



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 83, Folder 2, *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews*, 1984-1985.

OCT 10 1984

'Civilization and the Jews' TV series starring Eban - a big success in the U.S.

Davar Correspondent:

The new T.V. series 'Civilization and the Jews' starring Abba Eban is scoring a big success in the U.S. During the first week of its being shown throughout the U.S. the first two chapters had to be re-broadcast at the request of viewers, even before the projection of the whole series had been completed and before it had been projected in direct (Benney Sharin).

Eban himself appeared before tens of millions of viewers at the beginning of the series. The three movements in U.S. Jewry, the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform united in a unique gesture and invited Abba Eban to accept from their representative "The Jewish Personality of the Year" award for 1984, for his contribution to the perpetration (sic.) of Jewish history.

The Director of the American Jewish Committee phoned Abba Eban in the name of the Residents' Conference and told him: Despite my efforts not to exaggerate, I consider this series a work of Netzach Israel (Israel's Eternity).

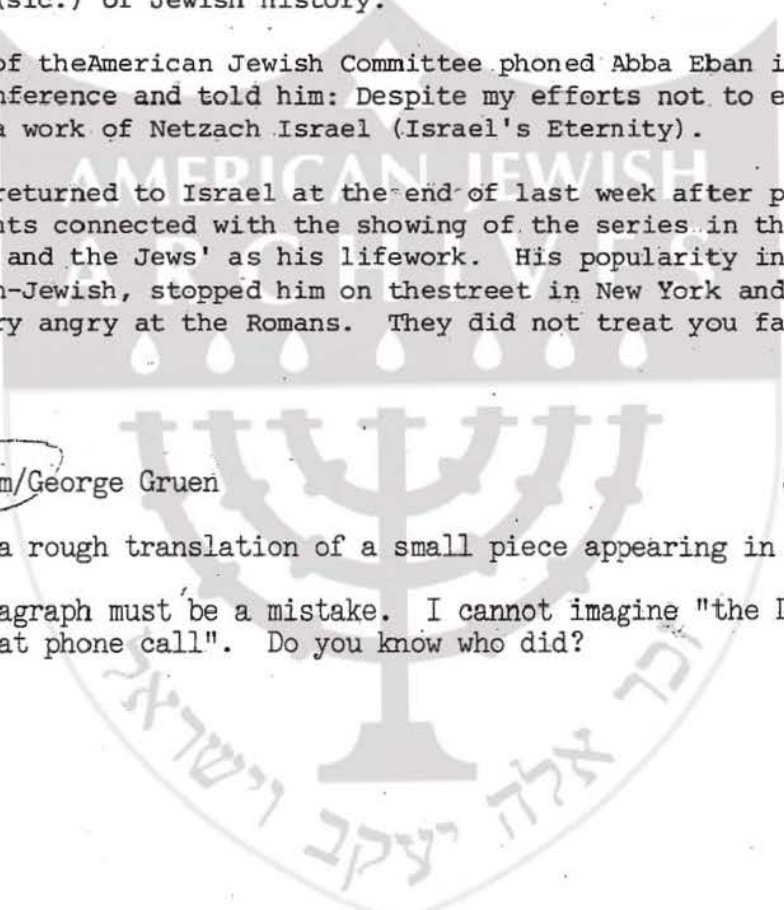
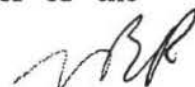
Eban himself returned to Israel at the end of last week after participating in the inaugural events connected with the showing of the series in the U.S. He considers 'Civilization and the Jews' as his lifework. His popularity in the U.S. is soaring. One woman, non-Jewish, stopped him on the street in New York and displaying anger told him: "I am very angry at the Romans. They did not treat you fairly" (Davar, October 10, 1984).

Marc Tanenbaum/George Gruen

8 October, 1984

The above is a rough translation of a small piece appearing in today's Davar.

The third paragraph must be a mistake. I cannot imagine "the Director of the AJC making that phone call". Do you know who did?



# NEWS

FROM THE

# COMMITTEE



**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE** Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, (212) 751-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

*MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations*

79th ANNUAL MEETING  
MAY 1-5, 1985  
WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL  
PARK AVENUE AT 50TH STREET  
NEW YORK, NY 10022  
(212) 355-3000

**CONTACT: Press-** Joyce Kaplan  
Leonard Fink  
Ralph Bass

**TV-Radio-** Randall Czarlinsky  
Haina Just

**PRESS ROOM: VERTES SUITE, 4TH FLOOR**

**FOR RELEASE AFTER 6 P.M.  
THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1985**

NEW YORK, May 2 . . . The WNET television series Heritage: Civilization and the Jews was awarded the American Jewish Committee's Mass Media Award at the Dinner of the Committee's 79th Annual Meeting, which continues through Sunday at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

The Award was given "in recognition of leadership in promoting man's understanding of his fellow-man through mass media, for a distinguished record of journalistic excellence and commitment to freedom of the press."

Abba Eban, former Israeli Ambassador to the United States, accepted the Award on behalf of the program, for which he was the narrator, stating that "after thousands of years, the Jews stand small, dispersed, vulnerable, but still inspired by a large and spacious ambition, still hoping to see great visions and to dream great dreams, the people with a voice whose echoes never die."

Presentations were also made of the Committee's American Liberties Medalion to Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr., and its Akiba Awards to Judith Rubin, President of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA, and James L. Weinberg, chairman of the board of the Jewish Museum. The Akiba Awards were for outstanding contributions to Jewish thought and culture by the institutions they head.

Preceding the Annual Dinner, Matthew Brown, a former Special Justice of the Boston Municipal Court, received the American Jewish Committee's Distinguished Leadership Award. President of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, Honorary Trustee of Beth Israel Hospital and Honorary Chairman for Life of the American Jewish Committee's Boston Chapter, Judge Brown is also a former AJC national Vice Chairman and an honorary member of its Board of Governors.

American Jewish Committee President Howard I. Friedman served as Chairman at the reception.

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Marc Siegel / 75 Central Park West / New York, N.Y. 10023

April 22, 1985

Howard I. Friedman, Esq.  
President, The American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10022

Dear Mr. Friedman:

Provided that no-one uses the word "eloquent" in introducing Abba Eban— it is an adjective that evokes a mood of immediate despair for him— he is certain to say all that should be said, brilliantly, from a global perspective, in responding to the presentation of the Mass Media Award of the American Jewish Committee to the WNET series, HERITAGE: Civilization and the Jews.

I would delight in being present to hear his response. But that is not possible. I will be, on that date, in London. I hope that someone will record his remarks.

I write not only to express my regret at being unable to be present, or to join with my WNET colleagues in our general appreciation for the award, but to thank the Committee specifically for its extraordinary support of "Civilization and the Jews" from the inception of that project.

In all of the six years that I served as executive producer of HERITAGE, and most particularly in the developmental period, the Committee was a resource of extraordinary constancy and versatility. I dwell with particular gratitude on the enthusiastic encouragement of Morton Yarmon, who helped marshal the support of the national Jewish organizations; of Marc Tannenbaum, whose guidance was particularly helpful in my first interviews at the Vatican; of Jim Rudin, and his colleagues, who helped in many interfaith areas, and in testing early reaction to the series. They, and many others, made significant contributions to the realization of this visionary effort.

But that, of course, came as no surprise to me. More than thirty-five years ago, it was Milton Krents of the American Jewish Committee, who guided me into writing what were among the first of my scripts of Jewish interest.

Thank you for the honor you do the series. It is the Committee's achievement, too.

Sincerely,

Marc Siegel  
Marc Siegel

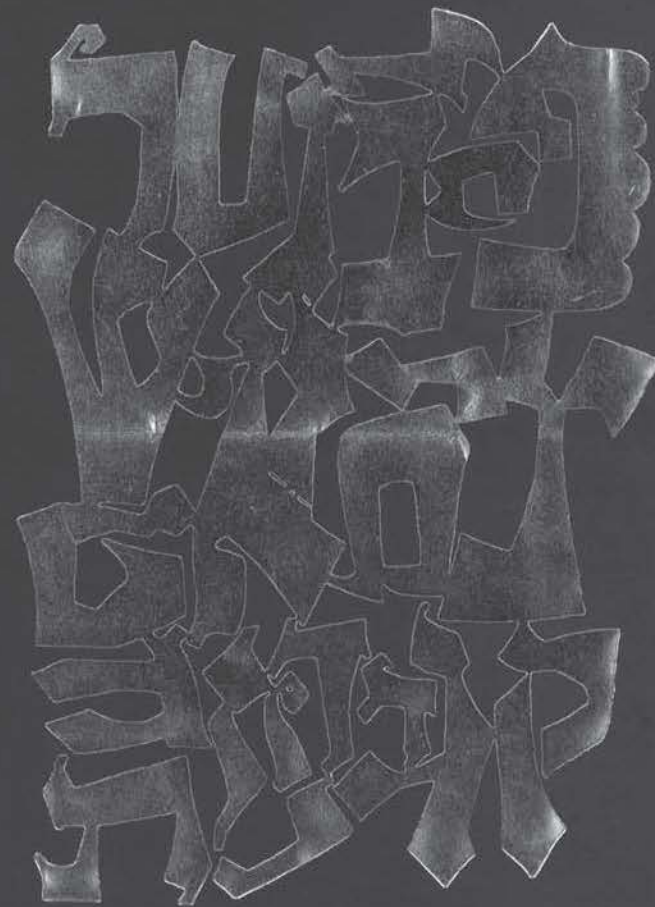
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**HERITAGE:**  
CIVILIZATION AND THE JEWS



WNET/Thirteen, the producer of **Heritage: Civilization and the Jews**, is proud to be associated in this monumental effort with Abba Eban, who serves as on-air host and commentator, chief editorial consultant, and author of the book based on the series.



Abba Eban is the host, narrator and chief consultant for **Heritage: Civilization and the Jews**, a nine-part series from WNET/Thirteen, New York, that will premiere on public television in the fall of 1984. Photo credit: Don Perdue.

Who better to serve as host than Abba Eban? Between 1959 and 1974, he served successively as Minister Without Portfolio in the Israeli Cabinet, Minister of Education and Culture, Deputy Prime Minister, and finally Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Eban's various diplomatic posts have ranged from serving as Israel's representative to the United Nations, Vice President of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1953, and a dual role as Ambassador to the United States and Chief Delegate to the United Nations from 1950 to 1959.

Mr. Eban, who graduated from Cambridge University, is a Fellow of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the only living member of the Orators' Hall of Fame.

"This is a dramatic story, a story that has been told in parchment and in sculpture, in writing, in music, in opera, in every medium," says Mr. Eban of the forthcoming nine-part series. "It has never been told on the television medium as vividly as we hope to tell it."

To paraphrase the Talmud, before you know where you are going, you have to know from where you came.

Cover: © The Ben Shahn Estate

## THE WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION

in association with

WNET—Channel 13/New York

cordially invites you to attend  
a private buffet reception

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

honoring

Abba Eban, M.K.

and

WNET's

**Heritage: Civilization and the Jews**

Sunday, September 30th, 1984

515 Park Avenue  
New York City

Reception: seven o'clock  
Preview Screening: eight-thirty o'clock

RSVP

**Heritage: Civilization and the Jews** recounts the dramatic story of a people who first emerged as nomadic tribes when the glittering empires of Mesopotamia and Egypt were thousands of years old, a people who declared allegiance to a God above nature, a people whose Exodus—escape—from slavery is a metaphor for liberation.

Filmed in more than eighteen nations on four continents, **Heritage** captures over 3,000 years of Jewish history within the context of the relationship with other Western religious and secular traditions.

From the story heights of the Sinai to the shores of the Dead Sea, from an amphitheater in Delphi to the Roman Forum, from the Arabian desert to the Rothschilds' Paris salon, Abba Eban, host and chief editorial consultant for **Heritage**, brings to life the history of the Jews and their influence on and interaction with Western civilizations.

These are the programs:

**A People is Born** (thirteenth century B.C.E. to sixth century B.C.E.) A new people is born—with its patriarchs, prophets and kings—amid the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

**The Power of the Word** (sixth century B.C.E. to second century C.E.) In this sweeping episode, we see the consolidation of the Jewish people and their law and the creative interaction with the ancient Greeks and Romans.

**The Shaping of Traditions** (first to ninth centuries) This program chronicles the destruction of the Second Temple, the rise of Christianity and Islam, and, finally, brings us to the emergence of Jewish culture in Europe.

**The Crucible of Europe** (ninth to fifteenth centuries) The turbulent and creative interplay of Judaism, Christianity and Islam during the Middle Ages is chronicled in this exciting episode.

**The Search for Deliverance** (1492 to 1789) This program resounds with the bustle of Jewish life in Amsterdam, Constantinople, Safed, and Venice in the wake of the expulsion from Spain and explores the flourishing of Polish Jewry.

**Roads from the Ghetto** (1789 to 1917) This period begins with the Industrial and French Revolutions, covers the struggle for Jewish emancipation, and witnesses the rise of modern anti-Semitism and the birth of Zionism.

**The Golden Land** (1654 to 1932) America! This program is a vivid portrait highlighting the Jewish experience in the New World.

**Out of the Ashes** (1917 to 1945) The turmoil of the '20's, the fury of Nazism and the Holocaust, the beginnings of reconstruction and a glimmer of hope for the future are presented in this dramatic program.

**Into the Future** (1945 to the present) This final episode examines the birth of the State of Israel, the plight of Soviet Jewry, the relations between the Jews of Israel and those in other parts of the world, and the meaning of Jewish identity today.





# HERITAGE:

CIVILIZATION AND THE JEWS

ARCHIVES

*An Interreligious Study Guide*



**Interreligious Affairs Department  
The American Jewish Committee**



## HERITAGE: CIVILIZATION AND THE JEWS

### Foreword

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THE Public Broadcasting Service series "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews" is one of television's most ambitious projects. From Biblical times to our own day, it carries the viewer through thousands of years of historical, cultural and religious interaction. It provides a unique opportunity for advancing interreligious understanding.

The Interreligious Affairs Department of The American Jewish Committee is pleased to publish this study guide to accompany the PBS series. The main themes

of each program are explored along with selected questions designed to stimulate thoughtful discussion among people of all faiths. Television is one of the world's most powerful teaching tools. Hopefully, "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews" will be seen by millions of people, and will reach both their heads and their hearts.

This study guide was written by Rabbi Alan Mittleman; Judith H. Banki provided many valuable insights and suggestions in its preparation. Both are staff members of The American Jewish Committee's Interreligious Affairs Department. We are grateful to Dr. Eugene J. Fisher, Executive Secretary, Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Rev. David E. Simpson, Director, Office on Christian-Jewish Relations, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.,

for their strong support and helpful guidance to the project. Thanks also go to Robert Miller, Project Coordinator of "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews," for his cooperation and assistance. Finally, the publication of this study guide is made possible by a grant from Leonard and Phyllis Greenberg of West Hartford, Connecticut. We deeply appreciate their commitment to this important undertaking.

Mimi Alperin, *Chair*  
Interreligious Affairs Commission

Rabbi A. James Rudin, *Director*  
Interreligious Affairs Department

*September, 1984*

## Introduction

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**J**OHN Donne wrote, "No man is an island, entire of itself." He could just as well have been thinking of the history of the Jews, for although the Jews have been a distinct people, they have never been an insular one. Jewish history is a history of encounter, interaction and exchange with other cultures and religious traditions. It is one of the merits of "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews" that it portrays the career of the Jewish people in this light. The series, like the story it relates, transcends parochial interest, for in the rich history of the Jews, much is discovered about the history of Christians, of Muslims, indeed, about the history of Western civilization.

This Interreligious Study Guide focuses on those aspects of the Jewish interaction with others which have enduring meaning for our own time. It may serve as a preparation for viewing a broadcast or as a means of stimulating and shaping a discussion after a program. It is hoped that this Study Guide will be used by groups who convene to view the series for the purpose of promoting mutual understanding.



## I. A People is Born

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**H**OW a people conceives its origins reveals much about its basic values. The ancient Babylonians, for example, located their origins in supernatural events: the victory celebration of a good god after a battle at the beginning of the world. This conception lent divine purpose and meaning to the life of the people, but it had one serious flaw. Since the Babylonians believed that only they were created by the god, they considered themselves to be superior to all others.

The ancient Israelites reacted against this idea, affirming that all humanity was created in the image of one God. All humanity, not just one people is beloved by this God. The Biblical idea that all men and women descend from two divinely created parents confers a fundamental equality and dignity on all persons irrespective of race or creed.

If the Israelites so viewed the origins of all humanity, then how did they make sense of their own birth as a people? Although they held that all humankind was beloved by God and created in His image, they believed that as humanity developed it erred. After the fall of Babel — symbolically representing the social and moral failure of Mesopotamian culture — God calls upon Abraham to migrate into the western wilderness and begin a new civilization. Following the call, Abraham prospers. Tracing their own origins to the story of Abraham's

family and followers, the Israelites believed that their ancestors were addressed by God and called to special service and obligation to Him through a covenantal relationship.

The insights that the Israelites won into their own character and mission were not gained without birth pangs and growing pains. In Egypt, they experienced profound suffering as well as liberation. In passing from slavery to freedom, they developed a consciousness of themselves as a special people who would become a nation destined to serve one God. As a nation, they needed more than ancestral faith and inherited custom, they needed laws and political institutions. Standing at Mt. Sinai, they entered into a mutual relationship of love and loyalty, a

covenant, with God. The Israelites received the Torah and promised to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Like Abraham, who was told that through him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed," they believed that they were called as a nation to explore the ways of righteousness on behalf of all humanity.

1. *Jewish origins are tied to the concept of a covenant with God. Christians also believe they have a covenant with God. How has this belief influenced their attitudes toward one another?*

2. *What did the Jews learn from the experience of the Exodus? How has this shaped them as a people? How has the Exodus influenced Christian thinking?*

3. *What have the Jews learned from the prophets of ancient Israel? What have Christians learned? How can their teachings be applied today?*





## II. The Power of the Word

**D**URING the long period beginning with the return to Israel from Babylonia and extending to the disastrous rebellions against Rome, the Jews experienced the fundamental situation that was to characterize their subsequent history: loss of sovereignty and often, exile. The Jews had to learn how to keep faith with their Biblical covenant while living as a vulnerable minority, uprooted from their own land and dependent upon benevolent rulers for their survival.

In this new situation, the Jews

experienced both opportunity and tragedy: the possibility of creative encounters with other cultures and the nightmare of powerlessness and persecution. Two words for the new situation reflect this duality. The Greek-speaking Jews, representing a flourishing cultural synthesis, called their condition a "diaspora," meaning a "scattering," as one might scatter seeds upon new ground. The Hebrew-speaking Jews followed the Biblical term coined by the prophets. They called their condition "galut" (exile), derived from a root which means "to be exposed." *Diaspora* and *galut* expressed the twin potentialities of the new situation.

The Jews responded to powerlessness by transforming their religion. Threatened with the loss of their land, they explored the

terrain of the Torah with great intensity and turned its study into a "portable homeland." They developed their most characteristic social institution, the synagogue, where the "service of the heart" complemented and eventually replaced the Temple-linked sacrificial rites.

Convinced that God's teaching could always address the challenges of new historical circumstances, they evolved new forms of social organization which enabled their faith to endure in lands beyond the horizons of their ancestors.

1. What did Jews gain from encounters with other cultures, for example with the Greeks? What did they lose? How did the Jews attempt to achieve a balance?

2. The Maccabean revolt was the first war in history waged for religious freedom. What lessons have Jews and Christians drawn from this rebellion?

3. After the rebellions against Rome, the Jews lost all traces of political sovereignty. Judaism developed without being bound to a state — unlike most other world religions. How did this characteristic affect its development? How did Christianity's access to power, by becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire, affect its development?





### III. The Shaping of Traditions

**U**NDER the leadership of the rabbis, the new emphasis on study, prayer and the sanctification of daily life became prominent in Judaism. The importance of the hereditary priesthood and the Temple ritual had declined even before the destruction of the Second Temple. As master teachers of scripture, the rabbis brought the Torah to bear with precision on all aspects of individual and communal life. As social leaders, they democratized Judaism, making leadership dependent upon learning and piety rather than birth. They also deepened Jewish spirituality, lovingly addressing the majestic Biblical King as "our Father" and calling Jews to spiritual renewal. They promoted a quiet but genuine religious revolution.

The revolution opened up a new world of possibilities. Many versions of Jewish faith and practice appeared. At a time of both religious ferment and political unrest, Jesus of Nazareth sounded the basic themes of the rabbinic movement with unusual forcefulness. In a society convulsed by a brutal Roman occupation, he preached God's love for the oppressed, for his people were oppressed. Like other rabbis, he called for each person to confront his or her own sin and turn penitently to God, Who — in the words of the psalmist — is "close to all who call upon Him."

Jesus' new accent was not so much in the content of his teachings as in his claim to authority. Unlike other rabbis who spoke in the names of their teachers, Jesus spoke in his own name and felt free to depart on occasion from traditional Jewish law. His followers gave him the title "Messiah" and believed that he was the awaited king who would liberate his people from Roman oppression and inaugurate a new age. For many Jews, this hope came to an end when Jesus was executed at the hands of the Romans. But some of his Jewish followers believed that he had been resurrected and that the new age, for which all longed, was about to commence.



Eventually the story of Jesus spread among other peoples, who — in their own way — became his followers. Christianity, beginning as a movement among Jews, passed into the Gentile world. In the process, the Jewish context of Jesus' teachings and life was more and more forgotten. Thus, while not often recognized as such, the spiritual convictions of the Jews, their persistent wrestling with the will of God, spread across the Roman world and decisively altered the destiny of the West.



1. *Do the Jewish roots of Christianity help Christians to understand Judaism? Do they help Jews to understand Christianity?*

2. *Both Jewish and Christian teachers were concerned with the connection between faith in God and righteous living. How did each group view the moral life?*

3. *What would an early Christian find familiar if he were to enter a synagogue today? How did the Synagogue influence the development of Christian liturgy?*



## IV. The Crucible of Europe

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THE diaspora held both opportunity and tragedy, and the Jews experienced extremes of both during the Middle Ages. The Jewish encounter with Hellenistic culture, begun in ancient times, was resumed in the Muslim world as Jews contributed to the renewal of classical learning. Giants of philosophy, poetry, grammatical and Biblical studies enriched both their Jewish and Muslim audiences. Eventually, when their Arabic and Hebrew works were translated into Latin, often by other Jews, these scholars helped to promote the scholastic tradition of Christendom. Creative cross-fertilization was the fruit of those Muslim societies which practiced tolerance.

In Christian Europe, legal

restrictions and popular antagonism against Jews limited their creative impact on the general culture. Moreover, beginning with the First Crusade, a pattern of violence and massacre descended on Jewish communities. Pogroms following the Black Death, forced conversions and mass expulsions decimated the European Jewish population. Particularly hideous was the Spanish Inquisition, which referred to the public burning of heretics — including thousands of Jews voluntarily or forcibly converted to Christianity as an *auto da fé*, an act of faith.

Traditions of contempt and violence not only wounded Jewry, they also disfigured the countenance of Christianity. Despite ostracism and persecution however, the Jews did not cease to pursue lives rich in human values and Biblical faith. The great works of law, spirituality and Bible commentary which they produced remain authoritative to the present day.

1. *Did medieval hostility to Jews originate in Christian theology and church policy, or in social and economic relations, or in both spheres?*

2. *How did the Jews of Europe respond to the walls of hostility surrounding them? How did some Christian authorities, such as the pope, seek to check the violence of the populace?*

3. *Why was Islam originally more tolerant of Judaism than was Christianity in the Middle Ages?*



## V. The Search for Deliverance

**T**HROUGHOUT the Middle Ages, the Jews maintained a strong and vibrant communal life. Within ghetto walls, they achieved extraordinarily high rates of literacy and learning. Although barred from the guilds, they pursued crafts such as silver-smithing and calligraphy. In the face of outer adversity, they created an inner world governed by justice and imbued with the Biblical spirit of *tzedakah*, righteousness. Drawing from their religious resources, the Jews fashioned a society which cared for its weaker members and nourished its young. They learned the art of humane survival in a hostile world.

The Renaissance and the Enlightenment illumined horizons beyond the ghetto for some Jews. Jewish exiles from Spain found a welcome in the Netherlands. The Spanish Jews participated vigorously in Holland's

expanding mercantile economy. Giants of learning such as Baruch Spinoza contributed to the new philosophical culture. However, Spinoza's radical religious philosophy was rejected by his coreligionists. The time for a revolution in Jewish religious thought was not yet at hand.

In Germany a century later, Moses Mendelssohn also achieved fame as a philosopher. Unlike Spinoza, however, Mendelssohn harmonized his thought and his social achievement with his Jewish background. His life's work was devoted to sharing his accomplishments with his fellow Jews. Dedicated to their education and

emancipation, he worked to introduce modern learning and to reinvigorate traditional Jewish study.

The intense energy that the Jews had directed toward sustaining their communal life in the ghetto was also focused on participating in the broader society whenever that society permitted it. For Western Jews, the ghetto became a tutor for the outside world.

1. *How did the intense experience of life in the ghetto equip the Jews for survival in the modern world? Can the ghetto experience provide us with any "resources for survival" in our troubled, modern world?*

2. *How did the Protestant Reformation, Humanism and the Enlightenment alter the Jewish situation in Europe? How did they affect Christian self-understanding?*

3. *Hasidism began in Eastern Europe, which was largely unaffected by strivings for political emancipation. What were the themes of this movement? Does the Hasidic way of life have parallels in Christianity?*



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# VI. Roads from the Ghetto

Cinq Centimes

ERNEST VAUGHAN  
L'AURORE  
Littéraire, Artistique, Sociale

ERNEST VAUGHAN  
100 - Rue de Valenciennes - 100

## J'Accuse...!

### LETTRE AU PRÉSIDENT DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE Par ÉMILE ZOLA

**LETTRE  
À M. FELIX FAURE**  
Président de la République

Monsieur le Président,

Je me permets de vous adresser cette lettre, à l'heure où vous allez vous rendre à la présidence de la République, à l'heure où vous allez vous rendre à la présidence de la République, à l'heure où vous allez vous rendre à la présidence de la République...

Je me permets de vous adresser cette lettre, à l'heure où vous allez vous rendre à la présidence de la République, à l'heure où vous allez vous rendre à la présidence de la République, à l'heure où vous allez vous rendre à la présidence de la République...

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THE French Revolution and the conquests of Napoleon spread liberal ideas across Europe, among which were the concepts of national citizenship and individual rights. Suddenly in France, and then gradually in Germany and Austria-Hungary, the Jews became citizens. The slogan of this movement was, "To the Jews as individuals — everything, to the Jews as a group — nothing."

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In exchange for civil rights and legal equality, the Jews were expected to shed their former group identity and dissolve into the general population. The "Jewish people" was to have no future in the new nation states; only the Jewish religion, emptied of ethnic and national elements, was to remain. Some Jews welcomed this proposal but many sensed danger, for the Jews had never been merely a religious denomination, they had always been a religious civilization, comprised of people, language, folkways and faith. During the nineteenth century, Jews struggled to find a balance between the claims of the traditional life they had known for centuries and the new possibilities offered them by European soci-

eties. But whether they transformed, neglected or clung to their heritage, a new form of Jew-hatred confronted them: anti-Semitism. Drawing on spurious social, racial and psychological theories, anti-Semites opposed the Jews' right to live as free and equal Europeans. Thus, Jews who refused to abandon certain aspects of their group identity faced suspicion and antagonism for that refusal, while Jews who were willing to do so found continued hostility and lack of acceptance. In the contradictory world of modernity, the Jews needed not only to preserve their rich past, but to insure their future against a renewal of virulent hostility.

1. *In the nineteenth century, various expressions of Jewish religion and culture such as Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Judaism, Zionism and Yiddish literature attempted to counter the pressures towards complete assimilation and shape a modern Jewish identity. How?*

2. *As the Jews of Western Europe equated the French Revolution and empire with their emancipation, leading rabbis of Poland prayed for Napoleon's defeat. They feared that emancipation would bring with it dissolution of the traditional Jewish world. How have traditional Jewish and Christian groups (such as the Amish) coped with modernity?*

3. *What are the similarities between modern anti-Semitism and the medieval theology of anti-Judaism? What are the differences? How have Jews defended themselves against anti-Semitism?*



## VII. The Golden Land

**J**EWES have embraced the American social experiment with passion. In no other land of the diaspora have Jews been so at home. Successive waves of immigrants quickly perceived that the American values of pluralism, democracy and religious tolerance provided a set of conditions under which Jewish life could flourish. Yet tolerance, a hallmark of the American political culture, is really an inadequate word to describe

the reality of Jewish-Christian relations. Strictly speaking, "tolerance" implies the decision of a majority group to allow the existence of a minority group. Not only does such a notion fail to describe our system of constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion, it also falls short of conveying the concept of pluralism, which encourages groups to maintain their own identities while participating fully in the larger society. This hospitality to group differences, which came to replace the "melting pot" notion that all differences would resolve into an American amalgam, has allowed for the flourishing of a rich variety of religious and cultural identities in the United States. Pluralism has created a framework for Jewish-Christian cooperation and dialogue in America. Set against the grim

background of almost two thousand years of animosity, it is one of the most hopeful products of the American social experiment.

1. *What challenges have Jews faced in common with other immigrant communities in entering the American mainstream?*
2. *How has American life influenced Judaism? Christianity? What common problems do both religions face today? What opportunities are there for Jews and Christians to enter into dialogue with each other in your community?*
3. *In what ways have Jews and Christians mutually enriched one another in America? In what ways have Jews and Christians enriched American life?*





**HERITAGE:**  
CIVILIZATION AND THE JEWS

## VIII. Out of the Ashes

AMERICAN JEWISH



**O**F eleven million innocent victims murdered by the Nazis during the twelve-year nightmare of the Third Reich, six million were Jews. More than a thousand years of Jewish life in Germany came to a sudden end. Entire Jewish cultures from the Mediterranean to the North Sea perished. The Jewries of Western and Eastern Europe were literally reduced to ashes. Although the

Jews had known countless persecutions in their long history, none was as sustained and demonic as the Holocaust. Never before was the entire apparatus of a modern, technological state directed toward the goal of annihilating an entire people. Can the ideas of "humanity" and "civilization" ever recover from this trauma? Germany had long been considered a guardian of both, "the land of poets and thinkers."

The Holocaust raises fundamental questions increasingly asked by persons of faith. How could it have happened that so many who considered themselves Christians did not resist the annihilation of the Jews? Where was the Christian conscience? Why did some Christians permit the destruction of their Jewish neighbors while others risked their lives to save Jews? Where were Christian ethics? Where was humanity? Where was God?

1. *To what extent did centuries of Christian anti-Semitism pave the way to the Holocaust?*

2. *Is it possible for Jews or Christians to continue to speak of God's love after the Holocaust? Why were some Christians among the victims and rescuers, and others among the persecutors?*

3. *What are the lessons of the Holocaust for Jews? For Christians? For all Americans? What lessons can be learned from the deeds of "righteous Gentiles?"*



## IX. Into the Future

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EVER since the beginning of the diaspora, Jews have felt strong ties to the Land of Israel and prayed to return to it. While there has always been a Jewish presence in the land, and there were periodic attempts through the ages to return to it, the idea of a mass return was tied to the messianic future and taken out of the realm of human initiative. Jews prayed daily for the coming of that era and the restoration of Zion as their land and state. In the nineteenth century, European Jews began to reconceive this millennial longing. Faced with enormous pressure on the one side to abandon their culture and peoplehood, and mounting anti-Semitism on the other, some Jews decided that they must take history into their own hands. Rather than wait for the Messiah to facilitate their return, they would initiate their own liberation movement, Zionism. The Zionist

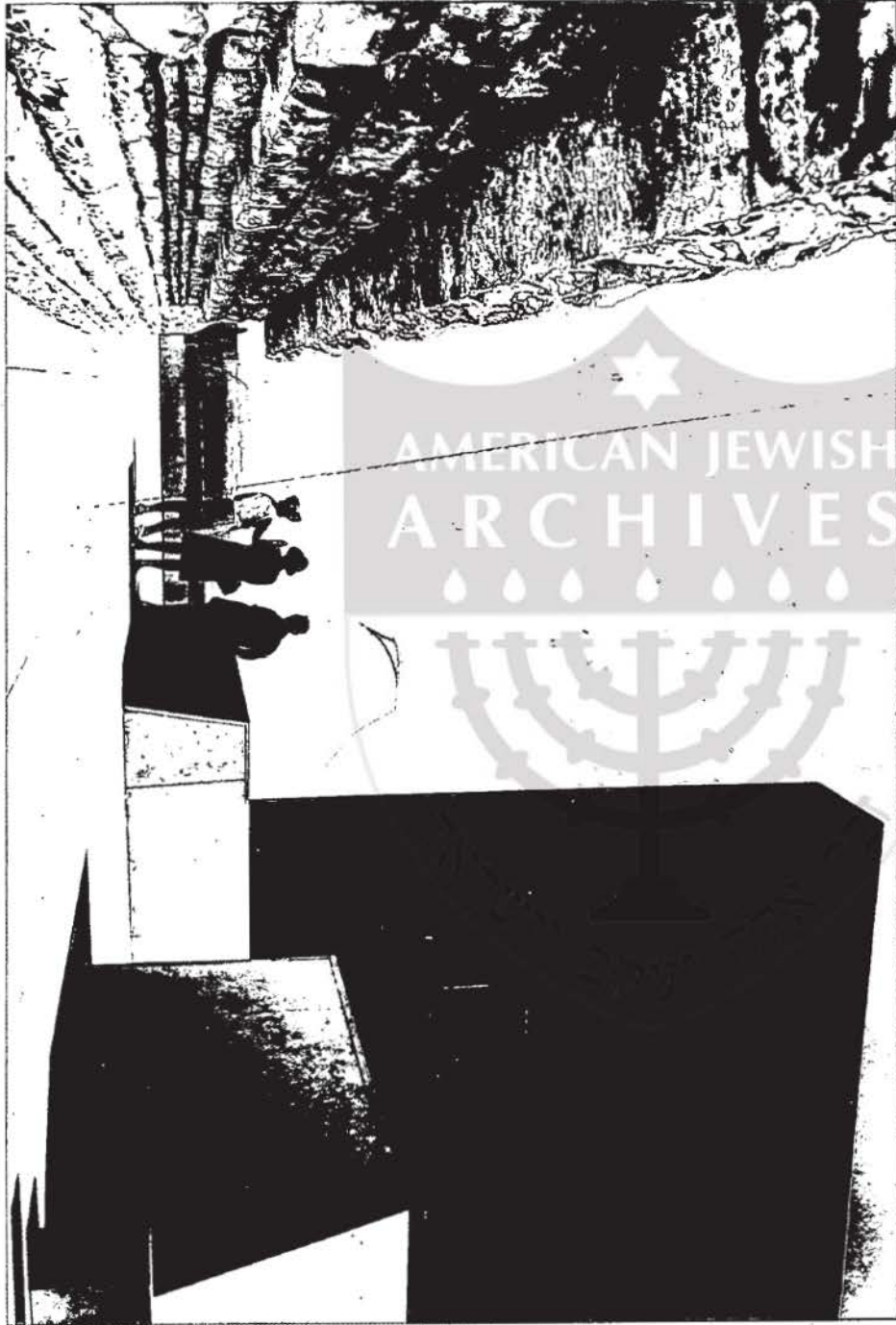
idea was a strategy for Jewish survival and renaissance in the modern world, rooted in the soil of traditional Jewish hopes and prayers. The founding of the State of Israel in 1948 gave political reality to the vision.

The State of Israel provides enormous opportunities and challenges for Jews. Jews now have a “living laboratory” in which to explore the possibilities of contemporary Jewish life and to build a complete Jewish civilization. The Jews of Israel face enormous political, moral and religious

questions with an urgency compounded by the external threat to their survival. Nonetheless, in only a few decades they have developed a vibrant and versatile culture organically rooted in their ancestral land.

Christians face challenges and opportunities with respect to Israel as well. For centuries, the Church taught that the Jews lived in exile because they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. What does the reestablishment of a Jewish commonwealth now mean? Israel has changed both Jewish self-understanding and the traditional stereotypes others have had of Jews.

1. *In what ways has the existence of Israel changed the ways in which Jews think about themselves? In which Christians think of Jews?*
2. *What concrete steps can American Jews and Christians take to work for peace in the Middle East?*
3. *How would you respond to the charge made by Israel's enemies that Zionism is racism?*





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