Eden, and the parched soil like to the vineyard of the Lord" . But in the 1570s, attacks by Arabs led to the partial destruction of the new settlements. In 1574, Selim died, leading to a decline of Joseph's influence at the Turkish court. By the time of Joseph's death in 1579, only a few settlers remained. Selim's support for Joseph's plans to build up a new Jewish center in Palestine was . only the most striking example of the pro-Jewish trend in 16th century Turkish policy . When the Jews were expelled from Spain at the end of the 15th century in the wake of the Spanish Inquisition, they were welcomed by the Turks. Large numbers of Jews settled at this time in Turkey , Greece and Bulgaria. In *Bulgaria and Her Jews*, Vicki Tamir points out that many of these Jews went into the woolen trades. By contract with the Sultan, the Jews of the Balkan region supplied the entire Turkish army with woolen clothing for more than three centuries. On page 61 of *Bulgaria and Her Jews*, Tamir also notes: "Throughout the sixteenth century only Jewesses, considered intellectually superior to and more trustworthy than the women of all the other subject nations, were called to fill the post of secretary to the sultana."

The knowledge that Jews were tolerated and even welcomed in the Turkish empire had a definite effect on Christian attitudes towards Jews during this period. As Poliakov notes in *The History of Anti-Semitism*, the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 had something of the same impact in Europe as the defeat of the Nazis at Stalingrad in 1943. At the time that Constantinople fell, expulsions and massacres of Jews in Europe had been going on almost constantly for about

350 years. But by the end of the 15th century, massacres of Jews had ceased almost everywhere in Europe. A new trend of interest in the Hebrew language and Hebrew tradition had set in, which was to lead to the Protestant Reformation. Awareness of the Turkish advance, which by the 16th century had reached as far as Vienna, played a major role in these developments.

Turkish sympathy for the Jews can be traced back at least as far as the Khazar kingdom. In later centuries, the Turks became Muslims; but as Muslims, the Turks were much more accepting of Jewish national aspirations than the Arabs. Far more than either the Arabs or the Jews, the Turks were aware of the many points of similarity between Islam and Judaism. In the contest between Jewish and Arab national aspirations in Palestine, they did not necessarily identify with the Arabs. For the most part they did tend to defer to the Arabs on this issue, if only because they were much stronger and more numerous than the Jews; but when the Jews had something to offer, the Turks were open to their point of view.

Turkish support for the projects of Joseph of Naxos may have been linked to the role of the Jewish refugees from Europe in the development of Turkish military technology. In *A History of the Jewish People*, on page 633, Ben-Sasson cites a 16th century Jewish writer, Elijah Capsali, as stating:

The Jews taught the Turks how to use all kinds of destructive weapons, batteries and field cannon. And through them the Turks grew mightier than all the peoples of the world.

Ben-Sasson goes on to note: "It is a fact of military history that the introduction of fire-arms into the equipment of the Turkish army came at about the time of the admission of the Spanish exiles into the Empire." Joseph of Naxos himself was reputed to be adept in the use of all kinds of weapons; within the Turkish court, he was closely identified with the war party.

The great 17th century Zionist movement led by Sabbetai Zevi was based on the expectation of Turkish support for Jewish settlement in Palestine. The history of this movement is described in *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah* by Gershom Scholem. Sabbetai Zevi arose following the terrible massacres of 1648 in Poland and declared himself the Messiah. He built up a great following, with supporters in most

Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean region and even in Poland, but was eventually imprisoned by the Turks. In prison, Sabbetai Zevi converted to Islam, resulting in the collapse of the movement which he had inspired.

The movement led by Sabbetai Zevi was based on the expectation that if only the Jews could get themselves together, they could persuade the Sultan to permit them to settle in large numbers in Palestine.

This expectation was rooted in large part in the fact that the Turks had done something like this in the 16th century at the time of Joseph of Naxos. But by the time of Sabbetai Zevi, Turkish policy was no longer so pro-Jewish as it had been at the height of the 16th century Turkish offensive. As the tide of battle with the Europeans began to turn against the Turks, they began to fear being too closely associated with the Jews. They continued to accept Jewish refugees into Turkish territory but did not treat them quite so well as previously or remain so sympathetic to Jewish national aspirations in Palestine.

Sabbetai Zevi was evidently led to believe by the Turks that if he and his followers became nominal Muslims, they would be permitted to continue their Zionist activities under this guise. In any case, a small number of his followers, led by Nathan of Gaza, did adopt this course, converting to Islam but remaining Jews secretly. They eventually founded a sect, called the Donmeh, with many thousands of followers, mainly in Greece and Turkey. Nor were their hopes entirely disappointed. Many of the "Young Turks", who overthrew the rule of the Sultan in the Turkish empire in 1908, were members of the Donmeh.

Isaiah Friedman, on page 151 of *Germany, Turkey, and Zionism:*

1897-1918, notes that Djavid Bey, the Minister of Finance in the first "Young Turk" government, was a member of the Donmeh.

The main base of the "Young Turks" was in Salonica, also the main base of the Donmeh and a city with a large Jewish population.

When the "Young Turks" came to power in 1908, it was widely believed that they would adopt a more favorable policy towards Zionism than their predecessors. Many Zionist leaders, including David Ben-Gurion, became Turkish citizens at this time, in the expectation that the Turks would henceforth aid the Zionists. But in practice, the "Young Turks" soon adopted the position, similar to that of the Sultans before them, that Jews could settle anywhere in Turkish territory except not in large numbers in Palestine. Despite the influence of the Donmeh within the "Young Turk" movement, the Turkish military

position at this time relative to the Europeans was too weak to permit any Turkish government to take such a daring step as allying itself with the Zionists.

Although Zionist hopes based primarily on Turkish assistance were ultimately disappointed, the rise of the Turkish empire nonetheless played a major role in the origins of the modern Zionist movement. With the Turks dominating the Middle East against both the Europeans and the Arabs, the Jews could at least hope that one day the Sultan might endorse large scale Jewish settlement in Palestine. In *The Jew and His History*, Lionel Kochan shows that the rise of Turkish power in the 16th century was accompanied by the emergence of a much more secular and realistic school of Jewish historical writing. Many of the historians of this school, including Elijah Capsali and Joseph Ha'Cohen, also wrote histories of Turkey. Another member of this school, Solomon ibn Verga, published a book in 1554 in Turkey called *Staff of Judah* in which, as Kochan notes on page 37, he "sought to explain objectively and naturalistically the hostility to which the Jews were exposed throughout their history". The emergence of a more secular and realistic school of Jewish historiography at this time was closely linked to the more realistic possibilities for Jewish national revival created by the rise of Turkish power.

## Mussulmen

In the extermination camps during the Holocaust, Jews who were obviously too starved or sick to survive were called "Muslims" by other Jews. A description of such "Muslims", or "Mussulmen" in Yiddish, appears in *The Holocaust* by Nora Levin on page 701: In this, the winter of liberation, the outside world saw for the first time a new species that had evolved in the concentration camp world, the Mussulmen. "It was impossible to extract from their lips their names much less their date of birth," a university professor observed. "Kindness itself had not the power to make them speak. They would only look at you with a long expressionless stare. If they tried to answer, their tongues could not reach their dried up palates to make a sound. One was aware only of a poisonous breath rising out of entrails already in a state of decomposition."

This usage of the term "Mussulmen" had an ironic ring. The root concept of Islam is that of "Surrender". A Muslim is one who has surrendered to Allah. The Jewish "Mussulmen" were Jews who had surrendered to death.

Beneath the irony lay another irony. The only reason why there were no non-Jewish Muslims in the camps was because Islam had long been banned in Europe. As Bernard Lewis points out in *Islam in History*, anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim feeling in Europe were closely related. Lewis states on page 136:

The worst massacres of Jews in medieval Christendom were perpetrated by Crusaders on their way to fight the Saracens; the expulsion of the Jews from Spain was the climax of the reconquest from the Moors; the deadliest enemies of the Turks were the Russians, the most inveterate Jew-haters of modern Europe.

Lewis leaves out the Nazis, whose efforts to murder the Jews of Europe coincided with a German invasion of the Middle East. Had the Germans won, the Arabs would soon have discovered that the Nazis really were anti-Semites and not merely Jew-haters.

European hatred of Jews and Muslims alike was ultimately rooted in the European drive for empire over the Middle East. The resemblance which Jews and Arabs have found so difficult to see is readily perceived by their enemies. Judaism and Islam are similar forms of Middle Eastern nationalism. The Judeo-Islamic tradition is a tradition of Middle Eastern nationalism, which can only be weakened by a refusal to recognize any of its many components.

## Chapter Fourteen

### The Big Picture

The rebirth of Israel after 2,000 years of struggle is an event without parallel in world history. The great prominence and power of this event derives from the impact of the long term Jewish struggle to survive on the development of world consciousness. Christianity, Islam and Marxism all arose from the Jewish struggle. Now the Jews have won, confronting all the world with a reality it had not wished to see. Christianity, Islam and Marxism are as one in their need to express Jewish concepts in an anti-Jewish form. For 2,000 years, Jewish ideas have been conquering the world, while the Jews themselves have been loaded with blame. The world thought that it was blaming the Jews for killing "Christ", or for rejecting Mohammed, or for fostering capitalism, but in reality all this time it was blaming the Jews for the same reason as it admired their ideas-for being revolutionaries, for defying the Romans, for being dispersed, murdered and abused. Now that the Jews have won, whom will the world find to blame?

At the present time it is still trying to blame the Jews. The source of most of the emotional energy that goes into hatred of Israel is the same need to blame the Jews which was formerly satisfied by massacres and ghettos. But hating Israel is not so satisfying as hating helpless, defenseless Jews. Israel fights back. Hence the world is gradually being pushed into the position where it must finally begin to look at its own tradition of blaming the Jews and question what it has been doing. The world does not want to do this, and yet it must all the same.

Recognition of the reality of Israel is the same as recognition of the reality of Jewish history. Both forms of recognition are still widely resisted because of their revolutionary implications. Christianity, Islam and Marxism alike would be transformed if the element of blame of the Jews were removed from them. The whole understanding of

human history currently established in Christian, Muslim and Marxist tradition alike would have to be radically revised to take account of the actual role of the Jewish people in world history. A world which could not solve its problems by blaming the Jews would be a new world. It would live in a new era, a Messianic Era. This is the era in which we are already living, would the world but recognize it. Recognition of the reality of Israel and recognition of the reality of Jewish history imply also recognition of the Messianic Era. If Israel is real, then the Messiah has come and gone.

### The Messianic Era

According to all the traditional signs, we are now living in the early stages of the Messianic Era. In Jewish tradition, the main task of the Messiah was the ingathering of the exiles and the restoration of the Jewish nation on the soil of the "Holy Land". This task has been accomplished. The time of the Messiah was to be a time of terrible suffering, of "wars of Gog and Magog", in which a cruel tyrant would oppress the earth. These expectations were amply fulfilled by the events of the second World War. Only the anticipated miracles were lacking, but miracles were never the real point of the Messianic tradition. The myth of the Messiah was but a means to an end, and the end has been fulfilled.

The mythical character of the Messianic ideal was long recognized within the Jewish Messianic movement. Many of the Hasidic Messianists of Eastern Europe consciously thought of the Messiah as a symbol for the collective struggle of the entire Jewish people. Gershom Scholem in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* on page 199 cites Nahum of Tchernobyl, a Hasidic leader, as stating:

Everybody in Israel has to restore and to prepare that part of the structure of the Messiah which belongs to his own soul . . . for the Messiah will be a complete structure composed of all the souls of Israel which are six hundred thousand as they were contained within Adam before the fall. Therefore everyone in Israel should prepare that part corresponding to his part in the soul of the Messiah which belongs to his own soul until the whole structure will be restored and established and then there will be a permanent and universal yihud, realization of unity.

In *The Jewish Mystical Tradition*, edited by Ben Zion Bokser, on page 243, appears a similar statement from the writings of Nahman of Bratislav:

Each person will bring to fruition his own Messianic element, ascending from level to level, in slow stages, until God's kingship will become fully manifest; and this state corresponds to what we mean by the coming of the messiah.

The writings of Nahman of Bratislav abound in illustrations of how individuals could hasten or delay the advent of the Messiah by their actions.

Although the Christian Messianists did not think of the concept of the Messiah as a myth, many of them did recognize the connection between the Messianic ideal and the Jewish national struggle. In *American Protestantism and a Jewish State*, Hertzfel Fishman shows that it was one particular Protestant tendency, known as the Dispensationalists, which formed the core of American Protestant support for Jewish Zionism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Dispensationalists believed that the restoration of Judah would be the signal for the "Second Coming" of "Christ". Most Puritan supporters of Zionism in England held similar beliefs. Just because they were Messianists, even in a Christian form, they could not help but recognize the relationship between the dream of the Messiah and the dream of Jewish national revival.

Now the dream has come true, yet something is lacking. In Jewish and Christian tradition alike, the advent of the Messiah was to inaugurate an era of universal peace and harmony. One of the earliest images of the Messianic Era appears in the Book of Enoch, dating from the 2nd century BCE. In chapter 52 it states:

And it shall come to pass in those days that none shall be saved.

Either by gold or by silver,

And none be able to escape,

And there shall be no iron for war,

Nor shall one clothe on self with a breastplate.

Bronze shall be of no service,

And tin shall be of no service and shall not be esteemed,

And lead shall not be desired.

## The Big Picture

The world has not gone in this direction. Instead of abolishing the rule of metal, it has developed it even further. There is still "iron for war", and not only in the forms of swords and shields but also guns, tanks, planes and bombs. The era of world peace is not yet in sight. Traditional Messianism could not conceive of the restoration of Judah except in the context of a general overthrow of all forms of imperialism and militarism. But it turned out that the restoration of Judah was accomplished in part with the aid of imperialism and militarism. Due to the permeation of European and American culture by Jewish ideas, the modern Zionists were able to find allies as well as enemies among the "Great Powers" contending for domination of the Middle East. Actually, traditional Jewish Messianism had also relied on "Great Power" support in the form of the Persian empire. The dream of the restoration of Judah in the context of the inauguration of an era of general world peace and harmony was never a realistic dream. Yet without the full realization of the Messianic dream, of what value is the Messianic reality?

It is of great value for the Jewish people. The main reason why Israel was born in the first place is because the world would not let the Jews live without it. No matter how hard the Jews tried to assimilate to the culture and values of others, they were always ultimately rejected as hopeless losers. Did the world not despise the Jews, it would not eat us in effigy. Jews will never be treated with respect and consideration by others until the world ceases to perceive us as losers. Only Israel can accomplish this change.

But the world wants more than this. It is accustomed to thinking of the Messiah as the hope of humanity, and it feels tricked and betrayed by the spectacle of a Messiah who cares only for the Jews. Yet this is just the point. For 2,000 years, the Jews have been carrying the load of the world's expectations on our backs. We do not want to carry this load for another 2,000 years. It is not the responsibility of Israel to save the world but only to save the Jews. Even if it did transform the world, the purpose of the Jewish struggle all those years was not to transform the world but to preserve the Jews. "Jesus" did not die for you but for us, and he was not the only one. If you like martyrs so much, supply them yourselves.

Yet even if it does not mean the advent of an era of universal peace and harmony, the birth of Israel does have a meaning for the world beyond its meaning for the Jews. It was no coincidence that the birth

of Israel took place in the context of the birth of the United Nations, of the triumph of the concept of national self-determination on a world scale, of the overthrow of the European imperialist system, of a wave of revolutions everywhere in the world. The existence of the state of Israel poses a fundamental challenge to all forms of imperialism and to the dominant world ideologies of Christianity, Islam and Marxism. Just as the birth of Israel was accompanied by a revolution in world organization, so the longer, slower process of the gradual recognition and acceptance of Israel will be accompanied by a longer, slower revolution in world thought.

### Demystification

The key to this revolution is the demystification of Jewish history. Absorption of Jewish ideas into world consciousness over the course of the last 2,000 years has been accomplished at the price of a gross mystification of Jewish history by Christians, Muslims and Marxists alike. This process must now be reversed and world understanding of Jewish history gradually demystified in order to take account of the new reality represented by Israel. Judaism itself will not emerge unchanged from the new process of demystification of Jewish history. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are much alike in the gross mystification of Jewish history implied by the concept of "God". Marxism is largely free from this form of mystification, but it has invented others to take its place. It is very doubtful that Marxism as an organized body of thought can survive the realization that its founder was guilty of systematic racism and dishonesty in his relations with his own people, the most proletarian people in the Europe of his day. No ideology will be affected more strongly by the demystification of Jewish history than Christianity. Christianity is mainly about Jewish history, and most of what it has to say on the subject is simply untrue. Joshua of Galilee was not born of a virgin, did not offer a path to salvation to the Jewish people, did not work great miracles and did not rise from the dead. Those Christians who maintain that they do not worship "Jesus" the "god" but the real, historic "Jesus" are just another school of Christian liars. If they had any feeling for the real, historic "Jesus" whatsoever, they would not worship him. Why is the Jewish martyr eulogized by the Greeks so much better than all the other Jewish martyrs? If the Christians really had a feeling

for Jewish martyrs, they would do like the Jews themselves, who do not worship any of their martyrs but only try to carry on their cause. The only reason why the Christians worship "Jesus" is so that they can kill and eat him . Even those Protestant sects that have abandoned the ritual of "Holy Communion" out of deference to Jewish feeling still perpetuate the root concept of " Holy Communion", the strange notion that "Jesus" died so that the Europeans might live. The more "godlike" the Christians consider "Jesus", the more they torture and consume him. The Europeans have a positive genius for not noticing what they are doing. In reality they have filled the world with images of a tortured, murdered Jew; but in their minds, they are worshipping "God".

Christians regard their religion as unique, and so they should.

Christianity is one of the few religions that have ever existed that worships a tortured, murdered "god", and it is the only one that has attained to widespread popularity. Most peoples traditionally preferred to worship powerful, successful "gods" and "goddesses". One of the few close parallels to Christianity in the history of world religions is the Aztec cult of Xipe. In Aztecs of Mexico, on page 184, G. C. Vaillant describes the Aztec cult of Xipe as follows :

Xipe (the Flayed One) symbolized spring, and his distinctive costume , a human skin, represented the new covering of vegetation with which the earth clothes itself each year. His priests, at the ceremonies in his honour, canied this symbolism into their costume by donning the skins of freshly flayed captives.

Xipe, also called " Our Lord The Flayed One", was believed by the Aztecs to have been killed and skinned. The main rites of the cult of Xipe were held in the spring, were associated with the worship of a , goddess" and were believed to promote fertility. Had' the Aztecs identified Xipe with a particular people, whose members they periodically tortured and killed in his honor, they would have approximated the Christian relationship to the Jews. Indeed, in the Nazi extermination camps, Jews were literally flayed and their skin used to make lampshades.

Anti-Semitism is not a secondary aspect of Christianity but its very basis. Christianity without anti-Semitism would be nothing more or less than Judaism . This was recognized by many of the 16th century

Protestants, who did in fact become Jews. But most Christians did not become Christians in order to become Jews. It is not Judah they want, but Xipe. If they are denied their Jewish Xipe, they will demand a new one. But no people wants to play the role of scapegoat in the European tradition of human sacrifice. Why don't the Europeans eat themselves?

Anti-Semitism is not so fundamental to Marxism as it is to Christianity, but Marx was an anti-Semite. Marx was so hostile to the Jewish people that, as Poliakov points out on page 425 of Volume 3 of *The History of Anti-Semitism* with reference to Marx: "His reading notes for 1852 show that when he was studying a treatise on general history (the *Allgemeine Culturgeschichte* by Wachsmuth), he avoided the chapter on the Jews." Marx's image of the Jewish people in his writings, both public and private, can hardly be called slanted or distorted; it is almost entirely imaginary, consisting of little more than hostile invective bolstered by an almost complete ignorance of and indifference to Jewish realities. Marx's work, despite its great merits, cannot provide a sound basis for an enduring world movement against all forms of racism and imperialism.

Marx's hostility to the Jews affected not only his position on the "Jewish question" but his whole world outlook. It brought a shrill and rhetorical tone into his polemics against Christianity, for Marx did not dare to attack the Christians for what they had done to the Jews but only on secondary and often trivial points. It led him to focus his whole attack on capitalism, which he identified with the Jews, and to considerably underestimate the power of feudalism, particularly in Germany. Moses Hess had a far more accurate understanding of the dangers of German imperialism and militarism than Marx, who was so afraid of being taken for a Jew as to swallow whole the anti-Semitic belief that Europe was ruled by the money interests, particularly the Jewish money interests. No doubt the capitalists were a powerful group, but as the Nazis were to prove in the 20th century, not the only powerful group in Europe. The world has learned much from Marx, but before his vision of a classless society can be fulfilled, the world will also have to unlearn the prejudices and distortions which Marx's anti-Semitism introduced into his thought.

Islam too cannot survive the birth of Israel in its traditional form. No doubt Mohammed was a great and inspiring leader, yet as experience has shown, he was mistaken in his belief that the Jews were

finished. When the Muslims finally grow weary of trying to make Israel disappear in order to vindicate Mohammed, they will be forced to take the opposite approach and question Mohammed in order to recognize Israel. It is the fear of just such a trend that lies behind the intensity of the Muslim rejection of Israel; but the longer and more intense the rejection, the sharper and more intense will be the questioning once the failure of the rejection has become apparent. The day will come when the Muslims realize that when they say they follow Moses as well as Mohammed, these are not just pretty words but have a meaning, and the name of the meaning is Israel.

Of all the many forms of mystification of Jewish history, the oldest and most enduring has proved to be the myth of "God" . This myth grew out of Judaism itself and in particular the Judaism that developed after the Babylonian captivity under Persian influence. The early Hebrews did not worship "God": they worshipped "I am that I am", a nameless, faceless spirit much like the Zoroastrian "Zurvan", the Chinese "Tao" and the metaphysical "Brahman" of later Hinduism. Worship of "I am that I am" was literally banned in later Judaism and replaced with worship of "the Lord", an imaginary entity also worshipped by Christians as " God" and Muslims as "Allah". Whether in Jewish, Christian or Muslim guise, "the Lord" was conceived as a king in the sky who had created the universe and ruled over it for some incomprehensible purpose known only to "Himself". This monarchical myth will not survive the collapse of the monarchical systems in which it was traditionally embedded. Strange as it may appear to those who associate the Jewish people above all with the concept of "God", the most profound aspect of the process of demystification of Jewish history initiated by the birth of Israel will undoubtedly prove to be the demystification of the concept of the spirit in human thought.

## Spirit

The concept of "God" is a monarchical myth that has fastened itself onto the concept of the spirit in human thought and made it almost impossible to think about the spirit in realistic, common sense terms. The spirit is real, but not as an entity set apart from or over the rest of the universe. The spirit flows through the universe, is a part of the universe, lives and dies together with the rest of the universe.

Spiritual reality is just another dimension of total reality. It differs from other dimensions mainly in that it is difficult to perceive and even more difficult to understand.

The spiritual dimension of reality is a dimension that can only be perceived fleetingly, out of the corner of the eye, in a manner which is difficult to describe. The testimony of countless generations since people began shows that the spirit is real; yet after all this time, it is still little understood. One big reason for this is the myth of "God". So long as people were forced to think, or pretend to think, that the spirit was a king in the sky, little progress could be made towards understanding it. Another big reason is the myth of the immortal soul, which is really but another form of the myth of "God". The spirit within us is not immortal; it is born when we are born and dies when we die. Spirit is a part of life and can only be understood as a part of life.

Many people have tried to define the spirit as energy or life force. Spirit could also be defined as mind, emotion, sense and sensation. A true understanding of spiritual reality could only be the outcome of a long collective process, for spirit is a collective reality. Our individual experience of spiritual reality, no matter how profound, is but a tiny corner of the universal experience of a universal force. The development of a realistic and common sense approach to the understanding of the spirit is the path opened up by the disappearance of the myth of "God". In an era of democracy, monarchy can be no more preserved in the domain of the spirit than in any other. Freed from monarchical rule, the spirit is magical. It flows and sparkles and works wonders just like magic. It does not require worship and praise like a monarch, only close attention. The spirit is like a dark star, that is seen yet not seen.

When people associate the Jewish people with the myth of "God" , what they are really doing is testifying to the power of the spirit in Jewish history. It was not for being so monarchical that Jewish thought became famous, but for being so spiritual. "I am that I am" is as good a definition of the spirit as any that has yet been advanced. In the search for truth, it is better to say too little than too much. The Jews all along have relied on truth to win the victory. Let the whole past be studied; let the whole truth be told. On the day when the whole past is truly known to the whole world, Israel will be counted among the ranks of the nations.