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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
JEWISH RACIAL IDENTITY

ESTELLE GOTTMAN MILLS

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION

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REFEREE: DR. MICHAEL A. MEYER

DEDICATION

Ani l'dodi v'dodi li-

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.

To Steve- who was always there for me; encouraging,
helping, proofreading, and most of all telling me I could
do it.

DIGEST

The subject of a Jewish race has been largely avoided since the Nazis' maniacal employment of racial theory to advocate the annihilation of the supposedly degenerate Jewish race. Yet, at one time this idea did enjoy widespread acceptance by segments of the Jewish community. This thesis addresses the development of a Jewish racial identity. It describes the environment from which the idea emerged, how it was employed by various figures in the Jewish community, and why the idea is a rarity among contemporary Jews.

The idea of biological distinctions was not present in biblical or rabbinic times. Jews were a holy nation, and then a religion. Jewish identity remained until the modern era a religious distinction. But with the advance of emancipation, religion no longer encompassed all Jews. Thus some Jews sought to redefine the Jewish people in a manner that would be inclusive of all their brethren. Anthropology and science had divulged the idea of distinct races among humankind. And although some non-Jews, notably Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, spoke of an inferior Jewish race, Jewish theologians such as Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig embraced the idea as a

positive solution to the crisis of Jewish identity in the modern era.

The idea of a Jewish race emerged in Germany during the nineteenth century, with its emphasis upon nationalist consciousness and Volkist ideology. The notion of a Jewish race was thus espoused by some segments of the Zionist community to legitimize their claims for a Jewish nation. Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky was the best known Zionist to speak of a Jewish race, and although he was originally from Eastern Europe, his racial ideas can be traced to the popular ideology of the West.

Following the Holocaust, the idea of a Jewish race was equated with racism, with its notions of racial superiority and inferiority. Although Jabotinsky, continued to speak of a Jewish race even after the Nazis acquisition of power, he was atypical. Martin Buber modified his prior biologically based Jewish identity. And Rabbi Meir Kahane, although popularly believed to espouse a Jewish racial identity, consistently defined the Jews as a religion, and not a race.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Dedication.....	2
Digest.....	3
Introduction.....	6
A. Purpose	
B. Terms	
C. Race in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature	
Chapter One: Racial Thinking in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.....	29
A. The Emergence and Development of Scientific Racial Theory	
B. The Influence of Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain	
C. The Impact of <u>Volkist</u> Thinking	
D. The Effect of Racial Theory upon Jewish Identity	
Chapter Two: Racial Thinking within Jewish Theology: The Examples of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig.....	84
A. Martin Buber's Theory of Jewish Blood	
B. Franz Rosenzweig's Community of Blood	
Chapter Three: Racial Ideology within Zionism: <u>Volkist</u> Thought in Western Europe and the Racial Nationalism of Jabotinsky in the East...	120
A. German Zionism and the Question of a Jewish Race	
B. Racial Nationalism's Roots in Eastern Europe: The Zionism of Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky and the Revisionists	
Chapter Four: Jewish Racial Identity in the Post- Holocaust World: The Example of Meir Kahane...	162
Conclusion.....	191
Bibliography.....	196

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This thesis traces the development of the idea of a Jewish race, and endeavors to understand the origin of Jewish racial identity as espoused by certain modern Jewish figures. It begins with an examination of the references to Judaism as a race in biblical and rabbinic sources to determine whether they contributed to later concepts of a Jewish race. Additionally, it investigates nineteenth and twentieth century racial theories and how they impacted upon the ideologies of later Jewish thinkers and on the Jewish self-view in general. In particular, I analyze and compare the thought of Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, and Meir Kahane. My aim is to explore historically Jewish attitudes toward the notion of a Jewish race, and to understand the process which ultimately led to contemporary concepts of Jewish racial identity.

* The belief in a Jewish race represents a rarity among contemporary Jews. The racial definition of Judaism has been disreputable since the Holocaust and the United Nations' resolution equating Zionism with racism. Few Jews

today talk of the Jews as a race because of the Nazis' maniacal employment of eighteenth-century anthropological theories and nineteenth-century racial science to allegedly prove that there is a superior Aryan race and an inferior Semitic or Jewish race. For the most part, post-emancipatory Jewry has identified itself as a religion, culture, nation, or a combination of the above, but has nearly uniformly avoided a racial label.

However, as exemplified by the thinking of Buber, Rosenzweig, Jabotinsky, and Kahane, a number of prominent Jews in the modern period have not shied away from a racial form of Jewish identity. Moreover, the idea of a Jewish race is not confined to the past two centuries. An awareness of race can be traced back to biblical and rabbinic times. And even as the racial theories of Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain were being popularized, Jewish philosophers such as Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig were developing their own ideas regarding Jewish peoplehood based on ties of blood.

With the recent assassination of Rabbi Meir Kahane on November 5, 1990, the career of the alleged leading proponent of Jewish racial self-definition came to an end. Rabbi Kahane, a charismatic but highly controversial Jewish figure, received much criticism, not only because of his

inflammatory actions, but also because he supposedly dared to speak of a Jewish race in the post-Holocaust era. Kahane was believed to have developed the racial ideology of his hero, Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, to conform to his own desire for an Arab-free Jewish homeland.

In the aftermath of Kahane's death, during a period when controversy over teaching racial science is once again being debated on North American university campuses, it is crucial to examine racial theory as it pertains to Judaism. Furthermore, as the number of Holocaust survivors rapidly declines and as the trend towards the reemergence of scientific racial theories gains renewed prominence,¹ it is important to know the arguments for and against a separate Jewish race in order to counter the dangers of scientific racism. This thesis presents the historical context for a racial definition of Judaism and provides background for determining the validity of Judaism as a race. Moreover, it confronts the scarcity of post-Holocaust scholarly material concerning the question of Judaism as a race.

Some of the questions considered within this thesis include: What is the difference between such terms as people, ethnic group, common descent, and race? How historically have Jews understood their identity, especially when they ceased to all be religious? What

impact did the nineteenth century racial theories have on the Jewish self-view? What effect did these racial theories have on Jewish theologians of the period? How could someone like Jabotinsky transform racial theory into a positive Jewish racial view? What impact did Kahane have on the question of the Jews as a race, and how might his concept continue to develop after his death?

The thesis is organized into five chapters in addition to this introduction. The introduction discusses the purpose of the thesis, defines the terms applying to racial identity particularly as they pertain to Judaism, and contains a survey of their usage in biblical and rabbinic literature. Its purpose is to provide the context from which modern Jewish racial identity grew.

The first chapter presents the background of the racial thinking of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It traces the emergence and development of scientific racial theory and concentrates on the contributions of Arthur de Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and the development of Volkist thinking. It gives perspective to the reactions and theories of Jewish theologians. The subsequent chapter reviews racial thinking within Jewish theology as exemplified by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. Both primary and secondary sources are

examined to better understand both the racial theories of these two thinkers and how they have been interpreted. Chapter three examines racial ideology within Zionism, and concentrates upon the contributions of Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky. Its aim is to trace how racial theories were adapted, first by German Zionists, and then by the Revisionists. The focus of chapter four is racial theory in the post-Holocaust era as exemplified by Rabbi Meir Kahane. The conclusion discusses the contemporary impact of Jewish racial identity.

The Terms

Before discussing the origin of the concept of a Jewish race, it is important to first understand what is meant by the term "race", and how it differs from other analogous terms. It is also useful to differentiate between the meaning of these terms in biblical and rabbinic literature, and how they are understood today.

A current definition of race is one of the major subdivisions of humankind, regarded as having a common origin and exhibiting a relatively constant set of physical traits. On the basis of the more commonly used criteria such as stature, the cephalic index, the nasal index, prognathism, skull capacity, texture of the hair and eye color, humankind has been divided into primary stocks or races, each of which is regarded as including a varying number of ethnic groups. According to some the primary stocks are: the Caucasoid, the Mongoloid, and the Negroid. A number of races, such as the Australian and Polynesian, are of doubtful classification.²

This standard definition makes no mention of a Jewish race. But the term is also used more generally to refer to a nation, a tribe, or people regarded as of common stock. In addition, the word is popularly understood by some "to be a group of common descent which is marked by hereditary physical characteristics and by equally hereditary mental and spiritual aptitudes or deficiencies bound up with or even determined by the physical characteristics."³ But there is widespread dissent concerning the attempts by some segments of the population to link physical characteristics with inherited mental aptitudes. And it is due to this linkage, first proposed in the eighteenth century, that the term is used hesitantly today. Currently there is no definitive consensus as to the number of "races" among the human species. Moreover, there is not agreement as to precisely which characteristics differentiate one race from another.⁴

There is not an exact equivalent of the above understanding of race in the Bible. The modern Hebrew word corresponding most closely to the above connotation of race is geza. But in biblical and rabbinic literature, the word geza refers only to a "trunk, stump, that which grows out of the trunk, shoot."⁵ Within the Bible, there are three instances in which forms of the word geza are cited: in

Isaiah 11:1 it is "a rod out of the stem", Isaiah 40:24 speaks of "stock taken root in the earth", and Job 14:8 translates as "stock which dies in the ground". Likewise, in rabbinic references, geza refers only to the offshoots of plants, and not to humans. But a modern Hebrew-English dictionary suggests other synonyms for race including words which do occur frequently in biblical and rabbinic literature, but which are more commonly translated as nation, people, tribe, or species.

Perhaps the ancient Hebrew word closest to the current understanding of race is min generally translated as species. Min does refer to classification systems based upon lineage. But, like the word geza, this term does not refer to human beings, rather min denotes classifications of animals or plants only.

The term "tribe" has a very different meaning today than it had in biblical times. During the period of ancient Israel, it denoted "an ethnic, hereditary, or political division of a united people". Today it refers to "a division, class, or group of people, varying ethnologically according to the circumstances from which their separation or distinction may originate."⁶ The word is rarely applied to the Jews today, "whereas when referring to biblical times the "tribes of Israel" is commonplace phraseology. However,

in the Bible, the word is only applied to the Jews in the plural, thus referring to the twelve tribes which composed the people of Israel, and not denoting a racial classification.

The biblical word am, usually translated as people, is likewise not synonymous with the modern application of race. Currently a people is understood to be "the aggregate of human beings living under the same government, speaking the same language, or being of the same blood: a general term, used when the technical terms race, tribe, nation, or language would be misleading."⁷ A "people" signifies a population regardless of racial origin which usually shares a particular geographic locale. A racial group can be composed of many peoples, and similarly a people does not necessarily belong to just one race.

The biblical classification most frequently confused with race is the word goy, translated both as people and nation. Yet, its biblical usage does not seem to be equatable with our modern understanding of race. And by rabbinic times, the word was used more frequently to identify non-Jews. In the Bible, goy is used to mean nation in the sense of "an aggregation of persons of the same ethnic family, and speaking the same language or cognate languages".⁸ Whereas, today "nation" connotes "a political

society composed of a sovereign or government and subjects or citizens, and constituting a political unit; an organized community, inhabiting a certain extent of territory, within which its sovereignty is exercised."⁹

Currently, a nation is usually composed of more than one race, and refers to "a body of individuals bound together by the possession of a common government and a common history, but not necessarily of common origin."¹⁰ Neither term is a subset of the other; a nation can be composed of many races, and likewise a given race dwells in various nations. National boundaries are political, while racial unity is determined by blood ties and physiological traits.¹¹ But in popular thinking, race and nation are often employed as synonyms, leading to confusion. Moreover, parallels do exist between race and nation. It is common for the inhabitants of a nation to possess a number of similar characteristics due to isolation and inbreeding.

Much of the confusion surrounding how these terms pertain to the Jews is due, not only to the changed definitions of the words since the biblical period, but also due to the change in the status of the Jewish people. During biblical times, the Jews were a people, tribe, nation, and religion. Today there is once again a Jewish

state, but not all Jews are citizens of this state. Moreover there are non-Jews who are citizens of the Jewish state. The words currently used most frequently by Jews in describing themselves are a religion, culture, or ethnic group. The words religion and culture are not synonymous with race in either the biblical or modern period, but terminology such as ethnic group, or common descent is somewhat ambiguous.

The primary factors in differentiating one race from another are blood lines, and common physical (and according to some mental) traits. An ethnic group is a stock of humankind that shares certain cultural, and perhaps also physical and mental characteristics, and which may or may not live in the same geographic vicinity. The word can be used as a synonym for race; "of or pertaining to race, races, or peoples."¹² Similarly, common descent or common stock indicates joint lineage, a line of familial descent, and in definition approximates both ethnic group and race.

Modern Jews display a great variety of physical characteristics. Furthermore, they are citizens of many different nations. However, they have ceased to all identify religiously, and yet most would agree that there is a common thread that binds all Jews. Was the term nation as it was employed in the Bible synonymous with today's

understanding of race? How has biblical and rabbinic literature contributed to current conceptions that Judaism is a race?

Race in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature

It has been claimed that Judaism was the first historical example of "anti-racist" ideology. The Bible begins with the story of Adam, thereby providing all humankind with a common ancestor from whom they descended.¹³ The Midrash elaborates upon the creation of Adam; "G-d is represented as having taken dust from all over the earth to fashion the body of Adam, red soil and black soil and yellow sand, so that no people, of whatever color, might be looked upon as excluded."¹⁴ Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5 comments upon this subject: "for the sake of peace among creatures, the descent of all individuals is traced back to one individual, so that one may not say to his neighbor, my father is greater than yours." Yet scientists and theologians have also cited biblical and rabbinic literature to point to the validity of a distinct Jewish race.

The first mention of different races within the Bible occurs soon after the creation of Adam, in the tenth chapter of Genesis. The story of the Tower of Babel, with its lists of different peoples, is taken by some as a record of races. According to one theory, discussed by both Sayce and Hirshenfeld in their respective books, the

threefold division of humankind corresponds to the three sons of Noah. Each son is assigned a separate place of settlement, Japheth in the north, Ham in the south, and Shem in the center, and their descendants are respectively white-skinned, black-skinned, and olive-skinned. The olive-skinned descendants of Shem are linked to the Semitic or Jewish race. The Swiss naturalist, George Cretien Dagobert Cuvier, first proposed this tripartite division of humankind. However, there is more speculation than fact to this theory, and it has lost much credibility since the development of Darwinism.¹⁵

The concept of the Jews as a "chosen people" is sometimes taken as proof for a distinct Jewish race. The proponents of this point of view construe "chosenness" to mean a "special relationship to God inherent in the genes, or the blood"¹⁶ But others point out that the hereditary privileges and duties are not linked with physical characteristics. Furthermore, hereditary privileges are only granted if the generation or individual is deserving. For example, the corrupt sons of Eli, the priest, were precluded from the priesthood, and the generation of the golden calf was not allowed to enter the promised land. Indeed, the two thousand year destiny of Judaism as a "chosen people" confirms the view that God sometimes

withdraws privileges.¹⁷ Thus, the privileges bestowed upon the Jews are clearly not based on blood ties alone.

In order to discover whether there was a concept of race within the Bible, it is important to discern whether the word nation, as it was employed in the Bible, is synonymous with today's understanding of race. During the time of the Bible, the discrepancy between the terms race, nation, and even religion was minimal. Jews during the biblical period constituted a religious community. They became a nation when they gained a political structure. Thus, from the days of Saul, the Israelites formed a nation according to even our modern definition of nation. Likewise, during these times, the Jews were a single, homogenous race. In these periods, "race and nation and religion all coincided. The Jewish race was no bigger, and no less big, than the Jewish nation, and the Jewish nation no bigger, and no less big, than the Jewish race, while the religion counted no adherents who were not members of the Jewish race and members of the Jewish nation."¹⁸

The ambiguity in identifying the Jews surfaced when the categories of race, nation, and religion no longer referred to the same population. Even prior to the destruction of the Temple and the loss of Jewish sovereignty, some Jews lived outside the boundaries of

Palestine and yet continued to count themselves as adherents of the Jewish religion. Heretics and apostates were considered to be Jews nonetheless. And there are numerous examples from biblical times of individuals from outside of Judaism joining the religion through intermarriage. Moses' first wife, Zipporah, was a non-Israelite, and in his old age he married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12:1), and David was a descendant of Ruth, a Moabite by birth.¹⁹ Proponents of a Jewish race claim therefore, that although a Jewish race exists, it has been an impure race since the biblical period.²⁰

The question of whether Jews during the biblical and rabbinic period had a racial identity can best be answered by looking at their attitudes towards intermarriage and proselytism. Were new adherents to Judaism regarded as diluting the purity of the race, or were they accepted as equal members of a religion?

There are numerous biblical passages that prohibit the marriage of Israelites with non-Jews. Exodus 34:15 forbids covenants with the inhabitants of the land lest it lead to marriages between pagans and Israelites. Deuteronomy 7:1-4 specifically prohibits intermarriage with the seven nations who were the original inhabitants of Canaan. Yet intermarriage did exist in the period before a conversion

process was developed. The practice in the patriarchal period was that the child of an Israelite father was considered an Israelite, irrespective of the mother's background. Thus the children of the patriarchs and non-Israelites, even slaves, followed the familial line of the father.²¹ For instance, Jacob does not discriminate between the four sons he had by the hand-maidens of his wives. By later biblical times the offspring of these mixed unions were considered Jewish only if the mother was Jewish. For example, in chapters nine and ten of Ezra, a distinction is made among the returning intermarried Judean exiles based on the religion of their mother.²² Genetically one is only a half member of the Jewish race, regardless of which parent was the Jewish parent. Thus the prohibition against intermarriage could not be due to a concern about racial purity. Rather, intermarriage was prohibited because of the danger of assimilation. In Deuteronomy 21:11-13, it seems intermarriage was permitted when it did not pose a threat to Jewish tradition; "and you see among the captives a beautiful woman and you desire her and would take her to wife, you shall bring her to your house, and she shall trim her hair, pare her nails, and discard her captive's garb. She shall spend a month's time in your house lamenting her father and mother; after that you may

come to her and possess her, and she shall be your wife."²³ Regardless of whether the Jews of the Bible had a racial identity, they were more concerned with preserving tradition than racial homogeny.

Proselytism existed from early biblical times, long before the institution of conversion had been developed. Generally, if one acquiesced to follow the Jewish way of life, that individual was accepted into the people of Israel. In fact, when the children of Israel left Egypt, a "mixed multitude" went with them. And during the struggle for Caanan, the Israelites spared the virgins and the children who became part of the Israelite community.²⁴ Non-Jewish slaves were circumcised, and thereby became practicing Israelites. At this time the process of joining the Israelites involved both ethnic and religious adhesion. With few exceptions, all strangers were permitted to become part of the Israelite community. In Exodus 12:48-49, it is expressly stated that one who undergoes circumcision is "as one that is born in the land...One law shall be to him that is homeborn and for the stranger that dwells among you."²⁵ Thus, once again the concern is not over maintaining racial purity.

By the rabbinic period, Judaism had begun transforming itself from a nation to a sanctified people. Sexual

relations with Gentiles were strictly prohibited, punishable by death. However, intermarriage with proselytes was tolerated, and the institution of conversion regimented the process. Proselytism had become an integral part of Jewish life. Talmudic law carefully distinguished the various types of proselytes, and whom they were permitted to marry. The born Jew was admonished not to remind proselytes of their past or discriminate against them. Moreover, the proselyte was considered a descendant of Abraham and, as such, party to the Sinaitic covenant.²⁶ The process emphasized the connection of the convert to both the ethnic and religious aspects of Judaism. This system of conversion in effect nullifies racial theory as proselytes become full Jews immediately upon conversion.

Despite the leniency which allowed Jews to marry non-Jews if the non-Jew converted, marriages between Jews and non-converted gentiles persisted. The offspring of such a union inherited the status of the mother. If the mother is Jewish, the child is Jewish; "If a non-Jew or a slave gave birth to a child the offspring is a mamzer." [a Jew with limited status] (Tosephta Kiddushin 4:16) The union between a non-Jewish man and a Jewish woman results in a gentile offspring; "If any woman is disqualified from marrying not only this man but also any other Jew, her

child is equal in status to her. And to what case does this refer? This refers to the child of a bondswoman or a non-Jewess." (Mishna Kiddushin 3:12)²⁷ In either situation, genetically the child is only half-Jewish, and yet this was not a consideration to the Rabbis. They seemed to want a standard, but did not base this standard on "racial" considerations.

Just because the Rabbis did not exclude individuals from becoming Jewish on the basis of race, does not necessarily mean they did not recognize a racial identity. A story in the Talmud, tractate Shabbat 31a, illustrates that they were aware of racial differences. In this story a man comes to Hillel asking a series of questions including why are the heads of the Babylonians round, why are the eyes of the Palmyreans bleared, and why are the feet of the Africans wide.

The fact that there was complete acceptance of individuals who converted to Judaism contradicts any theory that maintains Jews in the biblical and talmudic periods considered themselves a race. Although awareness of racial differences existed in these times, the Jews identified themselves, not as a race, but as a holy nation. Furthermore, they did not prohibit entrance to this holy nation according to blood lines. When later Jews began

identifying themselves as a race, they could not use the Bible or Talmud as evidence for a Jewish race. The idea that there is a distinct Jewish race could only have entered the Jewish ethos at a later time, borrowing from trends external to the Jewish heritage.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

¹ The question of whether racial theory should be taught on university campuses was the subject of a recent episode of Donahue, the cover article in the magazine section of the Cincinnati Sunday newspaper discussed the reemergence of racial prejudices, and the student newspaper of Northwestern University featured a controversial letter by Professor Arthur R. Butz which discussed the Jewish race.

² Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, 2 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1974), 1035.

³ Maurice Samuel, "Race, Nation, and People in the Jewish Bible," paper presented as the fifth annual B. G. Rudolph Lecture in Judaic Studies, held at Syracuse University, March 14, 1967, 6.

⁴ Ibid., 6-7, and Jacques Barzun, Race: A Study in Superstition (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), 1-2.

⁵ Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (Israel), 231.

⁶ Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, 1339.

⁷ Ibid., 934.

⁸ C. G. Montefiore, Race, Nation, and the Jews, HUB Papers, No. IV (Keighley, England: Wadsworth and Company, The Rydal Press, 1918), 3.

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ A. H. Sayce, The Races of the Old Testament (London: Whitefriars Press, Ltd., 1925), 20.

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹² Ibid., 436.

¹³ Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Race, Theory of."

14 Samuel, "Race, Nation, and People in the Jewish Bible," 17.

15 Sayce, The Races of the Old Testament, 67-8. and Magnus Hirshenfeld, Racism, trans. by Eden and Cedar Paul. (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1938), 95-98.

16 Samuel, "Race, Nation, and People in the Jewish Bible," 9.

17 Ibid., 7-8.

18 Montefiore, Race, Nation, and the Jews, 7-8.

19 Samuel, "Race, Nation, and People in the Jewish Bible," 14-15.

20 Sayce, The Races of the Old Testament, 115.

21 Raphael Patai and Jennifer Patai, The Myth of the Jewish Race, Revised Edition (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 93.

22 Lawrence H. Schiffman, Who was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1985), 14-17.

23 Samuel, "Race, Nation, and People in the Jewish Bible," 13-14.

24 Patai and Wing, The Myth of the Jewish Race, 96.

25 Ibid., 54-7.

26 Ibid., 61-2, 99-102.

27 Schiffman, Who was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism, 9-11.

CHAPTER ONE

RACIAL THINKING OF THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

The Emergence and Development of Scientific Racial Theory

Although Jews in the biblical and talmudic periods did not consider themselves a race, by the nineteenth century there was widespread popular belief that the Jews did indeed constitute one. Furthermore, this idea was espoused by segments of both the non-Jewish and Jewish populations. Generally, Jews who embraced the concept regarded themselves as a superior race, whereas non-Jews posited theories of the racial inferiority of the Jews.

Jews such as Israel Zangwill, writing in 1911, spoke of Judaism as an "extraordinary race" whose lineage, traits, and characteristics could be traced back to biblical times. Speaking of the Jewish race in his day, he said:

no demos in the world is so saturated with idealism and domestic virtue, and when it is compared with the yet uncivilized and brutalized masses of Europe, when, for example, the lowness of its infantile mortality or the healthiness of its school children is contrasted with the appalling statistics of its

neighbors, there is sound scientific warrant for endorsing even in its narrowest form its claim to be 'a chosen people'.¹

Furthermore, he gives credence to theories of Jewish domination of certain avocations and professions including theatre, music, and the health industry. He specifically states:

in law, mathematics, and philosophy, the Jew is particularly at home, especially as an expounder. In chess he literally sweeps the board. There is never a contest for the championship of the world in which both rivals are not Jews. Even the first man to fly (and die) was the Jew, Lilienthal.²

Zangwill was not alone in his endorsement of a Jewish race with distinct and superior characteristics. In 1933, a Jewish man named David Goldblatt published a book in English entitled Is the Jewish Race Pure? An Examination of the Evidence against and a Statement of Facts in its Favor, in which his stated purpose was to "defend the Jewish claim for superiority" with scientific arguments, and quoting only non-Jewish authorities "to avoid the charge of bias."³

Jews such as Goldblatt and Zangwill were not the only individuals reacting to an environment in which segments of

the scientific community had labeled the Jews an inferior race. Non-Jews also wrote about a distinct Jewish race. For example, in 1850, Robert Knox, M.D., a lecturer on anatomy, wrote The Races of Man, in which he asserted the Jews are "the lineal descendants of those who fled from Egypt-- spoiling the Egyptians-- forgetting to replace what they had borrowed-- but never returning to the land to which one might suppose them attached." He asks: "Where are the Jewish farmers, Jewish mechanics, laborers? Can he not till the earth, or settle anywhere? Why does he dislike labor? Has he no ingenuity, no inventive power, no mechanical or scientific turn of mind?"⁴ Not only were the Jews depicted as possessing inferior mental aptitude, certain physical characteristics were attributed to them as well. For example, in his book, The Races of Man and their Geographical Distribution published in 1902, Oscar Peschel describes the Jewish race as "more bearded than the Hamites, and more frequently gifted with expressive features, thin lips, high and generally aquiline noses, and well-marked eyebrows."⁵ By the mid eighteenth-century, a new branch of science had emerged which studied lineage [race] based upon the shape and size of one's skull, facial features, and other physical characteristics, and maintained there was a direct correlation between these

characteristics and one's intelligence and abilities.

The emergence of the concept of "race" and the science that developed surrounding it were predominantly products of the eighteenth century. However, the etymology of the word "race" can be traced back at least two centuries prior to this. The exact origin of the term is unknown. No related word existed in classical Latin or Greek, or the earlier Indo-European languages. Nor is its source Semitic. Etymologists are divided as to its true root. Some claim it first appeared in Spanish, deriving from the Moor word "ras" meaning "origin" or "source". Others trace it back to the Latin "radix" meaning "root". Still others claim it comes from the Old High German "reis" which meant a line, fissure, or cranny, and would thus connect it with the English "raze". The first known usage of the concept seems to be exemplified by the sixteenth-century Italian word "razza". Derivatives of the word were quickly borrowed by French, and it also was soon adapted into English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. The word exists in almost identical forms in modern Teutonic, Slav, and Latin languages, but it seems to have passed from one to the other.⁶

Whatever its origin, the concept espoused by the word quickly spread throughout eighteenth-century Europe, and

was seized upon by anthropologists who transformed it into a "science". Thus, beginning in the eighteenth century, underlying prejudices had, by way of anthropology, an outlet by which to be expressed scientifically. Scientists and anthropologists developed systems of classification to divide humankind. Within Systema Naturae written in 1735, Carl von Linneaus, a Sweedish botanist, was the first to arrange ethnic groups of humankind according to lines of demarcation. His classification was based upon simple biological differences, predominantly skin color, although he also compared temperament, customs, and habits. He classified humankind into four varieties: "[Native] American ("reddish, choleric, erect"); European ("white, ruddy, muscular"); Asiatic ("yellow, melancholic, inflexible"); and African ("black, phlegmatic, indulgent"). His system, based upon skin color, remained for many years the most popular method for dividing humankind.⁷

The term "race" was first introduced into scientific literature by a contemporary of Linneaus, the French naturalist George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon. In 1749, in the third of his forty-nine volumes of Histoire Naturelle, Buffon refers to six varieties or "races" of humankind: 1) the Lapp or Polar race; 2) the Tartar or Mongolian race; 3) the South Asiatic race; 4) the European

race; 5) the Ethiopian race; and 6) the [Native] American race. His division was based, in addition to skin color, on stature and certain psychic traits.⁸ However, he also attributed racial differences to one's environment, believing that climate, food, and customs impacted upon physical characteristics.⁹

Since the time of Lineaus and Comte de Buffon, there have been numerous classifications of humankind into races. The divisions are most commonly determined either on the basis of skull size or by comparison of a number of physical characteristics including, but not limited to, skin and hair color, the shape of one's eyes, nose, and face, and stature. A new and complex scientific field developed. And, although similarities in physical characteristics can be seen among groups of people living in close proximity to one another and sharing common ancestors, the idea of the division of humankind was taken further than mere classification.

Beginning in the eighteenth century, the first anthropologists believed that the so-called races of humankind differed not only in physical characteristics, but also in intelligence and even virtue. Theories of mental and moral characteristics were paired with the classifications of Linneaus, and from this there developed

notions of racial purity and superiority. And if there was a superior race, the theories also posited that there were "degenerate" races. The more prevalent theories regarded the white race as the superior, and in the earliest development of racial theory, Jews were considered part of the Caucasian race. However, with the onset of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of nationalism, the number of assumed divisions of humankind increased drastically. According to the prevalent theories of that time, Europe was thought to be composed of many races which were struggling against one another. Eventually the pure and superior race would emerge triumphant. Moreover, from the midst of this climate of nationalistic upheaval, the notion of a distinct and inferior Jewish race gained credence.¹⁰

The Influence of Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart
Chamberlain

The belief in the superiority of the white European race was expressed as early as 1799, as exemplified in the words of the English surgeon Charles White:

"Where else shall we find that noble arched head, containing such a quantity of brain?... Where that variety of features, and fullness of expression; those long, flowing graceful ringlets; that majestic beard, those rosy cheeks and coral lips?"¹¹

The so-called superior race was later narrowed from designating the entire European people to applying particularly to the Aryans or Nordics. Thus, the doctrine of Aryanism arose, which taught both the superiority of the Aryans over Semites and other inferior races, and the superiority of the Germans over all other Aryans. It further maintained that in order to preserve their special qualities, the Aryan people must not intermingle with the "inferior races".¹²

The theory of Aryanism was both primarily formulated and popularized by Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau in his four volume work Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines

(The Inequality of the Human Races) published between 1853 and 1855. Gobineau, a Frenchman, was reacting to what he deemed the worsening of the political situation in France and to the revolutions of 1848.¹³ Therefore, he dedicated his work to George V of Hannover, the German king who had abolished the liberal constitution granted by his predecessor. He attributed the nationalistic conflicts to the impurity of the races of Europe due to intermingling. In his opinion, not only did the French and Germans contain impure blood, but even the Scandinavians were not pure Aryan. The best race, according to him, was the one which was the "whitest", and this distinction he bestowed upon the Teutons [also called Aryans or Nordics].¹⁴

Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau was born in Ville d'Avray, near Paris, on July 14, 1816, the son of Louis de Gobineau and Anne-Louise Magdeleine de Gercy. His father left shortly following the birth of his younger sister. His mother was soon after imprisoned for embezzlement and debt. Nevertheless, he claimed that his mother was a descendant of Louis XV. In fact, throughout his lifetime he searched for details of his lineage and created a myth concerning his origins. He moved to Paris in 1835 where he was employed as a journalist.¹⁵ Following the 1848 Revolution, he worked for the French diplomatic service. But in the

midst of his search for his background, he became impassioned over the idea of the existence of a superior race, to which he as a light-skinned, blonde-haired individual belonged.¹⁶

Gobineau was basically a pessimistic person; he distrusted the efficacy of religion and morality, and he rejected the influence of the environment in one's development.¹⁷ He believed "all human races are anatomically, physically, and psychologically unequal,"¹⁸ and that racial differences are permanent. His pessimism, as it was expressed within his theory of the inequality of the races, fell upon a generation which was tired of war and disillusioned with enlightenment ideology. But he also provided a solution: "everything great, noble, and fruitful in the works of man on this earth, in science, art, and civilization, derives from a single starting point, is the development of a single germ and the result of a single thought; it belongs to one family alone, the different branches of which have reigned in all the civilized countries of the universe"¹⁹. If we return to the starting point, regain the purity of the Aryan race, order can be restored to the world and civilization can once more progress. Within the Essai, Gobineau asserts both that the Aryan race is degenerating because of the diluting of its

blood, and yet at the same time makes the contradictory claim that this great race is leading humanity to a more civilized, higher existence²⁰.

Gobineau's entire outlook on history was skewed. According to his theory, civilized European history did not begin until after the Teutonic invasions. Furthermore, as the number of pure Teutons declined, so too did the quality of European civilization. The decline was a direct result of the thinning of Teutonic or Nordic stock by the intermixing with the blood of the inferior races²¹: "the white race originally possessed the monopoly of beauty, intelligence, and strength. By its union with other varieties hybrids were created, which were beautiful without strength, strong without intelligence, or if intelligent, both weak and ugly."²² The result, according to Gobineau, was democracy, revolution, and industrialization. Furthermore, he predicted that civilizations die when "the primordial race-unit is so broken up and swamped by the influx of foreign elements that its effective qualities are destroyed."²³

Although Gobineau's work is composed of four volumes, it is his first volume which provides his theory; the remaining three are repetitions of his fundamental ideas. His main conviction is stated in his dedication: "that the

racial question overshadows all other problems of history, that it holds the key to them all, and that the inequality of the races from whose fusion a people is formed is enough to explain the whole course of its destiny."²⁴ Gobineau asserted that there were only three races: "the white (Caucasian, Semitic or Japhetic); the black (Hamitic); and the yellow (Altaic, Mongol, Finnish, and Tarter)."²⁵ And he compares them:

the negroid variety is the lowest, and stands at the foot of the ladder. The animal character, that appears in the shape of the pelvis is stamped on the negro from birth, and foreshadows his destiny.... the yellow races are thus clearly superior to the black. Every founder of a civilization would wish the backbone of his society, his middle class to consist of such men. But no civilized society could be created by them; they could not supply its nerve-force, or set in motion the springs of beauty and action... We now come to the white peoples. These are gifted with reflective energy, or rather with an energetic intelligence. They have a feeling for utility, but in a sense far wider and higher, more courageous and ideal, than the yellow races.²⁶

His conclusion is that "all civilizations derive from the white race, that none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it, provided that this group itself belongs to the most illustrious branch of our species."²⁷

The ideas expressed by Gobineau in his Essai were innovative, for he was the first to specifically state a concept of racism, and within this concept identify race as the cause of societal problems. As Hannah Arendt commented: "nobody before Gobineau thought of finding one single reason, one single force according to which civilization always and everywhere rises and falls."²⁸ It was an idea that was unknown in his time, it predated Darwin's Origin of the Species and the beginnings of genetic science. But the concept, as he intended it, has been transformed over time to assist others in attaining certain political motives. It was adapted by Nazi ideology for its own goals. Gobineau "had no more faith in Germany's racial superiority than in that of France."²⁹ His ideology was not nationalistic, he was not promoting either the French or the German people. The word "Aryan", as he employed it, was not meant to be a synonym for German. In fact, he felt that no European nation contained

enough pure Teutonic aristocrats to assert power over any other. Rather, he "was defending the role of the aristocratic remnant endangered by a bastard proletariat"³⁰ in any country.

There is also misconception regarding Gobineau's view of the Jews. "It is the Slavs and the Mongals, and the Latins in general (rather than the Jews in particular), upon whom he centers his analysis of doom."³¹ Although the Jews are regarded as an inferior race, they are not the cause of Aryan degeneration, and they are not portrayed in an entirely bad light. Rather, Gobineau appears impressed with their isolationist tendencies: "they were surrounded by tribes speaking the dialects of a language cognate with their own, and for the most part closely connected with them in race; yet they outdistanced all these tribes"³². Moreover, he equates the familial and tribal organization of the ancient Hebrews with Aryan characteristics: "they became a people that succeeded in everything it undertook, a free, strong, and intelligent people, and one which, before it lost, sword in hand, the name of an independent nation, had given as many learned men to the world as it had merchants."³³ He does, however, have a derogatory view of contemporary Jewry, in part because he regards them as competition for the Aryans.³⁴

Despite Gobineau's intention, which was to bolster the aristocracy's claim to domination, his ideology was altered by the Nazis to vindicate the extermination of inferior races in order to restore "Aryan" [redefined as German] purity. Gobineau's favorable references to the Jews were omitted from German republications of his work in the 1930's.³⁵ His Essai was subsequently an influence on Nazi ideology, and Gobineau is known by the dubious distinction of "the founder of racist ideology".

Although Gobineau created the notion of race superiority, the specific idea of Aryan [German] supremacy, especially as contrasted with Semitic [Jewish] inferiority, was first enunciated by an Englishman named Houston Stewart Chamberlain who, in 1899, published Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century). The idea of a superior "Aryan race", which was an innovation in Gobineau's day, had become a "scientific truth" by the beginning of the twentieth century. However, Chamberlain reformulated the concept in terms of a struggle between the Aryan and Semitic races. Moreover, he equated this struggle with the larger struggle of Good against Evil. Chamberlain believed that the Jews had been a mixed race since biblical times whereas the Aryans were a "pure"

racial group. Furthermore, the Jews were responsible for polluting the superior racial strain of the Aryans; they spread their "poison over the earth for thousands of years, a curse on all that was noble and a shame to Christianity".³⁶

Despite the fact that Chamberlain relies upon Gobineau, he was highly critical of his predecessor and accused him of "wrong-headedness and a perverse lack of the scientific attitude."³⁷ He only reluctantly acknowledges the former's contribution to his work. But two ideas central to his theory are borrowed from that of Gobineau. Like Gobineau, Chamberlain asserted that the races of humankind form a hierarchical structure at whose top is the Aryan race, and also that the interaction between the various races is the cause of social and political developments. He differs from Gobineau in that he creates a sharp polarization between the Aryans on the one extreme and the Jews whom he places at the bottom of the hierarchy. Chamberlain also emphasizes, to a much greater extent than Gobineau, the need for aggressive measures to remedy the harmful effects of racial intermingling. It was Chamberlain, not Gobineau, who was the first to advocate programs, later employed by the Nazis, of inbreeding and artificial selection to improve the blood mixture of the Aryan race.³⁸

Houston Stewart Chamberlain was born at Southsea on the southern coast of England on September 9, 1855. He was the fourth (and last) child of Admiral William Charles Chamberlain; his mother died in 1856 after having been weakened by the pregnancy. He was raised in France by an unmarried aunt, Harriet Mary Chamberlain, and saw little of his father, who was at sea for most of his early years. Chamberlain came from an upper-class British family, on his father's side were distinguished military personnel, on his mother's side scholars and owners of landed estates. His family was wealthy, well-traveled, and very British in loyalty, mannerisms, and attitude. He, however, was educated abroad, in a Lycee in Versailles while living with his aunt. He developed a much stronger attachment to France than to England, and disliked the English school in which his father eventually enrolled him. He was expected to follow in the path of his forebears and distinguish himself in the British military or colonial administration. He did attend Cheltenham College which specialized in training for a military career. However, from childhood, he was sickly and it soon became evident that he was not suitable for this type of career. After leaving Cheltenham, Chamberlain felt as if he had no nationality. He was more at home in France, yet there he was regarded as

a foreigner. He disliked England, but his estrangement from his birthplace was accompanied by feelings of self-doubt and guilt. These emotions exhibited themselves in his lifelong mission of creating the archetype of the superior German to which he, as a Briton by birth, could identify.³⁹

Chamberlain was profoundly influenced by his feelings of isolation and not belonging to any country. He became captivated by German culture, art, science, and philosophy, and in particular by the philosophy and music of Richard Wagner. He eventually settled in the town of Bayreuth in which Wagner had established his National Theatre, became Wagner's disciple, and married his daughter, Eva. His first published works were on Wagnerian subjects, and his most popular book, besides Foundations, was his biography of Wagner.⁴⁰

Chamberlain became a German citizen, and within Foundations glorified what he saw as the spiritual and cultural mission of his adopted land. Foundations espoused his "campaign to change Germany, to re-create a German nation free of the evils of liberal capitalist society."⁴¹ Unlike Gobineau, Chamberlain was tremendously optimistic, and his optimism was exemplified in his depiction of Germany's future role as a powerful world force.

Chamberlain was renowned in certain circles of pre-Nazi Germany. He is in fact known as the intellectual precursor of Nazi ideology.⁴² His book sold 60,000 copies in Germany, and eight editions were printed.⁴³ One of his greatest admirers was Kaiser Wilhelm II who insured that Foundations was used as a text in German schools and was on the shelves of all German libraries. Chamberlain was deeply grieved by the Kaiser's defeat, but before his death in 1927 had his faith in German supremacy renewed by the rising popularity of Hitler.⁴⁴

Chamberlain was popular in Germany because he transformed Gobineau's ideas of the racial supremacy of the Nordic-Teutonics, implying the aristocratic class, into the supremacy of the blond Teutonic race, meaning a nationalistic [German] entity. He felt that the "blond Teutonic race was the aristocracy of humanity."⁴⁵ And he praises them in glowing terms: "with their eyes flashing divine fire, their golden hair, their well-proportioned frames, and the lofty foreheads crowning their splendid spiritual development."⁴⁶ Furthermore he believed the reason for "the entrance of the Germanic tribes into the history of the world [was] the rescuing of agonizing humanity from the clutches of the everlasting bestial,"⁴⁷ thereby giving the German people a mission.

Foundations' purpose was not to be a racial treatise, rather it was Chamberlain's "endeavor to reveal the bases upon which the twentieth century rests,"⁴⁸ and as such was more of a historical and philosophical work. But his interpretation of history reveals vividly his racial construction of reality and his Aryan bias. His acknowledged goal was to "discuss the first eighteen centuries of the Christian era with frequent reference to times more remote."⁴⁹ He originally intended to write a second part to Foundations which would analyze the contributions of the nineteenth century, and a third section which would evaluate the nineteenth century as an integral part of the entire historical process, but neither the second or third section was completed. A further aim of Foundations was to substantiate two of his fundamental convictions: one, that humankind was composed of distinct races which inherently differed in physical characteristics, and mental and moral capacities, and two, the conflicts between the racial groups were responsible for history and as such the crucial key for understanding the development of civilization.⁵⁰ Thus, through his racial conception of history, Chamberlain gives credence to the ideas already popularized by Gobineau.

The published form of Foundations consists of two

parts. In the first part, entitled "The Origins", Chamberlain discussed in great detail world events prior to the year 1200. He identifies six determinants which impacted upon the development of the nineteenth century; Hellenic art and philosophy, Roman law, the revelation of Christ, the racial chaos resulting from the fall of the Roman Empire, the entrance of the Jews and their negative influence, and the positive effects of the Germanic people's entrance into history. The second part, which he calls "The Rise of a New World", details events in history from the year 1200 to the year 1800. In this section he concentrates upon lauding the Teutonic contributions, and praises the Teutons as creatures of a new and higher culture which will regenerate the entire world.⁵¹ He depicts their struggle for supremacy and of them says "it was Teutonic blood and Teutonic blood alone that formed the impelling force and the informing power" of history.⁵² He further asserts that all achievements whether in science, art, or politics were due to the Teutonic race, and that their achievements are greater than that of any other race.

In the tradition of Gobineau, Chamberlain depicts history as an unfolding of events leading to the development of the superior Aryan race and its eventual domination. He is critical of the contributions of any

non-Aryan society including the Greek and Roman civilizations. He does recount their accomplishments, but his underlying tone conveys that "the heritage of Greece and Rome was not unblemished, and both succumbed to racial degeneration"⁵³. Although Chamberlain denounces non-Aryan accomplishments, he cannot ignore what he deems the most important event in world history: the revelation of Christ. According to him, "the coming of Christ signifies, from the point of view of world history, the coming of a new human species."⁵⁴ However, it is quite problematic for him that Jesus supposedly belonged to the Semitic race. Therefore Chamberlain, employing biblical scholars such as Wellhausen when they are useful to his purpose, demonstrates that Jesus might have been a Jew by religion, but he was not part of the Jewish race. Jesus, argues Chamberlain, comes from a region of the Galilee which was predominantly populated by non-Jews including Greeks, Phoenicians, and Indo-Europeans. These people, including Jesus, were racially distinct from their Semitic neighbors and furthermore are the ancestors of the Aryans. Therefore Chamberlain concludes "the probability that Christ was no Jew, that He had not a drop of genuinely Jewish blood in his veins, is so great that it is almost equivalent to a certainty."⁵⁵ Although Chamberlain's reasoning contains contradictions and

ambiguities, his proof for an Aryan Jesus gained great notability.

Chamberlain's work has been criticized for a variety of reasons. Foremost, in Foundations, he does not espouse a scientific understanding of race. He denies any value to scientific classifications, branding them as fundamentally false. His brand of racism has been labeled cultural racism: "race is something amorphous grasped through true cultural appreciation."⁵⁶ He asserts race can be seen through history but cannot be rigidly defined. In fact, he rejects all definitions of race. And he is ambiguous as to whether racial distinctions are permanent. Although he claims that races cannot be classified according to anthropomorphic measurements or any other of the characteristics usually examined to differentiate one race from another, his whole theory is dependent on a contradictory assumption: that there is a close connection among Aryans, that they are "eminently united in their mental constitution even to the minutest details."⁵⁷ Yet, the advantage of not having a stringent division among the races is that his theory permits citizens of Germany whether from Celtic, Slav, or Teutonic descent to identify as a member of the supreme German nation: "this is here done by widening the idea "Germanic".⁵⁸ All German

citizens, except Jews, can be true Germans without having a German genealogy.

Just as Chamberlain does not provide a litany of characteristics that a German must possess, he also never identifies Jews by physical traits or genealogy. He knows that Jews in nineteenth-century Europe are not easily distinguishable from the population at large, that they possess a wide variety of physical characteristics. His definition of the Jewish race is broadly inclusive: "one does not need to have the authentic Hittite nose to be a Jew; the term Jew rather denotes a special way of thinking and feeling."⁵⁹ However, he passionately believed that the infusion of Jewish blood into the German race leads to its degeneration.

Unlike Gobineau, there was little that was really innovative in the ideology of Chamberlain. Much of what he wrote could be found in earlier racist literature. Moreover, his understanding of history was filled with errors, and his racial conception was contradictory. But he employed history, as he conceived of it, to demonstrate the popular racial myths of his time. And thus Foundations became the principal exponent of modern German racism. The development of Volkest thinking was a natural extension of Gobineau's and Chamberlain's philosophy, and with the

popularity of Chamberlain's proofs there appeared to be little opposition in Germany to the idea that the Jews constituted a separate race.

The Impact of Volkist Thinking

The idea that the Jews formed a distinct and inferior race thus had its roots in modern Germany. Moreover, it can be linked to the notion of a German Volk. Volkist thinking developed simultaneously with the rise of the nationalist movement in the late eighteenth, and early nineteenth century. But the widespread familiarity with the idea and its enlarged connotations was partially a product of the ideology elucidated later in the century by Chamberlain. The belief in a German Volk was central to Chamberlain's philosophy. He adapted and broadened prior understandings of the concept.

Before discussing how Chamberlain, and those following him, reformulated the concept of Volk, it is helpful to elaborate on its original meaning, and also how it was generally understood by Germans of the eighteenth century. The original meaning of the Teutonic "Volk", corresponding to the English "folk", was a "crowd", or "a miscellaneous collection of people". Some scholars believe it derives etymologically from the Latin vulgus which means the common people.⁶⁰ The definition provided by the Oxford English dictionary is a people, nation, race, or tribe. The term was modified in nineteenth-century Germany to denote the

elect German people, whereas Gevolk designated ordinary people.⁶¹ Another modern German variation of the word is Urvolk, meaning a racially homogeneous group of people.⁶²

Although the simple meaning of Volk is people, the word "cannot be translated into a single English word. At once it conveys a sense of nationalism and racial purity combined with a romantic notion of the collective genius of the common people" asserts Donald L. Niewyk.⁶³ Similarly, George Mosse explains, "Volk is one of those perplexing German terms which connotes far more than its specific meaning"⁶⁴ Mosse suggests that Volk came to mean more to German thinkers as early as the birth of German romanticism in the late eighteenth century. He defines Volk as

the union of a group of people with a transcendental 'essence'. This 'essence' might be called 'nature' or 'cosmos' or 'mythos', but in each instance it was fused to man's innermost nature, and represented the source of his creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality, and his unity with other members of the Volk.⁶⁵

In other words, there is something inherent in people's nature [essence] which is the determinant of their actions and character, and which individuals share with the other members of their particular Volk. Mosse emphasizes that

the essential point is the linkage between the soul and one's ancestral natural surroundings. Thus, according to Volkist theory, since the Jews are a desert people they are by nature a dry, shallow, and arid people lacking innovation. They are also spiritually barren, in contrast to the Aryans whose native environment is dark and forested leading to their deep and profound character.⁶⁶

In eighteenth-century Germany, Volk was a mystic and romantic notion. It denoted a "metaphysical entity, an eternal and unchanging ideal which encompassed all the German people."⁶⁷ The idea provided comfort and security to individuals of a fragmented and unstable Germany who "longed for an unchanging ideal of peoplehood to which they could relate themselves."⁶⁸ Early proponents of the Volkist revival, such as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), emphasized the romantic expressions of the Volk, in particular art and literature. The shared language and art of the German people transcended political divisions and highlighted the common ancestry of all Germans. Herder affirmed the eternal and unique character of the Volk (the Volksgeist) which remained unaltered despite the transformations that history had imposed upon Germany, camouflaging the true spirit of the Volk. He glorified the Middle Ages as the period when the Volk was

free from all constraints and able to fully express itself. He, therefore, believed that the natural environment of the German Volk is the rural, agrarian life-style of the Middle Ages. He also felt that every Volk, including the Jewish Volk, deserves respect. He likened the concept of Volk to a tree, that despite all changes, its roots are stationary and its' evolution natural.⁶⁹ This early conception of Volk was an idealization of the past and a romantic longing to return to it.

Chamberlain's conception of Volk was one of the first to include racial and political components, in addition to the mystical and romantic nuances. According to his definition, the "Volk becomes the repository and guardian of the pure race-soul."⁷⁰ It is due to the Volk that the racial spirit develops fully. Moreover, if the purity of the Volk is maintained, the race is safeguarded from degeneration partly because "it will resist miscegenation, but also because it will resist alien spiritual influences."⁷¹ Chamberlain also endows the romantic notion with an aggressive edge. The state, meaning the German nation, has a duty to protect the members of its Volk. In fact, all political institutions are subordinate to "the ultimate authority of the Volk."⁷²

Chamberlain published Foundations in 1899, but the notion of Volk as he envisioned it, with specific racial inferences and a political base, did not take hold until Germany's defeat in World War I and the establishment of the Weimar Republic. During the early years of the Weimar Republic, this broadened conception of Volk was expounded by a variety of organizations dedicated to the spreading of antisemitism and the preservation of the Aryan race. These groups maintained that radical action was needed to restore the Volk, and rejected the earlier idea (exemplified by Herder) of its' organic evolution. The German Volkist League for Defense and Defiance (Deutschvolkische Schutz- und Trutz-Bund), founded in February 1919, was the largest and most influential of these groups. In 1922, at its height and at the time of its' dissolution by government order, due to its alleged role in the assassination of Walter Rathenau, its membership exceeded 200,000. A smaller and then less-known group was the National Socialist German Workers' party (Nationalsozialistische deutsche Arbeiterpartei) headed by Adolf Hitler. Groups such as these quarreled with one another, but were united in their hatred of the Jews, and their use of violence (including assassinations) to achieve political ends. Their propaganda accused the Jews of being disloyal to

Germany during World War I, and blamed them for Germany's economic crisis.⁷³

By the end of 1924, when Germany was experiencing economic recovery, one of the only remnants of the early period of radical antisemitic Volkist organizations was Hitler's Nazi party. And within the party, Volkist thinking was further propagated by Alfred Rosenberg, the intellectual apostle of Nazism and author of a systematic ideology of racism. It was Rosenberg who furthered the ideas of Chamberlain and connected Volkism to ideas of blood:

a nation is constituted by the predominance of a definite character formed by its blood, also by language, geographical environment, and the sense of a united political destiny. These last constituents are not, however, definitive; the decisive element in a nation is its blood.⁷⁴

In addition, Rosenberg is credited with portraying the Jews as the antithesis of the German Volk, and he promotes heinous measures to eliminate the Jewish Volk.

Alfred Rosenberg was born in 1893 in Revel, the capital of the Baltic state of Estonia, then part of the Russian Empire. He despised the Esths, labeling them a slave race which should be ruled by the German minority, as

was the case in the Teutonic period. Rosenberg came from a lower middle class Protestant family, racially a mixture of Balt and of the German he so greatly admired. He attended a technical high school in Riga, and then studied architecture in Moscow, fleeing during the Red Revolution. In 1920, he joined the Nationalist Socialist German Worker's Party, in 1921 became editor of its newspaper, Der Volkische Beobachter (The Folkic Observer), and in 1930 of its magazine, National-sozialistische Monatshefte (National Socialist Monthly). When Hitler was sent to prison in 1924, he appointed Rosenberg as head of the Nazi party. Also, Rosenberg, in 1929, formed the Kampfbund der deutschen Kultur (Combat League for German Culture), which created ordinances dedicated to preserving the aesthetics and literature of the Volck. Rosenberg perceived his book, Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts (The Myth of the Twentieth Century), published in 1930, as a continuation of Chamberlain's Foundations. By the writing of Mythus, Rosenberg transformed Hitler's race hatred into a "quasi-coherent ideology", and became the "leading Nazi interpreter of German history."⁷⁵

In Mythus, Rosenberg depicts history as a continual struggle of blood against blood and race against race as opposed to class or religious struggles. He defines nation

as "the political expression of the race."⁷⁶ He believes that God created races of man, and not individuals or humankind as an entirety. He also maintains that only the race, not the individual, has a soul, but that no two races have the same soul⁷⁷: "each race has its soul, each soul its race."⁷⁸ Furthermore, when two races interbreed, the pure race-soul is destroyed. Like Chamberlain, Rosenberg asserts that any advance in history is due to the German soul. For example, the achievements of Rome were due to the interbreeding of Romans with Germans. And similarly, periods of German failure are due to contamination by an alien soul and alien blood. In particular, he accuses the Jews of trying to destroy the Aryan Volk. Rosenberg's solution is to repurify the German Volk, and simultaneously annihilate the Jewish one.⁷⁹ In his preface, he predicts "the blood that had died is beginning to come to life anew. In its mystical patterns a new cellular-structure of the German Volk-soul is developing."⁸⁰ His ultimate goal was to rid the German Volk of all alien elements in much the same way as a doctor cuts out cancer. He recommended that Germany be ruled by a Volk-king, a dictator who is the incarnation of the Volk.⁸¹

Rosenberg draws heavily upon the romanticism of the eighteenth century to justify intellectually "his view of

the German people as representing an organic and indivisible Volk.⁸² But he also emphasizes the racial component attributed to it by Chamberlain. In Mythus, Rosenberg takes the idea of a volk to an extreme, an extreme which permitted the Nazis to murder millions of Jews and other individuals who contained "alien blood" on the pretense of restoring the German Volk. The occurrence of the Holocaust substantiates the view that many Germans were enchanted with the concept of a German Volk as it was articulated by Rosenberg. But, how did Jews react to scientific racial theory as it was evolving during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries? And in particular, how did German Jews, respond to the notion that they constituted a "contaminated race"?

The Effect Of Racial Theory Upon Jewish Identity

The idea emerging in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the Jews constituted a distinct race arose simultaneously with Jewish strides towards emancipation, assimilation, and modernization. The majority of the Jewish population desired to be accepted as German, or French, or British, with Judaism being a designation of their religion only. These Jews vehemently denied a racial identity, and some employed science to disprove theories of a Jewish race. However, there were segments of the Jewish community who identified positively with the notion of a distinct Jewish race. Of particular note are the subjects of subsequent chapters: Jewish theologians such as Buber and Rosenzweig, and proponents of the Zionist movement. In addition, there were Jewish anthropologists, scientists, and romantics who glorified and propagated the belief that the Jews were a separate race. The concept of a Jewish race was thus a divisive issue for the Jewish community.

The question of race was troubling for the Jewish community of the late eighteenth century, for despite the desire of some to be accepted as equal citizens of the country in which they lived, they were forced to also reconcile the fact that, in Germany and throughout Europe,

they were a distinct social group with different customs than those of the Christian population: "a different religion; a different language; different family attitudes and values; different ways of life; and even a different and noticeable physiognomy."⁸³ As the other differences had to be mitigated or rationalized in the quest for emancipation, likewise the differences in physiognomy could not be ignored.

The question "what are the Jews" thus became a source of concern for the Jewish community with the beginnings of anthropology. It was frequently debated in the German Journal of Jewish Demography and Statistics.⁸⁴ Whether one agreed with racial classification or not, Jews entering modernity were forced to confront racial theory and prove, or disprove, its validity. Furthermore, the one question of whether the Jews were a race led to many other questions. For instance, do the Jews constitute one race, or two, or even three? Is the Jewish race inferior or superior? What are the distinguishing physical, moral, and mental features of the Jewish race? Are their shared characteristics genetic, or are they factors of the life-style and culture of the Jewish people?

A challenge to the Jewish community was posed in 1914 by Karl Kautsky in his book Rasse und Judentum (Are the

Jews a Race?). Kautsky asserts the sooner it [Judaism] disappears, the better it will be, not only for society, but also for the Jews themselves."⁸⁵ It is Kautsky who sets "the tone for discussion of the Jewish question"⁸⁶ following World War I. Kautsky's study was one of the first to employ comparative scientific data regarding Jewish characteristics. It was modeled after a 1911 publication by a Jew, Dr. Maurice Fishberg.⁸⁷ Kautsky's data include, for example, comparisons of the percentage of straight, hooked, snub, and flat noses among Jews, and the Jewish types and color of hair.⁸⁸ His tables have been cited in racial studies of recent times.⁸⁹ Kautsky also analyzes Jewish occupations and economic status. He promoted negative Jewish stereotypes and labeled the Jews "the representatives of the worst aspects of capitalism". He specifically attributes to them materialism, love of money, and an aptitude in commerce.⁹⁰ In conclusion, he advocated the improvement of the inferior Jewish race by outbreeding with the non-Jewish blood of rural peasants, and by the shedding of Jewish peculiarities. Moreover, being a socialist, he felt that the Jewish race would "vanish" with the inevitable collapse of capitalism.⁹¹ He ardently rejects Zionism, for it only furthers the isolationism and negative characteristics of the Jewish

race. His recommendation was that the Jews take the "only path to salvation that is available to them: an energetic participation in the class struggle of the proletariat"⁹²

As racial science developed, the Jews could not help but be aware of its widespread influence and popularity. But the majority of highly assimilated Jews chose to ignore classifications which labeled them a separate race. These Jews regarded themselves as members of the racial grouping among whom they lived, such as Saxons and Bavarians, and did not consider themselves racially Jewish. In particular, Jewish veterans associations following World War I emphasized the patriotism, nationalism, and racial homogeneity of the Jews with the countries for which they fought.⁹³ The opposite extreme of the Jewish community, the Orthodox and Hasidic separatist Jews, concurred with the assimilationists in their rejection of racial identity. According to their philosophy, the "superior people" were those of any religion who obeyed God's commandments.⁹⁴

The Jewish community also consisted of those who could not ignore the implications of racial science, but did not agree with them. Thus, within the Jewish community scientific studies were being conducted to defend the Jewish people from accusations of being a degenerate race, and to promote Jewish assimilation. Maurice Fishberg's

work (1911), The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment, was one of the first scientific analyses of the Jewish race. Its stated goal was to "present the results of anthropological, demographic, pathological, and sociological investigations of the Jews."⁹⁵ Its data, based upon a comparison of over four thousand Jews representing four continents⁹⁶ has been widely quoted⁹⁷, and it was for sixty-three years the only such study written in English.⁹⁸ Fishberg's purpose was to disprove the idea, prevalent in his day, that the Jews cannot be assimilated because they "have maintained themselves in absolute racial purity for three or four thousand years."⁹⁹ Although he feels the Jews can be assimilated, he does not advocate "race suicide". He holds the opinion that it is advantageous for the Jews to be aware of their Zeitgeist (understood by Fishberg as tendencies), as they enter the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰ He admits there are Jewish characteristics, but rejects the notion of a distinct Jewish race. Rather, he believes Jewish tendencies are more a result of separatism than of race. He blames the slow pace of Jewish assimilation on Jewish isolationism and the disabilities imposed upon the Jews. His conclusion is optimistic: "this alleged gulf between the Jew and his non-Jewish neighbors, being purely social and having no

ethnic basis, has, however, been narrowed of late."¹⁰¹

Although the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community rejected a racial identity, there were segments who believed that Jews are, and should continue to be, a distinct race. However, their belief in race did not include the notion that one race was necessarily superior to another. For instance, Jewish scientists, identifying as a race, realized the efficacy of racial study and contributed to the German Journal for Racial and Social Biology. One such view was expressed by Max Jungmann in his article "Ist das Juedische Volk degeneriert?", published in the journal Die Welt on June 13, 1902. In this article, Jungmann cites the racial ideas of Gobineau as a defense against intermarriage and assimilation. Gobineau is cited because he did not regard the Jews as a degenerate race, but rather admired the Jews' racial purity. Jungmann's argument maintains that the Jews have survived and prospered because of their purity of blood, and that miscegenation must continue to be avoided. He also felt "the Jewish and Aryan races could not interpenetrate, they could only live side by side in mutual understanding."¹⁰²

Jewish racial identity was strongest among Zionists (as will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3).

Some Zionists understood the Jews as a Volk, meaning both race and nation. These Zionists thus opposed intermarriage and assimilation. They wanted to maintain the race's purity, prompting the Zionist leaders of Berlin's Jewish community in 1929 to "authorize a report identifying intermarriage as a threat to the racial purity of the stock".¹⁰³ In another instance, the Zionist, Elias Auerbach, wrote in 1907 "that while the Jewish race had been a mixture in the dim past, it was now pure because it had kept itself separate through the centuries."¹⁰⁴ Like Jungmann, Auerbach cites Gobineau, asserting that a Volk will not die so long as it can maintain its purity. The Austrian physician, anthropologist, and Zionist, Ignaz Zollschan, goes even further and brings ideas of Chamberlain into his work (1910), Das Rassenproblem unter besonderer Beruecksichtigung der Theoretischen Grundlagen der Juedischen Rassenfrage (The Racial Problem with Special Attention to the Theoretical Foundation of the Jewish Race). Zollschan asserts that a race cannot be influenced by the environment; its traits are wholly genetic. Although he thinks Chamberlain is wrong in his characterization of the Jews, he praises Chamberlain's idea of the "nobility that racial purity confers on a group, and the necessity of developing the race to ever greater

heights of heroism."¹⁰⁵ He maintains society evolved due to the contributions of a combination of pure races, including the Jews. Zollschan's belief in a Jewish race was shattered only in the years immediately preceding the Holocaust.¹⁰⁶ Although segments of the Zionist community, such as those cited, believed in a Jewish race, none were known to be racist: to believe in the superiority of any race over another.

The effect of racial theory upon the Jews was naturally most pronounced in Germany where the ideas of Aryanism and of a racial Volk developed. Although the Volkist movement paved the way for the Holocaust, ironically many Jews came to believe in the reality of the Volk. The Zionists transformed the idea of Volk into pride in the Jewish Volk, whereas some assimilationists tragically attempted to change themselves to fit the image of the German Volk.

It was the German Zionists who espoused a "Jewish version of Volkist ideology, complete with the claim that racial and historical influences had combined to evolve a uniquely Jewish character and typically Jewish behavior."¹⁰⁷ This Jewish Volk was characterized by its love of knowledge and ethical idealism. It also adjusted to change easily. Thus, Jews were supposedly genetically

suited for new movements such as capitalism or socialism. The Zionist anthropologist, Fritz Kahn, claimed that Moses, Jesus, and Marx were "different representatives of the same racially determined drive to serve mankind."¹⁰⁸ Though the Zionist conception of Volk was somewhat self-righteous, it is important to again note that German Zionism never "explicitly embraced the doctrine of racial superiority."¹⁰⁹

The second group, rather than exhibiting pride in their own accomplishments, envied the "superior" traits of the German Volk and strived to imitate them. This group was composed, in part, of assimilationists, theologians, and the youth. The assimilationists were deeply affected by the Volkist movement. They had great faith in their right to be included in the German nation, and perceived antisemitism to be aimed at the unassimilated, religious, or Eastern-European Jews, and not at themselves. These Jews initiated programs aimed at removing traces of their Jewish character so as to be in all respects true members of the Aryan people. One such program is described in Aharon Appelfeld's novel The Retreat.¹¹⁰ In this pre-World War II fictional story, a group of Jews who did not fit into either Jewish or secular society travel to a "retreat" (the Institute for Advanced Studies). In this remote

mountain setting outside of Vienna, these assimilated Jews remain for extended periods of time studying "lessons in assimilation", and trying to escape from their Jewish identity. Another example is the Jewish Turnerschaft (gymnastic association) founded in 1899 "in order to develop a healthy Jewish people, to counteract the concentration of Jews in the cities, to direct them into manual work and handicrafts, and to offset the image of the over-intellectualized Jew engaged in study and conniving in trade."¹¹¹ In order to promote Jewish assimilation, the Reform preacher of Hamburg, Eduard Kley, twisted Herder's understanding of Volk. He interpreted Herder's axiom that language is the bond of a race and stated "The Jews... had ceased to be a Volk after they had lost their own language. But the revival of religious piety after emancipation produced a new language for the Jews, which because it was German, united them in heart and feeling with their new fatherland."¹¹² This sector of the Jewish community failed to see why as Jews they could not be included within the German Volk.

And there were other Jews who greatly admired the German Volk, and yet could not reconcile their Jewishness with it. They maintained an unrealistic faith that they could be accepted as legitimate heirs of the German Volk.

Thus, in 1897, Walter Rathenau, himself an assimilated Jew, describes the Jews as "a foreign tribe set apart within the confines of German life, warm-blooded and gesticulating.... they do not form part of the German people, they are a foreign organism in its body."¹¹³ He recommended a "concerted effort by Jews to replace their Asiatic customs and habits with behavior more becoming to Germans."¹¹⁴ More tragic are the examples of Otto Weininger and Paul Nikolaus Cossman. Weininger, a Viennese philosopher, felt his Jewishness prevented him from being among the German Volks and in his desperation eventually committed suicide.¹¹⁵ Cossman, a baptized Jew, became a Jewish antisemite. He spread the rumor that "Jewish Marxists like Kurt Eisner and Rosa Luxemburg had stabbed an undefeated German army in the back." He spoke derogatorily about Jews until, ironically, he was murdered at Theresienstadt.¹¹⁶

The assimilationists were following the example articulated by the Jewish philosophers of the period. For instance, the Jewish philosopher Constantin Brunner (known also by the pen name of Leo Wertheimer) demanded that Jews become one with Germany. He believed history progressed toward unity, and that the Jews must choose between "ultimate amalgamation, either into Germany or Jewish nationalism." For him, the only practical choice was the

former.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Hermann Cohen claimed "the existence of a profound brotherhood between Judaism and Germanism, a brotherhood which was a basic characteristic of the German spirit."¹¹⁸ Like Kley, he employed Herder's concept of language to prove the compatibility of Jews within the German Volk. He equates Yiddish, the ancestral language of most Jews, with German. If the Jews and Germans share a common language, does it not mean they belong to a common Volk?¹¹⁹ The philosopher most credited with the linking of the Jews to the concept of Volk, Martin Buber, is the subject of the next chapter. Buber asserted that one must first be part of his Volk, and that then he could "proudly join the wider fellowship of all men of good will."¹²⁰ However, Buber felt that one's Jewish blood prevented one from ever being fully German.

The segment of Germany's Jewish community enticed and deceived the most by Volkist thought was the youth during the Weimar period. Growing up in a era of not-quite assimilation, they were striving to belong and be accepted, and in their desperation were grasping at whatever they thought would assist them. Thus, the Jewish young people, like the young people throughout Germany, were swept up by Volkist youth movements. They felt a need to break with bourgeois society and to revitalize their culture, and the

youth movements were a crutch to help them cope with the changes they sought. Particularly following World War I, German nationalism was heightened and as a result, many of the young Jews turned to Volkist ideology to formulate a German-Jewish identity.¹²¹ They naively believed they could be integrated into the "New Germany". One such group, The Black Troop, "sought to find a path toward Germany and... wholeheartedly adopted the Volkist ideology," including the belief that a German Jew should be a "soldierly and bundisch [aristocratic]" individual.¹²²

The idea that the Jews constituted a race thus divided the Jewish community. The majority of the Jewish community rejected the idea, and yet they were often forced to confront it. As racial and later Volkist ideology was in vogue, some Jews sought to adapt it to prove that a Jew can be part of the Aryan Volk. Their efforts ultimately were a failure. Still other Jews, in particular theologians and Zionists, adapted the idea of Volk to promote a Jewish race. Although this notion was a modern concept, Jewish theologians attempted to infuse it with ancient authority. These theologians grasped the concept of race as a means to revitalize Judaism as it was entering modernity and struggling to redefine itself.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER TWO

RACIAL THINKING WITHIN JEWISH THEOLOGY: THE EXAMPLES OF MARTIN BUBER AND FRANZ ROSENZWEIG

Martin Buber's Theory of "Jewish Blood"

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jews of Western Europe had clearly emerged into modernity. They were completely emancipated and most had adopted the culture of the nation in which they resided. Many had ceased to identify religiously as Jews, yet they still felt a connection to the Jewish people. The challenge that faced Jewish theologians was to find a basis for identity which could include all Jews. If the words "nation" and "religion" no longer encompassed all those who claimed to be Jewish, then perhaps the new concept of race was really what connected the Jewish people to one another.

The Jewish theologian often cited for identifying Judaism as a race is Martin Buber. Buber was greatly influenced by the Volkist ideology that had gained prominence in twentieth century Western Europe. He was not a Jewish philosopher as such, but a general philosopher whose theories, in particular I and Thou, contributed greatly to modern philosophy. In addition, Buber's works

do contain discussions of his view of Judaism and Jews. Buber truly felt himself to be part of both the Jewish and secular worlds. He believed himself to be a product of the German culture in which he lived. However, he also identified as a member of the Jewish Volk, and felt that connection was one which, having been born a Jew, would always remain with him. The notion that Buber espoused a racial conception of the Jews stems from his idea of a Jewish peoplehood based on ties of blood. Buber linked "blood" with the idea of Volk, a notion Alfred Rosenberg would later employ.

Buber's Jewish identity reflected the milieu in which he lived, an era in which the Jewish people experienced great advances. Thus, any discussion of Buber's racial identity must take into account the fact that Buber lived the majority of his life as a German national and an acculturated Jew. The notion of "Jewish blood" did not have the connotations it developed because of the Holocaust. Buber's definition of "Jewishness" was modified as his world changed; from the pre-Holocaust world in which he was a modern German Jew proud of Bildung [German culture] to his post-Holocaust life as a non-traditional Jew teaching at the Hebrew University and residing in the modern state of Israel.

Martin Buber was born February 8, 1878, in Vienna. When he was three years old, his parents divorced and he was sent to live in Lemberg, Galicia [now Lvov in Ukraine] with his paternal grandparents, Salomon and Adele Buber. His grandfather was a wealthy landowner and merchant, a leader in the Jewish community, and a proponent of the Haskalah. Salomon Buber was also known for his edition of Midrashim. It was while in his grandparents' home that Buber was introduced to the world of biblical and rabbinic thought and classical Hebrew. It was also during these years that Buber came into contact with the Hasidic movement which he later romanticized. Buber's grandparents were observant Jews, yet Buber abandoned most religious practices shortly after becoming a Bar Mitzvah. In 1892, at the age of fourteen, Buber began residing with his remarried father, Carl Buber, and continued living with his father and stepmother until his graduation from a Polish gymnasium in 1896. Soon afterward he began his studies at the University of Vienna. He also attended the Universities of Leipzig, Berlin, and Zurich before receiving his PhD from Vienna in 1904, after completing a dissertation on German mysticism. While in Zurich, he met and soon after married Paula Winkler, a German Roman Catholic who subsequently converted to Judaism. In 1900,

their child, Raphael, was born.¹

During Buber's university years, "the meaning of his Jewishness haunted him."² His search to bring meaning to Judaism led to his attraction to the newly emerging Zionist movement. Buber's Zionism, unlike the political Zionism of Theodore Herzl, was primarily cultural and spiritual. He wanted to encourage a revival of total Jewish existence, not merely of a Jewish political entity. Because of his emphasis on the cultural, Buber's Zionism is often associated with that of Ahad Ha'am.³ In 1901 Buber became editor of the Zionist periodical Die Welt, and in 1916 he founded, and edited until 1924, the popular Journal Der Jude. The aim of Der Jude was to further the spiritual and cultural realities of Zionism. In addition, Buber occupied the chair of Jewish Religion and Ethics at the University of Frankfurt from 1923-1933, the only such position at any German University. He became interested in Hasidic mysticism at the age of twenty-six, withdrew from Zionism for a period, and wrote several books on the message of Hasidism. Ich und Du (I and Thou), his most widely read philosophical work, was published in 1923. From 1925-1929, Buber worked with Franz Rosenzweig on a German translation of the Bible, and eventually completed it on his own in 1961. Buber remained in Germany even after the Nazi

accession to power, but in 1938 fled to Israel where he was appointed Professor of Social Philosophy at Hebrew University. He died in Israel on June 13, 1965 at the age of eighty-seven⁴

Buber's life was marked by his allegiance to seemingly contradictory beliefs. He was both a part of the rational Bildung that characterized German Jews at the beginning of the twentieth century, and yet withdrew somewhat from it and romanticized a modern variation of Hasidic mysticism. He strongly advocated the existence of a Jewish Volk, however his Jewish Volk and the German Volk were surprisingly similar in their emphasis on Bildung. He identified as both part of the Jewish Volk and the German Volk, but felt his Jewishness prevented him from ever being fully part of the German Volk. Yet, Buber was a universalist. He believed one's "Volk was only a stepping stone to a common humanity."⁵ And although a Zionist, Buber's nationalism was not chauvinistic. From the time of his arrival in Palestine, Buber advocated peaceful coexistence with the Arab inhabitants. Additionally, Buber identified as a Jew and yet rejected traditional Judaism. He felt the commandments were deadly to Judaism, as they did not allow for spontaneity or personal freedom. Buber's goal was to revitalize Judaism, but before he could

accomplish this aim, he had to first identify the bond that linked the Jewish people to one another, "the meaning of Judaism for the Jews".⁶

Buber's understanding of Judaism was most clearly articulated in his work, Drei Reden ueber das Judentum (Three Speeches [Addresses] on Judaism), published in 1911. They were originally delivered between 1909 and 1911 as a series of lectures to Bar Kochba, an association of Jewish students at the University of Prague. The students had approached Buber to share with them his understanding of "Herzl's thesis that the Jews were a people."⁷ In his first speech, "Judaism and the Jews", Buber attempted to answer the question of why Jews call themselves Jews. He began this address by asserting that the two traditional terms of identification, nation or religion, were no longer applicable. Although the Jews were historically a religion, Buber proclaimed that in his time "Jewish religiosity is a memory, perhaps also a hope, but it is not a presence."⁸ Similarly, Buber declared that Judaism was no longer a nation because Jewish nationality was a condition imposed upon the Jew by surrounding society, and not part of the individual Jew's essence. He alleged that if the surrounding culture allowed it, the Jewish nation "would no longer be a living substance, but merely

remembered suffering and a remembered image."⁹

After negating the two most common perceptions of Jewish identity, Buber presented his idea of a Jewish Volk based upon ties of blood. His contention was that every individual at some moment

discovers the succession of generations, when he envisions the line of fathers and mothers that has led up to him. He perceives then what commingling of individuals, what confluence of blood, has produced him, what round of begettings and births has called him forth. He senses in this immortality of the generations a community of blood, which he feels to be the antecedents of his "I".¹⁰

Buber placed great emphasis on the power of blood. He defined blood as the "deep-rooted nurturing force within individual man; that the deepest layers of our being are determined by blood, that our innermost thinking and our will are colored by it".¹¹ Buber believed "the Western Jew is a divided person because his community of land, speech, and custom is different from his community of blood."¹² This "alienated bifurcated existence (Zwiespaeltigkeit)" could only be resolved by both integrating "one's heritage (Abstammung) and affirming the special qualities of the

Jewish Volks."¹³ Buber maintained that the division will persist until Jews recognize that their blood connection to one another is the "deepest, most potent stratum of [their] being."¹⁴ Buber's theory of blood does however have an interesting addendum: the blood of the Jews, more than that of any other civilized people, is a mixture of environment and the blood connection to their past. The Jew is caught "between the memory of his lifespan and the memory of millennia; between the objectives of society and the task of releasing his own potential".¹⁵ The challenge facing modern Jews, asserted Buber, was to master the tension between the blood of their Jewish past and the imprints of secular culture upon this blood.

Buber's second address, "Judaism and Mankind," dealt with conflicts inherent within the Jewish individual because Jews lack a nation of their own. It is a Zionist treatise, and does not contain any racial references. However, in his third address, entitled "Renewal of Judaism", Buber again made statements which can be construed as racial. In this essay, his goal was to define the rebirth of humanity, which he envisioned was the aim of Zionism. He also attacked other movements which shared the Zionist aim of revitalizing Judaism, such as modern liberal Judaism. For Buber, Zionism was the only true means of

renewing Judaism. Within this lecture, Buber ascribed to the Jew certain characteristics as genetic. He specifically said, "the Jew is endowed with greater motor than sensory faculties; his motor system works more intensely than his sensory system. He displays more substance and greater personality in action than in apperception..."¹⁶ Here Buber's description of the Jew is strikingly similar to statements made by Israel Zangwill in 1848.¹⁷ Buber appears to be saying that the Jews are not only united by shared blood, but also that this "Jewish blood" causes the Jew to be more susceptible to certain traits.

From 1912 to 1914, Buber prepared a second set of addresses about Judaism: "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism", "Jewish Religiosity" and "Myth in Judaism". These addresses were published together in 1915 under the title Vom Geist des Judentums (The Spirit of Judaism)¹⁸ In both "The Spirit of the Orient and Judaism" and "Myth in Judaism" the culture and peoples of the East were contrasted with that of the West. For instance, Buber asserted, "I would define the Oriental type of human being... as a man of pronounced motor faculties, in contrast to the Occidental type... whose sensory faculties are greater than his motor."¹⁹ The contrast also was

accompanied by value judgements. At times, Buber sounded similar to Chamberlain. For example, he claimed that none of the great religious teachings originated in the Occident. The Occident received and spiritually reworked what the Orient had to offer.... At times, it succeeded in developing further what the Orient had to offer; but it was never able to oppose a symbol of its own to the towering symbols of Asia. Europe has ideologies of incomparable purity, certitude, and inner cohesion, but none of them possesses the elemental force of the great teachings.²⁰

Buber appears to prescribe the superiority of one civilization over another, but has reversed the traditional hierarchy. He postulated that the East, the origin of the Jewish people, was responsible for the great advances in religious thought. Heretofore, Chamberlain, Gobineau, and other racial thinkers had claimed that progress originated in the West.

Buber's claim that the religious systems adhered to by modern society were the products of the East was not definitively racial. Rather, Buber was also making a factual statement. The three major religious systems did originate in the East. Eastern civilization predated

Western, and these systems were already in existence when Western society evolved. The Eastern origins of religious thought were, perhaps, more a happenstance of history than a statement on the intellectual capacities of the East versus the West. Similarly, Buber's ascribing of certain characteristics to the Jews was also not necessarily racial. In 1911, approximately the same time that Buber wrote The Spirit of Judaism, Maurice Fishberg analyzed "Jewish tendencies". However, Fishberg's aim was to disprove racial theory. Thus he asserted that Jewish traits were the result of separatism and disabilities placed upon the Jews.²¹ Buber might also have been documenting an observable phenomenon without meaning it to be understood as an unchangeable racial condition.

Although it is possible to understand Buber as a non-racial thinker on the above two points, his "theory of blood" is more difficult. It is this blood theory that gained Buber his reputation of professing a racial conception of Judaism. Of the concept Maurice Friedman wrote, "of all the doctrines that Buber ever enunciated, this one of the 'blood' is perhaps the most problematic and the most difficult to comprehend."²² Niewyk, in his book The Jews of Weimar-Germany, claimed that Buber did indeed postulate a "mystical view of the Jewish people that

closely paralleled the development of non-rational Volkest ideas among Germans." Moreover, Niewyk alleged that it was due to Buber's influence and stature that "Zionist publications during the Weimar years were replete with favorable references to 'the mysticism of blood', 'racial genius' and the 'Jewish people's soul' (juedische Volksseele)".²³ Similarly, George Mosse, in Toward the Final Solution; A History of European Racism, wrote that "purity of blood had become the symbol for the purity of the race and its vigor," and that "Martin Buber uses the metaphor of blood to strengthen the national feeling of the Jews."²⁴

Despite the racial connotations of the word "blood", some writers have asserted that Buber's use of the term was not racial. Mosse believed that "for Buber these concepts were metaphors that defined nationality rather than race."²⁵ But within "Judaism and the Jews," Buber specifically stated the Jews had ceased to be a nation. Grete Schaeder, in The Hebrew Humanism of Martin Buber, asserted that "the idea of a community of blood and destiny that he developed in his address was not the same as that of the other rising nationalisms or of the mystique of blood and origin that was in vogue at the time."²⁶ But again, Buber not only clearly acknowledged the existence of

both a distinct German and Jewish Volk, in the Judischer Almanach, his definition of a Volk specifically emphasized blood: "A Volk is held together by primary elements: blood, fate--insofar, as it rests upon the development of blood--and culturally created power--insofar as it is conditioned by the individuality which arises from the blood."²⁷ Friedman blamed history for retrospectively infusing into Buber's theory of blood "the type of racial mysticism prevalent in Germany at the time and later in cruder form incorporated into the myths of Nazism." Although acknowledging that "Alfred Rosenberg and his lawyer cited Buber at the Nuremberg trials as evidence that the Nazi philosophy was part of a Zeitgeist that had no necessary connection with antisemitism"²⁸, Friedman maintained there was a sharp difference between Buber's concept of Jewish blood and Volkist ideology. According to him, Buber differs from the Volkist thinkers because Buber clearly stated that the Jewish people were a mixture. Furthermore, Buber, unlike the Nazis, did not emphasize the superiority of one blood group over another, but rather "the precious uniqueness of both."²⁹ But it is possible to believe in a Jewish race without the doctrines of racial superiority or of racial purity, as Buber exemplified. Friedman, however, dismissed Buber's concept of blood as

"nothing more or less than the link of the generations."³⁰

Buber's concept of blood is clearly problematic. By definition the primary factors differentiating one race from another are blood lines. Whether he meant it in a romantic sense, as some individuals have alleged, Buber did assert that the Jewish people are tied to one another through blood. Even Friedman's interpretation of "the link of the generations" is racial. Generations are linked genetically, through blood. However, the belief in a race does not also necessitate the belief in a racial hierarchy. The notions of race superiority and racial purity are not necessary correlations to Volkist ideology. Buber was an acculturated German at a time when Volkist ideology was in vogue. During the early years of the twentieth century, he accepted and propagated the belief in a Jewish Volk, a Jewish peoplehood based on ties of blood. For him, this separatism in no way negated the striving for a common humanity. Although he had no conception of how chauvinistic German nationalism would become, "from the very beginning, Buber was aware of the inner tension between Volkist nationalism and universalism."³¹ However, the terms, blood and race, only assumed negative connotations with the advance of Nazism. Buber viewed his Judaism as something which separated him from the

population at large. It was not a traditional religious identification as he had rejected the efficacy of the commandments. Moreover, religion was an insufficiently broad term to serve as a common denominator for all Jews. Likewise, "Jewish" did not designate either his nationality or the nationality of his listeners, both identified as German nationals. Science and anthropology had revealed the concept of genetics. Volkist ideology offered Buber a solution in his quest for the meaning of Judaism for the Jews.

However, to a post-Holocaust Jewry, the word "blood" conjures up images of the gas chambers. And as the nightmare of Nazism became a reality, Buber's writings no longer employed the word "blood". Already before Hitler's capture of power, in 1932 while teaching at a Jewish school in Berlin, Buber declared, "We Jews are a community based on memory." In this essay, "Why We Should Study Jewish Sources" [part of a collection entitled Israel and the World; Essays in a Time of Crisis], Buber conveyed this slightly different understanding of Jewish peoplehood,

A common memory has kept us together and enabled us to survive. This does not mean we that we based our life on any one particular past, even on the loftiest of pasts; it simply meant that

one generation passed on to the next a memory which gained in scope--for new destiny and new emotional life were constantly accruing to it--and which realized itself in a way we call organic. This expanding memory was more than a spiritual motif; it was a power which sustained, fed, and quickened Jewish existence itself. I might even say that these memories realized themselves biologically, for in their strength the Jewish substance was renewed.³²

In all of Buber's later writings the word "memory" replaced "blood". He no longer made references to a Jewish people connected by blood. Moreover, the post-Holocaust Buber asserted his earlier concept of "blood" was not racial, rather it is the backbone that holds up the selfhood of a people.³³ He made this assertion while living in Israel, having witnessed from afar the extremes to which Nazism distorted Volkist ideology.

The later Buber was not a racial thinker. For the post-Holocaust world, Nazism had transformed race and blood into permanently untouchable terms of identification. "Memory" allowed the Jews to define themselves as a distinct people, yet still permitted them to strive to become a part of the common humanity of which Buber spoke.

But the earlier Buber clearly had a conception of a Jewish race, although he never specifically used this term. Buber's conception was not of a superior or pure race. Nor was it an unchangeable condition. To the early Buber, the Jews were a people united by blood, but they were also equally part of a common humanity.

Buber's conception of a race clearly grew out of his environment, the environment where racial thinking developed and enjoyed popularity. Race was not a term historically associated with the Jews. But, as Buber illustrated, the terms historically used as identification by the Jews, nation or religion, were no longer adequate. It is thus not coincidental that a second Jewish theologian who identified the Jews as a race, Franz Rosenzweig, was Buber's contemporary.

Franz Rosenzweig's "Community of Blood"

Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber were more than contemporaries, they were also friends who collaborated on a German translation of the Bible. Yet there was a great variance in how each applied Judaism to his own life. Unlike Buber, Rosenzweig was, in his later years, an observant Jew. Furthermore, Rosenzweig throughout his life remained adamantly opposed to Zionism. However, despite these differences, both confronted the same dilemma: how to define the Jewish people in the modern period. And although they understood Judaism differently, they defined the Jewish people similarly, namely as a community linked by ties of blood.

Buber and Rosenzweig lived in Germany during an era when the concept of race was at the forefront of popular thought, and were clearly influenced by it. Thus, both theologians used the term "blood" as the defining characteristic of the Jewish people. Rosenzweig, in his best-known work Der Stern der Erlösung [The Star of Redemption], specifically labeled the Jews a "Blutgemeinschaft- community of blood." But again, like Buber, whether Rosenzweig's use of this expression was racial is somewhat ambiguous.

Unlike Buber, Franz Rosenzweig did not live to witness the horrors to which Nazi ideology distorted racial ideas. Rosenzweig died in Frankfort on December 9, 1929 at the age of forty-three, after suffering from a debilitating paralysis for nearly seven years. And thus, it will never be known if he would have substituted another word for "blood" given the reality of the Holocaust. Rather, Rosenzweig lived his life as an acculturated German Jew during a period when Jews, for the most part, enjoyed acceptance and tolerance.

Rosenzweig was born on December 25, 1886 in Cassel, Germany. His father, Georg, was a successful manufacturer. His mother, Adele, enjoyed German literature and the arts. He was thus raised in a wealthy, cultured, and, Jewishly speaking, assimilated environment, typical of middle and upper class German Jews of the period. His childhood identification with Judaism was nominal. Rosenzweig graduated from a gymnasium in Cassel in 1905. He studied medicine from 1905 until 1907, but then concentrated instead upon philosophy and modern history. In 1912, upon completion of his dissertation, concerning Hegel's political theory, Rosenzweig enrolled in the University of Leipzig to study jurisprudence. But what was to have greater influence upon his life was his encounter and

subsequent conversations with a friend and distant relative Eugen Rosenstock.³⁴

The years 1913-1914 were pivotal in Rosenzweig's life. It was during this period that he wrestled with the meaning of his Judaism, and after nearly abandoning it, emerged with a strong commitment to the Jewish religion. Rosenzweig's affirmation of Judaism was due, in large measure, to a challenge posed by Rosenstock for Rosenzweig to either justify his Judaism or convert to Christianity. Rosenstock had been raised Jewish in an assimilated environment similar to Rosenzweig's, but Rosenstock had converted to Protestantism. The two had many discussions, during which Rosenzweig was subjected to intensive intellectual pressure to convert. Impressed by the sincerity of Rosenstock, Rosenzweig allowed himself to be convinced during a all-night conversation on July 7, 1913. Rosenzweig felt he could no longer justify remaining a Jew, as the religion contained no meaning for him. Moreover, Zionism was not an option, as politically and culturally Rosenzweig regarded himself thoroughly German. Although Rosenzweig capitulated to Rosenstock, his stipulation was that he would convert to Christianity "as a Jew" and not as an irreligious "pagan." Thus, Rosenzweig attended High Holiday services in 1913. He was unaffected by Rosh

Hashana services in his native Cassel, but on October 11, 1913 during Yom Kippur services at a small, orthodox synagogue in Berlin, something happened which changed him.³⁵ He never explicitly wrote or spoke of this experience, but he alluded to it when he wrote of his decision to remain a Jew: "[conversion to Christianity] no longer seems necessary to me and... no longer possible."³⁶

Following this decisive turn in his life, Rosenzweig began learning about Judaism. This newly discovered interest in Judaism grew and deepened for the rest of his life. He remained in Berlin, studying Jewish philosophy with Hermann Cohen. It was also during this period that the friendship between Rosenzweig and Buber began. With the outbreak of World War I, Rosenzweig interrupted his studies, and for most of the war served on the Balkan front. During this time, Rosenzweig came in contact with Jewish communities which he had never previously encountered. First, in Ushku, Yugoslavia, in the spring of 1917, he met Sephardic Jews whose Judaism he described as more natural and integral to their lives than that of the German Jews. In the spring of 1918, he encountered Eastern European Jews in Rembertow, near Warsaw, and was similarly impressed by the strength and vitality of their commitment to Judaism, as compared to German Jewry.³⁷

Additionally, Rosenzweig wrote extensively while serving on the Eastern front. He continued corresponding with Rosenstock on the validity of Judaism vis-a-vis Christianity. He also wrote an article, "Zeit ist's" ["It is time"], in the form of an open letter to Cohen. In "Zeit ist's", Rosenzweig addressed the problem of Jewish education in Germany, and recommended the foundation of a modern Jewish academy to train "scholar-teachers". Furthermore, his magnum opus, Der Stern der Erloesung, was composed while in trenches, in barracks, on trains, and in military hospitals. This profound theological and philosophical work was written on postcards and letters which were sent to his mother. Begun on August 22, 1918, it was completed on February 16, 1921, and published in Frankfurt am Main in 1921.³⁸

Upon return to Germany, in 1919, Rosenzweig founded in Frankfurt am Main the Freies Juedisches Lehrhaus, an academy for Jewish studies similar to that outlined in "Zeit ist's". He published his dissertation, Hegel und der Staat [Hegel and the State] in 1920. Also that same year, on March 29, he married Edith Hahn, and their son, Raphael Nehemiah was born September 8, 1922. In July, 1921, Rosenzweig wrote, Buechleinf vom gesunden und kranken Menschenverstand [Understanding the Sick and the Healthy],

his last essay as a healthy man. Just two or three months after it was published, Rosenzweig ironically was stricken with a strange paralysis. In February 1922, he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a paralyzing disease leading ultimately to death. Rosenzweig continued working, despite the paralysis, by use of a specially constructed typewriter. The nearly seven years of his paralysis were years of great creativity. But then, in 1929, he succumbed to the disease.³⁹

The events of Rosenzweig's life were certainly decisive in shaping his theological and philosophical views. His self-proclaimed "main work" Der Stern der Erloesung depicted his own struggle to understand Judaism and define its relation to Christianity. In broader terms, it also represents his highly original and extremely creative conception of reality in which a six-pointed Star is employed as a symbol of the universe. In this metaphor, Rosenzweig labeled one of the triangles "elements", meaning substances out of which reality comes into existence. Its three points are God, humanity, and the world. The second triangle he called "courses", denoting actions by the elements which link them to one another. Rosenzweig completed the metaphoric star with his theory that "God and man are linked by God's act of revelation, God and the

world are linked by God's act of creation, and man and the world are linked by man's act of redemption".⁴⁰ Thus, the ultimate meaning of All is the end configuration, the Star of David. And eternal truth is the star in its totality: "it is God, man, and the world unified within their elements as single entities that, through their course, are unified into a single reality that transcends both elements and courses."⁴¹ The order of the Parts and Books of The Star are intentionally parallel, "each part of this work is by design connected with every other part, and all of the parts together form a picture that does not refer to anything outside of itself."⁴²

Just as the design of The Star was complex, so were its goals. The Star was written for both philosophical and polemical reasons. The polemical dilemma Rosenzweig addressed was the question that had consumed him during his life: "Why does it make sense for an intelligent, civilized, well-educated, modern German Jew to continue to be a Jew", and not become a liberal Protestant?⁴³ This question was most specifically addressed in Part III of The Star: "The Configuration or The Eternal Hyper-Cosmos" in which Rosenzweig was the first Jewish theologian to conclude that Judaism and Christianity are "equally true and valid views of reality."⁴⁴ Both religions [he called

them forms] fit his criteria of the connectiveness of Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. According to Rosenzweig, Christianity and Judaism serve different functions. And as a Jew, Rosenzweig was content that he could know God and Truth without needing the intermediary of Jesus. The Star was thus Rosenzweig's system to free Judaism from the "curse of historicity"⁴⁵, and articulate what he believed was Judaism's true theology.

In order to unveil this true theology, Rosenzweig needed first to define Judaism. And it was the definition he presented that led to claims that he espoused a racial understanding of the Jewish people. But, it is perplexing that Rosenzweig, whose primary concern was to validate the Jewish religion and who embraced traditional Judaism, is often associated with defining Judaism as a race, and not as a religion. Yet Rosenzweig was painfully aware of Jews, like Buber, his parents, and even himself in the years prior to 1913, who maintained an identification with Judaism, and yet rejected it as a religion. Did Rosenzweig articulate a racial understanding of Judaism in order to be inclusive of these Jews? Did he really intend to characterize the Jews as a race in the tradition of the Volkist ideology of the era? Or was his definition understood as racial precisely because Volkist thought

enjoyed popularity at the time The Star was published?

Rosenzweig articulated his understanding of the Jewish people in Part III, Book I of The Star, entitled "The Fire or The Eternal Life". Within it, he placed great emphasis on the Jews as an "Eternal People" linked by blood:

There is only one community in which such a linked sequence of everlasting life goes from grandfather to grandson, only one which cannot utter the "we" of its unity without hearing deep within a voice that adds: "are eternal." It must be a blood-community, because only blood gives present warrant to hope for a future. If some other community, one that does not propagate itself from its own blood, desires to claim eternity for its "we", the only way open to it is to secure a place in the future. All eternity not based on blood must be based on the will and on hope. Only a community based on blood feels the warrant of eternity warm in its veins even now.⁴⁶

For Rosenzweig, blood denotes eternity. Because the Jews left their land, and relied completely upon their blood, they are guaranteed survival. Moreover, they are different from all other groups because they are tied to one another by blood, and not land or spirit:

What holds true generally for other groups united through blood relationship over and against communities of the spirit, holds for our people in particular... The people of the world are not content with the bonds of blood. They sink their roots into the night of earth, lifeless in itself but the spender of life, and from the lastingness of earth they conclude that they themselves will last. Their will to eternity clings to the soil and to the reign over the soil, to the land. The earth of their homeland is watered by the blood of their sons, for they do not trust in the life of a community of blood, in a community that can dispense with the anchorage of solid earth. We are the only ones who trusted in blood and abandoned the land.⁴⁷

Thus, Rosenzweig postulated, the Jews are beyond history. As his image of Judaism as the fire within the Star suggested "the Jews are the eternal core that are not subject to the universal movement of world history."⁴⁸

Rosenzweig's conception of the Jews as "beyond history" was a polemic against two groups whom he saw as threatening; first, against Christian missionary efforts, and second, but less explicitly, against Zionists. In response to Christians, Rosenzweig argued that Judaism is

not comparable. Christians choose to embrace Christianity. It is an act within history, and not something into which one is born. Conversely, one's attachment to Judaism is a blood tie, and as such is beyond history. Rosenzweig thus negated Christian charges that Judaism is an inferior stage in history's development. His reason for objecting to Zionism was similar. He specifically stated the bond of soil is more fragile than the link of blood. According to Rosenzweig, both Christianity and Zionism demand that the Jew reenter history and encounter the imperfections that entails.⁴⁹

The reasons why Rosenzweig asserted that the Jews are a "community of blood" are evident. It was a strong rebuttal to both Christians and Zionists. But this apparent biological definition conveys the idea that the Jews are more than a religion, and that notion is difficult to reconcile with Rosenzweig's supposed intentions. If he merely wanted to affirm the validity of the Jewish religion vis-a-vis Christianity, why would he attribute to the Jews a connection to one another which transcends theological convictions? Moreover, by asserting that a blood tie is stronger than ties to the soil, he was not only excluding himself from Zionism, but also from his right to complete equality as a German national. The idea of a "blood

community" suggested that one's blood link with the Jewish people was more formidable than one's connection to the German nation.

Thus, the more puzzling question remains: "Did Rosenzweig intend "community of blood" to be understood as racial?". As was the case with Buber, Rosenzweig's notion of blood was problematic: "nothing is more surprising in Rosenzweig's thoughts on Judaism than his idea that the survival of the Jewish people... is due to the community of blood, on which alone the Jew relies."⁵⁰ Steven Schwarzschild described Rosenzweig's definition of the Jews as "religious Cannanitism" saying the Jewish people are defined "in its constitution and continuity exclusively in terms of blood-relations."⁵¹ Schwarzschild also asserted "it is a biological bias which he [Rosenzweig] shares with his friend Martin Buber. There is an element of racialism involved in this conception..."⁵² Similarly, Eleiezer Berkovits concurred in Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism, "in Rosenzweig's thoughts the blood community appears as something naturally given," and this "idea sounds almost racist"⁵³. Berkovits rationalized that "metaphysical preoccupation could blind a brilliant mind to facts".⁵⁴ He argued that Rosenzweig misunderstood the "lifestream of Judaism" as blood alone, and not spirit or

faith:

It is true, Judaism is against mixed marriage, but only when the non-Jewish partner does not convert to Judaism or converts without inner conviction. Mixed marriage is frowned upon not because of the mixing of blood, but because of the mixing of faiths.⁵⁵

Perhaps Rosenzweig was so absorbed in his goal of uncovering a palatable theology of Judaism that in the process he distorted traditional Judaism to fit his notions.

The intent of Rosenzweig's notion of blood is vague and questionable. But blood was an all encompassing term, and one which in Rosenzweig's time did not have negative connotations. In contrast, "spirit" was a Hegelian term, and Rosenzweig had rejected Hegelian philosophy. "Faith", on the other hand, was associated with Christianity. Moreover, Rosenzweig was completely alienated from the term "nation" because of its secular connotations.

Although given the above context, it is easier to understand why Rosenzweig would consider the Jews a community of blood, he made "some very astounding statements,"⁵⁶ which is surprising as Rosenzweig was in most respects a profound and careful thinker. Yaakov

Fleishman understood Rosenzweig's use of "blood" as non-racial. Fleishman claimed "this singularly unsuccessful term strives to express the fact that Israel's election by God and its clear consciousness of this election actually entered the bloodstream of the people."⁵⁷ Fleishman thus interpreted blood as a figurative way of describing the eternal covenant between Israel and God.

However, certain of Rosenzweig's remarks do lead to the allegation that his overall conception of the Jewish people was undeniably biological. For instance, Rosenzweig concluded that Christianity's self-preservation is dependent upon proselytism, whereas the eternal character of Judaism depends upon "shutting the pure spring of blood off from foreign admixture."⁵⁸ Schwarzchild connected Rosenzweig's aversion to Jewish proselytism to "his emphasis on the 'blood' as the carrier of Jewish continuity."⁵⁹ In addition, Dan Clawson, in his article "Rosenzweig on Judaism and Christianity", concluded Rosenzweig believed "Judaism had not sought converts... [because it] had been defined by biological continuity."⁶⁰ Schwarzchild further noted that "this biological definition of Israel leads to one other conspicuous feature of Rosenzweig's system of thought: "If one were to compile an index to all his writings, to the best of my knowledge no

entry could be made under 'proselytism'. Naturally-- how could Jewish missionarizing be harmonized with the exclusiveness of biological blood ties?"⁶¹

Did Rosenzweig espouse a racial conception of the Jews? He did live during an era when Volkist ideology enjoyed popularity, and like his friend and contemporary Martin Buber, he claimed the Jews shared ties of blood. Despite the seeming inconsistency, for Rosenzweig, Judaism was foremost a religion, and yet he also subscribed to the idea that the Jewish people were a "blood community". He declared that it was the "blood, i.e. the biological entity and continuity, sanctified by the Sinaitic covenant, which makes it [Israel] a nation."⁶² Living in the pre-Holocaust world, Rosenzweig had encountered few negative associations with the concept of race. Rather, he employed this concept to bolster his arguments for the validity of the Jewish religion in the modern, predominantly Christian world in which he lived. Rosenzweig's conception of race was not the same as that of Chamberlain, Gobineau, or even Buber. Rosenzweig's originality is that he "teaches that Judaism is the faith of the Jewish people which, in turn, is defined by its blood ties."⁶³ For Rosenzweig, race was not a substitute for religion, but its bearer.

ENDNOTES

Chapter Two

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CHAPTER THREE

RACIAL IDEOLOGY WITHIN ZIONISM:

VOLKIST THOUGHT IN WESTERN EUROPE

AND THE RACIAL NATIONALISM OF JABOTINSKY IN THE EAST

German Zionism and the Question of a Jewish Race

Just as Franz Rosenzweig understood the newly emergent concept of race as the bearer of religion, segments of the Zionist community felt race was the sustainer of the Jewish nation. From its beginnings, Zionism was often equated with the notion of a Jewish race. However, the association between Zionism and a Jewish race was exemplified differently in Western and Eastern Europe. In Western Europe, a Jewish racial identity was most strongly linked to German Zionism and its notion of a Jewish Volk, whereas in Eastern Europe it was connected to Revisionist Zionism and its founder Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky. The Revisionists were the first Jews to identify as a race who were not from Western Europe. The Revisionists were thus also unique in that they were not influenced directly by Volkist ideology.

Although the Revisionists were not the originators of the notion of a Jewish race, Zionism is often equated with racial ideas because of their well-publicized, radical

exploits. Yet, The Union of Zionist-Revisionists was not formed until 1925, whereas as early as 1862, Moses Hess (1812-1875) propagated a racial definition of Judaism as the basis for a program of Jewish nationalism. Hess was known as a Socialist and died before Zionism existed as a political force. Yet, Hess asserted that

the Jewish race is a primary race which, despite climatic influences, accommodates itself to all conditions and retains its integrity. The Jewish type has remained indelibly the same throughout the centuries... Judaism as an nationality has a natural basis which cannot, like a confession of faith, be supplanted by another. A Jew still continues to belong to Jewry by virtue of his racial origin even though his ancestors may have become apostates.¹

Although born in Bonn, Hess did not feel at home in Germany, and was fearful of German antisemitism. He realized "the racial antagonism of the Germans towards the Jews was a deep, instinctive force, far more powerful than any racial argument."² Rejecting the optimism of his fellow German Jews, Hess predicted that

because of the Jew-hatred which surrounds him, the German Jew is only too eager to cast aside everything

Jewish and to deny his race... Even baptism itself does not save him from the nightmare of German Jew-hatred... The Germans hate the religion of the Jews less than they hate their race. Neither 'radical' reform, nor baptism, neither education nor emancipation completely unlocks for the German Jew the portals of social life. They, therefore, seek to deny their [racial] origin.³

The Jewish community of Western Europe was, however, in Hess's time infatuated with liberal, Enlightenment ideology which declared Jews could be accepted as equal members of the society in which they lived. They were unwilling to heed Hess's negative analysis and therefore, in his own day, Hess's ideas were largely ignored.

As liberalism faded and complete acceptance of the Jews became questionable, the Jewish nationalistic ideas of Hess came to the forefront in the emerging Zionist movement. In 1896, Theodore Herzl published Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State: An attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question), thereby transforming Zionism into a mass movement and a political force. Herzl was an acculturated Western European Jew, born in Budapest in 1860. In the pattern followed by many young middle-class Jews of that era, Herzl entered the University of Vienna in 1878 to

study law, a "respectable professional career". Until his university years, Herzl had never considered his Jewishness a "problem".⁴ Unlike the Revisionists, Herzl, was directly influenced by Volkest ideology. However, even as he became aware of those who viewed the Jews as a distinct Volk, he felt any accompanying antisemitism was merely "ein verschlepptes Stueck Mittelalter (a misplaced piece of the Middle Ages) which would inevitably be repudiated by a mankind growing toward Enlightenment."⁵

Theodore Herzl, the "founder of Zionism", is not generally associated with racial ideas. His later writings do not contain references to a Jewish race, and in fact, in his later writings he clearly repudiated racial ideology. For instance, he asserted the Jews "are a historical unit, a nation with anthropological diversities... No nation has uniformity of race."⁶ However, Herzl's initial understanding of Judaism was as a race. Before Herzl conceived of his vision for a Jewish nation, he identified as an assimilated German Jew. And thus when on February 1882, while a university student, Herzl read an account of the persecutions endured by Jews in the Middle Ages, the reflections he wrote in his diary indicate that he believed the Jews were a race:

The enforced isolation of the Jews had prevented the physiological improvement of their race through cross-breeding with others... Basically the Jews have a different physical and mental physiognomy because they interbred rarely with members of other nations... Crossbreeding of the Occidental races with the so-called Oriental one on the basis of a common state religion-- this is the desirable great solution.⁷

During these early years, Herzl employed a racial analysis and solution for the Jewish problem. Sanford Ragins in his book, Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany 1870-1914, asserted that Herzl assumed that after the foundation of the Jewish state, the diaspora "Jewish problem would be solved by total disappearance of Jewish distinctiveness (here defined as racial in character) through assimilation (here achieved through intermarriage or 'cross-breeding')".⁸

Although Herzl's later Zionism was devoid of these racial notions, subsequent proponents of Zionism saw a correlation between a Jewish race and a Jewish nation. In many German Zionist tracts the terms Volk [people], Rasse [race], and Stamm [lineage] were used interchangeably, thereby blurring their distinctions. Thus, some German Zionists, in response to the Volkest assertion that the

Jews were defined by a "racial essence which set them apart from 'authentic' Germans,"⁹ spoke of a separate Jewish Volk understood by them as people, nation, and race.

However, it is important to note that many Zionists did not equate Volk with race. In particular, the majority of early German Zionists [those who embraced Zionist ideology before the emergence of virulent antisemitism] advocated the creation of a Jewish nation, and yet adamantly rejected Volkist allegations that the Jews were a distinct race. For example, Max Bodenheimer (1865-1940) was careful to only employ the term Stamm as a designation for the Jews. Furthermore, after attending the sixth Zionist conference in 1903 and witnessing widespread acceptance by younger Zionists of a racial definition of Judaism, Franz Oppenheimer (1864-1943) declared, "I expressly do not say: blood, because the Jews, like all other peoples, are compounded out of the most variegated blood currents or, if one positively insists, races... Scientifically, it's absurd to speak of a Jewish race."¹⁰

One of the first Zionists to accept the idea of a distinct Jewish race was Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937), who on January 23, 1892 was also the first to apply the word Zionism to a specific political goal.¹¹ Birnbaum, a co-worker of Herzl, maintained that the "history of Man

[is] as a Rassenwesen (racial being)". He believed that "both nationality and race are realities of social organization that can be neither ignored nor wished away." Thus, he argued:

the firm foundation of nationality is always and everywhere race, [whether] a pure or a mixed race. When a race becomes ennobled in the course of its development by going through [the stage of a] RassenKultur, it becomes a nationality. Nationality in itself has nothing to do with the state or with language.... Since state and language are not among the essential persistent features of nationality, there can be no doubt about the contemporary existence of the Jewish nationality. For no one can contest its racial quality.¹²

Birnbaum was responding to claims that the Jews were not a nation because they lacked land and a language. In contrast, he maintained race defines a nation, and the Jews have always constituted a race.

As the notion of the German Volk became more exclusive and incorporated antisemitic propaganda, German Zionists increasingly came to regard themselves as members of a Jewish race. In particular, assimilated Jewish youth, rejected by their German peers because of their Jewishness

and yet having little or no grounding in the religious aspects of Judaism, were drawn to Zionism. If the broadened Volkist ideology dictated that as Jews they could never be accepted as part of the German Volk, then they concluded they needed to establish a Jewish nation for the Jewish Volk, which they equated with race.

As has been discussed previously, the question of whether the Jews constituted a race was a divisive issue for the German Jewish population of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. It not only divided German Jewry, it was also hotly debated among German Zionists. The first published effort by the Zionist movement to address this question occurred in 1897 in the Zionist periodical Die Welt, which printed an article by Leopold Laufer entitled "Are the Jews a Race?". In this article, Laufer reiterated both positive and negative arguments concerning a Jewish racial identity, and then concluded: "We do not consider the Jews to be an unmixed race but rather a Volk with many anthropological, racial characteristics."¹³ Thus, Laufer did not provide a decisive response, but rather "without denying a racial component in Jewishness, refused to give race primary status."¹⁴

After this initial, ambiguous response to the question, the articles appearing in Die Welt became more

assertive and more sympathetic to the idea that the Jews were a race. For example, Die Welt reprinted in its entirety an article by the anthropologist Heinrich Driesmans entitled "Ethos und Physis der juedischen Rasse". Driesmans' article, asserting that the Jews should not be fearful of discussing the racial question as most anthropologists regarded the Jews as a "model race", was prefaced with a note claiming that "since the question of a Jewish race is of such great importance, they [the editors of Die Welt] considered it advisable to have authorities with different points of view express their opinions."¹⁵ Moreover, Die Welt published an article by Dr. M. Kretzmer entitled the "Anthropological, Physiological, and Pathological Characteristics of the Jews". This article cited "scientific studies of skulls exhumed from ancient Jewish cemeteries and the depictions of Jews on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments" to reach the conclusion that "in ancient and modern times, the Judenstamm had cultivated and preserved characteristics throughout its exile from the homeland and during the dispersion through the rest of the world in a way known to us from no other Menschenstamm."¹⁶ Kretzmer argued that the Judenstamm was a unique, and completely pure race. Furthermore, he enumerated descriptive characteristics of the Jews, such as hair and

eye color and average height. In addition, as has been noted in chapter one¹⁷, Max Jungman's article, "Ist das Juedische Volk degeneriert?" appeared in Die Welt in 1902. In this article, Jungman modified Gobineau's notions of pure and impure races to affirm that Jewish traits are carried in pure Jewish blood. Therefore, if the Jews wish to be completely assimilated, they must mix their blood with that of impure races. Jungman concluded that "in most cases, it rather results in a deterioration of the human species", a degenerate nation.¹⁸

In addition to the articles in Die Welt, Western European Zionists published other studies concerning the notion of a Jewish race. The most comprehensive examination was Ignaz Zollschan's Das Rassenproblem unter besonderer Beruecksichtigung der theoretischen Grundlagen der juedischen Rassenfrage (The Racial Problem with Special Attention to the Theoretical Foundation of the Jewish race) published in Vienna in 1910.¹⁹ Zollschan promoted Zionism specifically because he viewed it as the only means to insure continued survival of the "pure Jewish race." Furthermore, Zollschan incorporated Chamberlain to bolster his notion of race purity. He wrote:

Chamberlain's book, The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century, has been attacked with a

vehemence that has been directed at few other works; and in most cases the attacks were well founded. But the turning point, the nucleus of Chamberlain's system, namely, his emphasis of the ennobling effects of race purity and of the destructive results of race chaos is unquestionably sound.²⁰

Zollschan expressed these ideas again in his essay, The Cultural Value of the Jewish Race, in which he concluded that it was inevitable that the Jewish race

a nation of pure blood... and of deeply rooted, virtuous habits, would develop an exceptional intellectual activity. Furthermore, the prohibition against mixed marriages provided that these highest ethnical treasures should not be lost, through admixture of less carefully bred races. This prohibition brought it about that heredity, which is the first factor in the formation of a race, should exercise its power in a most beneficial way, and thus the racial qualities are not only transmitted from generation to generation, but are gradually heightened.²¹

Similarly, Arthur Ruppin in his work, The Jews of Today, (first edition appeared in 1904, second in 1911) claimed

the Jews are a race. Like Zollschan, he regarded "the revival of Israel as a political entity as the only means of combating the disappearance of the Jewish spirit."²²

Ruppin maintained he had

proved sufficiently... the high intellectuality of the Jews without reserve, and [we] are justified in desiring to preserve this high human type, the equal of any race of mankind, as a separate entity, unmixed, because this is the only possible way to preserve and develop the race-character.²³

Thus, both Ruppin and Zollschan believed in the existence of a Jewish race, and both advocated Zionism as the sole means of insuring the continuation of the Jewish race.

The books of Zollschan and Ruppin as well as the articles in Die Welt exemplified the concern of Western European Zionists with formulating a definition of Jewish racial identity. Arguments in favor of a Jewish race strengthened the Zionist conviction that the Jewish question could not be solved by assimilation, and that antisemitism would persist so long as the Jews lived as a minority without their own nation. However, Die Welt, as a representative of Herzlian Zionism, was more concerned with countering notions of the physical degeneracy of the Jews than incorporating racial thinking into the Zionist

platform. Even those Zionists who affirmed the existence of a Jewish race needed to eradicate antisemitic charges that the Jews were an inferior race, as "if the Jews were ineradicably degenerate by virtue of fixed racial traits, the realization of Zionist aims would be impossible."²⁴

Many of these same German Zionists, however, believed the Eastern European Jews were physically debilitated. Thus they faced the difficult challenge of showing that these physical imperfections were the result of environment and not racial in origin. They needed to prove that given an environment free of disabilities [such as the assimilated Jews of Germany experienced] these Eastern European Jews would no longer exemplify "inadequacies". Many German Jews convinced themselves that antisemitism was directed only at the East European Jews. Some of them, thus, embraced Zionism solely as a solution to the problems posed by large numbers of Eastern European Jews emigrating to Germany. They advocated migration to Palestine as an alternative for the Jews of Eastern Europe, but never seriously regarded it as a viable option for themselves.

As has been shown, the question of a Jewish race was primarily debated in Germany where a segment of German Zionists adapted ideas of a Jewish Volk to counter the resurgence of antisemitism. But, Zionism only attracted a

small percentage of Germany's Jewish population. Most German Jews remained firmly committed to the belief that as acculturated Jews they would be accepted as equal Germans. Furthermore, the Jewish population of Germany in the late nineteenth century was only one tenth the size of that of the Jewish community of Russia. The vast majority of Jews lived in Eastern Europe, in the small villages of Galicia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, and White Russia.²⁵ These Eastern European Jews differed in many respects from their Western European brethren. And, in Eastern Europe, Jewish nationalist ideas were propagated, even prior to the publication of Herzl's Der Judenstaat, and independently from the racial debate that dominated German Zionism.

Racial Nationalism's Roots in Eastern Europe: The Zionism
of Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky and the Revisionists

Although from its inception Zionism was often equated with racial ideas, racial thought characterized Western European Zionism to a much greater extent than it did Eastern European Zionism. In the West, Zionism became entangled in the debate over whether the Jews constituted a race, as Volkist thinking was part of the popular ideology of Western Europe. However, any discussion of Zionism must also examine the widely divergent causes that differentiated Eastern European adherents from those of Western Europe. Prior to the Russian Revolution, most Jews of Eastern Europe were confined within the Pale of Settlement unemancipated, without opportunity to assimilate even if they had wished. However, for the majority of Eastern European Jews, Judaism unquestionably signified their religion. And yet, Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky and other Eastern Europeans joined Jewish nationalistic groups and developed ideas of Judaism as a designation of a nation and then a race.

Although Zionism developed in nineteenth century Western Europe as a response to antisemitism and in particular the Dreyfus affair, the more urgent need for

Zionism was felt in the East where the Jews suffered from oppression and persecution. Even before the word "Zionism" was coined and prior to the Russian pogroms of 1881, Peretz Smolenskin spoke of a Jewish national revival and the term Palestinofilstvo (Hibat Zion) was widely employed in Russia to designate those who wanted to recreate a Jewish state.²⁶ After 1881, many Russian Jews realized they would never be completely accepted in Russia, for as Moses Lieb Lilienblum concluded: "aliens we are and aliens we shall remain".²⁷ Many looked to the Goldine Medina (Golden Land) of America, yet some like Lilienblum felt "the Jewish question could only be solved if the Jews were transferred to a country where they constituted the majority."²⁸

Zionist activity in Eastern Europe prior to Herzl's infusing it with an international political goal, was characterized by Leo Pinsker's pamphlet Autoemanzipation, published anonymously in Berlin in 1882. Pinsker never spoke of the Jews as a race. Rather, he blamed Judeophobia (fear of Jews or antisemitism) which he regarded as a "psychic aberration", a heredity characteristic among non-Jews that could not be eradicated by reason or logic. His solution was practical: organize a national conference to purchase territory to settle several million Jews. Pinsker's idea was enthusiastically grasped

by the young Russian Jews who belonged to Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) chapters. These "associations for the promotion of Jewish emigration to Palestine" had been founded independently of one another in 1881-1882 as a reaction to the pogroms. Without political goals, nor real preparation for the rigors of agricultural life, many young adherents of Hovevei Zion emigrated to the land of Israel. With financial support from the Rothschilds, these young Russian idealists founded the first modern Jewish settlements in Palestine. Despite their efforts and enthusiasm, Hovevei Zion was organizationally and politically a failure. Their ideas did spread beyond Russia, but prior to Herzl, there was no mass movement nor did the notion of emigration to Palestine have wide appeal.²⁹ Hovevei Zion was later incorporated into the larger and politically orientated Zionist movement, whose leaders were predominantly Western European Jews.

In its beginnings, Eastern European Zionism was thus motivated primarily by the desire to establish a safe haven for the Jews, which many believed could only occur in a Jewish nation. The ideology of a Jewish race was in most respects unique to Western European Zionists. However, this idea received widespread attention in the East by the actions and philosophy of Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, the

creator and leader of Revisionist Zionism. Jabotinsky was a contemporary of Buber and Rosenzweig. He was born on October 18, 1880, just two years after Buber and six years before Rosenzweig. However, his life differed significantly from those of Buber and Rosenzweig, as Jabotinsky was born in Odessa, on Russia's Black Sea.

Vladimir Jabotinsky was raised primarily by his mother, Khava. His father Yona, a merchant, died when Jabotinsky was six years old. Jabotinsky learned Hebrew, but the basis of his education was in Russian schools. At a young age, Jabotinsky exhibited great literary skill, and in 1898, his last year of high school, he chose to accept a job as a foreign correspondent for an Odessa newspaper. Jabotinsky lived in Bern, and then in Rome where he also studied law for three years. His columns enjoyed such popularity that he was recalled to Odessa in 1901 to work for the newspaper's editorial staff. Jabotinsky actively embraced the Zionist movement in 1903, when he helped organize Haganah, a Jewish self-defense group in Odessa in anticipation of pogroms. In 1907, Jabotinsky married Johanna Marovna Galperin, who was also from Odessa, and in 1910 their only child, Eri Theodore Jabotinsky was born. Although Jabotinsky's primary source of income was journalism, his writing talent was also utilized in

composing novels, poetry, and Zionist propaganda. In addition, between 1903 and 1914, Jabotinsky traveled extensively throughout Russia, Europe and even to Turkey which then governed Palestine. He visited Palestine for the first time in 1908-1909. Like Herzl, Jabotinsky at first believed Zionism's success depended on astute political maneuvers and upon building a power base.³⁰

Jabotinsky's political astuteness was exemplified by his actions during World War I. When the war first began, he served as correspondent for a Moscow newspaper. However, when Turkey joined the war on the side of the Axis forces, Jabotinsky campaigned for the Jews to openly side with the Allies, with the hope that after the war the British would reciprocate by supporting Zionist aspirations for a homeland in Palestine. Confronting strong British opposition and a Zionist organization that was united behind a policy of neutrality, Jabotinsky almost single-handedly won British consent to form in 1915 an auxiliary Jewish transport unit, the Zion Mule Corps. In 1917, after much effort, three battalions of Jewish troops were created: the Jewish Legion.³¹

After the foundation of the Legion, Jabotinsky became inseparably identified with the notion of organized Jewish self-defense. In 1920, he was arrested and sentenced to

fifteen years of hard labor by the British for organizing a Jewish self-defense corps in Jerusalem in response to the Arab riots. After being pardoned, Jabotinsky was elected to the Zionist Executive in 1921, but within two years resigned, again due to his espousing a policy of militant self-defense. Jabotinsky refused to accept British promises of protection for the Jews of Palestine, and advocated Jewish police and military units. In 1923, Jabotinsky organized a group of high school students in Riga, Latvia into Brit Trumpeldor (Betar), a youth movement whose aim was to train teens in military tactics to prepare them to defend themselves upon immigration to Palestine. In 1925, Jabotinsky organized the Union of Zionist-Revisionists, and ten years later the Revisionists and what had become its youth affiliate, Betar, split entirely from the Zionist party. The history of Betar and the Revisionists is replete with illegal, guerrilla tactics. Jabotinsky settled in Palestine in 1928, and in the 1930's and 40's the Revisionists promoted unlawful immigration. Moreover, the military arm of the Revisionist party, the Irgun, engaged in acts of sabotage against the British mandate forces in Palestine. Until the day he died, Jabotinsky continued to cry out for mass immigration to Palestine despite the quotas of the British White Paper of

1922, and for the formation of a Jewish army to defend Jewish rights. He died at a Betar training camp in Hunter, New York on August 3, 1940. He had come to the United States in the midst of World War II to mobilize support for a Jewish army.³² Jabotinsky's ideas did not dissipate with his death, as even after the foundation of the state of Israel his ideology was carried on by Menachem Begin as leader of the Herut [Freedom] party.

Throughout his life, Jabotinsky exhibited an uncanny ability for predicting the future. He was consistently able to recognize the dangers of popular ideological currents, and he adamantly advocated that the Jews take control of their destiny and mitigate the threat. He was a charismatic leader with a gift for creating enthusiasm in others for his ideas. He exemplified a host of varied qualities: he was fluent in several languages, and "was a gifted journalist, an orator with mass appeal, a writer whose novels show considerable talent, and a sensitive aesthete who at the same time called on his people to gather iron."³³ In Schectman's biography, Jabotinsky is characterized by the somewhat contradictory terms "rebel and statesman, fighter and prophet."³⁴ However, Jabotinsky is remembered foremost as a militant Jewish nationalist, and the ideological creator of the Zionist right wing.

Jabotinsky's right-wing Revisionist Zionism can be characterized as combative, impatient, and uncompromising. Mainstream Zionism viewed it with hostility, claiming [in 1939] that "what he has done is a complete negation of what he and all Zionists have stood for for the last forty years."³⁵ Yet, in many respects Jabotinsky's "New Zionist Organization" had much in common with the World Zionist Organization from which it seceded. However, the Revisionists demanded much more immediate and aggressive measures to achieve their goals. The later Jabotinsky abandoned political appeasement in favor of direct confrontation. The principles of Betar clearly state that "the aim of Zionism is the creation of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan with a Jewish majority" and that "all private and group's interests must be subordinated to the main goal-- the winning of this war"³⁶

Although by birth an Eastern European Jew, Jabotinsky, like many of his Western European counterparts, based his claims for the creation of a Jewish nation on the idea that there existed a distinct Jewish race. This belief, although not always clearly articulated, was a central tenet underlying all his writings. The word "race" [geza in Hebrew] was frequently employed in his writings. For example, the Betar anthem, composed by Jabotinsky, spoke of

a Jewish race:

Betar- from the pit of decay and dust,
With blood and sweat, will arise a race [geza],
Proud, generous, and fierce.
Captured Betar, Yodefet, and Massada,
Shall arise again in all their strength and glory.³⁷

Moreover, his "Tribute to Theodore Herzl" was replete with references to the Jews as a race:

He did not die, like Moses, in the days bygone,
Upon the shores that overlook the promised land.
He led his race, but fell before the journey's end;
And left his sons to grieve upon the road, alone.
He burned in service to his race, and fell-
enshrined.³⁸

The frequent use of the term race/geza in Jabotinsky's writing without an explanation of how he understood the word indicates that for him the notion of a Jewish race was not problematic.

Rather, Jabotinsky's understanding of a Jewish race paralleled that of popular Volkist ideology. In The War and the Jews [1940], Jabotinsky acknowledged racial theory by his assertion that the "Jew-complex" is held to be sufficient proof of racial atavism."³⁹ Furthermore, his description of the "non-exodus solution of the Jewish

problem" reveals his acceptance of the concept of a racial Jewish identity:

Some [Jews] favor assimilation in language and manners, but no religious apostasy and no mixed marriages; which, after all, and despite all rhetoric to the contrary, means the perpetuation of some kind of separate racial community held together by a collective ideology. Others, more radical, foresee or even desire mixed marriages, so that both the race and the religion might gradually disappear; the comforting feature of this creed is the "proud" assurance that both race and religion will prove an excellent manure for enriching the physical and spiritual soil of humanity.⁴⁰

Like most Eastern European Jews, Jabotinsky did not deny the religious aspect of Judaism, however, he coupled the belief that the Jews were a religion with the notion that they were also, and more importantly, a race.

Growing up in Eastern Europe unaffected by Volkist thought, it is on the surface difficult to understand how Jabotinsky came to the conclusion that the Jews constituted a race, as this idea was not a part of traditional Jewish thought. Yet, therein lies part of the answer. As a

youth, Jabotinsky was exposed much more to the culture of the Russian intelligentsia than he was to Jewish culture. He was taught Hebrew at an early age, but not exposed to Jewish history or theology. Moreover, he was influenced by socialist ideology, and through his deceased father's library, Jabotinsky became acquainted with European, especially German culture.⁴¹ Shlomo Avineri, in his book The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State, asserted that Jabotinsky "became more attuned to the cultural and social convulsions of his age than any of his contemporaries in the [Eastern European] Zionist leadership and thus developed a theory of integralist nationalism deeply influenced by parallel developments on the general European scene."⁴² Avineri concluded, "it may have been this utter alienation from Jewish cultural values that caused Jabotinsky, in his quest for self-identity, to come out with an overstated and highly overcharged version of integralist nationalism by way of compensation."⁴³

Jabotinsky's interest in nationalism took shape predominantly due to his experiences in Italy. He acknowledged that the time he spent in Rome had a direct impact upon his political ideas. Jabotinsky admired the rhetoric and heroism in Italian nationalism in the

pre-Mussolini period, particularly as exemplified by Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) [an Italian patriot and general who secured the unity of Italy]. Jabotinsky later attempted to draw parallels between Garibaldi's accomplishments and Jewish nationalism, leading to the epithet "the Jewish Garibaldi" being applied to him. However, Jabotinsky's writing concerning nationalism was not limited to Jewish nationalism, his newspaper articles abound with discussions concerning European nationalism, and he later strongly endorsed the Ukrainian nationalist movement. For Jabotinsky, nationalism was a "supreme value", and in the tradition of Garibaldi, Jabotinsky exhorted: "there is no value in the world higher than the nation and the fatherland, there is no deity in the universe to which one should sacrifice these two most valuable jewels."⁴⁴

Jabotinsky's racial ideas developed almost simultaneously with his attraction to Jewish nationalism. In "A Letter on Autonomism" written in 1904, just one year after he embraced Zionism, he insisted:

it is clear that the source of national feeling is to be sought not in a man's education, but in something that precedes education. And what is that? I contemplated this question and arrived at the

conclusion that it lies in a man's blood. And I abide by this outlook even at present. That feeling of national ego is deeply ingrained in a man's 'blood'; in his racio-physical type, and in that alone... For that reason we do not believe in spiritual assimilation. It is inconceivable, from a physical point of view, that a Jew born to a family of pure Jewish blood over several generations can become adapted to the spiritual outlooks of a German or a Frenchman. A Jew brought up among Germans may assume German customs, German words. He may be wholly imbued with that German fluid but the nucleus of his spiritual structure will always remain Jewish, because his blood, his body, his physical-racial type are Jewish.... The spiritual assimilation of peoples whose blood is different is impossible of effectuation. It is impossible for a man to become assimilated with people whose blood is different from his own. In order to become fully assimilated he must change his body. He must become one of them in blood. In other words, he must bring into the world through a whole string of mixed marriages, over a period of many scores of years, a great-grandson in whose veins only a minute trace of Jewish blood remained.⁴⁵

In this letter, Jabotinsky not only defined the Jewish people by blood, he connected nationalism to race; "a preservation of national integrity is impossible except by a preservation of racial purity, and for that purpose we [the Jews] are in need of a territory of our own where our people will constitute the overwhelming majority."⁴⁶

Race was thus a necessary component in Jabotinsky's definition of nation. His racial nationalism was most clearly expressed in an essay entitled "Rasa [On Race]", published in 1913. Within this essay, Jabotinsky specifically said:

You are forced to say territory, religion, a common language-- all these are not the substance of a nation, but only its attributes; true, these attributes are immensely valuable, and they are even more valuable for the stability of national existence. But a nation's substance, the alpha and omega of the uniqueness of its character-- this is embodied in its specific physical quality, in the component of its racial composition.⁴⁷

In addition, within "On Race", Jabotinsky addressed the subtle difference between race and nation, and gave his opinion concerning the notion of "pure races":

It does not matter whether "pure" races exist or

not; what matters is that ethnic communities are distinguished from each other by their racial appearance, and it is in this sense that the term "race" acquires a most definite and scientific meaning. We are entitled then to say generally speaking almost every nation has a specific racial component, which is common to each individual within it. In this sense (and not, of course, in a political or juridical sense), nation and race overlap each other.⁴⁸

Although Jabotinsky, discussed "pure races", for him the concept was incidental. He predicted that some day science may achieve such refinement that it will become possible in a special analysis of the blood, or perhaps, the secretion of the glands, to establish the 'spectrum' or the 'recipe' of the various racial types, showing all the ingredients that go to making a typical Italian or an average Pole. I venture to forecast that most 'recipes' will be found to contain practically the same ingredients, only the proportions in which God and history have mixed them will prove different.⁴⁹

Furthermore, according to Jabotinsky's theory of race, racial traits could not be specifically described nor could

they be overcome: "it is impossible to describe the racial psyche, yet nonetheless there is no doubt that a racial community (in this sense) is endowed with a special racial psychology, which appears in one form or another, in every member of the community despite all their individual differences."⁵⁰ Jabotinsky's conclusion was that the ideal nation was one whose citizens were completely racially homogeneous:

Let us draw for ourself the ideal type of an "absolute nation". It would have to possess a racial appearance of marked unique character, an appearance different from the racial nature of that nation's neighbors. It would have to occupy from times immemorial a continuous and clearly defined piece of land; it would be highly desirable if in that area there would be no alien minorities who would weaken national unity.⁵¹

Jabotinsky's racial ideology applied to the Jews can easily be surmised from this essay. As he expressed in his letter of 1904, he believed the Jews were a race, and as a race they were entitled to create a nation upon the land to which they had historical ties, the land of Palestine. Moreover, the Jews should attempt to clear Palestine of its substantial "alien minority", the Arab inhabitants.

Jabotinsky's claim to Palestine was thus based on a supposed biological link among the Jewish people, and their historical claim to the Palestinian soil: "the need for a national territory now no longer resulted only from an atavistic impulse to return to the place of one's birth, but mainly from the need for a natural habitat that would enable the national group to develop freely and undisturbed, thus creating the conditions for an as authentic as possible expression of its particular genius and talents".⁵²

Although Jabotinsky is not from Germany, it is interesting to note how closely his views on race paralleled that of Volkist ideology. Yaacov Shavit, in his book Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement 1925-1948, commented upon the similarities:

Like many of his contemporaries, Jabotinsky borrowed the term from the fashionable meta-biological and meta-historical morphological theories. 'Race' was a physiological and physiognomical concept which determined the pattern or type (typos) of the spiritual essence of the genes embedded in the group, and which were passed on from generation to generation by hereditary means.⁵³

And Lenni Brenner, in The Iron Wall: Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir, asserted "it is easy to see the sources of Jabotinsky's racism. The bourgeois world of the early twentieth century was inundated by Social-Darwinist theories of natural biological conflicts between races, and these ideas soon took root among early Zionists,"⁵⁴ including Jabotinsky. Brenner, in fact, linked Jabotinsky to Buber emphasizing that "racism poured into Zionism primarily via German Zionists, as with the early Martin Buber who had taken over the blut theories of German rightism and had become... worshippers of Semitic blood."⁵⁵

Although Jabotinsky's racial identity resembled that of Buber and Rosenzweig, he adopted more aspects of the Volkist understanding of race than either Buber or Rosenzweig. In "An Exchange of Compliments," a dialogue composed by Jabotinsky (also in 1913), he actually alluded to the belief in superior and inferior races. However, for Jabotinsky the Jews were clearly the superior race, as they have consistently rejected external, alien influences and maintained their distinctiveness and originality:

First of all, a superior race has to possess self-awareness, it possess a kind of pride which can withstand everything: not, of course, through

sheer bragging, but through valiant steadfastness, through a feeling of respect for its own spiritual values. For such a race, the very idea that it will accept the authority of an alien element, is organically disgusting and detestable.⁵⁶

The dialogue concludes with a combative tone characteristic of Jabotinsky; "He who will never give up his internal independence, even when under foreign yoke-- he is superior.... We are a race that will never be harnessed."⁵⁷

Jabotinsky not only maintained the Jews were a race with shared physical characteristics, he also believed that members of the Jewish race shared certain abilities. In The War and the Jews, Jabotinsky concluded that the Jew is better equipped for most of the ordinary competitions of modern life; there is no pride in stating this, for the advantage has long been a curse to us, a curse and a nuisance. Nor can a Jew help his success; as well advise a red-haired fellow not to be "conspicuous," or a tall man, or a fat man.⁵⁸

Jabotinsky thus believed a Jew was inherently successful, and equated Jewish success with biological traits such as the color of one's hair or height.

Jabotinsky was not only unique among Jewish thinkers because he attributed to the Jewish race superior physical

and mental characteristics, he was also atypical in that he continued to speak of a Jewish race even after Hitler came to power. In 1933, he addressed [in Yiddish] the Jewish community of Warsaw in a pamphlet entitled "A Forlezung vegn Yidisher Geshikhte [A Lecture on Jewish History]". As the threat of Nazism spread, Jabotinsky called on the Jews of Warsaw to leave Poland and join their race in their natural homeland:

Every race possessing a definite uniqueness seeks to become a nation, i.e., to create for itself an economic, political, and intellectual environment in which every detail will derive from its specific thought and consequently will also relate to its specific taste. Such an environment a specific race can establish only in its own country, where it is the master. For this reason, every race seeks to become a state.... because only in its own state will it feel comfortable.⁵⁹

In addition, in a speech submitted to the Palestine Royal Commission and delivered in the House of Lords, London on February 11, 1937, Jabotinsky again spoke of a Jewish race. During this plea to save the Jews of Europe from Nazism, he specifically referred to the Jews as a race: "I do not know whether it is a question of re-housing one-third of

the Jewish race, half of the Jewish race, or a quarter of the Jewish race; I do not know; but it is a question of millions."⁶⁰

It is however interesting to note that in this period, Jabotinsky also conceived of the Jews as an ethnic group. In his last book, The War and the Jews [first English edition entitled The Jewish War Front published in London in 1940], Jabotinsky continued to speak of a Jewish race, and yet simultaneously employed the word "ethno-communities" in lieu of the Hebrew word for nationalities which as he stated "denotes State allegiance rather than ethnical allegiance."⁶¹ This reference to ethnic group is perplexing, for although Jabotinsky never explicitly says the Jews are a race in the work, the book like most of his earlier works does abound with references to the Jewish race. Furthermore, although the 1913 manuscript "On Race" bore the title "Rasa" and its Hebrew version was entitled "Geza", the English translation which was published after the first World War, he called "Race and Nationality"⁶² thereby deemphasizing the concept of race. In addition, in 1939, "he felt compelled to append a note to its manuscript translation warning readers that it was written before the word race had acquired 'the accursed and sinister significance it conveys to the present generation'".⁶³

Although he affixed this addendum to the translation, he did not negate his belief in a Jewish race. Rather, he explained that "one may be a firm adherent of all men's and tribes' equality, yet firmly believe that race is a fundamental factor of all civilization and history."⁶⁴

Thus, there is no doubt that Jabotinsky espoused a racial Jewish identity even on the eve of the Holocaust. However, for modern Jews this aspect of Jabotinsky's ideology is difficult to reconcile with the horrors to which Nazism subjected modern Jewry. Thus, Joseph Schechtman, a close collaborator of Jabotinsky and the author of his most comprehensive biography, makes no mention of the racial component of Jabotinsky's Zionism.⁶⁵ Lenni Brenner criticized Schechtman on this point claiming Schechtman "simply evades this aspect of Jabotinsky's philosophy."⁶⁶ Brenner cited Joseph Nedava as providing the "most candid" appraisal of Jabotinsky's racial ideas. In his article "Jabotinsky and the Bund", Nedava specifically stated Jabotinsky's "conception of peoples' separateness, the uniqueness of national destiny within the framework of universal history, made Jabotinsky a subscriber to the theory of race."⁶⁷ Nedava also acknowledged that "since Hitler's advent to power, the term race has been very much besmirched, but numerous

philosophers who preceded Jabotinsky expounded the theory of race"⁶⁸ in a way similar to Jabotinsky.

Jabotinsky clearly believed the basis for Jewish nationhood rested upon the fact that the Jews constituted a race. In his writings, beginning in 1904 and continuing until his death in 1940, he repeatedly spoke of the Jews as a race. According to Jabotinsky, Jewish distinctiveness, both mental and physical characteristics, only exemplified the superiority of the Jewish race. Even in 1940, the last year of his life, he advocated forming a war-time Assembly of Jews to be "an expression of some among the most powerful forces of the race."⁶⁹ As Nazism was bestowing negative associations upon the concept of race, Jabotinsky proudly maintained that the Jews were a race, a concept which post-Holocaust Jews have difficultly comprehending.

ENDNOTES

Chapter Three

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CHAPTER FOUR

JEWISH RACIAL IDENTITY IN THE POST-HOLOCAUST WORLD:

THE EXAMPLE OF MEIR KAHANE

Meir Kahane and the Jewish Defense League

The concept of a Jewish race originated in Germany during a period when the Jews enjoyed tolerance and prosperity. In this liberal climate, some Jews accepted the idea of a Jewish race. But then this notion was distorted to advocate the annihilation of the supposed degenerate Jewish race, and Jews such as Martin Buber modified their prior teachings. Among Jews, the belief in a Jewish race almost completely disappeared during the Second World War when millions suffered torture and murder in extermination camps. Although even after Hitler came to power, Zeev Jabotinsky continued to speak of a Jewish race, he was an exception. Following the Holocaust, few Jews dared to identify as a race, as this notion had become equated with Nazism. Yet, even among post-Holocaust Jewry, the idea endured.

The primary personality associated with Jewish racial self-definition in the post-Holocaust era was Rabbi Meir Kahane. Kahane regarded himself as a disciple of

Jabotinsky, and enlarged Jabotinsky's ideas to preach of an Arab-free Jewish homeland. Furthermore, like Jabotinsky, Kahane was a charismatic, but highly controversial individual, who was criticized not only for his radical exploits, but also because of his alleged racial definition of Judaism.

Kahane was born Martin David Kahane on August 1, 1932, in the Flatbush district of Brooklyn. His grandfather had been a rabbi in Palestine. His father, also a rabbi, had emigrated to the United States, where he maintained a strong affiliation with Revisionist Zionism. Kahane attended Betar camps, and in March of 1940 Jabotinsky was a guest in his family's home. In 1955, Kahane met seventeen year old Libby Blum and they were married a year later.¹ Kahane was ordained in 1957 by the Mirrer Yeshiva in Brooklyn. He had previously received his B.A. from Brooklyn College in 1954, an L.L.B. from New York Law School in 1957 [but failed the New York Bar Examination], and also in 1957 received a M.A. in International Law from New York University.² Two years after receiving his smicha, Kahane was fired by the small congregation which had employed him for "excessive religious zeal." Kahane then worked for the F.B.I. under the name of Michael King, and infiltrated the right-wing, antisemitic John Birch

Society. During the Vietnam war, he served as the director of the Center for Political Studies, a private research firm in Washington D.C., and in 1967 he became associate editor of the nationally circulated Jewish Press.³

Kahane was however best known as the creator of the Jewish Defense League (known also as the JDL), founded in July, 1968. Encouraged by the Israeli victory, Kahane had begun organizing Jewish self-defense patrols in Brooklyn in 1967. Together with another New York lawyer, Bertram Zweidon, Kahane then formally created what was in its first year and a half a para-military organization known as the Jewish Defense Corps. In its beginnings, this right-wing vigilante organization composed of Orthodox American Jews roamed the streets of the Williamsburg, Boro Park, and Crown Heights sections of Brooklyn, New York beating their targets: their Black American neighbors. Donning blue berets, uniforms, and brass insignia, and armed with chains and baseball bats, their stated aim was to protect their Jewish brethren from being objects of violence and crime by attacking the supposed perpetrators.⁴ The initial concerns of the JDL were "crime in the streets, black antisemitism, liberal do-nothing city government, and changing neighborhoods".⁵

Although the League emerged in New York in a milieu,

7

where working class Orthodox Jews lived in neighborhoods with an increasingly large presence of blacks, as the decade of the sixties drew to a close, the tension between New York's Jewish and black communities lessened. However, the League had already attracted quite a large constituency with chapters in New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other smaller cities, as well as in Canada and on forty college campuses.⁶ Thus, rather than admit its original aims were no longer relevant, Kahane changed the goals of the League. In fact, the thirteen years of the League's existence can be divided into three distinct periods characterized by three separate domains of action: 1) street patrols to protect Jews from antisemitism, 2) a period of increased popularity starting in 1969 with its espousal of the cause of Soviet Jewry, and, 3) beginning in 1971, a call for massive aliyah.⁷

As the focus of the League's anger switched from American blacks to the Soviet Union, its constituency also changed. With its foundation of the "Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry", it became much more youth oriented. Kahane spoke of offering guidance in "that search for Jewish identity on which many young Jews embarked."⁸ With this transition, the JDL gained a prominence it had heretofore

72

not experienced. Although the goal of helping bring Soviet Jews to freedom was exemplary, to accomplish this aim Kahane advocated the same violent actions that had characterized the League's earlier phase, announcing it would stop "at nothing to achieve its aim."⁹ In 1970 and 1971 the group received international news coverage for its "militant defense" of Soviet Jewry.¹⁰ In addition to camping outside of the Soviet Mission to the United Nations on numerous occasions, other JDL actions, included raiding the Soviet News Agency Tass and its travel agency Intourist, and painting the words Am Yisroel Chai upon their wall, and at Kennedy airport handcuffing themselves to an airplane newly arrived from Moscow. In January of 1971, the League initiated a surprisingly strong boycott of United States companies which had trade relations with the Soviet Union. On September 8, 1970, and again on January 8, 1971, the League claimed responsibility for the bombing of Soviet property in the United States, and in 1971, a dozen members of the League, including Kahane, were arrested for violations of the Federal Gun Control Act of 1968. However, their sentences were suspended and soon after Kahane switched his base of operations to Israel. Before the third phase of the League began, the United States representative to the United Nations claimed the

League was creating serious obstacles to detente, and the city of New York imposed a "media blackout" upon their escapades.¹¹

In the third phase of the group, Kahane no longer perceived the threat to Jewish survival as coming from Black America or the Soviet Union. Rather, the threat was the Arab inhabitants of Israel who contaminated what Kahane felt should be a Jewish state in all regards. Thus, in the summer of 1971, he "announced the opening of its "International Office" in Jerusalem and the adoption of aliyah as the core of League ideology."¹² The message was no longer stay and fight, but return and fight to regain what is divinely ours. Kahane envisioned the JDL as a continuation of the Revisionist Zionism of Jabotinsky, and of Menachem Begin's Betar movement. He preached for the forced removal of Arabs from the Jewish homeland. Espousing this militant anti-Arab platform, he gained a following among Israelis, particularly Sephardic Jews from the slums of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and American Orthodox Jews who had made aliyah. In 1984, he was elected to Knesset as head of Kach, the political party which he had formed. He also often traveled to America to spread his message and raise funds for his cause. He told audiences of American Jews that "Zionism and aliyah are the only

alternatives to the eternal hazards of the diaspora."¹³ His argument was that "antisemitism is unavoidable when Jews live among non-Jews, in non-Jewish lands."¹⁴ On November 5, 1990, during one of his trips to the United States, Kahane was assassinated.

During all three phases of the League, Kahane emphasized the importance of force. "One of the pillars of the JDL's operative ideology was the notion of 'Jewish iron' adopted from the ideology of Zeev Vladimir Jabotinsky and the militant Betar (Revisionist) movement."¹⁵ Thus, he established a training camp, modeled upon Betar camps, in New York's Catskill mountains: Camp Jedel in Woodbourne, New York. There every summer its young recruits, of high school and college age, were taught martial arts, target practice and bomb-making, as well as Jewish history with an emphasis on the history of antisemitism.¹⁶ According to Kahane, the JDL has three major aims: to teach Jewish pride, Jewish self-defense, and "political power".¹⁷ Its ideology depicted history as continually making the Jew the scapegoat. However, Kahane argued that the Jew had become weak. The JDL would exhibit an alternative; strong Jews who would fight for Jewish rights.

Kahane was a prolific writer. In the two decades between the founding of the League and his assassination,

he wrote many pamphlets and over twelve volumes. The central message within all his writings was incessantly repetitive. He consistently spoke of "Jewish power", promoting violence to insure Jewish survival. He also repeatedly criticized American Jewry for its assimilationist tendencies, and cited anecdotes to illustrate his belief that all Jews must live in Israel. Moreover, he chided Israel for being over accommodating towards its Arab population in its effort to avoid charges of discrimination. Despite his exaggerated caricatures of the Israeli policies and the American Jewish community, demographics in Israel and intermarriage in the United States reveal that there is an element of truth to his dismal appraisal. There is no question that his message was offensive and his violent tactics objectionable to mainstream Jewry, but did he really espouse a racial conception of Judaism? Or, as he countered, were these charges directed against him by Jews who employed them as a means to avoid confronting his distressing analysis?

Kahane's overall ideology, as exemplified through the League and later Kach International, was clearly disturbing to contemporary Jews. The mainstream Jewish communities of both Israel and the United States branded Kahane a racist due to his hatred of both Blacks and Arabs. And yet

despite Kach being outlawed in Israel as racist in 1988, the question of whether Kahane promoted a Jewish racial self-definition is not conclusive. Unlike prior Jews who espoused a racial definition of Judaism, Kahane was unique in that living in the post-Holocaust era, he both knew the dangers of racial thought and had the opportunity to refute the charges directed against him. Kahane, an Orthodox Jew, claimed his definition of the Jews was that of traditional Judaism. Moreover, he adamantly denounced claims that his conception of Judaism was racial. He reversed the accusations, condemning secular Zionism for being racist.

Kahane's answer to those who call him racist is apparent in his definition of Judaism. He claims "a Jew is--a Jew MUST BE-what halacha says he is. And that halachic definition, is clear: A Jew is one who is born of a Jewish mother or who has converted to Judaism according to Halacha."¹⁸ Kahane supposedly accepted the right of any individual to convert to Judaism, and be a part of the Jewish people. When in the Knesset on February 3, 1986, Shimon Peres, in reference to Kahane, declared: "A Jew who preaches racism is, in my eyes, not a Jew", Kahane exhorted:

what an outrage is this deliberate, deceitful twisting and misuse of the term, 'racism'. A word

that has a definite, precise meaning is cynically manipulated by an entire army of leftists and liberals and intellectuals to deliberately destroy a person who instills the deepest of ideological fears into them. They know that 'racism' means hatred or discrimination based upon opposition to a person's race--i.e. racial background, skin color. They know that Meir Kahane and the Judaism he represents could not care a fig for a person's skin color or racial or, indeed, ethnic or national origin. They know that Kahane cannot--as Judaism cannot--ever differentiate between white Jew or black or yellow; cannot ever distinguish between Jew of the East or West, Africa or Europe. They know that Kahane is bound by Judaism which is color blind and ethnic blind and racial blind. They know that any human being--any Arab--who seeks to become Jewish and converts according to Torah law will be accepted by Kahane as a Jew at least as good as Shimon Peres. They know that the difference between Jew and non-Jew has nothing to do with race or color, or national or ethnic origin, but only with the ideological religious belief of the person. White Swedish gentiles are not the same as Jews, but Black Jewish converts are.¹⁹

Despite his denial of a Jewish race, Kahane unquestionably considered himself Jabotinsky's successor. He incorporated Jabotinsky's ideology of Hadar and Barzel²⁰, continually spoke of heeding Jabotinsky's message and not repeating our mistakes²¹, and even referred to Jabotinsky's more immediate disciple, Menachem Begin, as the "Kahane of his time."²² And yet Jabotinsky, a secular Zionist, based Jewish nationality upon race whereas Kahane, a traditional Jew, maintained Judaism was a religion. Ironically, Kahane's ideology was however more chauvinistic than that of Jabotinsky. Moreover, historically religion was not viewed as a legitimate basis for defining nationality. Kahane thus needed to justify why the Jewish religion had the unique right to call itself a nation.

Kahane did confront this challenge. Insisting Judaism was not a race, he expounded upon his designation of what is a Jew?:

The answer is clearly found in a definition that differs from that of almost any other people. When one asks to define a Frenchman or a Pole or a German, the answer is, one who is a citizen of France, Poland, or Germany. Thus one can be of Greek national origin or Chinese; one can be Buddhist or Catholic; the acquisition of citizenship papers of the country,

Germany, will make that person a 'German', with all the rights of any other German. Not so the Jew. A Jew is a religio-national, and is defined by religious criteria; and one who wishes to become a Jew must undergo a religious process.²³

Although Kahane defined the Jews as a religious group, he differentiated them from other religions by his emphasis on the concept of "chosenness":

The Jew who was our ancestor--down to our grandfathers and grandfathers [sic]--knew that the Jewish nation was like no other...his nation had not come into being through the usual evolution of a handful of tribes into a permanent, larger entity. The Jewish nation had a specific moment it could point to when it became a nation... And the Jew always knew that there was a reason for this new nation's being. He knew that an everlasting covenant had been agreed to on that day... It was a destiny that was irrevocable and the Jew, try as he might, could not and would not ever escape from it. This was his election; this was why he was chosen. Not as a 'master race'. Not as a 'superior race'. But chosen for Torah, commandments, and holiness. And the Jew knew that he, the Chosen People of the chosen Law, had been given a chosen Land.²⁴

Kahane emphasized that chosenness was the reason that the Jews could claim they were a "religio-nation." Chosenness was responsible "for separation and separate growth a nationality. Not a perverted sense of a master race that reproduces the horrors of Nazism; not the desire to conquer foreign lands and rule over peoples;... rather a challenge to ourselves, a demand that we be holier, more spiritual, more ready to sacrifice. This is Jewish uniqueness."²⁵ Kahane thus concluded that

the Jewish state must reflect the Jewish people and we must never lose sight of the definition of that people. To speak of a Jewish religion as something distinct from a Jewish nation or to speak of the possibility of the absence of either concept is to misunderstand, to pervert, and to deny the Jewish truth of the Jewish people. The Jewish people exists as a religio-nation and to be a Jew is to partake of both qualities.²⁶

Although Kahane adamantly rejected a racial self-definition, racial ideology was a recurring, almost obsessive, topic within his writing. He was fixated upon the Holocaust, an obsession he had developed in childhood. A childhood friend commented that "Marty always talked about the Holocaust-- that it would not happen again-- that

American Jews were going to be different!"²⁷ He was also preoccupied with refuting racial theory as it pertained to the Jews. He said of Gobineau's book,

it was to become the Bible of a whole host of racists who took up its thesis that all races are unequal and that the Aryans are the source of all civilization... Soon the doctrine was being regularly used to point out the difference between the 'boundless superhumanity' of the German people and the 'debilitating subhumanity' of the Jews.'²⁸

It is thus quite understandable why, living in the shadow of the Holocaust, Kahane would react defensively to the charges of racism. He resented his plan for the "successful transfer of Arabs" being equated with Nazism:

The problem is the Jew who stupidly equates the transfer of Arabs with Hitler's genocide of the Jews, as if we were advocating gas chambers or killing of the Arabs in any form! As if the separation of Jews and Arabs will not save Arab and Jewish lives both!... How outrageously dishonest is this equation. How they cheapen and demean the terrible historical uniqueness and horror of the Holocaust... Did the Jews of Germany say that the land was really theirs, stolen from them by the

Germans, and that they would work until the day they became the majority and take the land and make it 'Judea'? If they did, the Jews of Hitler's time can be equated with the Arabs. Did the Jews of Europe massacre Germans, rape their women, burn their settlements, and vow to drive them into the sea? If they did, Europe's Jews and Israel's Arabs are the same. And if they did-- if Germany's Jews killed Germans and sought to take their state from them-- Germans would have been justified in removing them from Germany and saving their country. But if, as really happened, the Jews sought, not to destroy Germany, not to be independent of Germany, but to be good, loyal, fervent, assimilated Germans, then what the Germans did was horrible, and what the Jews who equate the murderous Arabs with the murdered Jews do is obscene.²⁹

Furthermore, Kahane defended himself from these charges by reiterating that he would accept any Arab who converts as a legitimate Jew: "Can Kahane who recognizes the absolute right of any Arab, through proper Jewish conversion, to become as good a Jew as anyone so born; who agrees to the right of any non-Jew, including an Arab who accepts a status of 'resident stranger' to remain in the land with

full personal rights; who never remotely calls for the deliberate, premeditated killing of Arabs-- can he conceivably be compared to the monster of Germany?"³⁰

Although Kahane claimed to define Judaism in non-racial terms, he acknowledged that it was easy to equate Zionism in general with a racial understanding of Judaism. He commented that "a certain resolution on Zionism has been passed by the United Nations. In reality, it is a resolution on Judaism. It is [therefore] important that the world know precisely what Zionism is and what the Jewish people are."³¹ Kahane felt there was an inherent tension between the Law of Return and secular Zionism's claim of being non-racial. Furthermore, although he defended the Law of Return as non-racist, he recognized how those not knowledgeable about Judaism could misconstrue it as racist. He wrote sarcastically, "the most basic law in Israel, the one that was passed immediately upon independence, was the Law of Return that guarantees every Jew the automatic right to enter the country and acquire citizenship. Every Jew, not every gentile.... Only Jews? This is democracy? This is equality? Only Jews? This is racism!"³² Speaking of this Law he asked: "Every Jew. Any Jew.... If David Ben Gurion had not passed such a law; if the State of Israel did not have such a law and Meir Kahane

proposed precisely such a law-word for word--what would...
[world Jewry] say?"³³ Kahane's answer was clear:

Kahanism is Zionism. Kahane declares that the Jewish people have returned to the Land of Israel to create a Jewish state, and that is exactly what Zionism says. Kahane says that a Jewish state can only be one with a majority of Jews and that alone will guarantee us sovereignty and mastery over our destiny, and that is precisely what Zionism declares. Kahane states that we must take steps to insure that Jews will always be a majority and will always control the state of Israel and that is absolutely what Zionism is committed to.³⁴

Furthermore, Kahane accused secular Zionists and those Jews who do not believe in God of being racist. As Mergui and Simonnot described it, Kahane was

not without a degree of justification, one has to admit. Because if Judaism is not founded on God, then what else can it be founded on apart from race? [Quoting Kahane] 'The biggest racist', he asserts, 'is the Jew who doesn't see the Jew is something special... The biggest racism would be to create a Jewish state that isn't Jewish, which is not ruled by Torah. Because', he repeats, 'the only thing which distinguishes Jews from non-Jews is the Torah.'

Therefore to call Kahane a racist would be tantamount to saying that Judaism is racist.³⁵

Kahane thus defended himself by claiming that he was no less or more racist than Judaism itself. He further declared that when the "Israeli schizophrenics" condemn him as a racist, they are actually legitimizing the United Nations' resolution³⁶ which the Knesset and "all the alphabet Jewish groups" responded to by indignantly proclaiming, "No, this is not racism, this is how the Jew is defined. The Jew is different from other people."³⁷ Kahane concurred with the analysis of the Knesset and mainstream Jewry adamantly exhorting

Zionism["] is not racism, because racism means the absolute and permanent relegation of one race or people or color to a position of inferiority, whereas Judaism decrees that all who wish to convert properly and according to halacha may, indeed, do so and thus become Jewish and equal to every other Jew in quality under the Law of Return that applies to Jews.

Judaism, Zionism, proclaim not the racism of the Jews but his havdala, his separation and difference, a status that is not biological but ideological. And the moment that the non-Jew adopts the ideology and becomes Jewish, the havdala drops away. But if

Zionism is not racism, it certainly is not democratic and it can never be so.³⁸

If one were to judge whether Kahane possessed a Jewish racial identity solely upon his own words, the answer would be no. Yet, the Israeli Knesset outlawed Kach, and most Jewish organizations have condemned Kahane as a racist. Is it fear of the truth, as he claimed, that has caused this reaction? Or did he espouse such a view, but in the post-Holocaust world in which he lived, was he fearful of the repercussions of such a declaration? From his own writings, Kahane did not appear to be worried about alienating mainstream Jewry. Nor did he ever base his words or actions upon probable repercussions. Rather, he clearly stated numerous times that he believed the Jews were a religio-nation, not a race.

A partial explanation for why Kahane was popularly believed to espouse a racial Jewish identity can be unveiled by examining his anti-Arab stance. According to Sprinzak's analysis of Kahane in The Ascendancy of Israel's Radical Right, Kahane's popular publications and speeches reveal that he displayed "a strong xenophobia, with heavy racist overtones." Sprinzak generalized that

the racist propaganda of Kach follows the usual racist pattern in its mixture of superiority complex,

sexual anxiety, and certain elements of an inferiority complex. Arabs are seen as both inferior and superior--inferior as all gentiles are, namely by not being the chosen people of God; superior in numbers, growth rate, and cruelty. They are the incarnation of the ruthless gentiles who have persecuted the Jew throughout history... Not only are they collectively dangerous, but they have also developed methods to individually defile the purity of the Jewish nation. They date Jewish women, sleep with them, and even want to marry them and take them back to their villages.³⁹ Sprinzak concluded that although "Kahane did not accept the charge that he was a racist, his writings and lectures are full of references to the Bible, Maimonides, and other great authorities; that he felt, exonerated him from the charge. The problem is that his fundamental reading of halakah was racist."⁴⁰ Similarly, Breslauer in his book, Meir Kahane, Ideologue, Hero, Thinker, observed that

psychologically Kahane dwells on the racist fears of Jewish Israelis. He notes that Arabs perpetrate sexual crimes against Jews--he reinforces the stereotype of Arabs as rapists and as responsible for homosexual assaults. He feeds such fears by suggesting that the Arab population grows more

rapidly than the Jewish one, that the Arabs are given economic concessions that sap the state of monies needed to help Jews, and that Arabs are single-mindedly opposed to the Jewish state. Those familiar with the dynamics of racial hatred can see in Kahane's rhetoric the common pattern of both romanticizing the object of one's fear and projecting upon that other one's own fears and weaknesses.⁴¹

Despite his denials, Kahane definitely exhibited hatred towards non-Jews which was generally believed to be racially motivated. And in the post-Holocaust world, in a period when Zionism itself had been stigmatized as racist by the United Nations, this epithet was the worst censure his opponents could bestow upon him. However, there is a difference between being a racist and possessing a Jewish racial self-definition. This distinction requires a careful examination of semantics. Kahane, from his youth, exhibited hatred towards certain groups of people based upon their skin color or ethnic origin, and that is technically racism. The JDL's initial phase was not directed against those who committed crimes in general, but rather its target was specifically Black Americans. And upon his arrival in Israel, Kahane staged "violent demonstrations against a sect of Black American Hebrews

that had settled in Dimona"⁴² but who were not accepted as legitimate Jews. Moreover, his hatred of Arabs was not just based upon their claim to the land of Israel, his writings depict that he also believed the "Arab race" was prone to violence and had an uncontrollable sexual urge. He wrote:

Arab sexual perversions result in cases such as the one in which five Arab laborers were accused of paying Jewish children from Tel Giborim and then practicing sodomy on them.... The more the Arabs multiply and reach Jewish areas, the greater will be the number of general crimes, and sexual ones in particular, committed against the Jews.⁴³

And during an address to Knesset in January, 1985, Kahane "announced Arab criminals should be sterilized."⁴⁴ Furthermore, he introduced a bill that would have criminalized intermarriage and sexual intercourse between Jews and non-Jews.⁴⁵ He also advocated "confining Israel's non-Jews to ghettos lest they pollute the authentic Jewish spirit".⁴⁶ These actions illustrate, however, that Kahane was not just worried about outbreeding with the Arab race, he was also equally concerned about white European Christians marrying kibbutzniks, and diluting the Jewish religion in that manner. As Friedman described his

motivation, "Kahane was swept up in a kind of Messianic passion. Jewish destiny he believed... was in his hands."⁴⁷

Kahane's racially based hostility towards Arabs and Blacks was often misunderstood as implying he also regarded the Jews as a race. Kahane's arguments against intermarriage and assimilation and his urging to preserve the Jewish individual have much in common with racial theory. Sprinzak described Kahane's ideology as "exclusivist and nationalist to the point of racism."⁴⁸ The bills Kahane introduced into the Knesset were "shockingly reminiscent of the Nuremberg Laws."⁴⁹ Moreover, although Kahane never made racial Jewish remarks, some of his followers did blur the fine line between his understanding of the Jews, and a racial Jewish identity. Particularly in the pre-Israel phases of the JDL, many of his American followers identified as members of a Jewish race.⁵⁰ And Rabbi Yitzchak Ginzburg justified the murder of a thirteen year old Palestinian girl with the remark, "it should be recognized that Jewish blood and a goy's blood are not the same."⁵¹

For Kahane to have advocated a Jewish racial identity would entail his believing there was a biological connection among Jews that can not be overcome, nor can non-Jews ever enter the group. Conversely, Kahane's

ideology contained the stipulation that one can become an equal member of the Jewish people through a halakic conversion. As stressed by Aviezer Ravitzky in The Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality,

From the formal point of view, Meir Kahane and his movement are not racists. The doctrine of racism does not allow for transition from one group to another, by any manner or means. The path from the inferior race to the superior is totally blocked. Meir Kahane, on the other hand, does allow such transition--from one nation to another, from one religion to another--by means of conversion; nor does he claim preference for one or another body or blood group. From the standpoint of inner content, however, the spiritual roots of Kahanism, there is a strong resemblance to the racist mind-set aiming to divest itself of the burden... and the expressed wish to 'clean out', to 'take care of', to 'remove' and the like. The root is one and the same. This is manifested in style, too, in the words spoken at public meetings and rallies. It is the style of hate and vituperation directed at the Arab as Arab.⁵²

Kahane wished to preserve, not the Jewish race, but rather the religio-nation. Although he would have

preferred different circumstances and thus a different reality for the Jewish state, he sacrificed everything, including democracy and humanitarianism, to guarantee Jewish survival. Moreover, he played upon ethnic hostilities among particular groups to achieve this purpose. He displayed tremendous animosity towards anything which interfered with his "divine mission" to save the Jewish people. This was evidenced by his abhorrence of Reform and Conservative Judaism, and the Soviet Union. Kahane's means were objectionable and immoral and he plainly harbored deep-seated prejudices against non-Jews. But despite the fact that he exhibited racial tendencies, he never defined the Jews as a race. For Kahane, the Jewish state was defined solely by theology, and not by race.

ENDNOTES

Chapter Four

¹ Robert I. Friedman, The False Prophet: Rabbi Meir Kahane: From FBI Informant to Knesset Member (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1990), 5-6, 47; and Raphael Mergui and Philippe Simonnot, Israel's Ayatollahs: Meir Kahane and the Far Right in Israel (London: Saqi Books, 1987), 14-15.

² American Jewish Committee; Trends Analyses Division, "Fact Sheet-Jewish Defense League" (New York: The American Jewish Committee, January 1971), 2

³ Mergui and Simonnot, Israel's Ayatollahs: Meir Kahane and the Far Right in Israel, 15.

⁴ Hyman Lumer, "The Jewish Defense League; A New Face for Reaction" [pamphlet], (New York: New Outlook Publishers, 1971), 3.

⁵ Janet L. Dolgin, Jewish Identity and the JDL (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 16.

⁶ American Jewish Committee; Trends Analyses Division, "Fact Sheet- Jewish Defense League", 6-7.

⁷ Dolgin, Jewish Identity and the JDL, 26.

⁸ S. Daniel Breslauer, Meir Kahane: Ideologue, Hero, Thinker (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 79.

⁹ Lumer, "The Jewish Defense League, 4.

¹⁰ Dolgin, Jewish Identity and the JDL, 23.

¹¹ Ibid., 33-39.

¹² Ibid., 41.

¹³ Ibid., 45.

¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

15 Ehud Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism", reprinted from Patterns of Prejudice vol 19, no. 3, no. 4, 1985 (New York: American Jewish Committee) 11.

16 Mergui and Simonnot, Israel's Ayatollahs: Meir Kahane and the Far Right in Israel, 16.

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18 Meir Kahane, Writings: Selected Writings by Meir Kahane from the years 5732-33 (1971-1973) (Jerusalem: The Jewish Identity Center, 1973), 52.

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23 Ibid., 56-57.

24 Meir Kahane, Our Challenge: The Chosen Land (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1974), 91-92.

25 Ibid., 109-110.

26 Ibid., 157.

27 Friedman, The False Prophet, 27.

28 Meir Kahane, Listen World, Listen Jew (Brooklyn: The Institute of the Jewish Idea, 1978), 62.

29 Meir Kahane, They Must Go (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1981), 261-262.

30 Kahane, Uncomfortable Questions for Comfortable Jews, 276.

31 Kahane, Listen World, Listen Jew, iii.

- 32 Kahane, Uncomfortable Questions for Comfortable Jews, 56.
- 33 Ibid., 69.
- 34 Ibid., 56.
- 35 Mergui and Simonnot, Israel's Ayatollahs: Meir Kahane and the Far Right in Israel, 140.
- 36 Kahane, Uncomfortable Questions for Comfortable Jews, 58.
- 37 Ibid., 57.
- 38 Ibid., 57-58.
- 39 Ehud Sprinzak, The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 238.
- 40 Ibid., 239.
- 41 Breslauer, Meir Kahane: Ideologue, Hero, Thinker, 132-133.
- 42 Friedman, The False Prophet, 141.
- 43 Kahane, They Must Go, 221.
- 44 Friedman, The False Prophet, 214.
- 45 Ibid., 258.
- 46 Ibid., 215.
- 47 Ibid., 169.
- 48 Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism", 11.
- 49 Friedman, The False Prophet, 214; See also the comparison made by Likud MK Michael Eitan in Yair Kotler, Heil Kahane (New York: Adama Books, 1986), 208-212.
- 50 See Dolgin, Jewish Identity and the JDL, Chapters 5 and 6.
- 51 Friedman, The False Prophet, 259.

52 Aviezer Ravitzky, The Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1986), 28.

CONCLUSION

THE IMPACT OF JEWISH RACIAL IDENTITY

Rabbi Meir Kahane was a controversial figure, and the cause of much embarrassment and discomfort for mainstream Jewry in both Israel and the United States. An enigma, he was branded a racist, perhaps the worst epithet one could apply to a Jew in the post-Holocaust world. But Kahane did not espouse a Jewish racial self-definition. In the post-Holocaust world Jews uniformly avoided identifying as a race. Racial Jewish identity developed in a particular milieu, was enthusiastically grasped by some Jews seeking to redefine themselves in the modern era, and then was completely abandoned in the aftermath of the Holocaust. However, although the popularity of this idea among Jews was relatively short, its impact was great and its repercussions are still being felt today.

As has been shown, the concept of a Jewish race was a development of the modern era, and not biblical or rabbinic in origin. The notion did not arise until the late eighteenth century and was in reality a by-product of anthropological science and European nationalism. Its roots can be traced in the theories of Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and in German Volkist

ideas in particular. Its greatest impact was in Germany, where it was eventually employed to legitimize the Holocaust. In its beginnings, some German Jews did respond favorably to the idea. Moreover, theologians such as Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig utilized it to define the Jewish people during a period when the traditional definitions of nation or religion no longer applied to all Jews. Similarly, Zionists including Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky cited a Jewish race as the impetus for recreating a Jewish nation. But after the creation of the modern Jewish state of Israel, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Zionism tried to divorce itself from racial ideas. Racial theory had become equated with racism.

Discussions of a Jewish racial identity were predominantly confined to the beginning of this century. In 1904, Arthur Ruppin's The Jews of Today first appeared, in 1910 Ignaz Zollschan wrote The Racial Problem with Special Attention to the Theoretical Foundation of the Jewish Race, and Maurice Fishberg's The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment was published in 1911. Similarly, Buber, Rosenzweig, and Jabotinsky were all contemporaries. Buber's Three Speeches on Judaism was written in 1911, Jabotinsky's On Race was published in 1913, and Rosenzweig's Star of Redemption in 1921. Each conceived of

the notion of a Jewish race in a way that would further his own conception of Judaism. For Rosenzweig, race was the bearer of the religion, whereas for the Zionists it was the sustainer of the Jewish nation.

Although the Jewish nation exists today apart from the idea of a Jewish race, Zionism is still haunted by the legacy of Jewish racial thought. Kahane was controversial because he touched upon a raw nerve in Zionist ideology. If the Jews are not a race, what gives them the legitimacy to claim exclusive rights to a geographic area their ancestors possessed over two thousand years ago? Secular Zionists claim that "Jewish" is the designation of a nationality, and not a religion or a race. But the United Nations felt that this nationalistic classification was chauvinistic, as exemplified by their declaration of November 10, 1975 that proclaimed Zionism a form of racism and racial discrimination. Moreover, if Jews are a nation by virtue of Judaism being a religion, what gives the Jewish religion the right to claim for itself the status of nation while this opportunity is denied to other religions? Some Jews prided themselves on the supposed fact that they are God's Chosen People and hence distinguished from all other peoples, a concept which may be interpreted in a way that has definite racial undertones.

Israeli Jews are not the only segment of world Jewry that has struggled to overcome a racial definition of Judaism. American Jewry has seen an increase in antisemitic actions directed against it out of alleged racial hatred of the Jews. The idea of a Jewish race, having been created, will not disappear. The Holocaust exemplified for the world the horrible extremes of this idea. But as the Holocaust fades into history, the idea of racial distinctions is regaining popularity. Multiculturalism and ethnocentrism are popular topics on the contemporary American scene. But for the present the shadow of the Holocaust has prevented Jews from again embracing the idea that they constitute a race.

The Jewish people undeniably has a complicated identity; it is a strange anomaly. Thus, at the beginning of this century, some Jews tried to simplify their identity by defining themselves as a race. Racial theory, however, became inseparably intertwined with ideas of racial superiority and inferiority. Moreover, Jews represent such a wide variety of physical types that to describe or classify the Jewish race would prove to be an impossibility. Jews cannot fit neatly into either the categories of religion, nation, or even the newer distinction of race. Racism against the Jews persists, but

most Jews do not consider themselves a race. Racial Jewish identity was a phenomenon of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century, an erroneous distinction which hopefully will not reemerge.

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