RM Die Religionen der Menschheit

Michael Tilly/Burton L. Visotzky (Eds.)

Judaism III

Culture and Modernity

Kohlhammer

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Die Religionen der Menschheit

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Content

Foreword

In the beginning, the Hebrew Bible was formed as an anthology of Jewish texts, each shaping an aspect of Jewish identity. As the Israelite community and its various tribes became two parts: a Diaspora and its complement, the community in the Land of Israel—competing interests formed a canon that represented their various concerns. Over time, the communities grew, interacted, and focused on local religious needs, all the while ostensibly proclaiming fealty to the Jerusalem Temple. Even so, some communities rejected the central shrine that the Torah's book of Deuteronomy proclaimed to be »the place where the Lord chose for His name to dwell« (Deut. 12:5, et passim). Still other Jewish communities had their own competing shrines. Yet for all their dissentions, disagreements, and local politics, there was a common yet unarticulated core of beliefs and practices that unified the early Jewish communities across the ancient world.[1] As the Second Temple period (516 BCE–70 CE) drew to a close, the biblical canon took its final shape, and a world-wide *Jewish* community—no longer Israelite—emerged as a moral and spiritual power.[2]

That canon, by definition, excluded certain Jewish texts, even as it codified others. And the political processes of the Persian and Hellenistic empires confined and defined the polities of their local Jews. From east to west, at the very moment in 70 CE when the centralized Jerusalem cult was reduced to ashes, Judaism, like the mythical phoenix, emerged. Across the oikumene, with each locale finding its own expressions, communities that had formed around the study of the biblical canon produced commentaries, codes, chronicles, commemorations, and compendia about Judaism. Some of these were inscribed on stone, others on parchment and paper, while still others were committed to memory. The devotion to this varied literature helped shape a Jewish culture and history that has persisted for two millennia.

This three-volume compendium, *Judaism: I. History, II. Literature, and III. Culture and Modernity*, considers various aspects of Jewish expressions over these past two millennia. In this Foreword, we the editors: an American rabbi-professor and an

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1 The idea of a »common Judaism« remains debated but was introduced by Ed P. Sanders in his *Judaism: Practice and Beliefs, 163 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992) and embraced as a scholarly consensus in Adele Reinhartz and Wayne McCready, eds., *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

2 See, inter alia, Timothy Lim, *The Formation of the Jewish Canon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

ordained German Protestant university professor, will discuss what led us to choose the chapters in this compendium. Obviously three volumes, even totaling a thousand pages, cannot include consideration of all aspects of a rich and robustly evolving two-thousand-year-old Jewish civilization. And so, we will assay to lay bare our own biases as editors and acknowledge our own shortcomings and those of these volumes, where they are visible to us. To do this we need to have a sense of perspective on the scholarly study of Judaism over the past two centuries.

1 *Die Wissenschaft des Judentums*

Dr. Leopold Zunz (1794–1886) began the modern study of Judaism by convening his *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* (the Society for the Culture and Critical Study of the Jews) exactly two hundred years ago, in late 1819 in Berlin.[3] Although the *Verein* was small and lasted but five years before disbanding, it included such luminaries as co-founder Eduard Gans, a disciple of Hegel, as well as the poet Heinrich Heine.[4] The scholarly *Verein* failed to gain traction in the larger Jewish community. None-the-less, Zunz and his German Reform colleagues introduced an academic study of Judaism based upon comparative research and use of non-Jewish sources. Their historical-critical approach to Jewish learning allowed for what had previously been confined to the Jewish orthodox Yeshiva world to eventually find an academic foothold in the university.

In that era, history was often seen as the stories of great men. Spiritual and political biographies held sway. Zunz accepted the challenge with his groundbreaking biography of the great medieval French exegete, »*Salomon ben Isaac, genannt Raschi*.« The work marked the end of the *Verein* and was published in the short-lived *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*.[5] The monographic length of the article and its use of what were then cutting-edge methods ironically helped assure the journal's demise. Further, the attempt to write a biography that might assay to peek behind the myth of the towering medieval figure, assured that the orthodox yeshiva scholars who passionately cared about Rashi would find the work anathema. Nevertheless, the study was a programmatic introduction not only to Rashi, but to the philological and comparative methods of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. It would set a curriculum for critical study of Judaism for the next century and a half.

Zunz solidified his methods and his agenda in 1832, when he published *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwickelt* (The Sermons of the Jews

3 Ismar Schorsch, *Leopold Zunz: Creativity in Adversity* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 29ff.

4 Both Gans and Heine subsequently converted to Christianity for the ease of cultural assimilation. Schorsch, ibid.

5 *ZWJ* (1823) 277–384, Schorsch 42.

in their Historic Development).[6] Here, Zunz surveyed rabbinic exegetical and homiletical literature, and by focusing on this literature, he conspicuously avoided both the study of the Talmud and Jewish mysticism. Zunz began his survey in the late books of the Hebrew Bible and continued to review the form and content of the genre up to German Reform preaching of his own day. His work was not without bias. Zunz separated what he imagined should be the academic study of Judaism from both the Yeshiva curriculum—primarily Talmud and legal codes—and from the Chassidic world, which had a strong dose of mysticism.

Zunz's acknowledgement of the mystic's yearning for God came in his masterful survey of medieval liturgical poetry, *Die Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters.*[7] Indeed, Jewish mysticism only finally came to be acknowledged in academic circles a century later by the efforts of Gershom Gerhard Scholem (1897–1982). Leopold Zunz essentially set the curriculum for the academic study of Judaism until the horrible events of World War II irreparably changed the course of Jewish history and learning. Even so, Zunz's agenda still affects Jewish studies to this day and has influenced the content choices of these volumes.

2 World War II and Vatican II

The world of Jewish academic study had its ups and downs in the century following Zunz. A year after his death, the Jewish Theological Seminary was founded in New York. It continues to be a beacon of Jewish scholarship in the western world. But the shift to America was prescient, as European Jewry as a whole suffered first from the predations of Czarist Russia, then from the decimation of World War I, and finally from the Holocaust of World War II.

The absolute destruction that the Holocaust wrought upon European Jewry cannot be exaggerated. Much of what is described in these volumes came to an abrupt and tragic end. Yet following World War II, two particular events had a dramatic effect on the future of Judaism. Both have some relationship to the attempted destruction of Jewry in Germany during the war, yet each has its own dynamic that brought it to full flowering. We refer to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 and the declaration of the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate* document in 1965. The former has been a continual midwife for the rebirth of Jewish culture and literature both within and outside the Diaspora. Of course, there is an entire chapter of this compendium devoted to Israel. The Vatican II document, which revolutionized the Catholic Church's approach to Jews and Judaism, is reckoned with in the final chapter of this work, describing interreligious dialogue in the past seventy years.

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6 Berlin: Asher Verlag. The work was translated into Hebrew by M. Zack and expanded by Hanokh Albeck as *HaDerashot BeYisrael* (Hebrew, reprinted many times by Bialik Publishing: Jerusalem).

7 Berlin: Julius Springer Verlag, 1855.

3 Jacob Neusner resets the agenda

A graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary's rabbinical school, Jacob Neusner (1932–2016) earned his doctorate with Prof. Morton Smith, who was a former Anglican cleric and professor of ancient history at Columbia University.[8] Although they broke bitterly in later years, Neusner imbibed Smith's methodology, which served to undermine the very foundations of Zunz's *Wissenschaft* curriculum. Neusner was exceedingly prolific and succeeded in publishing over 900 books before his death.

Among these was his *A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai: 1–80 CE*.[9] This work was a conventional biography of one of the founding-fathers of rabbinic Judaism, not unlike Zunz's much earlier work on Rashi. Yet eight years after the publication of the Yohanan biography, Neusner recanted this work and embraced Smith's »hermeneutic of suspicion,« publishing *The Development of a Legend: Studies in the Traditions Concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai.*[10] With this latter work, Neusner upended the notion of Jewish history as the stories of great men and treated those tales instead as ideological-didactic legends which exhibited a strong religious bias. He and his students continued to publish in this vein until they put a virtual end to the writing of positivist Jewish history.

This revolution came just as Jewish studies was being established as a discipline on American university campuses. For the past half-century, scholars have been writing instead the history of the ancient literature itself, and carefully limning what could and could not be asserted about the Jewish past. Due to Neusner's polemical nature, there has been a fault line between Israeli scholars and those in the European and American Diasporas regarding the reliability of rabbinic sources as evidence for the history of the ancient period, describing the very foundations of rabbinic Judaism.

4 Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Judaism and Hellenism)

Even as this monumental shift in the scholarly agenda was taking place, another significant change affected our understanding of Judaism. This transformation followed from the theological shift evinced by Vatican II and was apposite to the ending of what has been characterized as the Church's millennial »teaching of contempt« for Judaism.[11] European-Christian scholarship had, from the time of

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8 See Aaron W. Hughes, *Jacob Neusner: An American Jewish Iconoclast* (New York: NYU press, 2016).

9 Leiden: Brill, 1962.

10 Leiden: Brill, 1970.

11 The phrase was the title of the book by Jules Isaac in the context of Vatican II, idem, *The Teaching of Contempt: The Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964).

the separation of Church and Synagogue,[12] characterized Christianity as the direct inheritor of Greco-Roman Hellenism while Judaism, often derogated as *Spätjudentum*, was portrayed as primitive or even barbarian. In 1969, Martin Hengel (1926–2009) wrote a pathbreaking work of heterodox scholarship exploring the Hellenistic background of Judaism and how it was a seed-bed for subsequent Christian Hellenism.[13]

Hengel himself was relying in part on Jewish scholars such as Saul Lieberman, who wrote in the decades before him of Greek and Hellenism in Jewish Palestine.[14] Lieberman, however, wrote particularly of influences on the literature of the ancient rabbis and targeted his work to scholars of Talmudic literature. Hengel, a German Protestant scholar, wrote for scholars of New Testament, and achieved a much broader reach and influence. Finally, one hundred fifty years after Zunz gathered his Berlin *Verein*, Hengel granted Jewish studies and Judaism itself a seat at the table of Christian faculties, even as he felt that Jewish theology of the ancient period erred in rejecting Jesus.

5 The New Academy

Since Hengel, there has been a vast expansion of Jewish Studies in universities in North America and throughout the world. Today, there is nary a university without Jewish Studies. In part this waxing of Judaica was due to the theological shifts in the Catholic Church and Protestant academy. In part, especially in the US, the explosion of Jewish studies departments was due to a general move towards identity studies that began with women's studies and African-American studies, expanded to include Jewish studies, and other ethnic and religious departments, majors, or concentrations. But Jewish Studies itself has changed in many profound ways. To wit, Christian scholars have also excelled in the field. At the time of this writing, the president of the Association for Jewish Studies, Prof. Christine Hayes of Yale University, is the first non-Jew to lead the organization in its 51year history. Similarly, Peter Schäfer served as Perelman professor of Judaic Studies at Princeton University for fifteen years, having previously served as professor for Jewish Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin (1983–2008). Both Schäfer and Hayes specialize in Talmud scholarship. By this focus, we highlight not so much the anomaly of a gentile studying Talmud, as it is a sign of the integration of Jewish Studies into the

12 See James Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991) and in response Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.

13 M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jahrhunderts vor Christus* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 10) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969).

14 Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942) and idem., *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950).

broader academy. Indeed, as early as 1961, the late Rabbi Samuel Sandmel served as president of the otherwise overwhelmingly Christian membership of the Society for Biblical Literature.

6 Kohlhammer's *Die Religionen der Menschheit*

Since 1960, Kohlhammer in Stuttgart has published the prestigious series *Die Religionen der Menschheit* (The Religions of Humanity). While the series was originally conceived of as thirty-six volumes almost 60 years ago, today it extends to fifty plus volumes, covering virtually all aspects of world-religions. That said, a disproportionate number of the volumes (often made up of multi-book publications) are devoted to Christianity. This is unsurprising, given Kohlhammer's location in a German-Lutheran orbit.

In the earliest round of publication, Kohlhammer brought out a one-volume *Israelitische Religion* (1963, second edition: 1982), which covered Old Testament religion. This also demonstrated Kohlhammer's essentially Christian worldview. By separating Israelite religion from Judaism, it implies that Israelite religion might lead the way to Christianity; viz. that the Old Testament would be replaced by the New. Its author was Christian biblical theologian Helmer Ringgren.

In 1994, though, Kohlhammer began to address the appearance of bias with its publication of a one-volume (ca. 500 pp) work *Das Judentum*, Judaism. Although it was edited by German Christian scholar Günter Mayer, (who specialized in rabbinic literature), and had contributions by Hermann Greive, who was also a non-Jew; the work featured contributions by three notable rabbis: Jacob Petuchowski, Phillip Sigal, and especially Leo Trepp. German born, Rabbi Trepp was renown as the last surviving rabbi to lead a congregation in Germany.

In its current iteration, twenty-five years later, this edition of *Judaism* is a three-volume, 1000-page compendium with contributions by thirty experts in all areas of Judaism, from the destruction of the Second Temple and the advent of rabbinic Judaism, until today. We, the co-editors, are Dr. Burton L. Visotzky, Ph.D., a rabbi who serves as the Appleman Professor of Midrash and Interreligious Studies at New York's Jewish Theological Seminary. The other co-editor is Dr. Michael Tilly, a Protestant minister, Professor of New Testament and head of the Institute of Ancient Judaism and Hellenistic Religions at Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen.

Further, the individual chapter authors are a mix, albeit uneven, of men and women (our initial invitations were to the same number of women as men, but as will be apparent, the final number favors men over women). And there are more Jews than Christians writing for these three volumes, although we confess to not actually knowing the religion of each individual participant. Scholars from seven countries make up the mix, with a preponderance of North-Americans; there are also many Germans, Israelis and then, scholars from England, France, Austria, and Poland. We are not entirely sure what this distribution means, except perhaps that the publisher and one of the editors is German, the other editor is American, and the largest number of Jewish studies scholars are located in America and Israel.

The relative paucity of Europeans indicates the slow recovery from World War II, even as we celebrate the reinvigoration of Jewish Studies in Europe.

In this volume devoted to Culture, we survey the cultural movements that have affected Jewish identity development over recent times. Much of what we can discern regarding Jewish culture in antique and medieval times necessarily is found in the literature that survives. But more recently, in addition to literary evidence, the scholar of Jewish culture can turn to other artifacts and evidence to write a fuller appreciation of the various Jewish cultural environments.

We have chosen cultural moments that are readily discernable through the existence of scholarly disciplines devoted to them. It is not our intention to express preferences for one form of culture over another. Rather, we are attempting to draw a map of the various forms and movements of Jewish culture in the premodern and modern periods. We cannot be all inclusive, as Judaism has been blessed with a surfeit of cultural movements and expressions in the past century. We hope this volume celebrates that abundance.

Michael Tilly / Burton L. Visotzky, January 2020

Jewish engagement(s) with Modern Culture

Joachim Schlör

1 The challenges of modernization

Looking back at the documented history of mankind, we find in any given society individuals or smaller groups who were ahead of their contemporaries, more daring, more adventurous, more interested in the world beyond the confines of their respective communities. Modernity, understood as a conscious departure from tradition, has always been there. In the context of Jewish history, we can identify many instances where traditional customs and values have been replaced by more modern ones, from biblical times onward. In general terms, political upheaval, war, and forced emigration necessarily challenged individuals and communities to rethink traditional forms of living and to adapt to new circumstances. The Babylonian exile and the emergence of an exilic identity among those removed from Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, for example, could be usefully analysed and discussed in a context of modernisation. Given the mainly diasporic character of Jewish life and culture from the 6th century BCE on, and even more so after the destruction of the Second Temple, such periods of modernisation were often the product of an encounter—in contact, cooperation, or conflict—with the non-Jewish world: in Babylon, in Athens and Alexandria, in Rome[1], from the cities along the North African coast to the centres of Jewish life under Muslim[2] and Christian rule in »Sepharad« as well as in the settlements along the Rhine river in what was to become »Ashkenas«[3].

Traditional Jewish communities acquired new languages[4], Spanish or Middle High German, new customs, new forms of food or dress, and were influenced by different philosophical and scientific developments long before the dates that are usually noted as markers of the onset of modernity—be it 1492, with the discovery of a world beyond former conceptions of the earth, or 1789, when the French Revolution shattered the feudal societies all over Europe. Still, with this reservation, it is fair to say that the enlightenment in the late 18th century opened up the world

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1 See Levine, The Resilience of Jews and Judaism in Late Roman-Byzantine Eretz Israel, in: Visotzky/Tilly (Eds.), Judaism I. History (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2020).

2 See Lieberman, Jews and/under Islam, in: Visotzky/Tilly (Eds.), Judaism I. History (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2020).

3 See Chazan, Judaism in the Middle Ages 1000–1500, in: Visotzky/Tilly (Eds.), Judaism I. History (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2020).

4 See Schreiner, Languages of the Jews, below, 72–104.

of thought to a wider degree than ever before, and in its wake the industrial revolution with all its consequences changed the world of traditional communities, including that of the Jews, to such an extent that it makes sense to concentrate on the period that most researchers regard as modernity: from the end of the 18th through the 19th and 20th centuries, and to formulate questions that are of importance until the present day.

For the purposes of this text, we agree on some simple and basic assumptions. Culture is different from nature. Culture begins when people »do something« with nature, when they start to change the given landscape by working on it, by moving through it, by regarding, describing or studying it, by making their imprint on it. Culture, furthermore, is practice. In a narrow sense, we refer to practices such as writing, painting, making music or building houses as »cultural«. In a wider sense, practices such as inhabiting places, making clothes and dressing, eating and drinking, believing in natural or supernatural powers and giving form to such belief, in prayer and ritual, conceiving and rearing children, and educating them, are no less cultural, especially when they form part of processes of change and development—and when they become topics of reflection and forms of cultural production. In our context, »modern culture« evolves continually and offers new perspectives beyond traditional ways of living and thinking. It also needs to be noted that modernity, once set in, did not necessarily move forward unhindered. On the contrary, whenever and wherever individuals tried to depart from traditional ways of life, they met with resistance.

In the history of Judaism, the most famous case in point is the fate of Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) who can be regarded as a precursor of later developments. Born in 1632 in Amsterdam to a Portuguese-Jewish family, the intellectually highly gifted thinker »was issued the harshest writ of *herem*, ban or excommunication, ever pronounced by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam«. In his works, Spinoza »denies the immortality of the soul; strongly rejects the notion of a transcendent, providential God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and claims that the Law was neither literally given by God nor any longer binding on Jews«.[5] He clearly was an early moderniser, but his departure from traditional values and rituals was regarded as damaging for his community.

The case of Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) is not so completely different as one might assume, given the relative success of the Jewish enlightenment—the *Haskala*—that his life and work initiated. But the idea, and ensuing practice, to open the Jewish community of Berlin to the new horizons offered by the translation of the Hebrew Bible into German, the use of the German language in daily encounters, the creation of a »free school«—*Jüdische Freischule*, founded in 1778 by David Friedländer with Isaak Daniel Itzig and Hartwig Wessely—that offered instruction in worldly topics, and a thorough reform programme concerning synagogue services, a weakening of rabbinical authority, and the discontinuation of certain rituals, again provoked

5 Stanford *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. Baruch Spinoza; https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza/ [25/05/2018].

resistance within the community: »Reform«, in a way, created »Orthodoxy« as a (modern and anti-modern) response, and the path of German Jews towards modernity has been a troubled, ambivalent, and difficult one from the very start.

This can be illustrated with an example from those regions that Prussia acquired during the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century (1772–1795). When Prussian reformers, enlightened and carried on by the ideas of tolerance and a—controlled—emancipation of the minorities arrived in those regions, one of their first activities was to tear down old city walls and to make way for traffic and economic development: an act of modernization. By doing this, they unknowingly also destroyed parts of the traditional *eruv*[6], the Sabbath border of observant Jewish communities beyond which, according to Talmudic laws, Jews were not allowed to carry things on their holy day of the week. An interesting collection of documents, kept in the *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, shows how the rabbis and representatives of those communities, in the years between 1822 and 1835, applied to the authorities in Berlin to be allowed to reconstruct their *eruvim*, their »borders« that, for them, symbolized the continuity of a specific religious tradition and way of life. Permission then partly had been granted, but while some communities decided to re-erect the symbolic »walls« and »gates«, others opted for their abolition and thus opened the path for the members of their congregation: into modernity. In many cases, this initiated the beginning of a large-scale migration process from the smaller towns in Eastern and Central Europe—and similarly from the rural communities in South-West Germany—to the larger cities, most importantly to Berlin from where the heralds of enlightenment, the »Berliners«, had come with such promising news about a new future of emancipation and integration. Confronted with modernisation, those communities saw themselves challenged in two main areas: the tension between traditional religious practice and the culture of their host societies and, in more general terms, the relation between their existence in exile and the no less traditional longing for a return to the land of Israel.

As Rabbi David Ellenson, the eighth president of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), has argued,

> the advent of modernity led to radical political and legal changes for Jewry, particularly in the West. Coercive belonging to a community was replaced by voluntary adherence to what might best be called a congregation. [...] Modernity has affected many disparate areas including new forms of Judaism, opting out, Jewish identity, marriage, gender relations and expression, interfaith dialogue, attitudes toward universalism and particularity, and so on. Modernity has stimulated assimilation but also has fostered new ways of expressing Jewish identity.[7]

Modernity for Jews, Ellenson argues further, »begins first and foremost when the governmental structures that formerly marked the medieval *kehila* (community)

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6 See Dorff, Halakhah (Jewish Law) in Contemporary Judaism, below, 44–71.

7 David Ellenson, »How Modernity Changed Judaism,« in: *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* no. 36: September 15 (2008), http://jcpa.org/article/how-modernity-changed-judaism-interview-with-rabbi-david-ellenson/. Interview by Manfred Gerstenfeld.

collapsed«. The American and French revolutions also brought with them the separation of religion and state. Ellenson's teacher, the eminent historian Jacob Katz,

> contended that a major criterion for determining when modernity began was to analyze the moments when Jews began to think in cultural patterns taken from the non-Jewish world[8].

We can see this development in France, shown by Frances Malino's work on the Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux[9] where he describes the high degree of acculturation of their mores and manners. Similarly, Todd Endelman's book on the Jews of Georgian England[10] tells how Jews began to adapt and live like non-Jewish people. But, Ellenson concludes,

> if one wants to understand the essence of how modernity influenced Judaism, one has to study the developments in German Jewry. That was the only country where the changes in Jewish life were based on ideological justifications.

While this chapter will indeed concentrate on developments in Berlin, different paths to modernity need to be considered as well. As Lois Dubin and David Sorkin have shown, Sephardic trading families and communities—whose ancestors had been expelled from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1496—in the Early Modern Period had been allowed to settle in a string of port cities that reaches from Amsterdam, London and Hamburg in the North via Bordeaux, Bayonne, Livorno, Venice, and Trieste down to Sarajevo, Sofia, and Constantinople.[11] Even without an enlightenment »ideology«, practical life that required international contacts and cultural exchange enabled the »Port Jews« in those cities to establish a comparably important network of reformed communities with an equally strong interest in education and integration: again, in the context of urban societies which often were marginal in relation to their respective countries, but central for the creation of international trading routes and for the emergence of cultural practices related to the economy: cartography, translation, printing, activities that enabled them to participate in modern culture of a different kind.

A newly founded city on the shores of the Black Sea, Odessa, which was neither »ashkenazi« nor »sephardic«, maybe best represents the ambivalence between the positive and the negative aspects of Jewish urban fantasies during the 19th Century. Free of settlement restrictions, able to vote and even to be elected, Odessa's Jews, invited by Catherine the Great in 1794 and growing into the city's largest ethnic group in the course of the 19th century, experienced everything »modernity« had on offer: a relatively high

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8 Ibid.

9 Frances Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux: Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1978).

10 Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979).

11 David Cesarani, »Port Jews. Concepts, Cases, and Questions,« *Jewish Culture and History*, vol. 4.2 (2001), Special Issue: Port Jews. Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, ed. David Cesarani, 1–11; 1; David Sorkin, »Port Jews and The Three Regions of Emancipation«, ibid, 31–46; Lois Dubin, »Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Trieste and Beyond«, ibid, 47–58.

level of equality *and* violent outbreaks of anti-Semitism; amazing wealth in the case of some entrepreneurial families *and* great poverty among the working class; a high degree of cultural exchange with Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, Italian, and Russian neighbours *and* the emergence of nationalist movements (as a response they created their own national movement, Zionism[12], with a »practical« fraction initiated by Leon Pinsker and the *Hoveve Zion*, and a very influential »cultural« fraction, supported by Achad Ha'am and Chaim Nachman Bialik). Odessa became the creative centre for the development of modern Jewish literature[13] not just in Yiddish (Sholem Aleichem, Mendele Moikher Sforim) and in Hebrew (Bialik, Shaul Tchernichowsky) but also in Russian (Vladimir Jabotinsky, Isaak Babel), and ideas that were born in Odessa travelled the Jewish world, from Warsaw to Berlin and Paris, London and New York, Buenos Aires and of course Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Urbanization, then, in different forms, has been the most important factor for the modernization process and for the Jewish encounter with modern culture. But again, the ambivalent character of modernity and modernization needs to be considered. The big and growing city is a theatre of opportunities. Life in an urban and ever urbanizing context offers new forms of education and cultural activity unheard of in the places of origin: free schools, access to libraries and museums, theatre and concerts far beyond any religious content, and—maybe most importantly—the chance to make one's life outside of the traditional framework of the community. In Berlin more than elsewhere, this chance has been taken by the majority of those who became »German Jews« and saw themselves on the path to emancipation and integration within the wider society. Alongside the traditional institutions, synagogues, schools, hospitals, and charitable organisations, they created German-Jewish societies, from the »Gesellschaft der Freunde« to the bibliophile »Soncino-Gesellschaft«, as a means of integrating Jewish initiative with German culture, language, and lifestyle.

At the same time, the city provided the immigrant communities from Russia and Eastern Europe, not least Ḥasidic groups who had already rejected traditional rabbinical authority in their very own way, with the space to build up their own institutions, *shtiblech* and private synagogues, aid societies, *landsmanshaftn* (to use a Yiddish notion that gained most prominence in New York and other North and South American cities), areas of retreat and reclusion where members of those traditional groups could lead non-modern lives within the framework of modernity. This contrast has become obvious in Berlin, where the liberal *Neue Synagoge* of 1866 on Oranienburger Straße, a symbol of belonging and self-confidence, with a widely visible golden cuppola, stands not more than 200 yards away from the orthodox synagogue of *Adass Jisroel*, that opened in 1869 in a backyard on Artilleriestraße (today Tucholskystraße). German-Jewish history in the following period would be characterized by this duality, and other tensions would follow—between the more established community that regarded itself as German, and the new arrivals that

12 See Kloke, Zionism and the state of Israel, in: Michael Tilly, Burton L. Visotzky (Eds.), *Judaism I. History* (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2020).

13 See Morgenstern, Modern Jewish literature, below, 139–168.

were regarded as »Ostjuden.« Later, the struggle was between those who in 1893, as part of their fight against emerging anti-Semitism, formed the »Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens« (CV) and new movements such as Jewish renaissance and, most importantly, Zionism.

2 Hopes of belonging and experiences of rejection

While these ambivalences have principally been based in a religious context, they have often been played out and made visible by different attitudes towards modern culture. One important and very urban cultural practice of »belonging« among those who saw their place firmly established within the modern European societies was the support given by prominent Jewish individuals and families to the institutionalisation of modern culture in art museums and archaeological collections, in concert halls and opera houses. The author Theodor Fontane who, with his later novels, became a representative of Berlin's culture and identity towards the end of the 19th century, conceded in an article of 1878 for the aptly-named journal *Die Gegenwart*, that the Prussian aristocracy (whom he used to admire and praise in his early works) had nothing more to contribute to the new times, to sciences and the arts. They were too poor in spirit, too provincial, not cosmopolitan enough, whereas the new and emerging bourgeois society, and specifically the Jews, began to step in:

> Here then is superiority, while narrowness unfolds and the provincial is stripped off. Great interests are negotiated, the gaze has expanded, it goes across the world. Customs are refined, purified, improved. Especially Taste . . . The arts and the sciences, which otherwise went begging or were dependent on themselves, here have their place. Instead of stables, observatories are built. Instead of images in blue and yellow and red, the works of our masters now hang in rooms and galleries. The state may have lost, the world has won.[14]

Whether the »exposure to the modern world« was »forced« (Pierre Nora[15]) or voluntary, its result was a profound change to the traditional ways of Jewish life. Generations of scholars have debated the question of whether modern art—music, literature, fine and graphic arts, photography, film, popular culture—created or

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14 Theodor Fontane: »Adel und Judenthum in der Berliner Gesellschaft«. Mitgeteilt und kommentiert von Jost Schillemeit unter dem Titel »Berlin und die Berliner. Neuaufgefundene Fontane-Manuskripte« in *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, Band XXX/1986: 35–82, here 37f.: »Hier entfaltet sich eine Ueberlegenheit und das Enge, das Provinziale ist abgestreift. Große Interessen werden verhandelt, der Blick hat sich erweitert, er geht über die Welt. Die Sitten sind verfeinert, geläutert, gebessert. Vor allem der Geschmack. (...) Die Kunst, die Wissenschaft, die sonst betteln gingen oder auf sich selber angewiesen waren, hier haben sie ihre Stätte, statt der Pferdeställe werden Observatorien gebaut und statt der Ahnenbilder in Blau u. Gelb und Roth hängen die Werke unserer Meister in Zimmern und Galerien. Der Staat mag verloren haben, die Welt hat gewonnen.«

15 Pierre Nora, »Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire,« *Representations* 26, no. Special Issue: Memory and Counter Memory (Spring 1989): 8.

supported by Jewish individuals can be regarded as »Jewish«.[16] Would such a description not be essentialist or even exclusive? Has it not been a consistent strategy of anti-Semites to denounce creations or ideas »as Jewish« (and therefore, by conclusion, not »German« or »French« or »Polish« enough)? Following Karl Popper, cultural identity should not be imposed on a person or on their work, and self-identification is the important criterion for our contemporary assessment of these contributions. Individual Jews regarded the opportunities offered by modernization as a chance—and often enough as a risk—to participate in and to contribute to the emergence of a civic society in many areas, from natural science to urban sociology, from entrepreneurship to banking, from education to modern art.

A key figure in this context is James Henry Simon (1851–1932), who was born in Berlin. His father Isaac and uncle Louis had arrived there in 1838 and built up a cotton trade company. James went to school in the renowned *Gymnasium zum Grauen Kloster* in Berlin where he developed an interest in Latin, Greek, and Ancient History. He played the piano and the violin and would have loved to study classical languages. Instead, he joined the family business and became one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the city. His house, a villa in Tiergartenstraße 15a, was regarded as one of the finest addresses in Berlin, filled with an art collection for which he received advice from Wilhelm von Bode, the central personality for the development of Berlin's museums. In 1900, Simon donated his collection of Italian Renaissance art to the newly founded Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (today's Bode-Museum). He supported the »Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften« and the »Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft«, founded in 1898, and he financed the archaeological excavations at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt which brought the famous bust of Nefertiti to Berlin.

It has been said that Simon donated about one third of his yearly income, not just for the creation of museums and scientific institutions but also for social projects such as hospitals, public baths, children's homes, or »start-ups«, as we would say today, for Eastern European Jewish immigrants. While he was not an observant Jew, his public engagement has been grounded in the Jewish tradition of *Zedakah* and in the civic spirit that began to develop in imperial Germany. This tradition contributed to progress in science and technology, as well as the arts, and turned the formerly provincial Prussian capital into the modern metropolis before World War I and during the seemingly »Golden Twenties«. Simon, who died shortly before the Nazi's rise to power in Germany, was part of a world that Thomas Mann summed up in a letter to his brother Heinrich, after a first visit with his future Jewish father-in-law: »One is not at all reminded of Judaism among those people: one feels nothing but culture.«[17]

Simon's engagement with modern culture had contemporary alternatives. Here, we consider the contribution of Jewish folklorists, both in the Russian Empire and in Germany, such as Solomon An-ski (Shloyme Zaynvl Rapoport), or Rabbi Max Grünwald.

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16 See Morgenstern, Modern Jewish literature, below, 139–168.

17 Thomas Mann to Heinrich Mann, 27 February 1904, in *Briefwechsel, 1900–1949* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1968) 27; see Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1996).

Between 1912 and 1914, An-ski headed ethnographic expeditions to the Pale of Jewish Settlement. In his view, »only folklore would be the basis for creating a contemporary Jewish culture«.[18] His was a different, but no less valid, response to modernity than that of his contemporaries who opted for linguistic and cultural assimilation, not just in the sense of an »embourgouisement« as in Germany, but also in a proletarian context. The *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeyter Bund in Lite, Poyln, un Rusland* (The General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), known simply as »the Bund,« was founded in Vilna in October 1897 by a group of Jews who were profoundly influenced by Marxism and intended »to attract East European Jews to the emergent Russian revolutionary movement«.[19] In a distinct alternative to such assimilationist programmes, An-ski looked for a specifically Jewish response to modernity, and he found it in »tradition«. The folkloristic material itself that was collected during the *Jewish Historical-Ethnographic Society's* expeditions in Volhynia and Podolia can be regarded as the material expression of traditional religious practice (often made of wood, leather, and other simple fabrics)—but its collection, and its representation in exhibitions and museums, for example in St. Petersburg in 1917 and again between 1923 and 1929, was an act of modern cultural politics: to preserve local customs and surviving material objects in the face of modernisation and of potential loss.

With a comparable intention, Max Grünwald (1871–1953), an alumnus of the *Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar* in Breslau, whose PhD thesis had been dedicated to Baruch Spinoza, and who officiated as a rabbi in Hamburg from 1895, founded the *Gesellschaft für jüdische Volkskunde* in 1898. Until 1929, he edited the »*Mitteilungen*« of this society that intended not only to preserve and to exhibit monuments of the Jewish past but to use them as a means of Jewish self-understanding and self-confidence in view of modernity and its challenges. Both initiatives inspired an eclectic movement, mostly in Germany, that has been termed »Jewish Renaissance«, an attempt on many artistic levels to both safeguard Jewish cultural heritage and to adapt it to the new realities. Advocates of this movement who lived through a first creative period between 1900 and 1914 and a second during the interwar years, reacted to similar tendencies in different European societies and tried to work out the specifically Jewish potential of a return to the roots which ideally functioned, at the same time, as a step towards the future. Two longer quotations by Martin Buber can illustrate the ideas of this movement, since they discuss, importantly, tradition and modernity in dialogue rather than in opposition to each other:

> So we see universal and national cultures melt together in the deep unity of becoming. The best spirits of our time are illuminated by the idea of a human life saturated by beauty and benign strength, created and enjoyed by every individual and every people, each according to their ways and their values. That part of the Jewish tribe that understands itself as the Jewish people is placed within this new development and set aglow by it just like any other group. Still, its national participation in this development has a very distinct character: that

18 Benyamin Lukin, (2017). An-ski Ethnographic Expedition and Museum. *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe.* http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/An-ski_Ethnographic_Expedition_and_Museum.

19 Daniel Blatman, (2010). Bund. *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe.* http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bund [25/05/2018].