

These are excerpts from my current book project, which has gotten some great responses from first readers. It's about two-fifths done, aiming for 2027 publication.

**When God Stepped In**  
*Five Clear Cases of Providence in the Course of Jewish History*

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Book Draft

Including Table of Contents, Introduction and Sample Chapter

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The Roman Emperor Hadrian said to Rabbi Yehoshua, “How great is the lamb that survives among the seventy wolves.”

Rabbi Yehoshua replied, “How great is the shepherd who protects her.”

– *Medrash Tanchuma*<sup>1</sup>

## Table of Contents

### An Unusual Book About an Unusual People

*The surprising survival, success, and persecution of the Jewish people is often pointed to as evidence of God's hand in history, particularly since it was all predicted in Scripture two millennia ago. This book seeks to describe the actual inflection points implying such intervention, eras in the Jewish past when all indications are that a particular outcome should occur but another arises.*

### Case #1: The Portable Homeland

*Already suffering from hundreds of years of fractious infighting, the Jews of the second century suddenly find themselves without a state or national institutions. They reinvent themselves as a nation within nations, built on ideas and ideals – and endure as a people.*

### Case #2: The Wandering Jews

*The people spread out across the known world looking for comfort and commerce, learning new languages, new customs, new laws in places like Medina, England, North Africa – and each time end up persecuted and expelled, resettling elsewhere, intact and indomitable. The cycle goes on for fifteen centuries.*

### Case #3: The Russian Pale as Golden Age

*Confined to a swath of unfamiliar territory, subject to frequent pogroms, restricted from most occupations and burdened with heavy taxes, the Jews somehow survive—and in fact increase their population dramatically and lay the foundations for their future.*

### Case #4: The Creation of Israel

*A tiny group of immigrants and refugees with no military tradition, limited resources, and indefensible borders fights off the combined armies of six surrounding countries and reestablishes a state and a language after two thousand years. Still tiny, it quickly grows into one of the most powerful and influential countries in the world.*

### Case #5: Anti-Zionism

*Established by the United Nations, Israel is the first and only democracy in the Middle East, progressive and egalitarian, offering peace to its neighbors. But it is the target of an unprecedented barrage of unprovoked attacks and groundless accusations, riveting the world's attention and compelling countries and individuals to take sides.*

### What Conclusions Can We Draw?

*With our study complete, we can step back and look at this unique story as a whole, consider it for both its historical and current implications. Here we survey the repeated patterns of Jewish history, and the insights to be gained from them.*

### The Fallacy of Inevitability

*The study of Jewish history requires a critical and objective eye to appreciate its anomalies and their implications. This has been demonstrably missing from most such studies.*

### Lessons of Resilience

*Perhaps we can say that God stepped in, but we should also observe that the Jews stepped up. Several features supported their maintenance of national identity and mission through the centuries, and these can provide insights for others.*

### What's Next?

*The past was a creation of those who lived it at the time, and the history of tomorrow is being created by us today. Thus, we are responsible for learning something from this study of Jewish history, and to use it to inform our own decisions. Some observations about current events and what we might do about them.*

## An Unusual Book About an Unusual People

Jews are always in the news—whether as purported perpetrators of genocide or as the frontline in a battle for Western civilization, as victims of vicious ethnic hatred or as a fifth column pulling political strings and controlling the weather.

From the moment they stood at Mount Sinai through their long habitation in Judea and then longer still in exile, Jews have been heard from.<sup>1</sup> They have engaged with great empires, escaping Egypt, taking on Rome, oppressed by—then prospering in—Babylonia and Persia, giving rise to Christianity and Islam, chasing the British out of Palestine,\* allying with America. The content of their holy books informs much of the culture, philosophy, and political structures of Western civilization. Although consistently representing less than one-fifth of one percent of the world’s population, they’ve somehow found success in almost every society they’ve been a part of. On the other hand, they’ve been subjected to the most extreme, enduring persecution of any peoples anywhere.

It's all very strange. In fact, it's unique. Which is also very strange.

The phenomenon has been noted by observers for generations:

Leo Tolstoy, renowned author of *War and Peace*: “What kind of unique creature is this whom all the rulers of the nations of the world have disgraced and crushed and expelled and destroyed; persecuted, burned and drowned, and who, despite their anger and their fury, continues to live and to flourish?... The Jew is the symbol of eternity.”<sup>2</sup>

Alexander Hamilton, a Founding Father of the United States: “The progress of the Jews...from their earliest history to the present time has been and is entirely out of the ordinary course of human affairs. Is it not then a fair conclusion that the cause also is an extraordinary one—in other words that it is the effect of some great providential plan?”<sup>3</sup>

George W. Bush, President of the United States: “Soulless men took away lives and broke apart families, yet they could not take away the spirit of the Jewish people, and they could not break the promise of God.”<sup>4</sup>

When such people see an element of divine intervention in the Jews’ endurance and achievements, they’re generally referring to the “modern” era, after their defeat at the hands of the Romans. After all, the stories in Scripture are full of open miracles and dialogues with God. There, the interaction is visible, not hidden. But the Bible is just one book, handed down by an obviously biased group of people, and for the most part uncorroborated. Accepting its veracity is

\* As is well known, but deserving of reinforcement, the small strip on the Eastern Mediterranean that was the ancient homeland of the Jews and is now roughly defined by the borders of modern Israel (including the West Bank), was referred to as Palestine prior to the establishment of the state, and the term was a rallying cry for Zionistic Jews. The name was originally coined by the Romans who sought to de-Judaize the region both physically and politically. Ironically, Palestine has regained currency as a term for the region, mostly by anti-Zionistic voices. Its use in this book is for historical purposes only, and is not intended to make a political point.

a matter of choice, of belief. It's when the Jews enter the era of history with a capital H, the history ushered in by the likes of Herodotus and Josephus, that the circumstances become verifiable, and even more remarkable.

Many books have been written about the “miracle” of Jewish history, the surprising features that seem to break the rules by which other nations live. But no book has sought to put this perception to the test, to find specific chapters in that history, inflection points, where those rules were broken, when all indications are that a particular outcome should occur but another arises, when historical precedents fall on one side and there are none for the other. By examining the Jews' record within the context of the experience of other nations, it should be possible to parse where the departures lie. If Jewish history truly is unique, such an analysis might prove it so. And by laying out both the unexceptional runup to each inflection point and then the unexpected aftermath, one after another, it might be possible to perceive a definite pattern – and thus infer a non-historical force in play. That is what this book seeks to do.

What we'll find is that in distinct eras of the Jewish saga, in both sweep and detail, historical norms were not just resisted, but upended. Repeatedly, outcomes defied logic, and cumulatively they suggest that the fate of this people operates under different rules.

### **Understanding the Paradigm**

The high emotion with which the Jewish people and their history are viewed comes in part because of their traditional belief that they've been chosen by God for a mission – and how, understandably, others accept or reject that role.<sup>5</sup> That tradition describes a covenant with God that stipulates obligations for both parties, and the consequences of abrogating them. Thus, the twists and turns of the Jews' long experience should be viewed within that lens, whether as a result of how other nations have treated them in light of that belief, as a self-fulfilling prophecy for the people themselves, or as divine providence indeed.

This is important because the story is not just of physical survival, but survival of Judaism itself, through those who perpetuate it.\* Immortality, but at a cost. The promises made to the Jews as part of this covenant were not just of reward, but also of punishment. Deviation from Judaism's laws would bring serious consequences, mid-course corrections of a severe nature. The implication was that the mission to carry God's messages to the world was too important to permit negligence. And as the past has shown, these hardships also have not been normal, but as inexplicable in their detail and devastation as the extraordinary salvations. God did not promise the safety and longevity of individual Jews, but of the Jewish People.

In the exile, we don't hear of open miracles. There are no longer supernatural plagues, only violent pogroms; no manna from heaven, only material success on earth; no Red Sea drowning

\*Of course, in every age, there have been Jews who assimilated, who joined – even founded – other religions, who sometimes disagreed about what Judaism was and about what it meant to be a Jew. But always there was a core group, sometimes the mainstream, sometimes the minority, that clung to the fundamental beliefs and practices that have traditionally defined the Jewish people. No Jew today is far removed from an ancestor who was part of that core, and all have a shared history if traced back far enough.

the Egyptians, only an air force and tanks. The Book of Esther established the paradigm, recounting the threat of genocide in a foreign land and a sudden deliverance, never mentioning God's name, the only book in the Bible where this is the case. The lesson was that during the exile God was working behind the scenes, manipulating history with an unseen hand.

What makes this whole affair even stranger, of course, is that according to the Jews' own tradition this was all laid out long before they ever lost their homeland, before they even entered it. The Torah describes the covenant and its consequences ("If you will follow my laws and are careful to keep my commandments... you will have your fill of food, and live securely in the land... If you do not listen to Me, and do not keep these commandments... you will be defeated by your foes and your enemies will dominate you... I will scatter you among the nations...");<sup>6</sup> the continued attachment in exile ("He will not abandon you... and He will not forget the covenant of your forefathers that He swore to them.");<sup>7</sup> sometimes requiring discipline ("Just as a man might chastise his child, so the Lord your God is chastising you.");<sup>8</sup> and always just concealed from view ("I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be...").<sup>9</sup>

So the story of enduring existence in inhospitable lands, security turned to adversity, disaster averted, seemed to be precisely foretold – another anomaly for this anomalous people.

### **What This Book Is Not**

It's important to clarify that this book does not retell, or even mention, so-called miracles, supernatural incidents, or even mysterious coincidences. Its operating assumption is that providence is a force behind the fate of an entire people, somehow effecting subtle, imperceptible pressures to achieve certain ends. Perhaps this force affects individuals, but that is ultimately unknowable, and attempts to proclaim them so are convenient and generally unpersuasive.

Also, this is not a book *of* history, it is a book *about* history. It seeks to analyze historical trends, focusing on episodes relevant to the thesis, using reliable historical and academic sources. If the conclusion is correct – that Jewish history has indeed diverged from the norm in significant ways – then by examining what happened before and after each "inflection point," we should find surprising outcomes that support that conclusion.

Of course, describing the life of the Jews in each era produces rich and exciting narratives. But the aim is not to tell the same story heard countless times – it is to illuminate that story in a way never done before.

One could ask, is it right to attempt to pull back the curtain of history and try to take a peek at God's workings? The answer must be: yes. In an era when confusion reigns and intolerance grows, anything that brings clarity should be embraced and publicized. If Jewish history brings clarity, we should examine it.

## Five Clear Cases

We can identify a number of cases in Jewish history whose trajectories seem to defy explanation through natural causes, and focus on five of the most compelling:<sup>10</sup>

*The Portable Homeland:* Already suffering from hundreds of years of fractious infighting, the Jews of the second century suddenly find themselves without a state or national institutions. They reinvent themselves as a nation within nations, built on ideas and ideals – and endure as a people.

*The Wandering Jews:* The people spread out across the known world looking for comfort and commerce, learning new languages, new customs, new laws in places like Medina, England, North Africa – and each time end up persecuted and expelled, resettling elsewhere, intact and indomitable. The cycle goes on for fifteen centuries.

*The Russian Pale as Golden Age:* Confined to a swath of unfamiliar territory, subject to frequent pogroms, restricted from most occupations and burdened with heavy taxes, the Jews somehow survive—and in fact increase their population dramatically and lay the foundations for their future.

*The Creation of Israel:* A tiny group of immigrants and refugees with no military tradition, limited resources, and indefensible borders fights off the combined armies of six surrounding countries and reestablishes a state and a language after two thousand years. Still tiny, it quickly grows into one of the most powerful and influential nations in the world.

*Anti-Zionism:* Established by the United Nations, Israel is the first and only democracy in the Middle East, progressive and egalitarian, offering peace to its neighbors. But it is the target of an unprecedented barrage of unprovoked attacks and groundless accusations, riveting the world's attention and compelling countries and individuals to take sides.

In each of these cases, whether it was destruction or deliverance, fortune or misfortune, the normal rules of history did not appear to apply.

In the pages that follow, we'll investigate them case by case. Part I of each will recount what happened in Judea or France or Russia, etc., as events irresistibly headed to a certain conclusion. Part II will uncover what actually ensued. What we'll find is that each time Jewish history threatened to veer from the course set for it, that course was corrected. When the Jews were faced with annihilation, when they deviated too far from their responsibilities, when their time upon the world's stage appeared to be over – each time, something astonishing happened. Each time, it seems, God stepped in.

### Case #3: The Pale of Settlement As Golden Age

*“The isolated episodes that have stayed with me throughout the past seventy years have to do mostly with the terrible hardships my family suffered, with poverty, cold, hunger and fear, and I suppose my recollection of being frightened is the clearest of all my memories. I must have been very young, maybe only three and a half or four. We lived then on the first floor of a small house in Kiev, and I can still recall distinctly hearing about a pogrom that was to descend on us. I didn’t know then, of course, what a pogrom was, but I knew it had something to do with being Jewish and with the rabble that used to surge through town, brandishing knives and huge sticks, screaming, “Christ killers” as they looked for the Jews, and who were now going to do terrible things to me and to my family.”*

—Golda Meir, “My Life”<sup>1</sup>

We now come to the next great era of Jewish history, the long, troubled years under Russian oppression. Confined to a swath of undeveloped backwoods, restricted from most occupations and suffering from grinding poverty yet burdened with heavy taxes, subject to frequent and horrific violence, the Jews could only expect the breakdown of their world, if not its outright destruction.

And yet, the people did survive their century in the Pale of Settlement, and more than that, somehow thrived. Their population increased dramatically, the majority not only maintaining their Jewish identity but building new cultural forms and institutions that paved the way for the next era. The odds, in other words, were defied. As one observer of the Russian experience wrote in 1891, “In the case of the Jew, whose very existence after so many centuries of vicissitude is an anomaly which baffles explanation, it is always hazardous to argue on the basis of historical laws.”<sup>2</sup>

One might ask, why would God lead the Jews to domination under the Russians? Hadn’t there been enough rootlessness, enough trouble? To answer this question, we must look at the historical drivers that got them to the Pale and what happened once there. Then, when all seems lost, we’ll see the same paradigm of unexpected turns and eventual redemption.

## Part I: A Century of Oppression

In the 300 years following the Spanish expulsion, Jews continued to be on the move, settling, resettling, always looking for a home away from the home they had been forced to leave during the Roman era. The Sephardim of Spain converted (mostly as a practical matter) or resettled (mostly to North Africa and the New World). The other European Jews, known as Ashkenazim, endured their own cycles of settlement and expulsion (and repatriation) in countries such as France and England.<sup>3</sup> Many of them settled to the East, in the Black Sea region, in Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, and Belorussia, attracted by the economic opportunities of trade routes linking Europe and Asia, as well as the relative religious tolerance granted by local nobles. That they were falling under the sway of the burgeoning Russian empire did not deter them – after all, empires were always expanding and contracting, rising and falling, and Jews had found their way. Habsburg, Ottoman, Russian – did it matter in which empire they lived? As we'll see, it did.

The Kingdom of Poland, with 290,000 Jews in 1764,<sup>4</sup> had once been a powerful state, but it weakened so much in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that its neighbors simply began picking it to pieces. Partitions took place in 1772, 1793, and 1795, with Austria taking southern Poland and Prussia the northwest. Russia, always looking to shore up the borders of its empire with buffer states, annexed the rest – which by then included well over half a million Jews.<sup>5</sup> That turned the Czar's military and political victory into a religious and cultural challenge. For hundreds of years, Jews had been excluded from Russia.<sup>6</sup> The Russian Orthodox Church saw Judaism as a rival for religious supremacy, and worried that Jews would unduly influence their Christian neighbors.<sup>7,8</sup> The sentiment was shared by the Czars and was reflected in military practice. Conquering Russian armies would simply kill the local Jews to keep the new territory pristine.<sup>9</sup> Faced with all these Jews now inside the Russian empire, something had to be done.

In 1794, Catherine the Great restricted their residence to Poland, the Ukraine, and other newly acquired southern regions she wished to populate.<sup>10,11</sup> These areas comprised some 500,000 square miles, most of current-day Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Lithuania. In 1804, her grandson Alexander I made it official: the Pale of Settlement was the only place in the empire that Jews could legally live, and emigration was not permitted. With few exceptions, Jews who had managed to reside in cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg and smaller towns like Smolensk and Kharkov were now forced to make their way to this strange and desolate undeveloped land.

In 1820, the population of the Pale was about 5 million,<sup>12</sup> of which 1.6 million were Jewish,<sup>13</sup> by far the largest such population in the world. There, they lived among serfs, peasants bound by law to toil for landholders who could beat them or sell them as slaves at their whim. Almost all these serfs were illiterate and superstitious, dwelling in thatched mud huts along with their animals.<sup>14</sup>

This massive ghetto is the setting for more than a hundred years of appalling pressures on the Jewish people—cultural, economic, and mortal.

## The Screws Tighten

When Alexander established the Pale of Settlement, he followed it up with “Statutes Concerning the Organization of Jews,” whose stated goal was their “true happiness,” but of course that meant conversion and assimilation.<sup>15</sup> Public schools were now opened to Jewish children, but without any Jewish educational component. If parents refused to send their children, Jewish schools would be built at the Jews’ expense, double-taxed, and still required to teach only in Polish, Russian, or German, certainly not Yiddish. Likewise, these languages were the only ones permitted for public documents, contracts, and bills of sale. The Statutes continued: “All Jews are divided into four classes: (a) farmers, (b) manufacturers, (c) merchants and (d) city dwellers... If he is not registered in one of these classes, a Jew will not be tolerated anywhere in Russia.” Those unable to produce a document certifying membership in one of the classes “will be regarded as vagrants and will be treated to the full severity of the law.”

Perhaps most disruptive – and ultimately destructive – was the statute prohibiting Jews from renting property in any village or settlement, nor owning taverns, pubs, or inns. Since fully a third of the Jewish population owned, worked in, or served such businesses, livelihoods were destroyed.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the Minister of the Interior warned the Czar that it would lead to Jews dying of starvation – to no avail.<sup>17</sup> The new laws drove tens of thousands of families from their homes. For the miserable refugees, this was nothing new, as the partitions of Poland had already broken up the social connections of communities there, with families disrupted, wealth left behind, institutions inactivated.<sup>18</sup> The experience brought back memories of the expulsions their grandparents experienced, of “the poor people who have left their homes, bare and naked, without bread. They are without lodging, hundreds of poor people wandering from town to town... Many die in the carriages, many die on the roads, and even those who survive have on their arrival in the said place hardly a breath in their throats, and are glad... to there find a grave.”<sup>19</sup>

Those who endured ended up in shtetls, tiny groupings of a few hundred homes that consisted, according to a contemporary account, of “muddy unpaved streets, covered with boards here and there, low houses, only a tenth of them made of brick.”<sup>20</sup> There, with a local synagogue for prayer and study and a mikveh for ritual purity, the Jews tried to do what they had done for centuries: live their lives as the Children of Israel, faithfully fulfilling the commandments, and raising their children to do the same. A report made by a French fact-finding mission found “dilapidated shacks put together with rotting planks housing two families, of five to six people each, staying together in one room of nine square meters without partition.”<sup>21</sup> Where there were brick buildings, families lived in basements two floors underground. “In one of them, a room of no more than five square meters, we saw 20 people, all complete strangers – children, women clad in rags, and hungry men. Darkness filled the room, and with the scorching sun outside, we had to light a candle to take in this picture of disgust and desolation.” By one estimate, no less than 14% of Jews in the Pale, and in some places 22%, were on relief.<sup>22</sup>

Where was the famed Jewish industriousness? Why could they not pull themselves out of this squalor? The deck was stacked against them. Prohibited from owning land, Jewish occupations were concentrated in crafts such as tailoring and shoemaking and in commerce, mostly as small-scale traders and middlemen.<sup>23</sup> Farming families had to be resettled.<sup>24</sup> Competition was

therefore intense. An official onsite report made by the U.S. Immigration Department provided story after wretched story. “If it happens that 20 carpenters live in a city where there is work but for 5, the others may not move to another city where there are fewer carpenters, or where they may find work, while in their own city neither the police nor the trade unions will permit them to learn a new trade.”<sup>25</sup> In Russia, the job of the police was not to protect the people but to enforce the will of the state.

While those in some professions, such as skilled craftsmanship and prostitution, received a dispensation to travel or even live temporarily outside the Pale, the story often ended unhappily. One Jewish woman, who wanted to pursue university studies, registered as a prostitute to gain a residence permit. When the police discovered she was not practicing prostitution but studying, she was expelled from the city.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. report continued with more sad details:

“In Berditcher [*sic*], I saw a woman with four children living in a hut, the room 6 feet square, for which she paid 40 rubles (\$20) a year. The room was tidy and wooden conveniences about indicated the presence of a master workman. She told me her husband had been earning 2 rubles a week, which, as she put it, was ‘too little to live and too much to starve.’ ‘Why does not your husband go elsewhere to seek work?’ asked I. He had gone, she said, a few stations down on the railroad and found a job immediately at 6 rubles a week, which he brought home Friday night, and they were happy. The next week a police officer discovered he had no right to live there, and to hold his job he could only bring his wife 4 rubles the following week. Then a superior police officer found he was living outside of where he had the right of residence, but was willing to forget that fact for a weekly consideration. So that after a few weeks he found that he was no better off than in Berditcher with his possible 2 rubles weekly.”

It was common for the police to see their duties as a source of additional income. The government did as well. The largest Jewish population in the Pale, in the formerly Polish regions, was targeted with special taxes on kosher meat, for permission to marry, and a general “toleration” tax.<sup>27</sup> Jews were exempted from military service but had to pay an exorbitant annual communal tax as a result.<sup>28</sup> As many as 15% of Jewish households were headed by women, almost all of them widows.<sup>29</sup> The result of all this was relentless, suffocating poverty, and little hope for something better.

Physical danger was ever present. For centuries the Jews, neither landowners nor serfs, served as middlemen between the two – managing the rural estates of nobles, collecting their taxes, trading goods produced by others, lending money.<sup>30</sup> This arrangement engendered the gentry’s exploitation of the peasants, since it effectively insulated them from any unpleasant consequences. The industrialization and political emancipation that were beginning to disrupt every Western society were too impersonal and vague to be a target for their anger. Finding scapegoats next door was far easier. At the whims of the landowners, the police brutally enforced perceived misdeeds. Violent outbursts from the peasantry were just as commonplace. Prince Petr Danilovich Svyatopolk-Mirsky, governor-general of Kharkov, wrote, “In all spheres of public life, the Jews are a sinister force directed against the Russian people and the existing order of things, a force against which, in the eyes of the people, neither individual citizens nor the state can prevail. This may be the root of the conviction which has taken hold in the public

mind, that the authorities, unable to deal with them in other ways, have permitted the despoiling of the Jews.”<sup>31</sup>

Nowhere was the angry misperception more evident than in the edicts prohibiting Jews from owning inns or selling alcohol, which were seen as the root of Russian drunkenness. But a Russian governmental commission itself refuted this and projected the result of shutting down the inns and the forced transfer of Jews:

“Drunkenness would not diminish, it being as general in the governments of St. Petersburg, Livonia, and Estonia, where there were no Jews, as elsewhere. The general miserable condition of the peasantry in White Russia was caused by the general state of the country, not by the Jews. In the Governments of the South-West, where Jews resided, the peasants were prosperous. Their removal would therefore only aggravate the position of the peasantry, deprived, as they would then be, of these useful intermediaries in their sales of corn, and purchases of salt and iron. The sale of spirits did not enrich the Jews themselves, but their Christian landlords, from whom they obtained the license to distill.”<sup>32</sup>

No matter. Anger driven by jealousy was a far greater motivator than reason – and with a longer tradition.<sup>33</sup> Amidst this toxic mix of resentment and corruption, Jews understood there could be no expectation of justice. A policeman accused of killing innocents during riots against the Jews received a promotion.<sup>34</sup> A Russian tradesman charged with killing a Jew was sentenced to eight months imprisonment but was pardoned by Czar Alexander, who was known as “The Blessed.”<sup>35</sup>

Worn down by what seemed an eternity of brutality and hopelessness, Jews turned inward. Study of the holy books, not engagement in worldly occupations, had always been prized in Jewish life. Now, it became a refuge. “For most of them,” observed the U.S. immigration report, “...labor with the hands is demeaning.” Gone were the military traditions of the kings of ancient Israel, the proud revolts of the Maccabees, the prowess of the tribes of Israel in working the land. The world of the Pale was just a strait to be endured on the way to the World to Come.

### **The Screws Tighten Further**

Lest one think this is the whole story of Jewish oppression in Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sadly there is more – much more – to come. Only a quarter of the way through the century, Nicholas I, Alexander’s younger brother, ascended to the throne, determined to carry on his older sibling’s legacy but with a stronger hand. The rumor was that the government’s program for the Jews had become “one-third assimilation, one-third emigration, one-third extermination.”<sup>36</sup>

All Hebrew publishing houses were shut down.<sup>37</sup> Decrees were enacted banning “Jewish clothing,” such as fur hats, yarmulkes, women’s wigs that matched their hair color, and the like.<sup>38</sup> Soon, even sidelocks were included. The ban was bitterly resented, for the external “uniform” was a way to maintain internal unity, as the authorities were well aware.<sup>39</sup> District inspectors brutally enforced the law, even tearing the wigs off women’s heads in the street, pulling them “by their hair to the police station,” where they’d have buckets of cold water poured on them, be held for 48 hours, then forced to sweep the streets.<sup>40</sup>

Jews were now to be divided into those who were “useful,” meaning merchants and craftsmen, who could help the Russian economy, and “useless,” meaning everyone else.<sup>41</sup> Ever on the lookout for a buffer from perceived enemies, Russia now prohibited all Jews, whether “useful” or “useless,” from living within 35 miles of its border, shrinking the Pale and uprooting 100,000 people.<sup>42</sup> Jews were expelled from any villages inhabited by Cossacks, and any still living in Kiev and the port cities of Nikolayev and Sevastopol were likewise expelled.<sup>43</sup> There were expulsions from many of the shtetls, driving the new refugees back to cities, often the very cities from which they’d been banished.<sup>44</sup> The logic seemed simple: create havoc and misery and foster the conviction that the Jews were unwanted in the empire.

Perhaps nothing achieved that aim more than the hated Cantonist Law, which reversed the previous military exception and drafted Jewish boys turning 18 into the Russian army. Nicholas sent a memo to his generals: “The chief benefit to be derived from the drafting of the Jews is the certainty that it will move them most effectively to change their religion.”<sup>45</sup> At the same time, no Jewish soldier was permitted in the navy, the quarantine service, the guards, the gendarmerie, the commissariat, or the clerical grades; eventually, they were barred as well from military schools and thus from being officers.<sup>46,47</sup> In other words, their role was to be cannon fodder. When not enough Jewish soldiers converted, the draft age was reduced to 12, so the boys could receive “special training” for six years before serving, which meant lectures on Christianity and, if they refused baptism, vicious beatings and the withholding of food.<sup>48</sup> They were billeted only in Christian homes, and prevented from any contact with local Jews.<sup>49</sup> The 31 years of service away from home and family was inconceivably long, and in fact most never returned at all.

Jewish families stopped recording the births of sons, hoping to keep them hidden and away from harm.<sup>50</sup> Some parents even cut off their child’s forefinger, so he could not pull a trigger and was thus unsuitable for the army.<sup>51</sup> Those with any money bribed officials to replace their son’s name for the name of some other boy, pitting families against each other.<sup>52</sup> But since there were quotas, boys as young as eight were soon being drafted.<sup>53</sup> A Russian writer came across a group of young boys being herded by soldiers in the vicinity of Moscow and was astonished to hear they were recruits.

“Pale, exhausted, with frightened faces, they stood in thick, clumsy, soldiers’ overcoats with stand-up collars, fixing helpless, pitiful eyes on the garrison soldiers who were roughly getting them into ranks. The white lips, the blue rings under their eyes bore witness to fever or chill. And these sick children, without care or kindness, exposed to the icy wind that blows unobstructed from the Arctic Ocean, were going to their graves.”<sup>54</sup>

It should be no surprise that the rate of suicide among these conscripts was reported to be close to 60%.<sup>55</sup>

But the Iron Czar, as Nicholas I was now called, was not satisfied with the results, and concocted a plan to undermine Jewish unity and increase conversion.<sup>56</sup> He gave the responsibility for overseeing conscription and meeting the quotas to the *kahals*.<sup>57</sup> Kahals (literally, congregations) were unofficial but long-standing organizations led by local rabbis and citizens, collecting

money to support educational and charitable efforts, judging internal civil and criminal matters, and providing a united voice in dealing with the authorities.<sup>58</sup> For hundreds of years, the kahals allowed the Jews to exist as “states within states,” providing stability and a steady source of income to the host governments, and maintaining continuity of Jewish life.<sup>59</sup> But now they would be twisted into official deputies of the Czar.

The kahal leaders had to decide who should be conscripted, and under pressure to meet the quotas this often meant taking from the weakest, most defenseless parts of the community. Facing the awful choice between sending fathers or children to the draft, Kahals generally chose the latter.<sup>60</sup> They were even given the authority to choose those who they saw as troublemakers, which created not just resentment for serving the government’s interests but accusations of abuse of power.<sup>61</sup> Parents resisted, protested, hid their children. Under continued pressure, the kahals turned to thugs (*khappers*, or grabbers) to find and kidnap the recruits. The Czar’s decree actually provided for a reward of 100 rubles to anyone “who discloses the names of those who hid a Jew escaping the draft.”<sup>62</sup> This incentive in a poverty-stricken population led to fierce battles for the human spoils, and every knock on the door an occasion for terror for the families within.

“Occasionally they even resisted the kidnappers with axes, knives, iron bars, and hammers prepared in advance, and as soon as the kidnappers entered the house, all the members of the family attacked them with murderous blows. Both sides fought until their strength gave out, and victory went to the one that held out longest. Naturally that was usually the kidnappers.”<sup>63</sup>

Riots against the draft and against the kahals were common. But to no avail. During Nicholas I’s reign alone, 70,000 Jews were dragged off to the army.<sup>64</sup>

Sadly, many of the khappers were Jews themselves, adding to the destruction of trust and social cohesion. To their brethren, with their long historical memory, the dilemma was not new. Hadn’t Pharaoh appointed taskmasters and officers over the people? And according to Jewish tradition, while the taskmasters were Egyptian, the officers were Hebrews.<sup>65</sup> But the Hebrew officers in Egypt had resisted their orders, complaining on behalf of the people to Pharaoh and to Moses, and enduring whippings for it.<sup>66</sup> The contrast was not lost on the angry Jewish communities of the Pale. The Iron Czar’s conscription strategy was devilishly effective, and lasted 30 years.<sup>67</sup>

The next blow came in the 1840s, an attack on Jewish schools. Jews had created the first compulsory public education system in the world, as early as 65 CE, recognizing that a proper understanding of God’s commandments, His laws, and His expectations was the most important bulwark to maintaining national cohesion and fulfilling the national mission.<sup>68</sup> The “Shema,” the passages from the Bible that every Jew is expected to repeat in the morning and in the evening (“when you lie down and when you arise”), includes the admonitions to “teach them sharply to your children” and to “teach your children to speak of them.”<sup>69</sup> The Shema is not a prayer, it is a pledge and an affirmation – for both of the partners in the Covenant, God as well as His people. You keep the commandments and teach them diligently to your children, and I will provide you with the sustenance and protection necessary to complete your mission. The faithful

transmission of tradition from one generation to the next is a lynchpin of Jewish survival. Thus, when the Russian government ordered the establishment of state schools for Jewish children, the Jews realized this was no benign gesture of enlightenment but an attempt to wean the next generation away from the 25,000 *chedarim* (elementary schools) teaching traditional Jewish subjects.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, a secret clause in the decree declared, “The purpose of the education of the Jews is to bring them nearer to the Christians and to uproot their harmful beliefs which are influenced by the Talmud.”<sup>71</sup>

The government established alternative schools for rabbis as well, schools whose modern curricula were intended to influence a new generation of communal leaders. Mostly led by *maskilim* (Jews advocating Enlightenment ideas and values), these “yeshivas” did their job, producing rabbis dedicated to the casting off of tradition. Likewise, where Jews were allowed access to Russian institutions of higher education, these students were often willing instruments of the drive to assimilate their countrymen.<sup>72</sup> “They were thoroughly convinced that they were going to bring about a complete revolution in the worldview of the Jewish people, and impatiently awaited their moment of action.”<sup>73</sup>

There were carrots, too, not just sticks. All Jewish converts received a three-year tax holiday, monetary grants, clothing, commutation of criminal sentences, and freedom to live outside the Pale.<sup>74</sup> Soldiers who converted received an additional 25 ruble reward (equivalent to about three months’ pay), and the admiral of the Black Sea Fleet made it 40 rubles for his sailors.<sup>75,76</sup> That’s not to mention the educational and professional prospects that came with – finally – fitting in.

### **No Way Out... But One**

So why not leave? Because Russia, like most of the European empires, required government permission to emigrate, which was rarely granted.<sup>77</sup> Jews were not allowed to leave the Pale, much less cross the empire’s own borders. Even those willing to risk their lives to get out could hardly do so. Few had passports or any prospect of obtaining them.<sup>78</sup> The only help they could get was from smugglers who promised safe passage, but often were just swindlers who convinced the naive emigres into selling them their belongings, never to be seen again.<sup>79</sup> Only a tiny number of Russians, much less Jewish Russians, had ever gotten out. In the 1820s, the first decade of census-taking in Russia, fewer than 100 people made it to America, only a handful of them Jews.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, tens of thousands of gentiles were coming into Russia from Asia and the German speaking lands.<sup>81</sup> It was only the Jews who wanted – needed – to leave, but could not.

Constrained, concerned, confused, Jews of the Pale began to do exactly what the Romanovs had desired for them: convert. During Nicholas I’s reign, some 30,000 Jewish soldiers, over 40% of the total, took confession, joining the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>82</sup> (Of course, these were the ones who hadn’t died – by their own hand, by the hand of others, or by exposure to the elements.) In light of the economic benefits, many bankers, industrialists, merchants, printers, and communal officials adopted Christianity.<sup>83</sup> In the arts as well, conversion was seen as the ticket to acceptance and success. The St. Petersburg and Moscow music conservatories were both headed by the children of converted Jews.<sup>84</sup> By mid-century, the number of women converting exceeded that of men, a reflection of the even greater pressures on them, and reducing

the number of Jewish babies being born.<sup>85</sup> Yet, in the midst of all this misery, a glimmer of hope suddenly appeared.

### **The Liberator, the Liberated, and the Inevitable**

In 1855, Nicholas died and his son Alexander II succeeded him. He took the throne amidst powerful economic and social forces driving change throughout the modern world: rapid growth of industry and diminishing centrality of agriculture, the associated shift in power from country to city, the sudden promotion of individual rights and universal education. The new Czar also observed the growing discontent of his subjects. So he enacted a series of reforms – not to give in to these trends, but to channel them in his favor. Just as Abraham Lincoln would do in the U.S. a few years later, Alexander declared that Russia’s serfs, 47 million people who, for all intents and purposes had been slaves, were now free.<sup>86</sup> A jury system was introduced, universities were open to applicants from every social strata, and the length of military service was reduced, among numerous other reforms.<sup>87</sup> All Russians would be “equal before the law,” said *The Liberator*, as Alexander was now being called.<sup>88</sup> Of course, practice wasn’t quite up to theory – the nobility, the Czar’s most important constituency, would not have tolerated much more. But for the Jews, a tangible difference in their prospects suddenly was at hand.

Conscription of Jewish children into the army was ended.<sup>89</sup> Barriers to entry into many Russian schools and universities fell.<sup>90</sup> “Useful” Jews, meaning businessmen, were permitted to live outside the Pale and to settle in major cities in Russia itself.<sup>91</sup> Soon, grants of residence were also given to Jewish medical professionals, craftsmen, and university graduates.<sup>92</sup> Under certain conditions, Jews were even allowed to buy land in the Pale.<sup>93</sup> These weren’t full rights, but they aimed in the right direction.

The more cynical (or wiser) viewed these changes with circumspection. Hadn’t their history in exile seen them riding high or crushed below by the whims of a ruler?<sup>94</sup> In fact, the Czar viewed his reforms regarding the Jews as a way to gain their “moral improvement,” meaning conversion to Christianity, hoping that by permitting privileges to the “useful” Jews, the “useless” Jews would soon follow.<sup>95,96</sup> And he hoped that Jewish businessmen, given the chance, would facilitate investment from the great banking houses of Europe.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the cynicism on both sides, Jews responded like a coiled spring suddenly released. Those eligible began attending Russian universities, becoming doctors and lawyers, and began to take part in the country’s cultural and intellectual life.<sup>98,99</sup> Jewish communities outside the Pale quickly grew.<sup>100</sup> To the Czar’s satisfaction, Jews used foreign capital to open factories, found banks, and build railroads.<sup>101</sup> Inspired by these examples of success, many Jewish students flocked to the very government-sponsored schools that had seemed so anathema a decade before.<sup>102</sup> True, the new opportunities were relevant to only 5% or so of the entire Jewish population, but surely it was only a matter of time till political and economic emancipation would come to all.

Except it wasn’t. Within a decade, reaction came, growing out of the long tradition of antisemitic sentiment. Jews were too powerful, had too many privileges, were exploiting the masses – how else could they have been so successful so quickly? Leading intellectuals, such as

Fyodor Dostoyevsky (famously, in *Crime and Punishment*), blamed the Jews for the burgeoning socialist movement – *and* the capitalist movement.<sup>103</sup> The critics ignored the fact that the vast majority of the Jews, like the Russian masses, were no better off than before.<sup>104</sup> And now they faced another trend sweeping the 18<sup>th</sup> century: nationalism, which emphasized ethnicity over empire. The Jews could never be good Russians. “Is it possible for believers in the Mosaic Law, if they follow their own commandments, to consider our country to be their only fatherland?” asked the Polish Minister of Justice. “Even in those places where they have already received the rights of citizenship, they nevertheless seem to remain an alien and separate nation.”<sup>105</sup>

Furious in the face of disaffected minorities of all types, nascent revolutionary movements, an attempted revolt in Poland, and an attempt on his life, Alexander, true to Romanov tradition, responded with a heavy hand. Reforms were canceled. Russia would return to “the source of her greatness, the Slavic Soul.”<sup>106</sup> Unanimity and obedience were paramount, and protest was put down with force.<sup>107</sup> The Liberator ordered the Jews back into the Pale. With a collective groan, the people realized the inevitable had come and the bright flame of hope was extinguished. When a second assassination attempt in 1881 succeeded in killing the Czar, followed predictably by accusations they’d been behind it, could anyone blame the Jews of the Pale for finally giving up?

### **The Screws Tighten... Again**

Outraged over his father’s death at the hand of ungrateful revolutionaries and determined to carry on the reactionary policies to which his father had come too late, Alexander III presided over more than a decade of turmoil and torment—and strangely, for the Jews, a way out.

Rumors and violence spread like wildfire after the assassination, aggravated by poverty, political unrest, and propaganda. Riots broke out in both city and countryside, and the Jews, perennial scapegoats, were the victims. In every shtetl, every town, families agonized – would they be next? Was there anything to prevent it? In Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, desperate disbelief reigned. “Who believed in our time and in a city as respected as ours, with thousands of soldiers as well as government officials, something like this would happen, something out of the Middle Ages?”<sup>108</sup> Hadn’t Jewish businessmen built up Kiev following the reforms of the previous Czar? What Christian peasant or townsman who had been treated at a Jewish hospital would, as one observer put it, take part in a pogrom?<sup>109</sup>

But behind the scenes, every apparatus of the state was conspiring to unleash its wrath. The new Minister of the Interior, Count Nikolay Ignatyev, saw the Jews as the enemy of Slavic goodness and domination. Taking his cue from pogroms in Galati and Odessa 10 and 20 years earlier,<sup>110</sup> he encouraged violence and discouraged restraint. On April 26, 1882, it came to Kiev’s Jews, as one eyewitness told it:

“At noon, the air echoed with wild shouts, whistling, jeering, hooting, and laughing. An enormous crowd of young boys, artisans, and laborers was marching... The destruction of Jewish homes began... The sound of broken windowpanes and frames, the crying, shouting, and despair on the one hand, and the terrible yelling and jeering on the other... Shortly afterwards the mob threw itself upon the Jewish synagogue, which, despite its

strong bars, locks and shutters, was wrecked in a moment. One should have seen the fury with which the riffraff fell upon the [Torah] scrolls... The scrolls were torn to shreds, trampled in the dirt, and destroyed with incredible passion.”<sup>111</sup>

For five days, bands of marauders, some who had traveled from as far as Moscow, beat Jews indiscriminately and destroyed their property.<sup>112</sup> With each day, the crowd was “smaller, but more drunk and brutal,” as a Russian bystander related.<sup>113</sup> The Governor-General of Kiev warned his troops that they’d be prosecuted if they stepped in to stop it, and, in fact, both police and soldiers actively participated in the theft and destruction.<sup>114,115</sup> The onslaught of carnage spread almost everywhere Jews resided, and for two years, they bore the brunt directly or lived in terror that they’d be next. The mobs added arson to their arsenal, devastating Jewish towns, which were made mostly of wood.<sup>116</sup> For the first time, the word *pogrom*, from the Russian word for “thunder,” was being used to describe these organized massacres.<sup>117</sup> Under the new Czar, celebrated as “The Peacemaker,” a total of 259 pogroms took place, the last of which in 1884 saw 10 Jews hacked to death with axes.<sup>118</sup>

In the midst of this, Minister Ignatyev commissioned an investigation to identify the perpetrators. His report to The Peacemaker asserted first that the government has “energetically put down the disorders and stopped the people from taking the law into their own hands in order to safeguard the Jews from violence,” a fiction worthy of a Tolstoy.<sup>119</sup> The report concluded that the Jews themselves were at fault, because of their “tribal exclusion and religious fanaticism,” their “clannishness and solidarity,” and their unfair economic advantages. “In the last 20 years the Jews, little by little, have taken over not only trade and production but, through rent or purchase, significant amounts of landed property.”<sup>120</sup> Jews had become *too* useful, and jealousy and resentment were the result. The report left out the advantages to the government of redirecting the average Russian’s anger – at pervasive poverty and repressive policies – to an easy and familiar target. A leading Jewish writer in the Pale lamented, “Our future is fearful, without a spark of hope or a ray of light.”<sup>121</sup>

Thus, with the belief that the Jews were to blame not only for their own troubles but also for the troubles of Russians, and that they could never be truly integrated, two things happened almost at once: the May Laws, which increased persecution to an almost shocking extent, and permission to emigrate, which, for the first time, provided an escape from the persecution. That there were any Jews left to persecute or to emigrate was in itself surprising.

The May Laws (officially called the “Temporary Laws”) prohibited Jews from settling outside the cities and townships, meaning the shtetls.<sup>122</sup> Peasants were granted the right to demand the expulsion of Jews who lived among them.<sup>123</sup> Families were forced from homes they’d lived in for generations. Along with further residential restrictions in the Pale and expulsion of 20,000 Jews from Moscow, congested living conditions became even more intolerable.<sup>124</sup> One contemporary account calculated an average of 2,730 Jews to the square mile in the Pale; it was between 417 and 816 for the rest of Russia.<sup>125</sup> Registration of Jewish property and mortgages was halted, nor could Jews administer such properties.<sup>126</sup> Quotas were imposed on Jews attending most schools and universities, and banned entirely from others.<sup>127</sup> The Temporary Laws became permanent, and soon the government increased conscription quotas once again. Despite (or perhaps because of) complaints that they were not properly represented in the

military, Jews actually represented 6% of the rolls while accounting for only 5% of the population.<sup>128</sup>

Administrative pressures, continued brutality from the police, and ongoing mob violence made an intolerable situation impossible. Russia became the only European country where antisemitism was official government policy.<sup>129</sup> Philip Johnson cites the telling statements of Count Serge Witte, the Russian Finance Minister. On the one hand, he feels the Jews are too oppressed. On the other, “If it were possible to drown the six or seven million Jews in the Black Sea, I would be absolutely in favor of that.” Still, the Jews “are given encouragements – to emigrate. Kicks in the behind, for example.”<sup>130</sup> While “kicks in the behind” is an odd way to describe a century of cruel oppression, emigration was suddenly a possibility.

### **Was It in Time?**

In January of 1882, Minister Ignatyev announced that Jews were permitted to leave. It was not an official proclamation, and in fact he later denied he even said it, but from that moment, the spark had been ignited.<sup>131</sup> Within five years, over 60,000 Jews had left for the United States, the *Goldena Medina* (Golden Land), which had just thrown open its doors to “the huddled masses yearning to breathe free” (as the Statue of Liberty famously announced on its pedestal), not to mention the country’s need for cheap labor to fuel its industrial growth.<sup>132</sup> By 1890, over 200,000 Jews had left the Pale for America. Another 40,000 or so went to Britain, and an equal number elsewhere.<sup>133</sup> For the first time since the aborted reforms of Alexander II, this exhausted people had hope. And yet...

Hope is not the same as reality. For one thing, those 200,000 people represented only about 4% of the Jewish population in the Pale, now at about 4.5 million people.<sup>134</sup> Most did not have the money and resources necessary to make the trip. A passport cost 18 rubles, at a time when the rent on a single-room dwelling was 40 rubles a year.<sup>135</sup> Applications required police approval, which – without the necessary bribes-- could take months.<sup>136</sup> Steamship agents milked the desperate and naive emigrants, making up fees that went directly into their pockets.<sup>137</sup> Special papers were necessary for travel through Russian territory itself.<sup>138</sup> A common waystation was Finland, which was open to facilitating the travelers as long as they didn’t remain, and the trip from Minsk to Helsinki was over 500 miles. From Finland, they would travel to Germany or England, and from there to the United States.<sup>139</sup> Most chose Germany, despite its humiliating “disinfection” requirement.<sup>140</sup>

The Russian government was fiercely ambivalent about the departure of the Jews, vacillating between unrestricted emigration, which no other sub-population enjoyed, and prohibitive policies, which could exclude a single family member so the rest of the family could not leave.<sup>141,142</sup> Anyone publicizing emigration could be severely punished.<sup>143</sup> Only four months after affirming the right to emigrate, Ignatyev was dismissed by the Czar, as though he was reviled for aiding the hated Jews. Like Pharaoh and his subjects three millennia before, the Russians regretted their decision to let God’s people go. A Jewish tradition holds that only a fifth of the Jews escaped Egypt at the time of the Exodus.<sup>144</sup> Sadly, history would repeat itself, and despite an increasing outward flow from the Pale, it was still only a fraction of the total population, the rest doomed to bare existence in an increasingly hostile territory.

## The Final Tightening

It almost didn't matter that Nicholas II took the throne in 1894. A capricious, ineffectual leader, whatever he did or didn't do could not stem the powerful tides coursing through the country. Revolution was in the air and years of state-sponsored antisemitism had given rise to a ferocity that could not be contained – not that he wanted to contain it. Indeed, the Czar's secret police were behind the forgery and publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which purported to be a transcript of Jewish leaders plotting to rule the world. One of the most virulent and persistent pieces of antisemitic propaganda ever written, it helped incite anti-Jewish sentiment even further and triggered a fresh series of pogroms.

It started in Kishinev, a city of 55,000 Jews living among a quarter million gentiles, squeezed between Rumania and the Ukraine (and now the capital of Moldova).<sup>145</sup> Egged on by the intelligentsia and the authorities, justified as “self-defense,” the Jews' neighbors turned on them. As reported in the *New York Times* soon after:

“The mob was led by priests, and the general cry, ‘Kill the Jews’ was taken up all over the city. The Jews were taken wholly unaware and were slaughtered like sheep. The dead number 120 and the injured about 500. The scenes of horror attending this massacre are beyond description. Babes were literally torn to pieces by the frenzied and bloodthirsty mob. The local police made no attempt to check the reign of terror. At sunset the streets were piled with corpses and wounded. Those who could make their escape fled in terror, and the city is now practically deserted of Jews.”<sup>146</sup>

Left out of this account is that at least 600 women were raped.<sup>147</sup> Horribly, after so long beleaguered in exile and conditioned to sit passively and study and therefore avoid provocation, many Jewish men cowered while their women were violated. Hayim Bialik, the pioneer of modern Hebrew poetry, wrote his greatest poem, “The City of Slaughter.” based on what he'd been told by those who were there.

*Note also, do not fail to note,  
In that dark corner, and behind that cask  
Crouched husbands, bridegrooms, brothers, peering from the cracks,  
Watching the sacred bodies struggling underneath the bestial breath,  
Stifled in filth, and swallowing their blood.  
Watching from the darkness and its mesh  
The lecherous rabble portioning for booty  
Their kindred and their flesh.*<sup>148</sup>

Pogroms followed in Bialystok, Siedlce, and other cities and towns large and small. “Jews were burned alive; they had their tongues, ears, and hands severed; their eyes were gouged out; nails were driven into the heads of living individuals.”<sup>149</sup> The American government report declared, “It was not a struggle between two adversaries; it was a hunt by armed on unarmed people.”<sup>150</sup> In one town, the Prefect of Police was sympathetic to the Jews but was convinced that “it was the wish of the Czar – that a paper had come from him, he said – to plunder and murder the Jews and therefore dared not to interpose his power.”<sup>151</sup> Struggling to keep the lid on a pot boiling over

with social, political, and nationalistic uprisings, the Czar made the police state official. Martial law was declared almost everywhere, businesses were paralyzed, and every railroad, postal, and government worker – even janitors – were expected to report to the authorities the goings-on in their workplaces, what meetings were taking place, the presence of strangers.<sup>152,153</sup> Special police squads were tasked with spying on Jewish craftsmen to ensure they did nothing but work.<sup>154</sup> Others made nighttime raids on Jewish houses, arresting anyone, regardless of age or gender, who could not produce proof of residence.<sup>155</sup>

Singled out, the Jews were subject to relentless violence. During the first Russian Revolution from 1905–1907, there were another 600 pogroms.<sup>156</sup> The slaughter peaked again during the first World War. And in between, when the Russian army was defeated in Galicia and Poland, thousands of Jews were forced eastward from their homes.<sup>157</sup> Poverty was rampant, an entire third of the Jewish population depended on charity for survival.<sup>158</sup> A rabbinical conference in Vilna in 1909 released a declaration: “The restrictions of the Pale of Settlement and limited economic opportunity and gainful employment cause extreme poverty, and poverty leads the Jewish people to despair and to abandonment of traditional observance.”<sup>159</sup> The Pale represented not just a threat to Jewish lives, but a threat to Jewish life.<sup>160</sup>

It must be noted that some Jews had done well financially, building businesses or factories, bribing officials to live in Russia proper, and using their wealth to help their brethren. But this was never near enough to alleviate the suffering, and the well-to-do class was the exception, a tiny minority of the population.<sup>161</sup> Even emigration, which almost doubled each decade to reach a total of two and a half million people, still left behind more than five million.<sup>162</sup> While some Jews fought back, most followed the strategy that had seen them through the Exile thus far: cooperation with the authorities and keeping a low profile.<sup>163</sup> Yet no strategy seemed to work anymore, and Jewish life seemed to be falling apart. Divisions had long existed between the *Misnagdim* (traditionalists) and the *Hasidim* (sects that emphasized spirituality over scholarship). Now, young people were becoming Communist revolutionaries, or Bundist socialists, or ardent Zionists. Many left the Jewish people entirely, chasing the rewards of conversion and becoming Christian or the enticements of the Enlightenment and becoming secular. The favoritism of the kahals and the ruthlessness of the khappers caused further schisms. The very dynamic that championed physically weak, studious men and strong, active women could not stand up to the challenges of the modern age. The ancient patriarchal structure of the Jewish home was breaking down, leading to divorce, broken families, and prostitution.<sup>164</sup>

Five generations of Jews had lived – and died – through four generations of Romanovs. The Bolshevik revolution that finally deposed the Czars established the Soviet Union and led to the abolishment of the Pale of Settlement. Jews became equal citizens in the eyes of the law, officially ending their century-plus of oppression. Those who still lived in Russia, Ukraine, and the states formerly part of the Pale were overjoyed at this happy turn of events.<sup>165</sup> There was no way for them to know that the police state and persecution at the hands of the government and their fellow countrymen would continue as though there had been no revolution at all.

## Part II: The Maternity Ward

What would any rational observer of the Jewish experience in the Russian Pale of Settlement have expected? Given the unrelenting persecution from both the government and fellow citizens, regular acts of horrendous violence, grinding, pervasive poverty and hunger, conversions forced and elective, the breakdown of communal structures, challenges to tradition and the enticements of the modern world, a rational observer would likely expect widespread assimilation, massive rates of mortality, and the ultimate end of Jewish life and thus the Jewish mission.

And who could blame the Jews of the Pale for giving up on their stubborn and tired attachment to the Torah, or even life itself? How was it possible for a Jew at that time not to admit defeat?<sup>166</sup> They had been homeless for centuries, watching as first Christendom, then Islam – Judaism’s progeny – supplanted it and become world dominant. The previous exile, in Babylonia, lasted only 70 years. This was eighteen hundred years! Wasn’t it obvious that the Jewish road was a dead end? As Herman Wouk put it, why wouldn’t the Jews want “the chance to lay down the burden of ostracism and disappear among the billions of mankind?... Where is the sense – in view of the somber history of the Jews – in behaving any other way?”<sup>167</sup>

Of course, such defeat would be a disaster for Jewish destiny. The center of the Jewish world was the Pale: what happened – or didn’t happen – there was crucial. If the Jews of the Pale had given up, had disappeared, so would their mission.

But this is not what happened. What happened was that the largest population of Jews in the world got larger. And not just larger, but surged five-fold, at a rate faster than the non-Jewish populations around it. And although there was violence and conversion and assimilation, nearly all maintained their Jewish identity, clinging to their traditions and national character. And they didn’t just survive, they innovated vibrant new cultural and religious paths, institutions that laid the groundwork for the next era in their long, unpredictable history, and leading directly to the creation of the State of Israel.

This course of events, remarkable and inexplicable, begs to be investigated. Once done, perhaps we will conclude that there must have been an unseen hand behind it.

### **An Explosion of Growth**

At the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were a million Jews in the regions that would become the Russian Pale. By the eve of World War I, there were close to six million.<sup>168</sup> The numbers grew steadily every single decade, regardless of misfortune or emigration, even increasing after the crushing reversal of government policy mid-century, the era of the pogroms at the end of the century, and the political turmoil at the beginning of the next. And the six million figure doesn’t include the two and a half million who left the Pale for safer shores.<sup>169</sup> Paul Johnson describes that as a straight transfer of the “natural population increase.”<sup>170</sup> But in fact, it was anything but natural.

It’s true that it was an age of great population growth throughout the modern world, as advances in medicine and hygiene reduced the mortality rate. From 1815–1914, Europe’s population more

than doubled.<sup>171</sup> But the Jews, even in backward countries, had a growth rate twice that.<sup>172</sup> In the Pale in the same period, it quintupled! This was faster than Jewish growth in Western Europe, as well as in North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>173</sup> Not only that, but prior to 1800, Jewish population growth had been *lower* than everyone else's.<sup>174</sup> There was something exceptional going on in this particular century and this particular part of the Jewish world, something that defied the statistics and the expectations. It was reminiscent of the experience in Egypt: "The Israelites were fertile and prolific, and their population increased," and the more they were oppressed, "the more they proliferated and spread."<sup>175,176</sup>

Emigration slowed the growth, but not by much – which is even more notable because emigrants of other nationalities from the Pale were mostly men looking for work and returning afterward, while it was Jewish women and children as well as men who left, few ever returning.<sup>177</sup> And with the women went any future offspring.

Violence also seemed to have little effect. Even during the worst pogroms beginning in 1881 and up to the Russian Revolution, there were not enough fatalities and impairments to impact the growth significantly.<sup>178</sup> That the bloodshed didn't dampen the desire to live and to reproduce is the wonder.

Historians ascribe the proliferation of the Jews in the Pale to a number of causes. For one, Jewish men and women tended to marry early, even as teenagers, since family was valued as an end in itself and marriage a way to regulate natural appetites in the context of a sacred and beneficial institution. Following the Cantonist Laws, pre-teen boys began to be married off to receive a military exemption.<sup>179</sup> Of course, the bride and groom ran off to play after the wedding, not to live as husband and wife till they were older. But it multiplied the effect: the earlier marriage, the more children. A landowner in the Ukraine observed at the time, "They have no vice, unless early, improvident, and fruitful marriages can be deemed a vice."<sup>180</sup>

Jewish values are another force invoked by historians. Greater family cohesiveness and the devotion of parents, especially mothers, contributed to the health of the children.<sup>181</sup> This, coupled with traditional practices of hygiene also reduced infant deaths. In Czarist Russia, the death rate under one year old for Jews was 13%, among non-Jews 26%.<sup>182</sup> The rarity of illegitimate births translated to better care as well. In Vilna, one in 200 Jewish children was born out of wedlock. The neighbors' children were 28 times more likely to be so.<sup>183</sup>

Beyond the family was the community. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a third of Jewish families were on relief.<sup>184</sup> But it was other Jews providing the relief! The obligation to provide for those in need is mandated by Jewish law, called *tzedakah*, which translates not to charity but to justice. Everyone must give according to his or her ability, even the poor must give something. Emigrants who found success in the New Country sent money to those in the Old.<sup>185</sup> Long before the welfare state came into being, soup kitchens and medical clinics were established, weekly allowances were made to the poor, dowries given to impoverished brides, burials made for paupers, clothing supplied to orphans, aid provided for observing the Sabbath and holidays, and more.<sup>186</sup> Volunteer societies funneled funds and assistance, and the *kahals*, though divisive and resented, still functioned as coordinators of the efforts.<sup>187</sup>

A strange consequence of this was the desire of some non-Jews to convert to Judaism. For hundreds of years, throne, church and state had issued edicts against conversion to Judaism, with punishments for both converts and anyone facilitating their conversion ranging from imprisonment to exile to death.<sup>188</sup> For just as long, rabbinic leaders had declared it forbidden, knowing through hard experience that collective punishment could follow.<sup>189</sup> But why would a gentile want to become a Jew anyway? As one historian explained, “They realized that no Jew ever starved to death in the street, whereas if you were a Christian peasant... no one was going to take care of you. The government wasn’t going to do it and the Church wasn’t going to do it.”<sup>190</sup>

Still, did devoted parenting and a charitable infrastructure entirely account for the population explosion? At unheard of multiples compared to everyone else? Didn’t those factors exist before 1800, when the very same Eastern European Jews had growth rates lower than their neighbors? And what about the Jews outside the Pale, who also had the same injunction of tzedakah, charitable societies, good parents – why didn’t they proliferate in the same way? One can get bogged down in the whys and wherefores of history and miss its lessons.

### **The Irish as Counterexample**

Historical precedents abound of peoples who endured defeat or disaster, then watched, dispirited, as their populations withered or simply disappeared into another culture. Where are the Hittites, the Aztecs, the Carthaginians, the Circassians? It’s true that other peoples, such as those in China or India, have survived over time, have grown – but they weren’t forced from their borders, contending with the world’s greatest empires, facing both protracted, cruel subjugation and national calamities, time and time again. In the Pale itself, the Jews’ own neighbors – the majority of the inhabitants – did not experience the same increase in population, and nothing like the same resilience.

We can look at a straightforward counterexample to illuminate the point: the Irish. They were a defined people in a defined geography, with their own language, culture, and history. Over the course of the century (really, the very end of the 18th century up till World War I), the population numbers in Ireland were similar to those of the Jews of the Pale, each seeing rapid growth, massive emigration, never topping 10 million. What’s more, the Irish lived in abject poverty and insecurity. A contemporary report by the British government wrote:

“It would be impossible adequately to describe the privations which they habitually and silently endure... In many districts their only food is the potato, their only beverage water... Their cabins are seldom a protection against the weather... A bed or blanket is a rare luxury... and nearly in all, their pig and a manure heap constitute their only property... sufferings greater, we believe, than the people of any other country in Europe have to sustain.”<sup>191</sup>

The people were little more than serfs, raising crops or flocks on land owned by rich English families hundreds of miles away over the Irish Sea. Those landowners were predominantly Protestant, the Irish tenants predominantly Catholic, and the latter had suffered religious persecution at the hands of the former for hundreds of years. After the United Kingdom was formed in 1800, incorporating Ireland, Catholics became officially second class, unable to own

land, and with no redress against the foreign authorities.<sup>192</sup> The landlords' agents, or middlemen, collected rents and exploited the tenants for their own gains.<sup>193</sup> They would split the parcels of land into ever smaller portions to increase rent payments and tenants could lose their leases without recourse.<sup>194</sup> Middlemen would blame the absentee landlords, who were uncaring and untouchable.<sup>195</sup> Holdings became so small that potatoes were the only crop that could feed a family, and the same government report found that one-third could not support themselves at all after rent was paid.<sup>196</sup> Under such conditions, "industry and enterprise were extinguished."<sup>197</sup>

When it seemed conditions could not get worse, they did. In 1845, a disease decimated Ireland's potato crop. The main – and for some, the only – source of sustenance disappeared almost overnight. A million people died. England denied aid and tenants were evicted for nonpayment.<sup>198</sup> Two million more emigrated over the next decade.<sup>199</sup> It shook the society to its core and became a defining moment in its history. Thus, the parallel with the Jews is even more striking: desperately poor, oppressed by a foreign government in which they had no say, subject to persecution, and enduring an existential crisis that challenged their survival and their spirit.

How did the growth of their population compare? In the first half of the century, the Irish population grew from 4.8 million in 1791 to 8.2 million in 1841, an increase of over 70%, in line with the rapid growth seen around the modern world at the time.<sup>200</sup> As we've seen, the Jewish population in the Pale also saw rapid growth in the same timeframe, but it *quadrupled*, from 600,000 in 1795 to 2.4 million in 1850.<sup>201</sup>

What happened after the Famine is more striking. From 1856 to 1914, another 4 million Irish citizens left for foreign shores, and 2.4 million Jews left the Pale, roughly proportionate to the size of their respective populations.<sup>202,203</sup> But the Irish, demoralized by the famine, by the loss of friends and family to emigration, and by continued oppression, never recovered. Their population dropped by almost 25%, and in 1851 was down to 6.5 million. By 1900, it was down to 4.5 million – *and stayed there for half a century*, never coming close to where it had been until 2021.<sup>204</sup> Unlike the Irish who were crushed by the departure of their countrymen, the Jews were happy to see friends and family escape the devastation in which they lived. And no matter what setbacks they faced, their population grew steadily every decade. In fact, during the era of pogroms and emigration, from 1880 to 1910, growth in the Pale was faster than the fastest-growing non-Jewish populations in Europe: England and Russia proper.<sup>205</sup>

Had no Irish or Jewish emigration taken place beginning in the mid-19th century, the Irish would have entered the first World War with 8.4 million and the Jews of the Pale with 8 million. But the former would have grown by one and a third, and the latter by *three* and a third. In the century to come, every Jewish population in the world continued to grow – despite discrimination, pogroms, and a Holocaust.<sup>206</sup>

Now these are a lot of statistics to process, and it's easy to get lost in the numbers. Perhaps it's better just to ask the big question: Could it be expected? How likely are such different outcomes for such similar nations under such similar conditions? And not just differences, but striking divergence? The Irish counterexample reinforces the conclusion that something very unusual was happening with the Jews of the Russian Pale.

## Jews Stay Jews

Of course, this isn't just a tale of numbers. Far more important was the maintenance of the people behind those numbers, their lives as Jews.

Despite the relentless coercions and blandishments to convert to Christianity, the Jews as a group resisted. According to a Russian government report for the years 1842–1869, there were 5,081 Jewish converts.<sup>207</sup> Out of an average Jewish population for those years of 1.2 million, with only the adult half considered as candidates for conversion, the proportion of Jews who left the fold was just under 1%.<sup>208</sup> The total for the century, noted previously, was 84,000, which was 2% of the population, including those who emigrated. A far cry from the Czars' target of one third.

It wasn't the first time in history Jews had resisted conversion. In Spain, where the choice was usually the cross or death, many Jews chose the latter, and most who chose the former did so only for appearances, becoming "hidden Jews," practicing their mitzvot in secret for generations. Under the Poles and Russians, the choice was rarely death, but the benefits were enticing. Yet the Jews resisted. Perhaps the sight of priests blessing mobs on their way to pogroms, or even marching in the lead, was enough to make the prospect unappealing.

The bigger threat was the exciting alternatives to tradition sweeping the world, challenging antiquated practices and beliefs. Everywhere there was fierce debate over the rights of man and his place in society, revelations in science, and philosophical innovation. The winds of the Enlightenment finally blew into the Pale as the maskilim began calling for secular education alongside Torah study and for emancipation through the rejection of superficial distinctions such as clothing and language. The maskilim also advocated adoption of what Nicholas I would have considered "useful" work, such as skilled trades. Clearly, these aims aligned with those of the Russian authorities, and many maskilim occupied positions in state-sponsored Jewish schools, both elementary and advanced. Although the movement wasn't strictly anti-religious, embrace of Enlightenment ideas led, as it often did in the West, to secularism. Where the strictures of organized religion were greatest, the reaction tended to be most extreme, and the bastion of Jewish tradition that was the Pale was no exception. The Jews' long memory included the war they'd fought against the Hellenists – the maskilim of the time – more than two thousand years earlier, and they rejected their influence now as they did then.

Indeed, as powerful as all these forces were, there were always defectors on the margins. In Poland, wrote historian Antony Polonsky, "holding enlightened views, assimilation, and conversion were very much minority phenomena," and in the rest of Eastern Europe, "those who favored an adaptation of Jewish practice and belief to what they saw as the demands of modern scholarship and contemporary life remained a minority... So too did outright secularists."<sup>209</sup>

There were movements that sprang from exasperation with the Romanovs' repressive policies. "A century of appeasement had brought nothing but ignominy, starvation, pogroms," observed Max Dimont. "The Jews had had enough and were ready to fight. They began to demand liberties, instead of begging for them. They went into politics, they joined underground movements..."<sup>210</sup> One of these was the Bund, a labor movement with nationalistic goals, including autonomy of the Jewish masses and recognition of Yiddish as the language in the

street, in schools, and in the press.<sup>211</sup> Another was socialism, built on the ideas of Karl Marx, who repudiated his Jewish heritage yet the angry fist he shook at the perfidious and cruel ruling classes echoed the prophets of old. The Jewish revolutionaries hoped that replacing the Czars with the proletariat would remove all barriers to acceptance by the general society and thus solve the “Jewish problem.” Thousands were swept up in the currents of revolution.

But while Dimont implied it was “the Jews” who were ready to fight and to join these movements, in fact it was again a minority. The Jewish Bund was the largest socialist group in the Russian empire, but it never exceeded 40,000 official members.<sup>212</sup> Despite so much of the leadership of the Communist Party being Jewish – including such notables as Leon Trotsky (born Lev Bronstein) – according to the party’s 1917 census there were only 958 Jewish members out of a total of 23,600.<sup>213</sup> Noise is not numbers, and the vast majority of Jews remained Jews.

This steadfastness could be seen even among those able (and eager) to take advantage of opportunities that arose in higher education, the job market, the government, anywhere a crack opened. Despite obstacles, Jewish attendance increased in universities, whether through conversion, subterfuge, or simply attending without enrolling. In the 1880s, Jewish women made up 16% of those auditing classes in Moscow’s Third Gymnasium and in graduate courses in Kiev.<sup>214</sup> Having operated their own educational institutions since time immemorial, discoursing in logic and focused on abstractions, Jews were uniquely suited for study. In the workplace, despite bans and obstacles, many Jews found jobs in industries like textiles, the grain trade, banking, and railways. And yet, no matter where they were, “their Jewish origin always remained recognizable to others as well as themselves.”<sup>215</sup> Even those who rejected the tradition, who rejected God, retained their identity as Jews.

The Jew of the 1700s who had stood between landowner and serf, conducted moneylending with gentry and peasant, who traded grain from farmer to market, was always a middleman, always an outsider.<sup>216</sup> Loss of identity was never an issue. Yet the Jews of the 1800s did not integrate either. Most lived in towns and shtetls, physically separate from non-Jews, steeped in Jewish tradition, law, and culture. While often squalid, these little communities maintained and reinforced Jewish identity. As industrialization and urbanization attracted many to the cities, Jews chose to live in residential clusters, transplanting the insularity of shtetl life to the city.<sup>217</sup> Ze’ev Jabotinsky, who would go on to establish the Israeli army, remembered: “In Odessa, everybody was an Odessan.... Yet, at the same time... without any propaganda, without any ideology, we Jews used to sit on one row of benches in class, next to one another.”<sup>218</sup>

The people’s attachment to Jewish identity was habitual in the Pale. When the decrees banning “Jewish clothing” were enacted, the response was vehement. Many refused to obey, preferring to pay fines or even risk beatings. As a result, the impact was limited, and as one man said with some satisfaction, “Things returned to their old way.”<sup>219</sup> Nicholas I had shut down the Jewish printing presses and imposed strict censorship on books with Hebrew type, making it illegal to possess any uncensored book – a potentially devastating blow to the People of the Book. But the sheer number of volumes submitted to the censors overwhelmed them, and by the end of the century books and newspapers in Yiddish and Hebrew once again flourished.<sup>220,221</sup> When the government ordered the establishment of state schools for Jewish children, parents and communities simply refused to cooperate despite the sacrifices necessary to support local private

schools – which usually consisted of little more than a poor *melamed* instructing a handful of hungry students in a bare room with few books and a single candle.<sup>222</sup> When the state instituted seminaries to train “official” rabbis and place them in communities, the schools were boycotted by traditional scholars and the graduates were considered an insult or a joke.<sup>223</sup> When the government demanded that secular studies be taught at the famed Volozhin yeshiva, its leadership shut down rather than comply.<sup>224</sup> Within seven years, it had reopened. The stiff-necked Jews seemed to believe they just needed to wait out any trouble. Their patience was always going to be greater than that of their oppressors.

The Russians and Poles weren’t surprised by any of this. Minister Ignatyev regretted the Jews’ “tribal seclusion and religious fanaticism,” their “clannishness and solidarity.”<sup>225</sup> And hadn’t his boss, the Liberator, given up on ever integrating the Jewish ingrates? Hadn’t the Polish Minister of Justice said that no matter what beneficence was showered upon the Jews, they “remain an alien and separate nation”? They did. But would one have expected it? Hadn’t oppression, sudden changes in living conditions, wrenching relocations from rural to urban living, transformed other populations? Why wouldn’t the Jews give in and give up?

### **Adversity as a Positive**

One key to understanding the phenomenon was uttered by the prophet Ezekiel 2,600 years before: “What you have in mind shall never come to pass – when you say, ‘We will be like the nations, like the families of the lands, worshiping wood and stone.’ As I live, declares the Lord God, I will reign over you with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and overflowing fury.”<sup>226</sup> This seems an extraordinary and perhaps even a cruel strategy. But historical perspective seems to vindicate its efficacy. Acceptance by the host culture and an absence of adversity rarely leads to positive results for the Jewish mission. For a counterexample to the Pale we need look no further than the experience of the Jews next door, in Western Europe.

The trend of political reform and the shift of power from royalty to nobility to the people was a hallmark of modern European history, highlighted by the British Bill of Rights in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the French Revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup>. The trend never crossed the border into the Russian empire: power remained concentrated in the personage of the Czar and individual rights were a threat to order. There, discrimination against Jews was official policy. In the West, with increasing emancipation, discrimination was mostly a matter of custom, of personal choice and action.<sup>227</sup> It was thus a small impediment to anyone suddenly freed from the ghetto, and the Jews of Western Europe rushed to find success in the market, the salon, the university, even the legislature. Their suffering brethren in the Pale could see in the distance an alternative to their miserable existence, could long to also live in an environment of progress and enlightenment and to escape reactionism and oppression – and that sight no doubt further deepened their misery and resentment.

And yet, while the new liberties of the Western world may have been good for the individual materially, Judaism itself didn’t thrive there. For the emancipated Jews, the cost of entrée into society was simple: fit in, look and act like your neighbors. “In Western Europe,” warned a Jewish committee convened to analyze the situation at the time, “where Jews did not distinguish themselves from the other inhabitants by their costume, they had merged with the dominant

culture. But in the western provinces of Russia, where dress distinguished Jews from their neighbors, they formed a distinct caste.”<sup>228</sup> The Jews in the West didn’t need laws telling them to shave their beards or change their clothes, they did it themselves – and shed their heritage along with it.<sup>229</sup>

Sartre famously posited that antisemitism keeps Jews Jewish.<sup>230</sup> A more positive view of the dynamic was Ahad Ha’am’s observation, “More than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews.”<sup>231</sup> Sometimes freedom is good for Jewish people, but it’s not good for the Jewish People.<sup>232</sup>

### “Choose Life”

Thus far, we’ve discussed only half the story of unexpected outcomes from the century of the Pale. Yes, incredibly, Jews survived, and even more incredibly they survived as Jews, their identity intact. But rather than hold on to the status quo, or retreat into the safety of ideals and patterns of the past, the Jewish people moved forward, creating new modes of Judaism, of scholarship, of national pride and action—setting a foundation for the future.

In the wake of the wave of pogroms beginning in 1881, the Jews had to agree with the Russians that integration was no longer a possibility. “We are not permitted to live, yet we cannot die.”<sup>233</sup> So they put their energies towards making the best of it. One choice was to beat a path to the exit. In almost every town and city, societies were created to facilitate emigration, despite the vacillating policies of the authorities. Young Jews in Kiev and Vilna, like youth everywhere, were dissatisfied with the response of their elders, and set up Am Olam (“Eternal People”), an organization to establish agricultural settlements in America.<sup>234</sup> Although the ultimate results were disappointing, its founding reflected the idealism and ambition of the time. The various groups reached out to their foreign brethren, who responded quickly, setting up their own organizations to aid emigration and to support the new arrivals at the end of their journey.<sup>235</sup> Without this organized effort, far fewer would have escaped the Pale—and the Final Solution, although still in the distant future, might have come considerably closer to its goal than it did.<sup>236</sup>

An unexpected result of emigration was the establishment of a national religious leadership. The Agudat Yisrael (“Union of Israel”) was founded by traditional Jews to oppose secularism, alternative “Judaisms,” and political Zionism, whose goal to establish a Jewish state in Palestine was considered something only the messiah was entitled to do.<sup>237</sup> The Agudat Yisrael was comprised of rabbis to provide religious guidance for the organization and business leaders to liaise with the local and federal governments. The organization soon expanded its mandate, establishing the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (“Council of Torah Sages”), comprised of leading rabbinic figures, heads of yeshivas, and Hasidic rebbes, debating and setting policy on all major issues affecting religious Jewry. For most traditional Jews, it was the supreme authority on such matters in Europe until the Holocaust, and then served the same function in the United States and Israel through present times. While many outside what is now the “ultra-Orthodox” world dispute its authority, there is no question it was and still is a force in the battle over the direction of the Jewish future.

Because the rate of Jewish emigration couldn't keep pace with the rate of births (40 per every 1,000), something had to be done now about living conditions.<sup>238</sup> The Bund, whose main aim was peaceful attainment of higher wages and better working conditions, sought to achieve these through a change in attitude.<sup>239</sup> "Only when we show our strength will we force everyone to respect our honor," declared a Bundist publication.<sup>240</sup> Although, as noted, actual membership was relatively small, the Bund's philosophy and activities had a profound effect on the Jew in the street, instilling a new sense of pride and dignity.<sup>241</sup> In light of its philosophy, the Bund was driven to contribute—and in many cases lead—self-defense efforts, establishing small groups armed with homemade weapons to battle the rabble intent on another pogrom. In the city of Zhytomyr, the successful defeat of marauding police and citizens alike became legend. One resident reported, "If not for the self-defense, Zhytomyr would have been another Kishinev."<sup>242</sup> While the Bund lost much of its force after the Revolution, it had restored a bit of pride for the Jews of the Pale, and many members went on to become influential leaders of the Jewish world in America.

On the ground, the religious world was no less active, and even more innovative. Historically, yeshivas were local affairs, catering to and supported by the towns or cities in which they were established, usually by the resident Talmudic scholar. In light of the pervasive poverty and the philosophical upheavals of the Pale, a new model was needed. In the early 1800s, Rabbi Chaim ben Isaac of Volozhin in Belarus, sought to create a national yeshiva, with top teachers and students from across Europe and Russia.<sup>243</sup> The high level of intellectual engagement would fight against the Enlightenment for the minds of Jewish youth, and the enthusiasm of communal learning would battle Hasidism for their hearts. The response was immediate and powerful, and the new center of learning inspired others and produced leaders for generations after.<sup>244</sup> "The Yeshiva of Volozhin is the mother and source of all the yeshivot and Talmud Torahs [religious high schools] in the world," said one alumnus.<sup>245</sup>

Ironically (although at this point in our tale one might conclude inevitably), there were disparate trends within the yeshiva world as well. While the new yeshiva models were partly a response to Enlightenment ideas and to Hasidism, what was to be done about the compelling lure of humanism? Hasidism, emphasizing joy and spirituality, had sprung forth in part to escape the dry, legalistic approach that much of traditional Jewish life had become. Now, a new movement began that spoke to the dignity of the individual and the morality of his conduct. Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, a student of Reb Chaim of Volozhin, developed a program of personal improvement based on Jewish sources. He practiced what he preached, actively helping the sick during a cholera epidemic, and when doctors caused an uproar by declaring Jews should eat on Yom Kippur to fight off the disease, he brought food to the synagogue and ate it in front of the congregation.<sup>246</sup> His program, called *Mussar* (literally "correction"), was incorporated into the Volozhin curriculum, then in many other yeshivas, and has become mainstream throughout the Orthodox world.<sup>247</sup>

In parallel, another rabbinic leader in the Pale was promoting a simple idea: don't speak ill of other people. In his long life, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan founded a world-class yeshiva, whose institutional descendants continue to be active, was a leading figure in Agudat Yisrael, and wrote an extensive commentary on the *Code of Jewish Law* still widely viewed as the final word.<sup>248</sup> But his greatest influence was owed to his series of books on character development, though he

was never part of the mussar movement. One, called *Chofetz Chayim* (“Pursuer of Life”) explored the laws and moral foundations of proper speech. Like Rabbi Salanter, he famously practiced what he preached, even managing a small shop where he could chat with customers and show that avoiding gossip and slander didn’t require silence. In the midst of terrible infighting in a Jewish world being pulled in so many directions, the book was a welcome tonic, and Rabbi Kagan soon gained eponymous status, known simply as the Chofetz Chayim.<sup>249</sup> More than just a palliative for current tensions, addressing proper speech was seen as the key to the Redemption. As we’ve seen, the Talmud stated clearly that the real reason for the Exile was baseless hatred among Jews, specifically improper speech. Widespread study of the relevant laws could be a key to Redemption, and the Chofetz Chayim’s book—and philosophy—has become a fundamental part of religious life.

This was in the street. What of the home? The winds of change blew through there as well, upsetting centuries-old beliefs and practices. While boys and men were expected to learn Hebrew, law, and history at cheder and yeshiva, Jewish girls traditionally had been taught by their mothers—and only what they needed to know to run the home and raise the family. The system had worked for millennia, but no more.

“In our times, a girl receives no knowledge at all of *yiddishkeit* [Jewish way of life]. The first song that she hears is not a Jewish one; the first letter she learns is not *alef-bais* [Hebrew alphabet]; the first little story she reads is of foreign life in a foreign tongue... And this is the result of such an education: the mediocre woman either heads towards apostasy... or she arranges her house in a non-Jewish way and yearns her whole life after foreign peoples.”<sup>250</sup>

It was a dangerous situation. The Jewish home had always been the foundation of the nation’s life; according to Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, the entire Book of Genesis is simply a polemic on the importance of family, its identity and purity.<sup>251</sup> A seamstress in Cracow, self-taught but fired up by this threat to the future, defied tradition and started a school for girls to provide basic Jewish education, calling it Bais Yaakov (“House of Jacob”), Scripture’s euphemism for Jewish women. Sarah Schenirer’s school was an immediate success and soon had the blessing of the Chofetz Chayim and the support of Agudat Yisrael. Within 20 years, 25 students in one classroom became 35,000 in 248 Bais Yaakovs across the Pale.<sup>252</sup> Today, there is hardly a traditional Jewish community without one. It was the last major institution founded in the Pale before its end, and a common truism is that it did more to preserve the Jewish people—as Jews—than any other.

The astonishing outburst of organizational creativity that characterized the century of the Pale flies in the face of accepted sociological principles, which hold that social and economic stability are prerequisites to cultural and political innovation.<sup>253</sup> The Renaissance and the Post-World War II boom are examples of such a dynamic. Maslow’s famous “hierarchy of needs” spelled out the basic psychological necessities of physical and financial security that must be in place before other pursuits are possible.<sup>254</sup> Yet as we saw with the Roman and Babylonian eras, the Jews continued to pay no attention to such constraints, and set about creating the structures that would support a new life – if not in the Pale, then wherever God would lead them. Perhaps they were inspired by His injunction to them over 3,000 years earlier: “Before you I have placed life

and death, the blessing and the curse. You must choose life, so that you and your descendants will survive.” (Deuteronomy 30:19)

## A Cultural Revolution

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Pale was indeed a period of reinvention but also of reclamation, celebrating a focused Jewish life as both a means and an end. Nothing was more emblematic of this than the Hasidic movement, which had begun in the 1700s, embracing spirituality, creating self-supporting insular communities, and transforming rabbi to Rebbe, a wonder-working leader holding court like the prophet-kings of old. The more the world changed, the stronger these communities became, bulwarks against anything the Rebbes considered non-Jewish influences.<sup>255</sup> The strength of Hasidic life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – ecstatic song and dance, intense camaraderie, strict rules of comportment – was so great that it influenced contemporary Jewish groups, even those opposed to Jewish tradition, eventually permeating today’s ultra-Orthodox culture.<sup>256</sup>

This was a gradual process, of course, though no less powerful for being so. What was sudden was the perception that language had importance beyond just facilitating communication, that it could be a tool of national self-identification. As long ago as the First Exile in 586 BCE, the Jews in Babylonia had traded Hebrew for Aramaic for their everyday language. Since then, their lingua franca was whatever was spoken by their neighbors wherever they found themselves. In the Pale, many Jews spoke Russian, many Polish, some Ukrainian, some Moldavian – but all spoke Yiddish, itself a strange amalgam of mostly old German and some Hebrew and Aramaic. Suddenly, Yiddish itself became a cause célèbre, championed by socialists seeking cultural autonomy, the pious upholding continuity in the study hall, and the nationalists looking for a rallying point.<sup>257</sup> No less than Max Nordau, the great Zionist leader, wrote, “Since Yiddish is the language of millions of Jews, it is the duty of national Jewish writers to use Yiddish... To feel ashamed of the Yiddish language is to be guilty of anti-Semitism, of a great national crime.”<sup>258</sup> Newspapers and magazines proliferated, offering not just news and commentary, but an entire genre of Yiddish literature. Novelists and humorists such as Shalom Rabinowitz, better known by his pseudonym Sholom Aleichem, idealized and popularized the daily life of Jews in the Pale. Sholom Aleichem’s stories of Tevye the Milkman later became the play and movie “Fiddler on the Roof,” cementing forever the sentimental view of the sweet and simple shtetl life which was anything but.

Amazingly, there was room for the same level of excitement and activity in reviving Hebrew as the national language. The maskilim, championing the secular Enlightenment, mostly despised Yiddish as street jargon and the language of the Exile and sought to resurrect what was last spoken in a time of literary brilliance and national sovereignty.<sup>259</sup> Hebrew had always been *loshon hakodesh* (“holy tongue”), the idiom with which God had made Himself known to man, the mode of expression for the Law of Moses and the prophets of old. The psalmists had also composed their beautiful poetry in Hebrew, as did Solomon in his audacious “Song of Songs.” The maskilim encouraged the use of the ancient words in every field of knowledge.<sup>260</sup> A Hebrew newspaper began publishing in St. Petersburg. The first novel written in Hebrew was published in Lithuania.<sup>261,262</sup> Powerful new voices found expression in Hebrew, writers such as Ha’am and Bialik, whose “City of Slaughter” seemed to carry so much more weight in the

language of Jeremiah and Isaiah. But it was still a written language. It took a young linguist in Lithuania, who in 1879 decided a revived Hebrew must be the language for a revitalized people, to take it from page to speech. Believing the proper center of Jewish life was Palestine, he moved there two years later, changed his name to Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, and wrote the first modern Hebrew dictionary. He brought up his son and daughter to speak only Hebrew, the first children in over two millennia for whom it was their native tongue.<sup>263</sup> He co-founded the Va'ad Halashon ("Committee of Language"), which became the Academy of the Hebrew Language, Israel's official arbiter of new Hebrew words.<sup>264</sup> Ben-Yehuda's efforts led to Hebrew's rebirth as a spoken language, an unprecedented occurrence. Even more, it led to its role as a unifying force among Israel's disparate immigrants, with reverberations across the Jewish world. In Moscow, the Habima Theater, performing only in Hebrew, was founded – and it too moved to Palestine, becoming after the establishment of the state the National Theater of Israel.<sup>265</sup>

Campaigns for one language or another were conducted in the fast-changing milieu of the turn of the century, as so many Jews were relocating to towns and cities, gaining greater access to every communications medium – and the fervor these caused.<sup>266</sup> Despite bans, censorship, and an impoverished customer base, some 3,000 books were translated into Yiddish, Russian, and Hebrew.<sup>267</sup> Sixteen volumes of a Jewish encyclopedia were printed in Russian. Writers published in two or three languages to accommodate their trilingual audiences.<sup>268</sup> This babel of speech provoked as well as inspired. The Bundists and maskilim were against the use of Russian, the language of the oppressor, as well as Hebrew, championing Yiddish as the real national language. Many traditionalists attacked the Hebraists, outraged by the degradation of *loshon hakodesh* for the mundane and the profane. The Zionists, including Theodore Herzl himself, thought attempts to revive it were a fool's errand, never to catch on.<sup>269</sup> Sholom Aleichem, writing in Yiddish, chose to use a pseudonym to avoid antagonizing his own father, who was a proponent of Hebrew.<sup>270</sup> From our vantage point in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we see clearly the full flowering of Hebrew as the national language of the State of Israel, yet echoes of these passionately held positions are still heard today as the Jewish people continues to define and redefine itself.

### **The Journey Home Begins**

For all this commotion and vigor, no development during the Russian century was more momentous for Jewish destiny than the idea and ideal of a return to the ancestral homeland. From 1881 to 1917, 60,000 Jews emigrated to Palestine, almost all from the Russian Pale.<sup>271</sup> They were driven by religious conviction, by idealism, and by a desire to escape the violence. In the next case, we'll examine the miraculous restoration of Jewish life there and the establishment of the State of Israel. Here we're focused on its genesis in the Pale.

Despite the Roman expulsion, some Jews had managed to remain in their land, so there was a continuous Jewish presence there through all the years. As we saw, the culture created in Babylonia held the lost kingdom and destroyed Temple as central to Jewish identity, with ritual remembrances and longing baked into daily life. So, over the many years, pilgrims had made their way to the old land, many just in the hope of being buried there. Something changed in the modern era. The winds of nationalism blew across the modern world, inspiring people to define themselves by their common history or language or shared ideals rather than by which king or

noble they happened to owe fealty. Nationhood was an old idea for the Jews, of course, but they had long accepted their fate in exile and waited patiently for the Messiah to lead them out. Now that stance was being questioned, and by staunch members of the very religious establishment that had encouraged it. As early as the 1840s, Rabbis Yehuda Alkalai of Serbia and Tzvi Kalischer of Poland argued forcefully for the Jewish people to begin their return to Eretz Yisrael—not in place of the hoped-for leadership of the Messiah, but in anticipation of it.<sup>272</sup> Soon, non-religious voices echoed the call. Leon Pinsker, an Odessa physician, published a pamphlet titled, “Auto-Emancipation: A Warning to His Fellow People from a Russian Jew,” urging mass emigration to Palestine as the only solution to hatred and persecution.<sup>273</sup> All embraced the purchase and tilling of the soil; none mentioned the establishment of a state.

It took the horrific pogroms in the early 1880s to turn the ideal into action. The images of death and destruction, of mobs and mayhem, could not be dismissed. Jewish students in St. Petersburg voiced their outrage in an open letter:

“We thought that even though we lived under conditions that humiliated our dignity, at least our lives and property were protected; now we realize that this is not the case. Recent events compel us to rethink our position and have destroyed any hope for a better future here in Russia.... We need to move away from Russia everybody who can and wants to search for a new fatherland, we need to create for them our own place, where they can be rightful owners, where they can live in prosperity from their agricultural labor.”<sup>274</sup>

Jews had longed to return home for 1,800 years—now seemed like a good time to do it. A new movement took hold in the Pale, Hovevei Zion (“Lovers of Zion”), calling for national renaissance through agrarian settlement in Eretz Yisrael. It swiftly gained the approval of many rabbinic leaders, including the head of the Volozhin Yeshiva, as well as material support from wealthy and influential Jews in England and France.<sup>275</sup> Soon began what is now known as the First Aliyah, a 20-year period in which 25,000 Jews, mostly religious and mostly from Russia and Eastern Europe, settled in Palestine, doubling the Jewish presence there.<sup>276</sup>

Just as Italy then Germany created modern states based on shared language (in 1861 and 1871, respectively), and the Baltic States struggled for independence, it was inevitable that some Jewish intellectuals would conclude that their own people should build their own state. Theodore Herzl, a Viennese journalist, playwright and bon vivant, based his program on that of Pinsker’s, and in his own words “founded the Jewish state.”<sup>277</sup> But it was the Russian-born Chaim Weizmann who did more than anyone else to bring it to realization, heading the World Zionist Organization,<sup>278</sup> persuading the British government to approve a renewed Jewish homeland in Palestine,<sup>279</sup> persuading the United States to support the United Nations vote on establishing it,<sup>280</sup> founding the country’s first scientific research centers and first university, and eventually becoming the first President of Israel.<sup>281</sup>

In the decade leading up to World War I, 35,000 Jews, inspired by the Zionist idea and in the midst of a storm of pogroms, made up the Second Aliyah. Ideologically intent on farming amid desert and swamp, it was hard going for the new arrivals. “Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery,” wrote Mark Twain on his famous trip there, “I think Palestine must be the prince. The

hills are barren, they are dull of color... It is a hopeless, dreary, heart-broken land.”<sup>282</sup> And the new pioneers could not have been less suited for the task. Over three-quarters of the Jews of the Pale were engaged in commerce and industry, less than 4% in agriculture.<sup>283</sup> Yet the pioneers put their frail bodies to the plow – men and women, with equal responsibilities and equal privileges – drained swamps, cleared rocks, planted and sowed, and little by little their bodies grew stronger and the soil yielded its fruits.<sup>284</sup>

Unlike the Jew of the First Aliyah, the new arrival was “basically secular, socialist, idealist, and zealous in his belief that he was not only building a new land, but also creating a new Jew and a new nation.”<sup>285</sup> Gone would be the days of fear and helplessness, of cowering in corners and praying for miracles. It was said that Bialik’s poem had caused revulsion among thousands of Jewish youth, and rejecting pacifism they joined the Russian underground to oppose the Czar and tyranny.<sup>286</sup> Many took that experience to the new land, eventually fighting for the right to join the Allied armies against the Nazis, which in turn prepared them for the Israeli War of Independence. The Bund’s efforts at self-defense also inspired. “It is as if a powerful electric shock has passed through the body of our humiliated people... our fate depends not on our environment but on ourselves, our will and on our national effort.”<sup>287</sup> Thus, the spirit of Zionism born in the Pale, a spirit of agency, autonomy, mission, self-reliance, and strength, became the backbone of the Israeli spirit.

Within a remarkably short time, these pioneers from Russia and Eastern Europe, small in number but giant in determination, began to build a nation. By 1914, new suburbs had been established outside the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>288</sup> Petach Tikva, now a city, was the first settlement to be established in Eretz Yisrael in 2,000 years.<sup>289</sup> On the sand dunes north of Jaffa, a town was founded that would become Tel Aviv. Rail lines were laid and a bank created.<sup>290</sup>

Another product of the Pale was the leadership behind this progress. David Ben-Gurion, born in Plonsk, Poland, became the Founding Father of Israel and served as its first Prime Minister. Having headed the labor organization that built the infrastructure of the Jewish State before it was established, he then proclaimed its establishment and was the first person to sign the Israel Declaration of Independence (which he helped write). In fact, of 37 signatories to the Declaration, only six did not hail from the Russian Empire.<sup>291</sup> One of the signers was Golda Meir, from Kiev, who persuaded American Jews that they were partners in this enterprise and raised unheard-of funds that were crucial to building the State. She later became the First Labor Minister, overseeing the absorption of immigrants who doubled the population in four years, building housing and putting them to work.<sup>292</sup> She went on to become the country’s first female Prime Minister (and the first in the Middle East).<sup>293</sup> Valdimir (later Ze’ev) Jabotinsky, of Odessa, founded the Irgun underground, which was instrumental in driving the British out of Palestine, and was the architect of Jewish battalions in the Allied military, which combined to become the Israeli army.<sup>294</sup> A young lawyer from Belarus, Menachem Begin, caught the Zionist fire from Jabotinsky and succeeded him as leader of the Irgun. He eventually became the first non-Labor Prime Minister and signed a peace treaty with Egypt that changed the region forever.<sup>295</sup> From Latvia came Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, one of the foremost rabbinic leaders in the religious world, who became the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine. He viewed the Zionist movement as a divinely inspired first step to the final Redemption – despite or even because of its secular nature. This led to his repudiation by the ultra-Orthodox but to his embrace by most

everyone else, preserving a space for traditional Judaism within Israeli society and anticipating the eventual shift of the center of the Jewish world to Eretz Yisrael.<sup>296</sup> Herzl might have come from the West, but aliyah came from the East.

This triumph of the Pale, the building of a nation focused on the future out of the rubble of the past, is certainly stirring. But could it possibly have been expected? Workers trained for commerce succeeding in agriculture. A language unspoken in everyday life for over 2,000 thousand years reintroduced and swiftly adopted by emigres from 29 countries.<sup>297</sup> A people grown used to making do with the scraps of others and passively accepting persecution becoming exemplars of self-reliance and self-defense. These and more are startling individual achievements, and collectively inexplicable against the backdrop of the Russian experience, perhaps even more so with the relocation of the center – just in time for the American Century.

### **The Other Promised Land**

From 1881 until just after World War I (when the Red Scare ended unrestricted immigration), more than two million Jews arrived from the Russian Empire.<sup>298</sup> It was one of the largest population transfers in history, certainly the most significant migration for the Jews since the expulsion from Spain. Relocation to the safe haven of the United States saved many Jews from continued persecution and worse under Russian domination in the Pale and the terrible upheavals of revolution and world war. Ultimately, it prevented complete annihilation at the hand of the Nazis. As it was, losing a third of your people in a handful of years, in such a ghastly manner and while almost every country turned a blind eye, is a staggering circumstance and it still defies belief that the Jews recovered. Had it been two-thirds, or even more, would recovery have been possible?

Emma Lazarus, the 19th century writer of those “huddled masses” verses immortalized at the base of the Statue of Liberty, highlighted the importance of the new American homeland. She had taken exception to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s celebrated poem, “The Jewish Cemetery at Newport,” written a few years before, which closed with, “dead nations never rise again.” Lazarus published a fiery essay disputing such a conclusion, asserting that the many Jews coming to America “prove them to be very warmly and thoroughly alive.”<sup>299</sup>

But did America’s “rescue” of the Jews ensure Jewish survival? As we’ve discussed, Jewish destiny is about the People, not the people. In 1964, *Look* magazine, the second most widely circulated publication in America at the time, featured a story on its cover, “The Vanishing American Jew,” which cited the “alarming” increase of intermarriage and decreasing birthrate and how this jeopardized “the vitality and the entire future of the Jewish people.”<sup>300</sup> A 1977 Harvard study predicted there would be only 10,000 Jews in America in three to four generations.<sup>301</sup> And as late as 1994, a researcher was projecting “the approaching end of Jewish history.”<sup>302</sup> They were all wrong. The Orthodox, though small in numbers, had benefited from a rising financial tide and had grown in political sophistication, which in turn fueled the growth of their educational and communal infrastructure and the ability to support large families. Between 2000 and 2020, the number of American Orthodox Jews tripled, and continue to increase their representation.<sup>303</sup> While the total number of Jews finding religion important in their lives is half that of their fellow Americans, almost all of the subset of Orthodox Jews finds it important.<sup>304</sup>

The core had not just survived, but thrived. And while many of the rest had shed their religious practice, their Jewish name, even their choice of Jews as spouses – most had maintained their Jewish identity.<sup>305</sup> The Jews had defied the odds again.

As we saw in Babylonia, if given the chance, this unusual people grabbed it and bettered their circumstances. When the bedraggled masses of the Pale first disembarked in America, they brought with them their values and their support structure, setting up educational and healthcare agencies almost upon arrival; they established synagogues, yeshivas, day schools, and social clubs. Life may have been hard for the greenhorns, but here there was hope and opportunity – if not for themselves, then for their children. Soon, they found both material and cultural success, moving from the needle trades into the professions, the arts, and other callings. There were suddenly Jewish judges, congressmen, even Cabinet secretaries. Publishing houses were dominated by Jews, and scientists with Jewish names were winning Nobel prizes. Major department stores grew from the pushcarts of Russian peddlers.<sup>306</sup> In only 30 years, the proportion of Jews toiling in manufacturing jobs shifted from 60% to 20% in favor of commerce and public services.<sup>307</sup> They became a force for workers' rights and for civil rights, gained a strong voice in politics, and their own ascendance helped drive America's. A singular beneficiary of all this success – beyond the improvement in living conditions and a renewed sense of pride – was Israel. In 1948 alone, American Jews donated \$150 million to the infant nation—four times the total amount raised by the American Red Cross in the same year, and equivalent to about \$1.2 billion in 2025.<sup>308</sup> In the 50 years from 1948–1998, over half of all Jewish philanthropic giving went to the Jewish State. Private donations through organizations totaled almost \$14 billion.<sup>309</sup> Finances were not the only contribution. As a powerful bloc of voters, the Jews generally focused on two things: their own economic interests and Israel. Few politicians could risk ignoring them. The sway held by American Jewry was acknowledged by Anwar Sadat, when he published “An Open Letter to American Jews,” asking them to assume an “historic responsibility” in supporting peace between Israel and Egypt.<sup>310</sup> He knew that the power to persuade lay outside of the Middle East.<sup>311</sup>

While most of those who had left the Pale chose America over Palestine, and their descendants, including the Orthodox, continue to have little interest in moving to Israel (although they like to visit), some observers believe this itself is an act of divine providence, ensuring the material and diplomatic security of those in the motherland.<sup>312</sup> This paradigm, of the wealthy majority supporting from afar the poor but dedicated minority returning to Eretz Yisrael, has echoes of the return from the Babylonian exile under Zerubbabel and Ezra. Jewish history moves on to unknown paths, yet so often the journey feels familiar.

### **A Look Back Before We Move On**

In the end, what came of Russia's intentions towards its Jews? Were one-third converted, one-third exterminated, and one-third provoked to emigrate? In fact, only one-fiftieth had taken confession with the Church and perhaps another fiftieth had died of unnatural causes, but one-third did escape.<sup>313</sup> An old Yiddish expression goes, *Mann tracht un Gott lacht*: “Man plans and God laughs.”

We can make some important observations about the century of the Pale. Against all odds, in the midst of political, cultural, and religious divisions unseen since Second Temple days, a strange kind of unity was maintained. Jewish life fractured but it never broke. When their brothers were in need, others stepped up. Charitable efforts, which all could agree on and cooperate in, subconsciously expressed Jewish solidarity.<sup>314</sup> And while each group considered its own brand of Jewishness as authentic and superior, its members acknowledged that those in other camps were still Jewish.<sup>315</sup>

It should also be noted that for much of the time the Jews spent in the Pale, it was effectively a giant open-air prison. Some joined rebellions and many escaped, and it can be debated if they could have fought back sooner or harder. But they never descended to blind violence or resorted to terrorism. Instead, they strove to improve their own lives, some seeking to effect political change, some leaving when they could, and always with a sense of history and destiny. They were victims but did not identify as victims. Rather than let the actions of others define them, they defined themselves—by their heritage, which they carried onto the next great waystations of Jewish history, America and Palestine. Rather than a cemetery, the Pale was a maternity ward.

But before any of these things happened, could they have been predicted? Would anyone expect the population to grow, at levels exceeding its neighbors, its predecessors, its contemporaries? To maintain its identity, its purpose, its strength? To create new institutions and cultural paradigms crucial to its future? To decamp to an inhospitable and foreign soil and build the foundations of a future state? To transfer so many of its people in so little time to a completely different sort of country and immediately find such success?

We began the telling of this case with Golda Meir's memory of her four-year-old self. "Above all, I remember being aware that this was happening to me because I was Jewish," she continued. "It was a feeling that I was to know again many times during my life—the fear, the frustration, the consciousness of being different." Inevitably, she had "the profound instinctive belief that if one wanted to survive, one had to take effective action about it personally."<sup>316</sup> One might expect that action to be a repudiation of the identity, history and people that had led her family to such a fate. That's human nature, after all, and many Jews did indeed take that course. Yet she did not. She—and Ben-Gurion and Begin and Weizmann and so many others—doubled down on the very thing that invited the oppression. At the risk of terrible personal cost, they dedicated themselves to the success of their people, to their place in history. And they were followed by countless others determined to carry on as Jews. In a book he called *Eternal People*, an immigrant to America wrote, "The Jews of Russia have given fresh proof of the old historical truth that one may crush the Jew's body but not his soul."<sup>317</sup>

One can find reasonable, real-world explanations for every one of the events in this case, enough to satisfy the casual observer, and even the historian. It might be true that each outcome wasn't what a reasonable person would expect, but the unexpected sometimes happens. What doesn't happen is that *every* expectation is subverted, every anticipated zig turns into a zag. At a certain point, one would be forgiven for observing this surprising series of outcomes and conclude the deck is stacked.

So, perhaps we can ascribe the preservation of the Jewish people in the midst of cruel oppression to providence. Perhaps we can even say God was behind the startling achievements that came as a result. But should we say He stepped in only after they were herded into the Pale? Maybe it was part of the plan all along. Squeezing the olive is the only way to get pure olive oil, in the Midrash's allegory for the Jewish people's struggles.<sup>318</sup> This seems especially clear in hindsight, comparing the experience of the Pale with "enlightened" Western Europe, where the Jews found political and economic freedom but retained little of their heritage, created few lasting cultural contributions, and sent almost no one to rebuild the ancient homeland – until a Holocaust drove the remnants to it.

No matter. Whether providence brought them to the Pale as part of a grand plan, or simply turned the experience there for the good, no one could have predicted it. Except perhaps God Himself. "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6)

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## Flyleaf

<sup>1</sup> Schorr, Yisroel Simcha & Malinowitz, Chaim, ed., *Talmud Bavli*, Tractate Yoma, Vol. 2, Artscroll, quoted in commentary, p. 69b:4

## An Unusual Book About an Unusual People

**<sup>1</sup> Before we get too far, it would be appropriate to define just what we mean by “Jews.” For the purposes of this study, we are referring to a family then a nation, defined by both birth and heritage, whose constitution is the Torah, and acting as God’s messengers on earth. Despite stark differences in geography, religious practice, and custom over time, the core group bearing allegiance to the mission has persevered, and this is the story of that group.**

<sup>2</sup> Tolstoy, Leo, “The Final Resolution?” *Jewish World Periodical*, 1908, <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Judaism>

<sup>3</sup> Papers of Alexander Hamilton, volume 26, U.S. National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-26-02-0003-0009>

<sup>4</sup> The American Presidency Project, “Remarks to Members of the Knesset in Jerusalem,” May 15, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-members-the-knesset-jerusalem>

**<sup>5</sup> Just as we did with “Jews” above, we should define what we mean by “God.” Let us agree that at the most basic – without going into distracting details – we are referring to the entity that created the universe, who did so for a purpose, and who interacts with individuals and nations to bring about certain goals. The mechanisms by which these things happen is a mystery, although the results may not be.**

<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 26:3, 5, 14, 17, 33. Kaplan, Aryeh, *The Living Torah: The Five Books of Moses*, Maznaim Publishing, 1981. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the Pentateuch are from this source, which is considered by many to be the most reliable and relatable translation in English.

<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 4:31

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 8:5

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 32:20

**<sup>10</sup> Other cases include: the nation’s rebirth after exile to Babylonia, recovery of life after the expulsion from Spain, surviving America’s melting pot, the Holocaust, and the Six-Day War. Perhaps these will be examined in a second book if there is interest.**

## The Russian Pale As Golden Age

<sup>1</sup> Meir, Golda, *My Life*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975, p 7

<sup>2</sup> Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p. 150

<sup>3</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 110

<sup>4</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 322

<sup>5</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 322

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 716

<sup>7</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 343

<sup>8</sup> Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p. 150

<sup>9</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 716

**<sup>10</sup> At the time, “the Ukraine” was a region; in 1991, it became a country, “Ukraine.” Ukrainians today are quite sensitive about the distinction.**

<sup>11</sup> Kantor, Mattis, *Codex Judaica*, Zichron Press, 2005, p. 257. **The historical irony of this edict is that it was not the first time the Jews had been banished to or expelled from the Ukraine. In 1721, Peter the Great ordered their expulsion from the region. In 1742, Empress Petrovna expelled them again. In 1764, Catherine the Great allowed them to come back temporarily, before making it permanent in 1794.** (Ehrlich, Avrum, *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2009, p. 1010)

<sup>12</sup> RETRIEVE REF

<sup>13</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 198

<sup>14</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 306

- <sup>15</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 179
- <sup>16</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 358
- <sup>17</sup> Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p. 151
- <sup>18</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 715
- <sup>19</sup> Kobler, Franz, ed., *A Treasury of Jewish Letters*, Jewish Publication Society, 1954, p. 627
- <sup>20</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 168
- <sup>21</sup> Danilenko, Vladimir, "The Kiev Jewish Emigration Society Documents on the Jewish Emigration," Kiev Jewish Emigration Society, <https://rtrfoundation.org/kiev-1.shtml>, p. 3
- <sup>22</sup> Gilbert, Martin, *Atlas of Jewish History*, Dorset Press, 1984
- <sup>23</sup> Wilcox, Walter, ed., *International Migrations, Vol. II: Interpretations*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1931, p. 541; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 13, "Pale of Settlement," p. 27
- <sup>24</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 147
- <sup>25</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A8
- <sup>26</sup> Dubnow, Simon, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, Vol. 2*, Jewish Publication Society, cited in Cooper, Jack, *Who Knew: Unusual Stories in Jewish History*, Gefen Publishing, 2010, p. 88
- <sup>27</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 287
- <sup>28</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 291
- <sup>29</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 341
- <sup>30</sup> Rosenstein, Marc, *Turning Points in Jewish History*, University of Nebraska Press, 2018, p. 211
- <sup>31</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. II, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 6
- <sup>32</sup> Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p. 151
- <sup>33</sup> **Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, in their seminal book explaining the roots of antisemitism, *Why the Jews* (Simon & Schuster, 1983), cite jealousy and resentment as one of the drivers of Jew hatred throughout history. "In nearly every society in which Jews have lived for the past two thousand years, they have been better educated, more sober, more charitable with one another, committed far fewer violent crimes, and have had a more stable family life than their non-Jewish neighbors." They quote economist Thomas Sowell that even when the Jews lived in slums, there was lower alcoholism, homicide, rates of accidental death, truancy, juvenile delinquency, and even higher IQs. While admitting precise measurement is not possible, they make a strong case that the quality of Jewish life was a perennial cause of jealousy, resentment, and consequently antisemitism.**
- <sup>34</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A21
- <sup>35</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A21
- <sup>36</sup> JewishHistory.org, "Jewish Russia, 1800-1850," <https://www.jewishhistory.org/jewish-russia-1800-1850>, p. 3
- <sup>37</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 260
- <sup>38</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p.384. **According to Jewish law, a married woman must cover her hair, as a sign of the exclusivity and increased modesty befitting the matriarch of a Jewish home; many wore wigs rather than scarves, both out of aesthetic considerations and to avoid standing out.**
- <sup>39</sup> **Indeed, Jewish tradition holds that the Hebrews maintained only three unique characteristics during their long slavery in Egypt, and that these saved them from assimilating: their Jewish names, language, and clothes.**
- <sup>40</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p.384
- <sup>41</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, "Russia," p. 441
- <sup>42</sup> JewishHistory.org, "Jewish Russia, 1800-1850," <https://www.jewishhistory.org/jewish-russia-1800-1850>, p. 1, 3; John Klier, "Pale of Settlement," YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe
- <sup>43</sup> John Klier, "Pale of Settlement," YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe
- <sup>44</sup> Kantor, Mattis, *Codex Judaica*, Zichron Press, 2005, p. 262
- <sup>45</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 216
- <sup>46</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 361
- <sup>47</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 361
- <sup>48</sup> Cooper, Jack, *Who Knew: Unusual Stories in Jewish History*, Gefen Publishing, 2010, p. 89
- <sup>49</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 360

- <sup>50</sup> Khiterer, Victoria, *Jewish City or Inferno of Russian Israel?: A History of the Jews in Kiev Before February 1917*, Academic Studies Press, 2016, p. 260
- <sup>51</sup> Spiro, Ken, *Crash Course in Jewish History: From Abraham to Modern Israel*, Targum Press, 2010, p. 325
- <sup>52</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 216
- <sup>53</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 216
- <sup>54</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 217
- <sup>55</sup> JewishHistory.org, “Jewish Russia, 1800-1850,” <https://www.jewishhistory.org/jewish-russia-1800-1850>, p. 4
- <sup>56</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 182
- <sup>57</sup> Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p. 153
- <sup>58</sup> Rosenstein, Marc, *Turning Points in Jewish History*, University of Nebraska Press, 2018, p. 211
- <sup>59</sup> Rosenstein, Marc, *Turning Points in Jewish History*, University of Nebraska Press, 2018, p. 211-212. **Of course, the existence of “states within states” consistently led to accusations of Jews as fifth columnists, with no loyalty to the country and seeking to exploit the non-Jewish masses.** (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Russia,” p. 442)
- <sup>60</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 360
- <sup>61</sup> Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p. 153; Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 361
- <sup>62</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 184
- <sup>63</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 361
- <sup>64</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 360
- <sup>65</sup> Rashi on Exodus 5:6, Ben Isaiah, Abraham & Sharfman, Benjamin, *The Pentateuch and Rashi’s Commentary*, S.S.&R. Publishing Company, 1950, p. 41
- <sup>66</sup> Exodus 5:14, 5:15, 5:20
- <sup>67</sup> JewishHistory.org, “Jewish Russia, 1800-1850,” <https://www.jewishhistory.org/jewish-russia-1800-1850>, p. 4
- <sup>68</sup> **“In 75 B.C.E., Shimon ben-Shetach declared elementary education compulsory. In 64 C.E., Yehoshua ben-Gamla, the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) made the momentous decision that teachers of young children be appointed in each district and town and that children should start school at age six or seven. Although there was formal education before him, ben-Gamla reformed it, making the system universal and more effective. The Talmud declares that were it not for ben-Gamla, ‘Torah would have become forgotten among the Jewish People’.”** (Sutton, Robert, “Ancient Jewish Education,” *Amit Magazine*, <https://amitchildren.org/ancient-jewish-education>) **The United Kingdom did not establish universal public education for children until the late 19th century, the United States not until the early 20th; the United Nations didn’t officially call for it until 1989.**
- <sup>69</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21, and Numbers 15:37–41
- <sup>70</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 363
- <sup>71</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Russia,” p. 440
- <sup>72</sup> **The state’s approach to Jewish participation in secular higher education was still restrictive. Enrollment in top training schools such as the St. Petersburg Institute of Civil Engineers, the Army Medical College, and the Kharkov Veterinary Institute was forbidden.** (Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 362)
- <sup>73</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 377
- <sup>74</sup> Schainker, Ellie, *Confessions of the Shtetl*, Stanford University Press, 2016, p. 35
- <sup>75</sup> Schainker, Ellie, *Confessions of the Shtetl*, Stanford University Press, 2016, p. 35
- <sup>76</sup> Schainker, Ellie, *Confessions of the Shtetl*, Stanford University Press, 2016, p. 35
- <sup>77</sup> Danilenko, Vladimir, “The Kiev Jewish Emigration Society Documents on the Jewish Emigration,” Kiev Jewish Emigration Society, <https://rtrfoundation.org/kiev-1.shtml>, p. 2
- <sup>78</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 263
- <sup>79</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 263
- <sup>80</sup> Wilcox, Walter, ed., *International Migrations, Vol. II: Interpretations*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1931, p. 523

- <sup>81</sup> Wilcox, Walter, ed., *International Migrations, Vol. II: Interpretations*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1931, p. 569
- <sup>82</sup> Schainker, Ellie, *Confessions of the Shtetl*, Stanford University Press, 2016, p. 34
- <sup>83</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p.:306
- <sup>84</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p 363
- <sup>85</sup> Schainker, Ellie, *Confessions of the Shtetl*, Stanford University Press, 2016, p. 6
- <sup>86</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 218
- <sup>87</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 168, Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 218
- <sup>88</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 218
- <sup>89</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 186
- <sup>90</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 186
- <sup>91</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 168
- <sup>92</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, "Modern Jewish History: The Pale of Settlement," <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-pale-of-settlement>
- <sup>93</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p.:400
- <sup>94</sup> **The Jews had already had experience with Russian government capriciousness. The 1819 law allowing Jewish distillers to settle in Russia proper was revoked only seven years later. Jewish artisans were expelled from the city of Nicolaev in 1829 and recalled a year later. Jewish workmen were allowed to settle in the ports of the Black Sea, only to be expelled once again. Permission for Jewish chemists to reside in the interior of Russia was conditioned in such a way that they could not actually practice their profession.** (Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p. 153)
- <sup>95</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 218
- <sup>96</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 722
- <sup>97</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 308
- <sup>98</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 186
- <sup>99</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, "Russia," p. 442
- <sup>100</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, "Russia," p. 442
- <sup>101</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 218
- <sup>102</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 219
- <sup>103</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 219
- <sup>104</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 219
- <sup>105</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p.:286
- <sup>106</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 369
- <sup>107</sup> **To our ears in the West, all this may sound strange. How could the Czars, the whole apparatus of government, get away with all this? Russia, indeed most of the world, had no tradition of democracy, much less human rights. Except for the Jews and their Torah, these are mostly modern concepts. The Russian character, in particular, believes in strength, in constancy, in a strong man at the top and the strong common man supporting him. Three centuries of Romanovs, 18 of them altogether, did nothing to impinge on this belief, and everything to reinforce it. Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, though personally immoral and debauched (drunken balls, decapitations of paramours, torture of disagreeable family members) were political geniuses. This was a necessity to grow and maintain a vast empire covering one-sixth of the world. The remaining Romanovs were no better personally, but far worse politically. Of the last dozen Romanov sovereigns, half were assassinated (as pointed out by Greg King, "The Romanovs: fascinating, odd and**

odious,” *Washington Post*, 2016). Nevertheless, the Czar’s word was law, and more. “In the conception of the Great Russian people, the tsar is the embodiment of the state... He is not the chief of the army, nor the people’s choice, nor the head of state or the representative of the administration, nor even the sentimental Landesvater or bon pere du people... The tsar is the state itself – ideal, benevolent, and at the same time its stern expression.” (Konstatin Dimitrievich Kavelin, *Thoughts and Remarks about Russian History*, 1865, cited in Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 322)

<sup>108</sup> Dekel-Chen et al, ed., *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 115

<sup>109</sup> Dekel-Chen et al, ed., *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*, Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 116

<sup>110</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 364

<sup>111</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 221

<sup>112</sup> Khiterer, Victoria, *Jewish City or Inferno of Russian Israel?: A History of the Jews in Kiev Before February 1917*, Academic Studies Press, 2016, p. 266

<sup>113</sup> Khiterer, Victoria, *Jewish City or Inferno of Russian Israel?: A History of the Jews in Kiev Before February 1917*, Academic Studies Press, 2016, p. 266

<sup>114</sup> Khiterer, Victoria, *Jewish City or Inferno of Russian Israel?: A History of the Jews in Kiev Before February 1917*, Academic Studies Press, 2016, p. 268

<sup>115</sup> Khiterer, Victoria, *Jewish City or Inferno of Russian Israel?: A History of the Jews in Kiev Before February 1917*, Academic Studies Press, 2016, p. 276

<sup>116</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 735

<sup>117</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 221

<sup>118</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. II, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 5

<sup>119</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. II, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 7

<sup>120</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. II, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 7

<sup>121</sup> Goldstein, Phyllis, *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, 2012, p. 223

<sup>122</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 13, “Pale of Settlement,” p. 26

<sup>123</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 13, “Pale of Settlement,” p. 26

<sup>124</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 309

<sup>125</sup> Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p.:154

<sup>126</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 187

<sup>127</sup> Danilenko, Vladimir, “The Kiev Jewish Emigration Society Documents on the Jewish Emigration,” Kiev Jewish Emigration Society, <https://rtrfoundation.org/kiev-1.shtml>, p. 2

<sup>128</sup> Harris, Isidore, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1891, p.:155

<sup>129</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 363

<sup>130</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 364

<sup>131</sup> Strakhova, Anastasiia, “Unexpected Allies: Imperial Russian Support of Jewish Emigration at the Time of Its Legal Ban, 1881-1914,” *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, Issue 20, December 2021

<sup>132</sup> Danilenko, Vladimir, “The Kiev Jewish Emigration Society Documents on the Jewish Emigration,” Kiev Jewish Emigration Society, <https://rtrfoundation.org/kiev-1.shtml>, p. 4

<sup>133</sup> Danilenko, Vladimir, “The Kiev Jewish Emigration Society Documents on the Jewish Emigration,” Kiev Jewish Emigration Society, <https://rtrfoundation.org/kiev-1.shtml>, p. 4

<sup>134</sup> Danilenko, Vladimir, “The Kiev Jewish Emigration Society Documents on the Jewish Emigration,” Kiev Jewish Emigration Society, <https://rtrfoundation.org/kiev-1.shtml>, p. 4

<sup>135</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A5

<sup>136</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. D11

<sup>137</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. C29

<sup>138</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A5

<sup>139</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A5

- <sup>140</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. B36
- <sup>141</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 269
- <sup>142</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A6
- <sup>143</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A5
- <sup>144</sup> Rashi on Exodus 13:18, Ben Isaiah, Abraham & Sharfman, Benjamin, *The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary*, S.S.&R. Publishing Company, 1950, p. 133
- <sup>145</sup> Lebovic, Matt, "How a Small Pogrom in Russia Changed the Course of History," *Times of Israel*, April 9, 2018 (review of *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History*, Stephen Zipperstein, Liveright, 2018), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-a-small-pogrom-in-russia-changed-the-course-of-history/>
- <sup>146</sup> *The New York Times*, 28 April 1903, page 6, cited in Katz, Moshe, "A Day in the City of Slaughter," <https://www.your-krav-maga-expert.com/In-the-City-of-Slaughter.html>
- <sup>147</sup> Lebovic, Matt, "How a Small Pogrom in Russia Changed the Course of History," *Times of Israel*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-a-small-pogrom-in-russia-changed-the-course-of-history>
- <sup>148</sup> H.N. Bialik, "The City of Slaughter" in Efros, Israel, ed., *Complete Poetic Works of Hayyim Nahman Bialik*, 1948, cited in Cooperman, Bernard Dov, University of Maryland, <https://faculty.history.umd.edu/BCooperman/NewCity/Slaughter.html>
- <sup>149</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 269
- <sup>150</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. D31
- <sup>151</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. D44
- <sup>152</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. B12
- <sup>153</sup> Cowen, Philip, *U.S. Report on Immigration: Immigration from Russia*, 1906, p. A4
- <sup>154</sup> Danilenko, Vladimir, "The Kiev Jewish Emigration Society Documents on the Jewish Emigration," Kiev Jewish Emigration Society, <https://rtrfoundation.org/kiev-1.shtml>, p. 3
- <sup>155</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 361
- <sup>156</sup> Ehrlich, Avrum, *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2009, p. 1011
- <sup>157</sup> Ehrlich, Avrum, *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2009, p. 1011
- <sup>158</sup> Wikipedia, "Pale of Settlement," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale\\_of\\_Settlement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale_of_Settlement), p. 3
- <sup>159</sup> Gerberer, Yehuda, "For the Record," *Mishpacha Magazine*, May 28, 2024
- <sup>160</sup> **One may argue that such relentless, oppressive treatment must have sprung from somewhere. Surely the Jews had done or were doing terrible, unlawful things to deserve it. It's the question on the lips of most Jew haters and in the pit of the stomach of many Jews. Let's look at the reasons actually given by the two populations engendering and enforcing the treatment: the tandem of Church and state and the Jews' neighbors. The Czar, ruling a far-flung empire of disparate peoples, sought to assimilate them all into one Russian People. The Jews, ever clinging to their history and their ways, stubbornly resisted integration, and thus became the focus of the Czar's ire. The Russian Church had a particular interest in supporting the program of assimilation, since the Jewish tenacity in clinging to its beliefs was an insult and a threat to the Church's claim to ultimate truth and authority. The Jews' neighbors, the majority of them serfs and, after emancipation, peasants, resented the Jewish role of middleman between them and the land-owning aristocracy, and the fact that no matter the level of oppression, the Jews managed to maintain their lives, their communities, and their beliefs. It seems a stretch that empire-making, indignation, and resentment are sufficient explanation for such hatred and cruel oppression. And it's hard to make the case it was excusable. One could argue that the peculiar historical and social circumstances made the response inevitable. But when the historical and social circumstances change from one era to the next, and yet the phenomenon is the same, clearly something larger is at play. As Psalm 83 observes, "For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads. They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones. They say, 'Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!' "**
- <sup>161</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, "Russia," p. 443
- <sup>162</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 194; Facts and Details, "Rise of the Jews in Russia," [https://factsanddetails.com/russia/Minorities/sub9\\_3b/entry-5097.html#chapter-5](https://factsanddetails.com/russia/Minorities/sub9_3b/entry-5097.html#chapter-5)
- <sup>163</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 269

<sup>164</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 377

<sup>165</sup> **In a speech in 1919, Lenin said, “Only the most ignorant and downtrodden people can believe the lies and slander that are spread about the Jews... It is not the Jews who are the enemies of the working people. The enemies of the workers are the capitalists of all countries. Among the Jews there are working people, and they form the majority. They are our brothers, who, like us, are oppressed by capital; they are our comrades in the struggle for socialism. Shame on accursed Tsarism, which tortured and persecuted the Jews. Shame on those who foment hatred towards the Jews...”** (Archived from a gramophone recording, cited in Wikipedia, “History of the Jews in Russia,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Jews\\_in\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Russia))

<sup>166</sup> A perspective from Rabbi David Gottlieb, heard by the author at a lecture at Yeshiva Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, August, 1988.

<sup>167</sup> Wouk, Herman, *This Is My God*, Little, Brown, 1987, p. 230.

<sup>168</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, Table 6.A.2. Except where footnoted otherwise, all figures for the Jewish population of the Pale in this section are from this source, which aligns with other definitive sources for the same data.

<sup>169</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, “Migrations,” pp. 1519. Except where footnoted otherwise, all figures for Jewish emigration from the Pale in this section are from this source, which aligns with other definitive sources for the same data.

<sup>170</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 365

<sup>171</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Population,” p. 886

<sup>172</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, “History,” p. 271

<sup>173</sup> DellaPergola, Sergio, “Notes Toward a Demographic History of the Jews,” *Genealogy*, 2023-12, Vol. 8, <https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/8/1/2>

<sup>174</sup> DellaPergola, Sergio, “Notes Toward a Demographic History of the Jews,” *Genealogy*, 2023-12, Vol. 8, <https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/8/1/2>

<sup>175</sup> Kaplan, Exodus 1:7

<sup>176</sup> Exodus 1:12

<sup>177</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, “Migrations,” pp. 1519 and 1521

<sup>178</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Population,” p. 887

<sup>179</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Population,” p. 885

<sup>180</sup> **Scholarly sources report that many young couples lived with the bride’s family until they were able to establish themselves, an arrangement that helped reduce infantile mortality, but this was predominantly among well-to-do families. That cohort being minute, it can’t be seen as a driver of population growth.**

(*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Population,” p. 887, and Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 338)

<sup>181</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Russia,” p. 442; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Population,” p. 887

<sup>182</sup> Roth, Cecil, *The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation*, The East and West Library, 1956, p. 255

<sup>183</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Population,” p. 887

<sup>184</sup> Wikipedia, “Pale of Settlement,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale\\_of\\_Settlement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale_of_Settlement), p. 3

<sup>185</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Russia,” p. 449

<sup>186</sup> Ross, Arthur, *Communal Solidarity: Immigration, Settlement, and Social Welfare in Winnipeg’s Jewish Community, 1882–1930*, University of Manitoba Press, 2019, p. 2

<sup>187</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 307. **Maimonides, the great Jewish sage of the Middle Ages, observed, “We never saw ten Jews residing together who did not establish a charity fund.” (Laws of Gifts to the Poor, 9:3)**

<sup>188</sup> Teter, Magda, “Conversion,” YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, <https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/article/318>

<sup>189</sup> Teter, Magda, “Conversion,” YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, <https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/article/318>

<sup>190</sup> Spiro, Ken, *Crash Course in Jewish History: From Abraham to Modern Israel*, Targum Press, 2010

<sup>191</sup> “The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845–1849, Woodham-Smith, Cecil, Penguin, noted in “Great Famine (Ireland), Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Famine\\_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland)).

<sup>192</sup> **William Gladstone, four-time Prime Minister of Great Britain in the 1800s, focused his considerable powers in the final decades of his career on addressing the “Irish Problem.” “We are bound to lose Ireland in consequence of years of cruelty, stupidity and misgovernment.” Sadly, he failed, and a century of violence, rebellion, and ill will followed.** (Brand, Eric, *William Gladstone*, Chelsea House Publishers, 1986)

<sup>193</sup> Wikipedia, “Great Famine (Ireland),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Famine\\_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland))

<sup>194</sup> Wikipedia, “Great Famine (Ireland),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Famine\\_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland))

<sup>195</sup> **An interesting side note to the comparison is the reaction of the peasantry in each country to the system of middlemen. Both classes of middlemen served the same function, but there were two important distinctions. In Ireland, the peasants were Irish and the middlemen were Irish. In the Pale, the peasants were Russian and the middlemen were Jews. In Ireland, the middlemen were known to be cruel and exploitative, and demonstrably the cause of much of the people’s suffering. In the Pale, there is no record of pervasive exploitation on the part of Jewish middlemen – in fact, unlike the absentee landlords of Irish land, the Russian and Polish landlords strictly constrained their middlemen’s powers. Yet the Irish peasant’s anger was directed toward the distant landowners and the Russian peasant’s ire was directed toward the Jews.**

<sup>196</sup> Wikipedia, “Great Famine (Ireland),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Famine\\_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland))

<sup>197</sup> Wikipedia, “Great Famine (Ireland),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Famine\\_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland))

<sup>198</sup> Wikipedia, “Great Famine (Ireland),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Famine\\_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland))

<sup>199</sup> Wikipedia, “Great Famine (Ireland),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Famine\\_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine_(Ireland))

<sup>200</sup> “Historical Population of Ireland” (Wikipedia), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical\\_population\\_of\\_Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_population_of_Ireland). Except where footnoted otherwise, all figures for Irish population in this section are from this source, which aligns with other definitive sources for the same data.

<sup>201</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010

<sup>202</sup> “Emigration from Ireland in the 19th century,” Irish Genealogy Toolkit, <https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/emigration-Ireland-19th-century.html>.

<sup>203</sup> Enc. Judaica, 1519

<sup>204</sup> **Another point of difference between the two nations is their achievements during and after their adversity. The Irish became sullen and directed whatever strength they had left to seeking independence from England – with mixed results – and aside from some outstanding cultural triumphs on the part of individual artists, never achieved brilliance on their own stage nor significant contributions on the global stage. The Jews, in stark contrast, created diverse and often competing educational and political institutions that set the stage for success in their new homes and the astonishing revival of their homeland and ancient tongue – as well as new literary and cultural ideas and forms. Related to this is what happened when each group left to foreign shores, mainly America. The Irish, although proud of their heritage and their names, generally adopted the national identity of their host countries. The Jews (as a group, though not all individuals) maintained their national identity, acculturating to one extent or another, but never fully assimilating. These points are discussed in the next section.**

<sup>205</sup> DellaPergola, Sergio, “Notes Toward a Demographic History of the Jews,” *Genealogy*, 2023-12, Vol. 8, <https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/8/1/2>

<sup>206</sup> DellaPergola, Sergio, “Notes Toward a Demographic History of the Jews,” *Genealogy*, 2023-12, Vol. 8, <https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/8/1/2>. **Thus, this would include obvious examples of host countries in the West and in Israel, but also Jewish communities in North Africa and the Middle East until their forced transfer. Obviously, the Holocaust decimated Europe’s Jewish population, but this was extrinsic – wherever Jews had the opportunity to live and reproduce, each succeeding generation more than replaced its predecessor.**

<sup>207</sup> Schainker, Ellie, *Confessions of the Shtetl*, Stanford University Press, 2016, Table 1.1

<sup>208</sup> Assumes 50% of the population were minors, in line with historical proportions.

<sup>209</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 334

<sup>210</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 310

<sup>211</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Russia,” p. 452

<sup>212</sup> Wikipedia, “General Jewish Labor Bund,”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General\\_Jewish\\_Labour\\_Bund#cite\\_note-:0-8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Jewish_Labour_Bund#cite_note-:0-8)

<sup>213</sup> Gitelman, Zvi, “Communism,” YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, <https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Communism#author>

<sup>214</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 354

<sup>215</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 731

<sup>216</sup> Rosenstein, Marc, *Turning Points in Jewish History*, University of Nebraska Press, 2018, p. 211

<sup>217</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Russia,” p. 450

- <sup>218</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 197
- <sup>219</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 383
- <sup>220</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 363
- <sup>221</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 268
- <sup>222</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, "Russia," p. 439
- <sup>223</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 724
- <sup>224</sup> Kantor, Mattis, *Codex Judaica: Chronological Index of Jewish History*, Zichron Press, 2005, p. 273
- <sup>225</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. II, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 7
- <sup>226</sup> Ezekiel 20:32-33, Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, Jewish Publication Society, 1988
- <sup>227</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009. P. 261
- <sup>228</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 383
- <sup>229</sup> Dimont, Max, *The Indestructible Jews*, New American Library, 1971, p. 331
- <sup>230</sup> "Anti-Semite and Jew," Jean-Paul Sartre, 1944
- <sup>231</sup> "Shabbat and Zionism," Ahad Ha'am, 1898.
- <sup>232</sup> **This apparently inevitable follow-on to freedom, the dissolution of religious values and ethical behavior, is one of the reasons traditional religions – especially fundamentalist strains – criticize Western culture. Obviously, extreme tactics like intimidation and holy war practiced by some of these religious adherents are reprehensible and certainly counterproductive. But the logic behind the objection is sound.**
- <sup>233</sup> Dimont, Max, *The Indestructible Jews*, New American Library, 1971, p. 326
- <sup>234</sup> Wikipedia, "Am Olam," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Am\\_Olam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Am_Olam)
- <sup>235</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 264. **A few of those organizations were the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in New York, the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Paris, the Mansion House in London, and the Jewish Colonization Association in Argentina, although there were many more.**
- <sup>236</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, "Migrations," p. 1520
- <sup>237</sup> Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 403
- <sup>238</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 265
- <sup>239</sup> Rubin, Alexis, ed., *Scattered Among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49-1975*, Jason Aronson, 1995, p. 201
- <sup>240</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 270
- <sup>241</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 270
- <sup>242</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 270
- <sup>243</sup> JewishHistory.org, "The Volozhin Revolution," <https://www.jewishhistory.org/the-volozhin-revolution>
- <sup>244</sup> Wikipedia, "Pale of Settlement," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale\\_of\\_Settlement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pale_of_Settlement)
- <sup>245</sup> Spiro, Ken, "History Crash Course: Pale of Settlement," <https://aish.com/48956361>
- <sup>246</sup> Kantor, Mattis, *Codex Judaica*, Zichron Press, 2005, p. 266
- <sup>247</sup> **One of the first yeshivas to adopt the Mussar program was Slobodka, founded by the legendary Nosson Tzvi Finkel, who was a master at character development and personally prepared a generation of religious leaders who established their own yeshivas in America and Israel and were members of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah. Another case of the Pale's influence on the Jewish future.**
- <sup>248</sup> Wikipedia, "Yisrael Meir Kagan," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yisrael\\_Meir\\_Kagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yisrael_Meir_Kagan)
- <sup>249</sup> **Outstanding Jewish scholars have often been known by the name of their most influential book.** (Wein, Berel, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1990*, Mesorah Publications, 1990)
- <sup>250</sup> Polonsky, Antony, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, Vol. I, Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, p. 354
- <sup>251</sup> Sacks, Jonathan, *Covenant & Conversation: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible, Genesis, the Book of Beginnings*, Magid, 2009

- <sup>252</sup> Ginsparg Klein, Leslie, “A Traditional Revolutionary: Sarah Schenirer’s Legacy Revisited,” *Jewish Action Magazine*, Summer 2016, <https://jewishaction.com/jewish-world/people/traditional-revolutionary-sarah-schenirers-legacy-revisited/>
- <sup>253</sup> Recent books touch on this maxim, such as Richard Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class* (Basic Books, 2002) and John Howkin’s *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas* (Penguin Books, 2002).
- <sup>254</sup> Wikipedia, “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s\\_hierarchy\\_of\\_needs#cite\\_note-:0-3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs#cite_note-:0-3)
- <sup>255</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 162
- <sup>256</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 725
- <sup>257</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 269
- <sup>258</sup> Dimont, Max, *The Indestructible Jews*, New American Library, 1971, p. 141
- <sup>259</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 200
- <sup>260</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 200
- <sup>261</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 268
- <sup>262</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 200
- <sup>263</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 200
- <sup>264</sup> Wikipedia, “Eliezer Ben-Yehuda,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eliezer\\_Ben-Yehuda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eliezer_Ben-Yehuda)
- <sup>265</sup> Habima, “About,” <https://www.habima.co.il/en/about/>
- <sup>266</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 11, “Russia,” p. 450
- <sup>267</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 268
- <sup>268</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 206
- <sup>269</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 200
- <sup>270</sup> Barnavi, Eli, ed., *A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People*, Schocken Books, 1992, p. 206
- <sup>271</sup> Wein, Berel, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1990*, Mesorah Publications, 1990
- <sup>272</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, “Zionism,” pp. 1034-1035M
- <sup>273</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 255
- <sup>274</sup> Khiterer, Victoria, *Jewish City or Inferno of Russian Israel?: A History of the Jews in Kiev Before February 1917*, Academic Studies Press, 2016, p. 268
- <sup>275</sup> Wein, Berel, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1990*, Mesorah Publications, 1990
- <sup>276</sup> Wein, Berel, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1990*, Mesorah Publications, 1990bv
- <sup>277</sup> Harris, Constance, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images*, McFarland & Co., 2009, p. 255
- <sup>278</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, “Chaim Weizmann”
- <sup>279</sup> Dimont, Max, *The Indestructible Jews*, New American Library, 1971, pp. 396-397, Johnson, Paul, *A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 397
- <sup>280</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 2, “Assimilation,” p. 436
- <sup>281</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, “Chaim Weizmann,” p. 430. **The Weizmann family had grown up with Zionist ideals, and 10 of Chaim’s 15 siblings moved to Palestine. Two also became noted chemists at the Weizmann Institute, one headed the chemistry department at Hebrew University. His nephew Ezer became commander of the Israel Air Force and also served as President. His wife Vera, a pediatrician, was a founder and first president of the Women’s International Zionist Organization.** (Wikipedia, “Chaim Weizmann,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaim\\_Weizmann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaim_Weizmann))
- <sup>282</sup> Blech, Benjamin, *Eyewitness to Jewish History*, John Wiley & Sons, 2004, p. 222
- <sup>283</sup> Wilcox, Walter, ed., *International Migrations, Vol. II: Interpretations*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1931, p. 541
- <sup>284</sup> Lewittes, Mordechai, *Highlights of Jewish History*, Hebrew Publishing Company, 1957, p. 177; Wein, Berel, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1990*, Mesorah Publications, 1990, p. 259. **It would be a mistake to conclude that this new Jewish/Israeli spirit was simply a product of the new land. If that were the case, all the Jews who had ever moved there would have become fighters. It came about as a**

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**decision, a repudiation of 2,000 years of passive acceptance of oppression, of second-class citizenship, of failure to live fully and proudly. And it was also consciously an attempt to recapture the original spirit of the pioneers under Joshua, the fighting spirit under the Maccabees. The rough life of the new land helped mold the new personality, but the kernel was already there. Without the spirit, the body would not have developed.**

<sup>285</sup> Wein, Berel, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1990*, Mesorah Publications, 1990, p. 258

<sup>286</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 347

<sup>287</sup> Reinharz, Jehuda, ed., *Living with Antisemitism: Modern Jewish Responses*, Brandeis University Press, 1987, p. 271

<sup>288</sup> Wein, Berel, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1990*, Mesorah Publications, 1990

<sup>289</sup> Kantor, Mattis, *Codex Judaica*, Zichron Press, 2005, p. 270

<sup>290</sup> Kantor, Mattis, *Codex Judaica*, Zichron Press, 2005, p. 208

<sup>291</sup> Only one was from Palestine.

<sup>292</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, "Vital Statistics: Population of Israel: 1948 – Present,"

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/population-of-israel-1948-present>

<sup>293</sup> Meir, Golda, *My Life*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975.

<sup>294</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 402

<sup>295</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, "Zionism"

<sup>296</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, "Zionism," p. 1054

<sup>297</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, "Total Immigration to Israel by Country of Origin: 1948 – Present,"

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/total-immigration-to-israel-by-country-of-origin>

<sup>298</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 16, "Migrations," p. 1519

<sup>299</sup> Alt Miller, Yvette, "Emma Lazarus, the Jews and Israel," Aish.com, <https://aish.com/emma-lazarus-the-jews-and-israel>

<sup>300</sup> Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Intermarriage, Low Birth Rate Seen Decreasing Ratio of Jews in U.S.A.," April 22, 1964, <https://www.jta.org/archive/intermarriage-low-birth-rate-seen-decreasing-ratio-of-jews-in-u-s-a>

<sup>301</sup> Goldscheider, Calvin, "Are American Jews Vanishing Again," *Contexts*, Winter 2003, p. 19

<sup>302</sup> Goldscheider, Calvin, "Are American Jews Vanishing Again," *Contexts*, Winter 2003, p. 19

<sup>303</sup> Goldscheider, Calvin, "Are American Jews Vanishing Again," *Contexts*, Winter 2003, p. 19; Pew Research

Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020," [https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-](https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/05/PF_05.11.21_Jewish.Americans.pdf)

[content/uploads/sites/20/2021/05/PF\\_05.11.21\\_Jewish.Americans.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/05/PF_05.11.21_Jewish.Americans.pdf), p. 22

<sup>304</sup> Pew Research Center, "Jewish Americans in 2020," [https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-](https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/05/PF_05.11.21_Jewish.Americans.pdf)

[content/uploads/sites/20/2021/05/PF\\_05.11.21\\_Jewish.Americans.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/05/PF_05.11.21_Jewish.Americans.pdf), p. 22

<sup>305</sup> **An interesting element of this story is the "Baal Teshuva Movement." Following the Six Day War, in the midst of the counter-culturalism of the 1960s, thousands of young Jews from non-traditional, sometimes completely un-Jewish or even anti-religious, homes began returning to the observance of their grandparents and great grandparents, helped along by new institutions set up by the Orthodox to teach them. We've seen a similar phenomenon recently following Hamas's attack on Israel and the explosion of antisemitism that ensued. Unaffiliated Jews suddenly found in their fear an incipient Jewishness, began participating in demonstrations, scouring Jewish websites for news and inspiration, reaching out to rabbis for support and engagement, even looking into aliyah to Israel. Perhaps the feeling will blow over when the war ends, but perhaps it is also part of God's plan to return the Jews to where they belong.**

<sup>306</sup> Dimont, Max, *Jews, God, and History*, New American Library, 1962, p. 360

<sup>307</sup> Kantor, Mattis, *Codex Judaica*, Zichron Press, 2005, p. 218

<sup>308</sup> Philanthropy Roundtable, "Founding Israel: Reborn as a Modern State,"

<https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/israel-reborn>

<sup>309</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, "American Jewish Contributions to Israel,"

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/american-jewish-contributions-to-israel>. **Emma Lazarus in "An Epistle to the Hebrews," foresaw a revival of Jewish civilization through mutual action by Jews in America and Palestine, as pointed out by Paul Johnson. (*A History of the Jews*, Harper & Row, 1987, p. 371)**

<sup>310</sup> Kantor, Mattis, *Codex Judaica*, Zichron Press, 2005, p. 271

<sup>311</sup> **Although the same story of economic success and political influence played out in a number of other countries to which the Jews of the Pale emigrated – in particular, Great Britain – the scale was far smaller, and thus less consequential.**

<sup>312</sup> Eisenberg, Rafael, *Survival: Israel and Mankind*, Feldheim Publishers, 1991, p. 123

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<sup>313</sup> Conversion and emigration figures cited previously, violent deaths estimated by the author based on numerous sources.

<sup>314</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 725

<sup>315</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Vol. 8, p. 724

<sup>316</sup> Meir, Golda, *My Life*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975, p. 8

<sup>317</sup> Kasovich, Israel, *Eternal People*, Hebrew Publishing Company, 1927, p. 304

<sup>318</sup> Midrash Pitron Torah to Numbers 13:2