

On the National State

Part 2: The Guardian of the Jews

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In the first part of this essay I argued that the institution of the national state, together with the political order based on it, is the foundation of the liberty that characterizes the free states of the West; and that this order of national states is clearly preferable to the imperial and anarchic orders that are its rivals.¹ In the pages that follow, I explore the reasons that one among the order of national states should be a Jewish state.

Peoples vary greatly in their self-understanding, traditions, and laws, and at the heart of the conflict between the principle of empire and that of national sovereignty is a dispute as to how far such differences should find expression in the way in which peoples are governed. It is a hallmark of imperial states that they strive to bring the laws of all peoples under the rubric of a single will; while the principle of national sovereignty tends in the opposite direction, regarding the differences among nations as a desirable reflection of each people's efforts to advance itself in knowledge, justice, and honor in accordance with the unique tools at its disposal. Indeed, it is a premise of the order of sovereign states that each state is

unique, and that states will necessarily differ in the purposes for which they are founded and, consequently, in their internal constitutions. Thus while every state bears the same obligation to care for all who are in its charge, sovereignty means independence not only with respect to the more superficial aspects of national custom, but also with respect to the deeper questions of national constitution and purpose.

It is this variation of purpose that makes the independent nation at once truly different from all others, and at the same time potentially worthy of imitation. In this regard, Montesquieu writes concerning the purpose of various states that “although all states have the same purpose in general... yet each state has a purpose that is peculiar to it: Expansion was the purpose of Rome; war that of Lacedaemonia; religion that of the Jewish laws; commerce that of Marseilles; public tranquility that of the laws of China; navigation that of the laws of Rhodians; ... the independence of each individual is the purpose of the laws of Poland, and what results from this is the oppression of all. There is also one nation whose constitution has political liberty for its direct purpose”—and this last observation, of course, is the beginning of his famous inquiry into the English constitution.²

Israel, too, is a state founded with a unique purpose that distinguishes it from other states. This purpose is to be what Theodor Herzl called “the guardian of the Jews,” the one *Judenstaat* (or “Jewish state”) whose laws, institutions, and policies would be directed towards the advancement of the interests and aspirations of the Jews as a people.³ It is this idea that stands at the center of Israel’s political tradition, and it is this that brought Jews the world over, as well as the statesmen of many other nations, to give their support to the birth and consolidation of this state.

Many years have passed since the heyday of the theoretical disputes that surrounded the establishment of Israel, and some, as we know, now feel they have no further need to investigate this topic. One may, of course, love one’s country as a child loves his mother, without understanding her. But such an innocent love of country is insufficient to

many, both Jews and gentiles, and it is especially so in these times, in which the Jews of Israel are being called upon to devote ever more of our attention and resources to ensuring that this state will continue to exist for the generations to come. Under such circumstances, it is important to remind ourselves of the reasons why we should accept the burden of building and sustaining such a Jewish state, and even of making very real sacrifices on its behalf. To establish our loyalty to the idea of the Jewish state on firmer foundations, it is necessary to understand the purpose of this state, and it is to such an exploration that I will devote the remainder of this essay.

In the Zionist political tradition that preceded the establishment of Israel, this purpose of Jewish guardianship was conceived in threefold fashion, with the hoped-for Jewish state envisioned as a polity that would: *First*, ameliorate the condition of persecution that had afflicted the Jews in their dispersion; *second*, permit the establishment of an independent Jewish national culture based on the unique perspective of the Jews; and *third*, assist the Jews in developing a character suitable for a life of self-reliance and independence. Although these three facets of the idea of Jewish guardianship can be, and in practice often were, treated as though each were an end in itself independent from the others, it is helpful to think of them as being dependent on one another in a hierarchical fashion: It being understood that the ability to maintain a Jewish state concerned with the condition of diaspora Jewry is ultimately dependent on the development of a unique Jewish vantage point or culture; and that both of these are dependent on the development of a strong Jewish character. It is in this fashion that I suggest we think about the different aspects of Jewish guardianship, each of which I will examine in turn.

II

A generation ago, a good case might have been made for understatement in everything regarding the most familiar aspect of Israel's purposive character, its mission as guardian of the physical well-being of the Jewish people. To discuss it would have been to raise questions whose answers were too obvious to benefit from extended inquiry; and at the same time, there was a certain dignity to be found in discretion concerning such matters, as is always the case when civilized men speak of power. But there is a fine line between that silence which is born of quiet knowledge, and that which is born of unfamiliarity, or of an inability to address the subject coherently, or of indifference to it. In recent years, the location of this line has been lost, much that was obvious has ceased to be so, and we no longer dignify the subject of Jewish strength by our reticence. Today there is a great need for speaking of these matters plainly.

By now, however, it is not easy to reconstruct in our imagination the circumstances of Jewish life in the centuries prior to the establishment of Israel. The exile has in many ways ceased to be real for us, and this fact has made it difficult to fully comprehend the idea that the Jewish state exists to ameliorate the conditions of that exile. In this regard, it is useful to recall the views of Edmund Burke, the great eighteenth-century British philosopher and statesman. For Burke, as for many others, there was no question but that the intolerable circumstances of the Jews resulted from the lack of the diplomatic and military instruments that would be afforded by a sovereign Jewish state. The British and Dutch, he argued before Parliament in 1781, have their army, fleet, and foreign service to protect the individuals belonging to those nations. But the Jews have no such recourse:

Having no fixed settlement in any part of the world, no kingdom nor country in which they have a government, a community and a system of laws, they are thrown on the benevolence of nations.... If Dutchmen are injured and attacked, the Dutch have a nation, a government, and armies to redress or revenge their cause. If Britons be injured, Britons have armies and laws, the law of nations... to fly to for protection and justice. But the Jews have no such power and no such friend to depend on. Humanity, then, must become their protector and ally.⁴

It is important to notice that Burke's conception of the service rendered by the state to the members of a given nation is quite different from the "safe haven" of traditional Zionist parlance. This old catch phrase is itself a reflection of a profound insecurity, which permitted Jews to imagine that the advantage of a Jewish state would be that within its borders, at least, the Jews would finally be "safe" from harm. The British, of course, did not build up the might of their military and foreign services in order to make of their island the one place where an Englishman might hide from the dangers of the world. As is evident from the above passage, the purpose of British power was to make the *world* safer for the subjects of that nation, so that no matter where their affairs might lead them, their enemies would have to take account of the very real possibility of British intervention—and, indeed, of British vengeance. By the same token, it was the absence of such an independent Jewish power which made the existence of the Jews so terrible in every corner of the world, and which moved men such as Burke to raise the possibility that a civilized state might serve not only as the protector of its own people, but of the Jews as well.

Sympathy with the people of the Bible was to lead, not many years later, to the extension of British protection to the Jewish community in Palestine in the time of Lord Palmerston,⁵ and eventually to the British alliance with the Zionist Organization that would lay the foundations for the State of Israel. But the possibility Burke foresaw—that the humane

nations could take upon themselves the protection of the Jews—proved to be no more than a romantic hope. By the time Herzl wrote of the same problem a century later, he saw clearly that the circumstances of statelessness had brought the Jews to the brink of horrors believed to have been left behind in medieval times. “It was erroneous... to believe that men can be made equal by publishing an edict in the Imperial Gazette,” Herzl wrote in 1895.⁶ Any gains the Jews had made in Europe would eventually be called into question, and when this time came, whatever the Jews did not have the political power to protect would be destroyed: “What form this [destruction] will take, I cannot surmise. Will it be a revolutionary expropriation from below or a reactionary confiscation from above? Will they drive us out? Will they kill us? ... [In] France there will come a social revolution whose first victims will be the big bankers and the Jews.... In Russia there will simply be a confiscation from above. In Germany they will make emergency laws.... In Austria people will let themselves be intimidated by the Viennese rabble.... There, you see, the mob can achieve anything.”⁷

In Herzl’s day, most of the leading Jewish figures could not be induced to see matters in this fashion. Only with the passage of another generation did the darkness Herzl saw on the horizon begin to fill the noonday sky so that none could miss it. In 1942, the movement for the creation of an independent Jewish state had gained a significant foothold in Palestine, but the Viennese rabble had long since seized power not only in Austria, but in Germany and much of the rest of Europe as well. There, a people that had, in Burke’s words, “no such power and no such friend” was incinerated like so much unwanted refuse. The Jews, without independent state power and an army to throw into the alliance against Germany, were once again excluded from the councils of nations and left to plead for mercy, in a war in which mercy had run out long ago. When reliable information concerning the destruction of European Jewry finally reached Palestine, Ben-Gurion, speaking for nearly all of Jewry, once

more asserted the need for a Jewish national state before the Jewish National Assembly in Palestine:

We do not know exactly what goes on in the Nazi valley of death, or how many Jews have been slaughtered.... We do not know whether the victory of democracy and freedom and justice will not find Europe a vast Jewish cemetery in which the bones of our people are scattered.... We are the only people in the world whose blood, as a nation, is allowed to be shed.... Only our children, our women... and our aged are set apart for special treatment, to be buried alive in graves dug by them, to be cremated in crematoriums, to be strangled and to be murdered by machine guns... for but one sin: ... Because the Jews have no political standing, no Jewish army, no Jewish independence, and no homeland.... What has happened to us in Poland, what may, God forbid, happen to us in the future, all our innocent victims, all the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions... are the sacrifices of a people without a homeland.... We demand a homeland and independence.⁸

It has often been said that the destruction of European Jewry might have been greatly reduced in scale, and perhaps even prevented, had Israel come into existence in 1937, when Britain first proposed a partition of Palestine that would give the Jews an independent state. And it is surely right that even a relatively weak Jewish state—had it possessed the power to legislate in matters of immigration in a part of Palestine, and an armed force and diplomatic corps capable of being taken into account by the nations—might have done much to alter the fate of the Jews during the war.

But this historical hypothesis, which so easily evokes assent among us, carries within it an implication too rarely discussed. We are all aware of the failure of the United States and Britain to respond with even token efforts to relieve the plight of the Jews during the war, and yet most Jews

are careful not to speak of this fact in too straightforward a fashion. The reason for this is certainly the universal esteem in which these two nations have been held by Jews, both during the war and since. Yet these nations, which we justifiably hold in such high regard, stood by in near perfect inaction as the “crimes against humanity” they excoriated after the fact were committed. Nor is this only a matter of the failure of the Allied armed forces to take action against the machinery of extermination—action which would have required the diversion of a minuscule quantity of men and arms in a direction that might not have contributed optimally to the prosecution of the war. For in Palestine, British forces that could have been engaged in the war against Germany were instead assigned to preventing European Jews from reaching safety—and this, despite the fact that few British statesmen were more inclined to consider favorably the cause of the Jews than was Churchill, then the British prime minister.

It is difficult not to conclude from these events that Burke’s supposition of a humanity capable of offering protection to the Jews was hopelessly misguided. For the truth is that those states we most admire for their humanity are those whose thoughts were elsewhere during the long years in which Jewry was being hunted down in every corner of Europe. Now the precise combination of causes which brought about this result may never be known for certain. But the more general cause is, I think, evident: Every state has its purpose, and the purposes of states have a profound effect on the manner in which national priorities are determined, whether in peacetime or in war. Thus while the Germans had seemingly excellent reasons not to divert their resources, in the midst of total war, to scouring Europe in search of Jewish children, these reasons were of secondary significance to a state whose purpose was to unite humanity under a regime of racial enslavement and purification. This overarching purpose rendered the destruction of the Jews a significant war aim for Germany, and it was pursued with consistency and determination over a period of years, even at the expense of other aims.

Had the United States and Britain regarded saving those Jews who might still be saved as one of the major aims of their war effort, just as the Germans saw murdering those Jews who might still be murdered as one of the aims of their own war effort, then the outcome of the war would certainly have been different. But the simple truth is that the Germans were prepared to make very real sacrifices to achieve the extinction of the Jews, while the Allies were not prepared to make even remotely comparable sacrifices to save them. And the reason for this is that the purpose of the English state, like that of her daughter America, is in fact what Montesquieu claimed it to be: The creation of the conditions of political liberty. This is without question one of the most noble purposes any national state has ever taken up, and in championing it, these states have immeasurably improved the condition of mankind. Moreover, it was for the sake of this cause that so many Americans and Britons gave their lives during the war against Germany. Yet there is no avoiding the fact that this purpose is exceedingly remote from a commitment to seek the salvation of endangered Jews come what may. To say this is not to deny that the British and the Americans have, on the whole, been better to the Jews than any other powers in history. Nonetheless, a state whose overriding purpose is the pursuit of political liberty cannot be counted upon to act like a state whose purpose is to pursue, with constancy and vigor, the well-being and interest of the Jewish people. For this, one must have a state whose purpose is to be the guardian of the Jews. For this, one must have a Jewish state.

Some well-educated Jews are ill at ease with this conclusion, preferring to believe that the idea of the guardian of the Jews is an anachronism, and that humanity has learned its lesson from the experience of Nazi Germany. Is it not absurd, they ask, to speak of the enemies of the Jews and of the need to defend the Jewish interest in an era in which a concern for human rights is becoming universal; in which the United Nations and the leading Western powers act on behalf of oppressed peoples everywhere; and in which Europe's national states are dissolving themselves

due to a widespread sense that such states are no longer needed in an era of international fraternity? Does this not augur a new age in which the Jews will no longer face enmity and danger?

It is sobering to recognize how limited is our capacity for education, if we still find these questions being asked—not only because the destruction of Europe’s Jews took place a mere fifty years ago, and because one would have to be foolish indeed to suppose that the fundamental dangers posed by man’s nature would be overturned in such a brief time; but principally because these same arguments concerning the imminent disappearance of hostility towards Jews and the imminent end of politics based on national interest were already being advanced with such great conviction, and with the most terrible consequences, a hundred years ago. Indeed, these arguments were so common in the decades before the Holocaust that Herzl felt he had to address them directly in *The Jewish State*:

It might... be said that we should not create new distinctions between people [by creating a Jewish state], that we ought not to raise fresh barriers, but make the old ones disappear instead. I say that those who think along these lines are loveable romantics. But the idea of the fatherland will go on flourishing long after the dust of their bones will have been blown away without a trace.... The Jews, like every other nation, will always have enough enemies.⁹

Today we know that Herzl was right, and his interlocutors unequivocally mistaken, regarding the feasibility of eliminating competition and enmity from the political life of nations. But the point that bears emphasizing is that the then-prevalent belief in such an imminent improvement of man’s condition was not without foundation. During the 1870s, for example, when citizenship and equal rights were being granted to the Jews throughout central Europe, a certain optimism may well have been in place. But it is hard to forgive the lavish interpretation that many German Jews gave to these events—a striking example of which can be found in Hermann Cohen’s 1915 essay “Germanism and Judaism,” which should

perhaps stand as a warning to all of us concerning our proclivity for overly sanguine readings of political conditions. Written with the encouragement of leading members of established German Jewry, this discourse by the foremost Jewish thinker of his age announced that the German people had discovered and engraved upon its heart the truth of a pure universal brotherhood of man; and that, as this was none other than the eternal message of the Jews, the souls of these two peoples were in effect one, and Germany itself was the new homeland of the Jewish spirit. As he argued:

The inner commonality between Germans and Jewishness should now be evident to everyone. The concept of humanity has its origins in the messianism of the Israelite prophets.... Now, however, the Messiah is again to be found... within the framework of the German spirit.... The Jews in France, England, and Russia are also subject to the duty of loyalty to Germany, because Germany is the motherland of their souls.... Accordingly, irrespective of common prejudices, I venture to assert that the equality of the Jews in Germany is more deeply rooted than anywhere else.¹⁰

In short, Cohen, and through him many of the leading Jews of Germany, assured all who were willing to follow their advice that the long history of adversity they had experienced in Europe was virtually at an end. And yet when this essay was written and the era of good feeling was at its height, a mere *eighteen years* remained before the crisis that led to the murder, at the hands of the German state, of two-thirds of the Jews in Europe.

These facts must teach us something concerning the nature of the political realm, and especially concerning the feebleness of our capacity to predict political events. For if the Jews of Germany could have erred so terribly concerning the disappearance of the anti-Semitic hostility that was shortly to consume them, it is difficult to imagine what prudence there could be in building our own politics on the assumption that we can know, better than they, what the future holds for us fifty or a hundred years from now. This tendency to mistake limited fluctuations in political

fortune for permanent changes in the fabric of political reality is, as it seems, endemic to human nature. We should know this well. It was just yesterday, after all, that some among us were speaking with such eloquence and conviction of the impending arrival of the “end of history,” and of a “new Middle East.”¹¹ Yet all that is gone now as if it had never been, lost in a world reeking of war.

It is perhaps a bitter fact, but nonetheless true, that for us, having been denied prophecy, the future is a closed book. Regarding its contents, we find time and again that we know next to nothing. And this is true even where events not many years hence are concerned, not to speak of events and conditions a generation or two in the future. Reasonable men should be able to understand this, and to accept it as a political premise that those who believe otherwise can contribute little to our efforts to guide the state.

A century ago, our people inclined its ear to false prophets who encouraged them to believe that the terror was gone from the world, or would shortly disappear; and we will never know how many lives might have been saved had they kept their peace, or had their predictions at least been greeted with suitable skepticism. Today new voices bear this same message, saying that the terror is gone from the world, or will shortly disappear. The lives of our children and grandchildren depend on our ability to dismiss all such vanity without hesitation and without afterthought. For we must always bear in mind: *The future is for us a closed book, and regarding its contents we know next to nothing.* We do not know with certainty that our world is no longer that of our fathers, in which men and governments found cause to practice terror and make war against our people. And even if we did know this, we would still not know that such a world will not return in the time of our children and of our children’s children. And since we cannot know these things, we also cannot know that the inheritance of a Jewish state, which our fathers bequeathed to us and which was won at such great cost, is a gift whose time has come and gone.

It is argued by some that Israel today seems hardly to possess the wherewithal to defend itself, much less the Jews of the world.¹² And indeed, amid the black winds that swirl around us now, the product of our own folly, we can see the Jewish state in all its human frailty. The existence of a state is no guarantee of wise rulers, and we certainly have it within our power, by our own errors, to transform Israel into a helpless nation. But one cannot judge an enterprise spanning centuries on the basis of the foolishness of this minister or that one. One must not forget that it was no more than a handful of years ago that Israeli security services devoted a decade of dangerous but successful work to the rescue of the Jews of Ethiopia, saving tens of thousands of lives that would otherwise have been lost. And one must not forget the triumph of the Six Day War, and of Entebbe, nor the work of Israeli officials on behalf of Jews in the lands of Islam, Russia, Argentina, and elsewhere. Nor even the trial of Eichmann, which established for the first time the principle of worldly punishment for those who commit crimes against the Jewish people.

The Jewish state is an extraordinary instrument in the hands of those who wield it well, and no moment of weakness is an argument against the principle of guardianship of the welfare of the Jews, any more than it would be an argument against American liberty if the nerve of America should fail under pressure of one test or another. For it is the nature of all political states that even at their finest, they grant to their heirs only a great potential—the potential to protect those who depend on them, and the potential to fulfill a higher purpose. Whether the Jews redeem this opportunity or not is left to each generation, whose great deeds are visited upon its children, and whose sins are as well.

III

If Israel could do no more than offer diplomatic and military assistance to Jews in need, this would be sufficient reason to maintain it as a Jewish state. Such a purpose is one of *pikuah nefesh*, the safeguarding of life, which in Jewish tradition is a purpose that has precedence over virtually every other concern.¹³ Given what we have learned in recent generations concerning life among the nations, no further motive should be necessary to persuade Jews that we must learn the arts of statecraft and war, teach them to our children, and maintain ourselves as a sovereign citizenry prepared to make use of them whenever the need should arise. Every effort in this direction is a matter of safeguarding lives, and must be understood as an imperative of the highest order.

This having been said, there is nevertheless something degraded and insufficient in the sober, businesslike manner that has crept into Jewish discourse in the years since the Holocaust, in which all discussion begins and ends with *survival*, regardless of whether the subject is education, economics, war, or peace; and no word is spoken concerning any greater end, for whose sake we Jews continue to choose survival over the other, all too realistic, option. For sixty years, it is this imperative—to survive for the sake of those who were lost—that has sustained us, whether in the struggle to establish the Jewish state, or in the effort to rescue persecuted Jewry, or in attempting to shore up communities that have been ravaged by assimilation and intermarriage and a reluctance to bear children. But though such a motivation may yet have its effect on some Jews, we must recognize that the day is fast approaching when the banner of survival will no longer suffice. Memory of the Holocaust recedes day by day, and with it the self-evidence that once clung to the need to survive. The younger

generation, which did not grow up in the shadow of the death camps, is no longer moved by such an emotional mechanism. For this generation, it is only the degradation that is self-evident: The degradation of a people that once bore a great ideal, but which no longer seems to have an interest in anything beyond formulas for its own continued existence.

I am aware that there are Jews for whom any discussion of that ideal has itself become a kind of sacrilege, and who, whenever they sense that conversation is in danger of proceeding in such a direction, immediately let loose with a torrent of protest, to the effect that no people save the Jews finds need to justify its existence, and that even to admit such questions is to encourage a corrosive self-doubt. And it is of course true that there have been, and always will be, countless peoples that exist unattended by an awareness that they have any special purpose or calling among mankind. Such peoples are born constantly and disappear constantly, leaving no one to grieve for their passing.

But there also exist in history nations that do, at a certain point, awaken to a sense of the unique vantage point from which they regard mankind, and of those traditions, ideas, and virtues that make their destiny different from that of other peoples. Such nations find that they have long ago become a subject of discussion among other peoples, and that their insights and manners have touched the rest of mankind even without their desiring it, at times engendering admiration, at times anger. A truth or virtue that one possesses without knowing that others are in want of it can seem a small thing, and one may not recognize the importance of preserving or strengthening it. From the admiration and anger of other peoples, however, one begins to see with increased clarity those aspects of one's own inheritance that are of true significance. And with this awareness comes the need to articulate the unique vantage point from which the nation regards the condition of mankind.

Certainly this has been true of England and France, Italy, Germany, and Russia, and, of course, America; and it has been true of others as well.

Among such nations, the struggle for survival is not a matter of raw spirit. It is conceptualized, which is to say that an intellectual order is imposed on it, so that it may be understood. I do not mean by this that the character of the nation is invented or imagined, in the sense that it did not exist beforehand and is artificially grafted on. Rather, the existing character of the people is for the first time articulated in clear terms—not in traditional, esoteric, or holy language that speaks only to the nation in question, but in general terms that can be understood by everyone. Very often it is a foreigner, in fact, who first succeeds in rendering the character of a nation in this way: In England’s case, Montesquieu; in the case of America, Tocqueville.

I say this in order to set aside the pretense that other peoples do not engage in discussion of their special purpose or calling, and that it is somehow unseemly for Jews to do so. The truth is exactly the opposite: There are many peoples who have not yet reached a point where they can reasonably see themselves as being of significance to mankind as a whole, and these may well be able to dispense with such discussion; but all great nations—what used to be called the “historic nations”¹⁴—conduct such conversations among themselves with intensity, knowing full well that the future of humanity depends on it.

More than any other people, the Jews have understood themselves as a historic nation—that is, as the bearer of an idea, as a people with a role to play in history. It was this commitment to an idea that was the true strength of the Jews and the secret that kept us alive in the bitter sea of exile, while so many nations around us vanished into the mists of history; it was this loyalty to the ideal of Israel and to the God of Israel that moved so many generations, including a great many Jews who did not understand this ideal or believe in this God, to suffer privation and death for their sake. In other words, what brought the Jews eternal life among the nations was not a preoccupation with survival, whether individual or collective, but rather the opposite. It was the willingness to give up one’s life for an idea, for a historic calling, that saved us.

The Jews are among the oldest of the existing historic nations, and in some respects the most successful, having become aware of our unique purpose more than thirty centuries ago, and having in the meantime influenced the self-understanding of mankind more than any nation. This is not only because of our people's authorship of the Bible in antiquity, but because it has throughout these centuries devoted its highest energies, often under conditions of great danger and hardship, to the cultivation of an intellectual tradition unique among the nations. This tradition, forged in light of the main currents of Western thought but in conscious and constant contradistinction to them, is for this reason unparalleled as an alternate vantage point from which to address the central questions that confront humanity.

I have already discussed the response of the Hebrew Bible to the dilemma of empire and anarchy, but one may as easily point to many other instances in which there exist independent and, to one degree or another, characteristic Jewish views. I think it is obvious, for example, that the Jewish intellectual tradition is without the towering walls erected in the last few centuries by Western thought, which separate *is* from *ought*, prudence from duty, and the ideal state from man's vision of the good. Similarly, one finds in Jewish tradition an understanding of the world in which man is inclined to evil from childhood, but free to choose the good without need of grace; in which reward and punishment are primarily a matter of this world rather than the next; in which responsibility is not only individual, but collective; in which memory is sacred, and every generation must see itself as if it had lived in the time of its forefathers; and in which love is rejected as the main wellspring of morality, in favor of justice and even honor (as in "Honor your father and your mother"¹⁵). This last, especially, is the reason that law is understood among Jews as the only natural discipline capable of reasonably adjudicating conflicting moral demands.

Moreover, there is in the Jewish tradition a distinct approach to epistemology, in which tradition is recognized as the mainstay of wisdom,

and truth triumphs not through “pure” reasoning, but through history. There is also a distinct Jewish view of politics, in which the ways of power and worldly wisdom are not removed from the city of God, but are of it; the goodness of regimes is judged not by the procedures they have devised but by the benefits they confer on men; and no king and no public may be obeyed by the individual in the face of the demands imposed by higher moral law. And, of course, there are many specific moral principles of our tradition that constitute a proposal and a challenge to mankind: The idea that the debasement of the body is sacrilege; that books may deserve the same dignity in death as do men; that hard labor must be limited by an insuperable commandment of rest; that poverty, like celibacy, is no virtue, and achievement no vice; that the material world is not our property, but only in our care; and many others. With regard to theology, I will say only this much here—that in the Jewish tradition, God’s many other perfections are of less significance than this one: That he keeps the promises he makes to man.¹⁶

Not long ago, Jews were still capable of speaking about such matters as though we were a match for other great nations, with much to learn from them, but also with much to teach them. As late as the early eighteenth century, the tradition of the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, and Maimonides was still a living intellectual force in the West, borne by our people and informing the worldviews of men such as Hobbes, Grotius, Selden, Milton, Cunaeus, and Newton, in the process making a not insignificant contribution to the development of the European national state and the modern understanding of freedom.¹⁷ Rousseau, too, inquired after the views of the rabbis, and when he published *On the Social Contract* in 1762, he well understood that it was with the political tradition of the Jews that his own ideas were most fundamentally in conflict.¹⁸ The period of Enlightenment all but closed the door on such engagement between the Jewish tradition and the West, but even thereafter, the Jews continued to see themselves as the bearer of an idea of great importance

not only to themselves, but to all humanity. One need only read Moses Hess' *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862) to catch a fleeting glimpse of the ancient Jewish message, its grandeur undiminished, still sharply distinct from the understanding of the Christian world around it, yet couched in general terms accessible to all men.¹⁹

Difficult as it may be to admit, it was the Holocaust that extinguished the flame of intellectual independence within the Jewish people, destroying our confidence in our tradition and ourselves, and reducing our conceptual horizon to that of a small people, overwhelmed by the day-to-day cares of its struggle to survive. That is, it was the Holocaust that destroyed our belief in ourselves as a historic nation. And while the conviction and valor of Ben-Gurion and his generation may have obscured this from view, engaging all our attention in the quest to achieve and consolidate a Jewish sovereignty, the struggle for the establishment of Israel only deferred the reckoning, whose time has now come. The signs of this can be seen everywhere: The sense of exhaustion which haunts us, while our enemies seem forever young; the inner cry that we have paid enough and deserve finally to rest; the feeling that our hope, while not yet entirely extinguished, is without any fixed object. All these cavernous hollows that now open up around us are the deep aftereffects of a life deprived of the end that once animated it, of a people no longer convinced it bears an idea, or at least one worth bearing.

Of course, there are peoples that can continue for a long time without permitting themselves to ask *why*. But ours is not among them. A historic nation, its life unnaturally extended by virtue of its ideal, loses its taste for ignorance. I do not mean by this that it is impossible for us to return to the path of a minor people, obsessed with persistence alone, and therefore utterly mortal—another Albania or Bulgaria or Montenegro, as Franz Rosenzweig once said, on the shores of the Mediterranean. We can choose this road, but we cannot prevent the devastation this choice will visit upon the next generation of Jews, the best of whom now have the option

to slip away from such a people without a trace of regret. Indeed, we are already seeing this choice being made every day, not only in the diaspora but in Israel as well.

I know our people fears this road—the road of a historic people, a people that seeks its calling before the nations and responds to it, and which, in its truer moments, breathes the air of eternity. To hear some Jews speak on the subject, one would think that to believe in any Jewish calling or purpose other than survival and benignity is of necessity to be a fanatic, a messianist, and a hater of other peoples. This is the root of the constant vituperation one hears against even the mildest efforts to understand why the Jewish people might in some sense be chosen, and of the insistence that the Israeli state must be a “neutral” state, which is to say one that is stripped clean of any overarching purpose. But the truth is that the Jews have given much to humanity and are, even today, potentially one of the great factors in civilization. And one does not have to see the hand of the divine in history to understand this. Mankind has in the last hundred years arrived at a crossroads such as it has not known since the time of Elizabeth, Shakespeare, and Bacon. The Jews are one of the few peoples with the capacity to offer significant and independent answers regarding what man has come to, and where he must now turn. In this we are not “like all the nations.” At most we are like a very few other nations. And our destiny, like that of those other nations, is therefore of no mean, parochial interest.

It is this realization that brings us to the second aspect of the Jewish state’s purpose as the guardian of the Jews. For the conditions of dispersion and exile that preceded the establishment of the state spelled not only physical insecurity but intellectual insecurity as well. Certainly, there were important windows of grace—not only the “golden” ages in exilic Babylonia and Spain, but other, lesser-known periods of ferment and transaction. Nonetheless, it is difficult to deny that the normative state of Jewry was one of intellectual siege, in which neither the free, internal development

of Jewish ideas nor a real public airing of them was even remotely possible. Rousseau described these conditions in *Emile* (1762):

Do you know many Christians who have taken the effort to examine with care what Judaism alleges against them? If some individuals have seen something of this, it is in the books of the Christians. A good way of informing oneself about their adversaries' arguments! But what is there to do? If someone dared to publish among us books in which Judaism were openly favored, we would punish the author, the publisher, the bookseller.... There is a pleasure in refuting people who do not dare to speak.

Those who have access to conversation with Jews are not much farther advanced. These unfortunates feel themselves to be at our mercy.... What will they dare say without laying themselves open to our accusing them of blasphemy? ... The most learned, the most enlightened among them are always the most circumspect....²⁰

It was these conditions that stood before the eyes of early Zionist writers in their hope that an independent Jewish state could provide a suitable soil for the proper elaboration of Jewish ideas. Perhaps surprisingly, Rousseau himself came to this same conclusion, arguing that only a Jewish state would bring about a truly free development of the Jewish perspective in intellectual matters. As he concluded in the passage quoted above: "I shall never believe I have heard the arguments of the Jews until they have a free state, schools, and universities, where they can speak and dispute without risk. Only then will we know what they have to say."²¹

Now this claim is one that requires some consideration, since it is hardly the most obvious argument Rousseau might have made. One of the architects of the egalitarian state, he might easily have argued that the absence of a distinctive Jewish voice in European public discourse was the result of intolerance, and that reducing the latter would create the conditions for the free development of the ideas of the Jews. Certainly, this is

what many of his admirers would say today. Rousseau, however, seems to have realized that there is a far deeper question here than can be addressed by a simple end to persecution. For the desire to which he gave voice—the desire to “know what the Jews have to say”—is a burden that the principles of equality and freedom of expression cannot possibly bear. To have a hope of achieving such a purpose one needs to seek out additional analytic principles suited to this end.

The recognition that the machinery of political equality does not necessarily lead to intellectual and cultural independence—not of the Jews, and not of anyone else—is an insight of great importance in an age in which the liberty to speak is consistently treated as though it were the sole and sufficient condition for the development of ideas worthy of being spoken. In keeping with Mill’s infectious enthusiasm on the subject, we all tend to believe that given the free competition of ideas, the truth concerning every subject of importance will eventually be discovered, expressed in a persuasive fashion, and, as a consequence, heeded. And yet experience teaches something different. In public affairs, as in the life of the individual, we find that the liberty to express an opinion often does little to assure its eventual acceptance in the face of an opposite, prevailing one. The prevailing idea is defended by a great many individuals, whose desire to avoid the unpleasantness of revising their way of thinking is generally far in excess of their desire to learn the truth; and even those whose desire to know the truth is beyond question are rarely capable of investing the intellectual and emotional energies required to uproot a long-established way of understanding things. Moreover, the resistance to change is generally intransigent, poorly reasoned, and virulent in direct proportion to the importance of the subject. In the general case, it is only the young who even approach being “open-minded.” The rest of humanity have their minds opened for them by a catastrophic turn of events that forces them to reconsider, or else they do not reconsider at all.

Given this reality, the price of nonconformity becomes, for most people, unbearably high. Without the shelter provided by a community of

the like-minded, the dissenting individual finds himself exposed and set upon from all sides. And, unless he is made of truly extraordinary materials and has no need for encouragement or for the respect of others, capitulation and accommodation are not long in coming. In this way, disagreement is driven underground or becomes the province of eccentrics, and every original strand of thought that emerges is forced to conform to the standards generally prevailing long before it reaches its full development.²²

It was this that caused Ahad Ha'am, himself no friend of the ghetto, to regard with such horror the fate of Judaism in the free lands of the West. As he wrote:

It is only in the latest period, that of emancipation and assimilation, that Jewish culture has really become sterile and ceased to bear new fruit. This does not mean that our creative power has been suddenly destroyed, or that we are no longer capable of doing original work. It is the tendency to sink the national individuality, and merge it in that of other nations, that has produced [the] characteristic phenomena of this period: ... The really original intellects desert their own poverty-stricken people and give their efforts to the enrichment of those who are already rich, while our literature remains a barren field for dullards and mediocrities to trample on.... Even what is good in our literature... is good only in that it resembles more or less the good products of other literatures.... We cannot feel that our national life is linked with a literature like this, which is in its essence nothing but a purveyor of foreign goods, presenting the ideas and feelings of foreign writers in a vastly inferior form.²³

Once these considerations are taken into account, the idea that freedom of expression will lead to truth must be significantly qualified. Statements of fact pertaining to subjects both easily understandable and readily verifiable may on occasion be quickly accepted as truth, even if they overturn prevailing views. But the great issues are never of this kind.

Arguments over moral, political, or religious truth are typically fought and won only over the course of generations or even centuries. Even where the falsehood is blatant, as was the case, for example, with Marxist historical and economic theories, it may be a century or more before disputes over abstract ideas begin to gravitate towards real resolution. In such protracted conceptual struggles, the truth of an idea is little guarantee of its acceptance if its advocates do not have at their disposal instruments appropriate to articulating, preserving, and advancing it over the course of long generations, and in the face of the vindictiveness that is inevitably arrayed to protect an established contrary view.

When I speak here of instruments suitable for the development of ideas over generations, and especially in the face of overwhelming opposition, I have in mind social institutions substantial enough to create a community of the like-minded, whose members can find mutual encouragement, assistance, and respect among themselves to a degree that cannot exist when the individual stands alone before society as a whole. Such institutions include universities and monasteries—and, on a far larger scale, the national state. What these institutions have in common is the recognition that *seclusion*, no less than liberty, is a precondition for the development of ideas of consequence. This insight was expressed long ago by Humboldt, the founder of the modern university,²⁴ and it is perhaps most immediately understood with reference to that institution (and similar ones such as yeshivot). Conditions of liberty, as we know, create a public arena in which ideas are tested against their competitors. The metaphor of the arena is apt: It is here that ideas are pitted against one another, here that they garner the applause or scorn of the public. The purpose of argument becomes, above all else, to sway the crowd, and its qualities are in accordance with this need. Arguments are chosen not because they are best but because they sound best. The prestige of the forum in which an argument is made, or of the individuals who can be induced to lend their names to it, is found to be of greater effect than the substance of what has been said. Humiliation and anger reign, careers are

made and broken, everything is exaggerated and all subtlety lost. Quiet is restored only when one side reaches exhaustion and retires to the sanctuary of his study.

This is the public arena, the inevitable and wholly desirable outcome of liberty. It is the best means we have of adjudicating intellectual disputes. But it is absurd to think that weighty intellectual innovations are born or brought to maturity under such conditions. Rather, it is in the secluded society, in which like-minded individuals can work together over long years without fear of humiliation born of malice, that novel ideas appear and mature. Think of the university: There one has the benefit of a select audience comprised of individuals of like concerns, whose attention span is therefore measured not in minutes, but in years. There one has the benefit of the private criticism of one's associates, whose interest is not in swaying the crowd, but in improving the argument and bettering the common intellectual effort. There one may engage the attention of future generations of scholars and public figures who are immersed in the complexities and difficulties of the developing idea, and for this reason steeled against the shallow rhetoric of its detractors—as they must necessarily be if they are to take up the work of construction themselves. In short, it is here that one finds an environment conducive to the articulation of an independent idea, and to the upbuilding of an independent school of thought, even in the face of severe prejudice and hostility on the part of the world beyond. And this is possible only because the university consciously secludes itself—using a variety of barriers, physical, psychological, and social—from the clamor of the utterly open society beyond its gates.

Anyone familiar with the national state will recognize in this description a model and a metaphor for such a state. For with its territorial, linguistic, and political barriers and boundaries, the national state is itself the greatest natural shelter under which an alternative understanding of truth and right living can take root and flower. Of course, the national state is an institution on an altogether different scale. And if the university

is understood as a sheltered social space conducive to the development of an innovative but on the whole unitary school of thought, then the national state—which can be home to a wide array of such institutions—is best understood as having the potential to be a school of such schools: A microcosm in which various schools of thought compete with one another in interpreting a people’s heritage, each seeking to influence the basis for the intellectual and moral contribution that the national state will make to mankind. In the Jewish historical context, one easily thinks of the competing schools of Hillel and Shammai, or of the later schools of R. Yishmael and R. Akiva, which wrestled with one another over the precise location of the unique Jewish vantage point and of what might be seen from there, but which were nonetheless united in advancing a common and unique Jewish perspective before the world. As our tradition understood it, “These as well as the others are the words of the living God.”²⁵

In our own day, a sovereign Jewish state holds out the only option for a society that is regulated in accordance with the principles of liberty, while at the same time affording the seclusion necessary for the development of a specific Jewish vantage point that will not be a mere imitation of the main intellectual currents circulating in the West.²⁶ Like other national states, Israel is well suited to provide just such seclusion, which is to an important extent an inevitable result of the territorial, linguistic, and political divisions created by virtue of its existence as an independent, Hebrew-speaking country: Differences in language in any case have the tendency to reflect (and encourage) divergences from other cultures regarding the proper understanding of reality; and the language itself, by erecting a natural barrier to communication of these ideas to the outside world, and by damping outside criticism, is in and of itself a powerful sheltering agent militating in the direction of a secure space in which such alternative understandings can take root.²⁷ The barriers created by geography have a similar effect, even with their attenuation by modern methods of transportation and communication. Nor is it possible to overlook the

cultural differentiation that results from political division and from variations in political regime. For the heart of every civilization is its historical experience, and historical experience is principally the experience of the political. The trials, accomplishments, and catastrophes shared by a given political society form the backbone of that which the individual shares with his neighbor, and these experiences, the basis for traditions of thought and action extending far beyond the strictly political, divide men from their colleagues who are members of another polity, no matter how much they share with them a fundamental sympathy.²⁸

When these factors are considered together, we see that the national state is an immensely powerful seclusionary institution, well able, in principle, to establish a sheltered cultural space in which differentiated and original ideals may find their full development for the common benefit of mankind. It was just this possibility that led Ahad Ha'am to argue that the answer to the deterioration of Judaism in the West had to be the creation of a concentrated Jewish settlement in Palestine. "The spiritual trouble of which I have spoken is fraught with danger to our people's future," he wrote, "no less than the physical trouble. A 'home of refuge' for the national spirit is therefore not less essential than a home of refuge for our homeless wanderers.... It is impossible, in my opinion, to deny that the necessary scale would be very large indeed... [if we are] to create a fixed and independent center for our national culture—for science, art, and literature."²⁹

The shelter and seclusion provided by the national state cannot, of course, guarantee that it will be home to the creation of an original and worthwhile intellectual life within its boundaries, any more than the establishment of a university can guarantee it. Every institution depends on the particular men who comprise it, and if these choose to devote all their activities to mimicking the ideas of others, then no institutional structure will prevent such assimilation. But where there exists an intellectual leadership of even moderate creativity and daring, the barriers erected by language, territory, and polity assume their seclusionary role, creating the

secure space in which different voices can be heard and can gain their first blush of respect, without immediately becoming the focus of withering opposition from the partisans of dominant contrary ideas. Under such circumstances, the national state becomes the ideal vessel for the development and propagation of an original intellectual climate. And if, as often happens, we find the writers and scholars of other national states jealous for the reputations of their own peoples, we may also find that the system of independent national states—with each nation devoted to the development of its own special way in life and thought—has become a great nursery for innovations and experiments, in which each people pursues its own ends, to the ultimate benefit of all.

In October 2002, exactly one hundred years will have passed since the Minsk Conference, at which Ahad Ha'am called for the establishment of an extensive and concentrated Jewish settlement in Palestine capable of serving as what he called a "spiritual center" for the Jews. In the intervening time, the work of generations has succeeded not only in making the Hebrew language one that is spoken with fluency by millions of Jews, but also in bringing it to a level of sophistication and beauty not seen in many centuries. And in this land, too, there have arisen universities and other institutions of higher learning and culture, as well as a greater number of yeshivot than the Jewish world has ever known—so that the potential for learning what the Jews have to say, to use again Rousseau's phrase, has never been greater than it is in modern Israel.

The reality, of course, has been something of a surprise and a disappointment. The spirit of the German academy, in which the works of the Jewish mind were seen as having contributed little or nothing to man's advancement, hovers over the universities of the Jewish state; and many a good mind has succumbed to this view of things. Nor do the great founders of our national intellectual life—Agnon and Bialik, Dinur, Scholem, and R. Kook, all of whom were immigrants from Europe—have much in common with the new generation of Israeli academics and authors, many of whom seem to believe that the nihilistic fads emanating from America

and Germany constitute a definitive revelation as to how we must understand our world. A book published in Hebrew, as it turns out, may be as distant from making a contribution to the dream of a “home of refuge for the national spirit” as any in German or English.³⁰ And as might be expected when the best energies of so many of Israel’s men of letters are devoted to copying foreign fashion, the nations of the world, who can more easily have the originals, tend to dismiss the entire gallery of them without so much as a footnote.

Unfortunate though the failings of many among the present generation of Israeli writers and scholars may be, these cannot be considered decisive. The establishment of the Jewish state is an enterprise of many generations, and it should always be judged from this perspective. On such a scale, perhaps only the re-establishment of the Hebrew language as a living medium can be judged to be of enduring significance. True, this is in an important sense no more than the achievement of a *formal requirement* of an independent national life, as is the establishment of a Jewish political sovereignty. After all, Jewish sovereignty will not rescue persecuted Jews in other lands if we have no public men devoted to the principle of Jewish guardianship; and by the same token, our intellectual heritage will remain a closed book to Jew and gentile alike as long as we do not have an intellectual leadership guided by a similar devotion. But this is already a matter of *character*, the third aspect of Israel’s purpose, which will be the subject of the third and final section of this essay. For our purposes here, suffice it to say that an apparently formal achievement on the scale of the revival of the language of the Bible is not to be underestimated in terms of the possibilities it opens up for us as a historic nation.

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Notes

1. "On the National State, Part 1: Empire and Anarchy," *AZURE* 12 (Winter 2002), pp. 27-70.
2. Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. and trans. Anne M. Cohler, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1989), p. 156.
3. Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (Vienna: M. Breitenstein, 1896), p. 94. [German]
4. Burke's speech appears in William Cobbett, *The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803* (London: T.C. Hansard, 1806), pp. 223-224.
5. See Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London: Mitchell, 1961), p. 7.
6. Theodor Herzl, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. Raphael Patai, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl Press, 1960), p. 10.
7. Theodor Herzl, *Complete Diaries*, pp. 131-132.
8. Speech by Ben-Gurion before a special session of the National Assembly, November 30, 1942. Central Zionist Archives, J/1366. Cf. Herzl, who argued that the one thing that was needed was "Jews who carry out Jewish policies, and not cabinet policies on orders from someone else." Theodor Herzl, "Judaism," in Theodor Herzl, *Zionist Writings: Essays and Addresses*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl Press, 1973), vol. 1, p. 55.
9. Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl Press, 1970), pp. 107-108. The possibility that the national state would wither away and would be replaced by a world of small, independent communities was also discussed by the Zionists. As Max Nordau wrote, "I would prefer to believe that the organic evolution of human beings will bring them someday to a point where... the molecular motion of the brain will be imparted directly to other brains by a kind of radiation or continuous transmission. I ascribe the same degree of probability to this imaginary onward evolution from the national state into the independent community." Quoted in Ben Zion Netanyahu's introduction to Max Nordau, *To His People: A Summons and a Challenge* (New York: Scopus, 1941), pp. 37-38.
10. Hermann Cohen, "Germanism and Judaism," in Hermann Cohen, *Juedische Schriften* (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1924). [German] On Cohen's relationship with the established German-Jewish leadership, see: Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promised Land: The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1975), p. 84; D. Engel, "Relations Between

Liberals and Zionists in Germany During World War I,” *Zion* 27:4 (September 1982), p. 447 [Hebrew]; Jehuda Medler, “Hermann Cohen’s Philosophy of Judaism,” doctoral dissertation (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1968), p. 488.

11. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); and Shimon Peres, *The New Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993). Today these works are even more painful to read than they were a decade ago.

12. Yossi Beilin, *The Death of the American Uncle* (Tel Aviv: Yedi’ot Aharonot, 1999), p. 49 [Hebrew]; Moshe Zimmermann, “Anti-Semitic Imports from Europe,” *Ha’aretz*, October 26, 2000.

13. Tosefta Shabbat 15:17; Yoma 82a.

14. My use of the term “historic nation” is not intended to imply an acceptance of any of the specific doctrines that have been appended to it and to other terms that might be thought to be similar. In particular, I have no sympathy with the idea of an *ur-nation*, or “primary nation,” as this term was used by Herder and others. I mean only to refer to peoples who have for many generations been aware of a particular calling or purpose which describes and animates their place within history.

15. Exodus 20:12.

16. Such a cursory mentioning of ideas cannot ever be satisfactory, much less complete in any sense. I have not, for example, included many of the most important Jewish ideas (e.g., the one God; or the social order based principally on respect for marriage and property) out of fear that these will, in this context, appear trite. In addition, it is obvious that every way of life will be of interest only relative to what is accepted among surrounding peoples, so that every such sketch must change from one generation to the next.

For a more significant discussion of this general topic, see David Novak, *Natural Law in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1998); Ofir Haivry, “The Way of the World,” *AZURE* 5 (Autumn 1998). On the place of law in Jewish moral thought, see David Hazony, “Eliezer Berkovits and the Revival of Jewish Moral Thought,” *AZURE* 11 (Summer 2001); on the individual and the state, see Yoram Hazony, “The Jewish Origins of the Western Disobedience Tradition,” *AZURE* 4 (Summer 1998); on the Sabbath, see Yosef Yitzhak Lifshitz, “Secret of the Sabbath,” *AZURE* 10 (Winter 2001). It is also possible to describe a Jewish literary esthetic with an evident affinity for the epistemology and morality described here. See Assaf Inbari, “Towards a Hebrew Literature,” *AZURE* 9 (Spring 2000).

The expression “a proposal and a challenge to mankind” is borrowed, roughly, from Pierre Manent, “Democracy Without Nations?” in Daniel J. Mahoney and

Paul Senton, eds., *Modern Liberty and Its Discontents* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), p. 195.

17. See Fania Oz-Salzberger, "The Jewish Roots of Western Freedom," in this issue of *AZURE*, pp. 88-132.

18. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's, 1978), pp. 125-126. Nonetheless, this controversy with the Jews did not prevent him from recognizing, for instance, in his essay on *The Government of Poland*, that his own conception of the proper founding of the nation was based to no small degree on the establishment of the Jewish polity as depicted in the Hebrew Bible. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Government of Poland* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1972), pp. 5-6, 8.

19. Moses Hess, *The Revival of Israel: Rome and Jerusalem*, trans. Meyer Waxman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1995).

20. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), pp. 303-304.

21. Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 304.

22. It is for this reason that the institution of tenure has done nothing to secure intellectual freedom at the universities. Proponents of this arrangement claim that by removing permanently the threat of dismissal, they permit academics to write and teach according to their true convictions. But this argument is predicated on the false premise that a learned professor will generally value his daily bread more than the comradeship and esteem of his fellows.

23. Ahad Ha'am, "The Spiritual Revival," in *Selected Essays of Ahad Ha'am*, ed. and trans. Leon Simon (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), pp. 265, 286-287.

24. I am careful here to speak of *seclusion* rather than *exclusion*, whose meaning is the precise opposite of my intention. By seclusion, I mean the purposive gathering of like-minded people to advance a common aim, without any intention of excluding others. In general, I think it would be correct to say that exclusive institutions do not welcome outsiders, whereas seclusive institutions do welcome outsiders who are not opposed to the aims of the institution.

25. Eruvin 13b.

26. For over a century, those who have attempted to incite the Jews to reach for such a goal have had to contend with those who say they wish to see just such a flourishing of Jewish life in Germany, or more recently, in America. I believe that this is an impossibility, unless American Jewry concludes that it is willing to sacrifice its social status and mobility for seclusionary institutions such as only the Orthodox have generally maintained until now. It is difficult to imagine, for

example, a Jewish university in the United States that would be voluntarily attended by most of the country's best Jewish students. At this point, such a vision seems fantastic, and this fact is of the first consequence. For so long as Harvard and Yale continue to draw the most gifted students—including many of the Orthodox—it is futile to speak of a Jewish renaissance that is not predicated upon and derivative of such a cultural restoration in Israel. Without seclusion, in other words, American Jewry is doomed to find itself operating to a greater or lesser extent within the same framework described by Ahad Ha'am a century ago: The most original minds leave aside the concerns of Jewish civilization and devote their best efforts to the more general advancement of things American, while Jewish literature and ideas remain largely a barren field.

27. Compare this with Mill's comment that in a multinational regime, "One section does not know what opinions, or what instigations, are circulating in another," due to differences in language. John Stuart Mill, "On Representative Government," in H.B. Acton, ed., *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Considerations on Representative Government* (London: Everyman, 1984), pp. 392-394.

28. These dividing effects of geography, language, and polity are well known to those accustomed to reflecting on intellectual trends, which are for this reason consistently and usefully represented by geographic designations—such as the Frankfurt School, the Austrian School, English empiricism, the Scottish Enlightenment, German idealism, and so on. This is not just convention, but a reflection of the fact that individuals familiar with the subject matter treated by these styles of thought can and do feel the changes of intellectual climate from the moment they descend from the train to pay a visit to their colleagues.

29. Ahad Ha'am, "The Spiritual Revival," *Hashiloah* 10:60 (December 1902), pp. 481-482. [Hebrew] Cf. Ahad Ha'am, "The Spiritual Revival," pp. 287-289.

30. On the change in the character of the Hebrew language itself in recent years, see Joseph Dan, "On Post-Zionism, Modern Hebrew, and False Messianism," *Ha'aretz*, March 25, 1994.