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Rapoport, Nessa. Report on CIJE Publications and
Disseminations, June 1997.

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To: Steering Committee Members
From: Nessa Rapoport
Date: June 9, 1997
Re: Report on CIJE Publications and Dissemination

The Network for Research in Jewish Education

CIJE gave three presentations at the conference of the Research Network, held in Boston on June 1 and 2.

"Leaders and Leadership in Jewish Schools: Different Views of Persistent Realities": Ellen Goldring, Barry Holtz, Josh Elkin, Susan Shevitz

"Gender Differences Among Teachers in Jewish Schools: A Study of Three Communities": Bill Robinson, Adam Gamoran, Ellen Goldring

"Leading Indicators of Jewish Education: A Plan for Monitoring Change": Adam Gamoran, Ellen Goldring, Bill Robinson

CIJE Education Seminar

On June 17, Dr. Steven Bayme, Director of the Jewish Communal Affairs Department at The American Jewish Committee, will discuss an approach to teaching Jewish history to adults based on his recently published book, ***Understanding Jewish History: Texts and Commentaries***.

For your interest, we have included the book's introduction and first chapter, "**Creation, Covenant, Redemption,**" which will form the basis of the discussion.

Dr. Bayme will explore such questions as: Why does the study of Jewish history matter? What is the relationship of the study of Jewish history to our lives as Americans? How can his approach to teaching adults be implemented?

Attendees of the seminar include a wide range of senior educators and policy makers from the New York area. Dr. Bayme's presentation concludes the second year of the seminar. (A complete list of presenters and papers can be found in the *CIJE Current Activities*.)

CIJE Current Activities: Spring 1997

This document is updated each spring and fall. Its primary audience is the academic, research and policy community in Jewish education. It is also distributed as orientation to the growing network of people entering our work, such as professors of education, consultants, and new attendees of our pilot programs. Enclosed is the most recent edition.

Best Practices

We have attached the press coverage in the *Jewish Bulletin of Northern California* on Barry Holtz's presentation, "The Success Stories of Jewish Education," which focused on CIJE's Best Practices work.

The Jewish Funders Network Conference (Boca Raton, March 1997)

Enclosed is a copy of the keynote address I delivered at the opening plenary of the conference: "**The Case for Jewish Education: 10 Principles for Making a Difference.**" The speech will also be distributed by the JFN to all of its members.

Looking Ahead

In the fall, CIJE will publish *The Teachers Report*, which provides a comprehensive picture of teachers in Jewish schools based on the research of *The CIJE Study of Educators*. The report offers information on work settings and experience, salary and benefits, and perceptions of career opportunities, in addition to details about teachers' background and training beyond those documented in *The CIJE Policy Brief on the Background and Training of Teachers in Jewish Schools*. It also compares results from the CIJE Study to earlier studies carried out in Boston, Los Angeles, and Miami.

CIJE continues to receive requests for the results of the complete study; we look forward to disseminating the report.

"The Place of Vision in Jewish Educational Reform," by Dan Pekarsky, is about to be published in *The Journal of Jewish Education*. The paper was first presented at the 1996 conference of the Network for Research in Jewish Education.

In addition, as previously noted, two papers about our work will be published in journals of general education this fall:

"Educational Leaders as Teacher Educators: The Teacher Educator Institute--A Case from Jewish Education," by Barry Holtz, Gail Zaiman Dorph and Ellen B. Goldring (*Peabody Journal of Education*)

"Background and Training of Teachers in Jewish Schools: Current Status and Levers for Change," by Adam Gamoran, Ellen Goldring, Bill Robinson, Roberta Louis Goodman and Julie Tammivaara (*Journal of Religious Education*)

Finally, we are preparing for the fall a publication about CIJE that can be given out to communal and professional leaders to explain who we are and what we do. Illustrated with photographs and quotes, it will highlight CIJE's goals and key projects.

Understanding Jewish History

TEXTS AND COMMENTARIES

by

Steven Bayme



KTAV Publishing House, Inc.

in association with

The American Jewish Committee

Contents

Acknowledgments			
Introduction			
I	Creation, Covenant, Redemption	ix	
II	Monarchy and Political Centralization	xiii	
III	Prophecy and Biblical Religion	1	
IV	Destruction and Exile	12	
V	Athens and Jerusalem	24	
VI	Jewish Sectarianism	35	
VII	Rome and Jerusalem	50	
VIII	Destruction and Renewal	63	
IX	Origins of Christianity	74	
X	The Church and the Jews	89	
XI	Jewry and Islam	103	
XII	Jewish Messianism and Sectarianism	115	
XIII	Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Mysticism	126	
XIV	The Crusades and the Jews	140	
XV	Islamic Jewish Culture	152	
XVI	Jews and Christian Spain	164	
XVII	Renaissance and Reformation	176	
XVIII	The Marrano Phenomenon	188	
XIX	East European Jewry	198	
XX	Sabbetianism and its Aftermath	212	
XXI	Hasidism	223	
		245	
XXII	Decline of the Medieval Kehilla		258
XXIII	Jewish Emancipation in France		269
XXIV	Reform Judaism		279
XXV	Neo-Orthodoxy		295
XXVI	Modern Anti-Semitism		307
XXVII	Reaction in Eastern Europe		321
XXVIII	Modern Zionism		332
XXIX	Jewish Settlement in America		346
XXX	Conservative Judaism and Reconstructionism		359
XXXI	Jewry and the Soviet Union		370
XXXII	The Holocaust		383
XXXIII	Israel and World Jewry		403
XXXIV	Where Are We?		422
	Index		431



Introduction

This book constitutes an invitation to a unique adventure—a *tour d' horizon* of the Jewish experience from ancient through modern times. Organized in 34 units, the volume is effectively a guide to all facets of Jewish historical experience—cultural, religious, political, and social. If there is a message contained here concerning Jewish identity, it is that to be a Jew today means ongoing contact and dialogue with Jewish tradition.

The volume is aimed at the general reader desiring a core course covering the main contours of Jewish history. Based upon my two decades of teaching college students and adult education, this book assumes that most American Jews have attained a relatively high level of secular education but only rarely have applied the same level of rigor and expertise to the study of the Jewish experience. To address this gap, this book has been conceived of as a thinking person's teaching volume.

Its particular objectives include an understanding of the primary historical experiences of the Jews, the distinctive ideas which Jews and Judaism have advocated, and some exposure to the classical texts of the Judaic heritage. It is unrealistic, of course, to attempt to cover everything that has ever happened in Jewish history. Rather, this book's teaching goals address broad currents, seeing where Judaism has differed, and attaining a basic literacy in reading classical Jewish literature. Each unit will be accompanied by textual readings, questions for discussion, and additional bibliography.

Given the limitations of scope, this volume is shaped by several assumptions about Jewish experience: continuity rather than dis-

continuity, salience rather than irrelevance, and the value of honest and informed confrontation with Jewish sources.

Continuity: There are no radical breaks in the course of Jewish history. Change, although significant, occurs only over prolonged periods. Jewish emancipation did not take place overnight, nor did the exile begin with the destruction of the Second Temple. Although events such as these were doubtless significant, they developed in the context of long pre-existing conditions. Therefore, in speaking of continuity in history, the evolutionary nature of change suggests continued common ground with past generations. The contemporary Jewish condition comprises an outgrowth of the sum of Jewish experience. Understanding contemporary Jewish life, therefore, presupposes understanding how the Jews have evolved as a people.

Salience: The relevance of the past does *not* mean there are particular lessons to be applied to contemporary experience. All too often, individuals seeking to "learn" from history develop facile instructions for state leaders based upon historical experience. Human nature and development, however, are far more diverse and complicated. Conditions are rarely equivalent, and human behaviors cannot so easily be predicted.

Rarely, therefore, can history provide unequivocal instruction in particular decision-making. The value in studying history, and its continued salience, lie elsewhere. Contemporary issues and problems do not exist in a vacuum. The origins, development, and contemporary context are all rooted in the past. To approach issues from a strictly present-day perspective will blur complexities and limit understanding. The Middle East conflict is a good case in point.

It did not begin with the Intifada nor, for that matter, with the 1967 Six-Day War. The root causes of the conflict lie in Arab rejection of Jewish nationalism as an alien and intrusive force within the region. From this historical perspective, statecraft requires recognition that peace will come, not by signing a treaty, but only through fundamental changes in the perceptions of Zionism in Arab consciousness, underscored by extensive efforts at public education to signal that the Jewish State is now, indeed, welcome in the Middle East.

Jews are heirs to a unique and rich tradition. Dialogue with the past enables, not current decision-making, but rather understand-

ing the context of contemporary life. Study of Jewish tradition, in this view, is not the study of an obsolete body of teachings, but rather an attempt to understand Jewish civilization through the prism of teachings that have guided, subject to development, Jewish life for millennia.

Jewish sources: There are three ways to read Jewish texts: Initially, students read primarily for information—to understand what is inside the text. On a secondary level, individuals may read texts as documents from the time in which they were written—voices from the past providing a record of the society, its values, and the culture of the times. This is known as the historical reading of texts. It requires some distancing between the reader and the text, asking questions of what the text meant in its own time period. On a third level, we ask what this text says to me personally and existentially. All too often, unfortunately, readers become stuck on the first level of reading and fail to ask the necessary questions concerning what a document meant in its own time, much less what it means today.

This course will utilize all three levels of reading. Jewish sources, to come alive for the reader, must speak on multiple levels. It is not enough to know Bible stories in terms of what happened. Far more significant is to utilize sources to provide a snapshot of the culture in which they were written and, subsequently, to be able to ask whether these sources can address the existential dilemmas of being Jewish in the twentieth century. Although these three levels apply to virtually any text, the course will begin by utilizing a number of biblical texts and then progress through rabbinic, medieval, and ultimately modern source materials.

Goals: Given these three assumptions of continuity, salience, and value in reading texts, what can a course in Jewish history accomplish? The course will operate on diverse levels: On one level, the aim is to nurture understanding of how the Jews evolved as a people. Accumulating data and bits of information is insufficient. Rather, the questions must concern what historical events mean in shaping the evolution of the Jews as a people.

On yet another level, the goal is to ensure confrontation with Jewish texts and enhance Judaic literacy. Each unit is therefore followed by guided readings taken exclusively from primary source materials. The student is encouraged to study the text in question

after reviewing the historical background and context contained in the study unit. In this way, the text acts not only as a repository of information, but as a voice calling to us from the historical past.

Beyond information-gathering and textual literacy, the distinctiveness of this volume lies in its emphasis upon Jewish ideas and their continued salience to the modern Jew. On this level, readers will be asked not only to understand which ideas were distinctive Judaically and how they developed, but to continue the process of dialogue and questioning of these ideas to determine whether, how, and should these ideas affect contemporary Jewish living.

This work would not have been possible without the ongoing cooperation, encouragement, and assistance of numerous individuals. At the American Jewish Committee, David Harris, AJC Executive Director, has stimulated the broad expansion of Judaic literacy initiatives and seminars. I am grateful both to him and to Shula Bahat, AJC Associate Director, for encouraging this project and for granting me a sabbatical to complete it. Moreover, I have been privileged over many years to work with AJC's lay leadership. In many ways, this book is an outgrowth of the forums we have run at AJC chapter and national events. Robert S. Rifkind, AJC National President, Alfred Moses, his immediate predecessor, and Jack Lapin, Chair of the Committee's National Council, have served as a constant inspiration for my labors through their dedication to Jewish continuity and the future of the Jewish people.

The idea for the volume itself originated, as have so many good ideas, from a Shabbat luncheon with my dear friends Jack and Mierle Ukeles and Ezra and Batya Levin. Their encouragement helped transform a dim vision into reality.

Over the years I have been privileged to study with some of the outstanding teachers in contemporary Jewish life. The late Yehuda Rosenman initially invited me to work at the American Jewish Committee and served as my direct supervisor. Under Yehuda's close supervision, we developed the idea for an adult curriculum in Jewish history. Bert Gold, then AJC's executive director, appointed me to succeed Yehuda and gave me the opportunity to help transmit Yehuda's love for Jewish learning. At Yeshiva University, I was privileged to study with Dr. Irving Greenberg, currently President of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (CLAL). He first articulated for me the excitement in relating Jewish tradition to modern values and contexts. He has

since served as mentor and role model for me in more ways than I can count. Professor David Berger, then at Yeshiva University, first introduced me to the value for all Jews in a core survey course in Jewish history. Subsequently, I was privileged to study at Columbia University with Profs. Zvi Ankori, Lloyd Gartner, Arthur Hertzberg, Paula Hyman, and Ismar Schorsch. Dr. Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University, first exposed me to the beauties of Jewish philosophy. He subsequently invited me to develop and teach courses in Jewish history at Yeshiva on both undergraduate and graduate levels. Professors David Berger and Jonathan Sarna read drafts of numerous chapters and provided many useful suggestions and corrections. The influence of these people, both individually and collectively, is reflected on virtually every one of the following pages. They are, of course, in no way responsible for my errors.

Partial funding for this volume was made possible through the American Jewish Committee's Susan and Jack Lapin Fund for Jewish Continuity and by a fellowship from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. I thank Dr. Jerry Hochbaum of the Memorial Foundation for his assistance and constant friendship.

It has been my pleasure to work with Bernard Scharfstein of KTAV Publishing House on this and other projects. Roselyn Bell expertly edited the final manuscript and offered many helpful suggestions for improving it.

Last and by no means least, the volume would not have been possible without the constant love and support of my family. My three children, Ilana, Eytan, and Yehuda, participated in regular Friday evening lectures on Jewish history (over raspberries), while my wife Edith has been a guiding and inspirational presence since graduate school. It is to them that I lovingly dedicate this volume.

Steven Bayme
January, 1997

Unit I

Creation, Covenant, Redemption



The Hebrew Bible is divided into three components: the Pentateuch, or the Five Books of Moses, detail narratives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the formation of Israel as a nation via exodus from slavery, and its wanderings in the desert for 40 years before entering the Promised Land of Canaan. However, the essential meaning of the word Torah is instruction. In that context, the Pentateuch is by no means a history book, although it contains much historical information. Its primary purpose is to instruct the Jews in the distinctive legal codes of the Jews governing personal, familial, and societal behaviors. The Prophetic Writings contain both historical accounts of the settlement of the Jews in Canaan (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) as well as the moral exhortations of the literary prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Minor Prophets). The Hagiographa, or Holy Writings, contain religious, historical, and wisdom literature, often in the form of parables or stories, which offer good advice on how to lead one's day-to-day life. A fourth body of writings, the Apocrypha, consists of uncanceled books that relate primarily to Jewish life in Second Commonwealth times. These writings were preserved in the Christian Bible as intertestamental literature, meaning literature composed between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament.

Judaism begins distinctively as a religion of law. What sets the Jews apart as a people are the distinctive laws governing Jewish practice. In some respects, these laws are moral in nature, govern-

ing human relations. In other respects, the laws are ritualistic in nature, binding the Jews together as a people through their distinctive practices. Genesis, in particular the patriarchal narratives, communicates the essential origins of Judaism as a religion. Like other religions, Judaism begins with the question of how we came here. How did this world come into existence?

Classical religions originate with mythological tales of stories of the gods. The essence of ancient paganism lay in the reality that forces of nature governed day-to-day human activities. Ancient men and women looked around themselves and saw their lives regulated by many forces over which they had no control—thunder, lightning, rain, and sunshine. It was natural to assume that each of these forces represented a godly presence. In that sense paganism begins in the context of pluralism—namely, that there are many forces at work in the universe and none can claim exclusive power or truth. Ancient tales of creation, such as the Sumerian or Enuma Elish epic, posit creation as a result of struggle for supremacy among the deities.

Judaism rejected this paganism. The origins of Judaism as a religion lie in a struggle with paganism, in which Judaism posits a moral order and Divine Creator. Precisely because creation arose not by chance or struggle of the gods, but rather because of a Divine mind imposing order on the universe, Judaism articulated the principle of unity rather than pluralism and moral order rather than chaos. Genesis, therefore, begins with the statement “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”—meaning that creation occurred in time and through a Divine plan and purpose. Similarly, the second verse of Genesis states that the earth was chaotic; the process of creation imposed order amidst the chaos. Lastly, just as creation imposes a natural order on reality, the creation of human beings imposes a moral order in which the purpose of human existence is to build society and to shape it toward purposeful and moral ends. Man and woman, standing at the apex of creation, in effect become elevated into Divine partners. Just as God created nature, the message of Genesis to human beings is to build society for constructive and moral purposes.

The creation story gives humanity a past and an origin. The story of covenant suggests an ongoing presence. Several covenants dot the biblical narratives. The initial covenant is by no means designated as such. Rather it is simply assumed that humanity will

carry on the work of creation. The record of humanity, however, is by no means that benign. Genesis records the story of the great flood as a Divine reaction to human corruption, i.e. to humanity's failure to fulfill the ongoing work of creation. The flood narrative is both similar and dissimilar to the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh. Most distinctively, Genesis emphasizes moral responsibility and culminates in the first formal covenant between God and humanity symbolized by the rainbow. This covenant with Noah we might refer to today as a covenant of natural law. God promises that nature will never overwhelm humanity again as happened in the flood. Conversely, Noah assumes the responsibility of fulfilling the moral code to respect human life. The symbolism of the rainbow is significant—a statement of beauty that the forces of nature, while powerful, are ultimately preservative of humanity. Only humanity has the capacity to effect its own self-destruction. Nature, as terrible as its actions may be, ultimately culminates in the rainbow—a symbol of peace and safety. Human actions, by contrast, contain no built-in guarantee and are, in fact, unpredictable.

This initial covenant is a universal one. God promises all of humanity that never again will nature overwhelm society. The responsibilities of natural law are incumbent upon all men and women. This universal covenant, however, is transcended by yet a third covenant between God and Abraham, applying strictly to the Jews. This covenant is symbolized by circumcision, suggesting that sexual prowess must be restrained by human responsibilities and obligations. More particularly, precisely because the Canaanites had been guilty of sexual abominations, they will forfeit the land of Canaan. The Jewish promise of a land of their own is directly conditioned upon whether the Jews will fulfill the obligations of covenant. To the extent that the Jews will adhere to the moral and legal imperatives of Torah, their presence in the land of Israel is secured. But there are no guarantees. If the covenant of Torah is not fulfilled, Jewish presence and security are jeopardized. To be sure, although the promise of covenant is eternal, implementation will require human activity.

This covenant with Abraham, binding upon all future generations of Jews, is ultimately translated as a concept of the chosen people—perhaps the most difficult concept to grasp in the entire corpus of Jewish literature. To be sure, the rabbis were troubled by the notion of why God would choose one people to the exclusion

of all others. Their answer was that only the Jews accepted voluntarily the moral code of Torah. Similarly, the covenant with the Jews was by no means a racial cover ant. It was available also to all born outside the covenant but who chose to join it.

In historical terms, moreover, the concept of the chosen people is indeed understandable. Virtually every nation has assigned itself a sense of distinctive mission and national purpose. Certainly the American doctrine of nationhood articulates American distinctiveness and even American exceptionalism. John F. Kennedy's inaugural address in 1961 proclaiming the New Frontier clearly articulated that American distinctiveness. The phrase, "The sun never sets on the British empire" similarly assigns a distinctive status to England. The Jewish concept of chosenness is by no means unique. Every nation wishes to see itself as pursuing a distinctive purpose and national dream.

Similarly, the idea of chosenness does speak to us on theological levels. It does not suggest that other peoples are less favored by God. Rather, it suggests that being a Jew is a heavy burden. It imposes specific responsibilities and obligations upon individual Jews and upon the Jews as a collective people. Elie Wiesel, for one, has gone so far as to argue that the price of the covenant with the Jews has simply been too heavy. Because the Jews were a chosen people, they were singled out for the most unique and destructive genocide known to human history. Others argue that the idea of chosenness articulates Jewish responsibility to the world at large. This was the famous "mission theory," first articulated by the prophet Isaiah and later emphasized heavily in Reform Judaism, as well as in German neo-Orthodoxy. Zionist theoreticians, particularly Ahad Ha'am and Martin Buber, have underscored the moral responsibility of the Jewish State to be a light unto the gentiles.

Common to these ideas of chosenness is the Jewish concept of holiness. The terms of the covenant dictate the Jews become a holy people, whose content forms Jewish distinctiveness. Holiness means separateness—the Jews are set apart from the nations of the world by their adherence to the Divine covenant. The Jews as a people must communicate distinctive content and national purpose in accord with the terms of covenant and chosen peoplehood. It is this sense of holiness and separateness that, in some respects, is most endangered today, when the boundary line between Jew and gentile has become so fluid in contemporary America.

Yet the idea of covenant remains salient. For minorities to survive in a democratic majority culture, they require distinctiveness, separateness and borders. The minority can and should open itself up to those who wish to join it—but not at the surrender of distinctive purpose and national content. For these reasons, Jews are enjoined not to intermarry with the surrounding gentile population. To be a Jew means to assert the covenant, to share it with others who wish to enter, but, at the same time, to recognize that it cannot mean all things to all people. The language of inclusiveness, so politically popular in our own day, must recognize that Jewish continuity presupposes some level of corporate distinctiveness that will be exclusionary to those who do not enter. Although that language of exclusivity may often seem harsh or insensitive, the very idea of a distinctive covenant with the Jews presupposes that it is not a covenant with all of humanity. The covenant with humanity at large remains, as symbolized by the rainbow, but the distinctive covenant with the Jews applies only to those who enter the *brit* of Abraham.

One other consequence of this covenant applies to monotheistic religions as a whole. Monotheistic faiths, particularly the Western ones, have been known for their religious intolerance rather than tolerance. In fact, it was the Jews who introduced the abominable concept of forced conversion to Western history in the time of the Maccabees. Needless to add, the Catholic Inquisition, the Moslem *jihād*, and the Protestant wars of religion all contained features of religious intolerance.

The concept of covenant to some extent explains why religious intolerance has been a feature of monotheistic faiths. The claim of monotheism is its possession of truth. By definition, that excludes those who do not share those truths. Taken to excess, this concept can and has been translated into violence against the infidel or those who do not share the truths of that monotheistic faith. Paganism, by contrast, precisely because of its pluralism, suggests that you can have your deity while we have ours. Deities are different, but by no means superior or inferior. In fact, there are even echoes of this pluralism within biblical references to ancient pagan cults. For example, in the Book of Judges, the judge Jephthah, on a diplomatic mission to the Ammonites, suggests to them that whatever their god Chemosh has given to them is theirs and whatever the God of the Jews has given to the Jews belongs to the Jews as a

people. Although this may be dismissed as diplomatic parlance, the statement reflects the basic values of pagan pluralism—namely, a plurality of deities in which no deity can claim exclusive truths. Consequently, while pagan religions have often featured many unsavory practices, including witchcraft and human sacrifice, they have been relatively free of the religious intolerance that has characterized monotheistic faiths. Judaism, offended by contemporary pagan sexual and sacrificial practices, mounted a permanent protest against the essence of paganism. In effect, the message of the Jewish covenant was to fly in the face of reality—to assert the principles of ethics and monotheism in a world in which the reality of pluralism held sway.

Moreover, the idea of the covenant undergoes further development in later Jewish history. For Abraham, the covenant is primarily theological and territorial—belief in God rewarded by possession of land. The Mosaic code extends the covenant to a broad array of legal practices, the corpus of which defines the Jews as a moral people. At yet a later stage, David centralizes the covenant in the particular locality of Jerusalem, suggesting that while its terms apply to Jews everywhere, the sanctity of Jerusalem symbolizes a central address that will claim the passions, energies, and attention of Jews throughout the ages. Some of the prophets went a step further in suggesting that the covenant will remain binding until the end of days, at which time it will be replaced by a new covenant. This statement, originating in Jeremiah, became the basis for the Christian reading of the covenant that the New Testament supersedes the Old Testament, that the covenant of law applicable to the Jews gives way to a covenant of grace applicable to all humanity. Paul was the first to articulate this doctrine of supersessionism, that the covenant of law granted to the Jews was simply inadequate to work out human salvation. Paul stated that “the just shall live by faith alone,” meaning that God became man to bestow the gift of faith in Him and make it available to all of humanity. For much of later Christian thought, Judaism was an obsolete faith—a covenant which had gone unfulfilled because human beings were incapable of working out their own salvation. Jews, of course, understood Jeremiah’s “new covenant” as essentially a reaffirmation of the traditional covenant.

In more recent years, Jewish theologians have been perplexed by the reality of the Holocaust and have asked how the covenant

could remain binding if the Jews had fallen victim to the worst genocide in history. Elie Wiesel, Irving Greenberg, and David Hartman, in particular, have emphasized human responsibility for the covenant in the aftermath of Auschwitz. Wiesel has articulated this theme most brilliantly through his novels, which portray an exchange of roles between God and man. As history has progressed, human beings have increasingly had to take the responsibility for their destiny and for the fulfillment of the covenant. The Holocaust, in that context, suggests the reality of human power to affect history toward ends that are clearly demonic. The Jews cannot rely upon a Divine promise. They can rely only upon their own power, tempered, to be sure, by covenantal concepts of justice. Irving Greenberg has, therefore, described Auschwitz as shattering the traditional covenant and replacing it with a voluntary covenant in which Jews assume the burdens of their destiny and history.

Although the terms of the covenant may have been altered by the reality of the Holocaust, most Jewish thinkers would agree that its ultimate promise remains that of Redemption. In that sense, if creation suggests a past from which we stem, and covenant suggests a present reality in which we live, redemption suggests the promise of a future in which the world will be better. This idea of redemption stands at the very root of the Jewish optimistic reading of history. Unlike Paul, the Jew is never overwhelmed by the reality of contemporary history. The idea of redemption offers a promise that no matter how dark individual moments in history may be, its overall direction is progressive. Although Jewish thinkers always attempted to marginalize messianic drives because they could be so destructive of contemporary reality, they did not marginalize the messianic idea or the dream of a future redemption. In their day-to-day lives, Jews are exhorted to live by the covenant in the present reality and to reject messianic activity as destructive. Yet at the same time, Jews pray every day for an ultimate arrival of the Messiah, who will fulfill their dreams of a national restoration and of universal peace among the nations.

These central ideas of creation, covenant, and redemption form the building blocks of Judaic distinctiveness. The books of the Jews transmit their historical memories—of being born as a nation in bondage, of being liberated, and of being granted their Promised Land. These historical narratives are not valued as history *per se*. The Bible makes no claim to offer a straight historical sequence.

Rather, it provides us with a wealth of information to articulate the distinctive Jewish ideas of creation, covenant, and redemption. The Jewish "story" reveals how these ideas not only preserved the Jews as a people, but provided them with the essential content of what being a Jew meant. In subsequent units of this study course, we will look at the particular historical experiences of the Jews and ask how these seminal ideas of Judaism developed under the impetus of concrete historical circumstances.



Readings: Genesis I: 1–5, 24–31; IX: 1–17; XV: 7–18

The Book of Genesis serves as a "pre-history" for the Jewish people. The patriarchal narratives of Genesis trace the family dynamics within the clans of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Genesis, in effect, implies that before the Jews could become a people, they had to learn how to build family by resolving conflicts. The selections from Genesis detail the nature of covenant. Note in particular the differences between the universal or Noahide covenant, symbolized by the rainbow, and the Abrahamic covenant, uniquely with the Jewish people, symbolized by circumcision.

Chapter One

¹When God began to create heaven and earth—²the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—³ God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day . . .

²⁴God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. ²⁶And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." ²⁷And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created

him; male and female He created them. ²⁸God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."

²⁹God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so. ³¹And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Chapter Nine

¹God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. ²The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky—everything with which the earth is astir—and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. ³Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. ⁴You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it. ⁵But for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of man, too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man!

⁶Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; For in His image did God make man.

⁷Be fertile, then, and increase; abound on the earth and increase on it."

⁸And God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹"I now establish My covenant with you and your offspring to come, ¹⁰and with every living thing that is with you—birds, cattle, and every wild beast as well—all that have come out of the ark, every living thing on earth. ¹¹I will maintain My covenant with you: never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

¹²God further said, "This is the sign that I set for the covenant between Me and you, and every living creature with you, for

all ages to come. ¹³I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living creature among all flesh, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures, all flesh that is on earth. ¹⁷That," God said to Noah, "shall be the sign of the covenant that I have established between Me and all flesh that is on earth."

Chapter Fifteen

⁷Then He said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to assign this land to you as a possession." ⁸And he said, "O Lord God, how shall I know that I am to possess it?" ⁹He answered, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle-dove, and a young bird." ¹⁰He brought Him all these and cut them in two, placing each half opposite the other; but he did not cut up the bird. ¹¹Birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. ¹²As the sun was about to set, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a great dark dread descended upon him. ¹³And He said to Abram, "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years; ¹⁴but I will execute judgment on the nation they shall serve, and in the end they shall go free with great wealth. ¹⁵As for you,

You shall go to your fathers in peace;
You shall be buried at a ripe old age.

¹⁶And they shall return here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

¹⁷When the sun set and it was very dark, there appeared a smoking oven, and a flaming torch which passed between those pieces. ¹⁸On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I assign this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates: ¹⁹the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰the Hittites, the Per-

izzites, the Rephaim, ²¹the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

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