

expressed in their language and culture. In his view, which was strongly influenced by the Romantic ideas that were current in European society at the time, Judaism is, above all, the natural religious expression of the historical Jewish people. As such, scholarly or rabbinic elites cannot introduce radical changes through *ex cathedra* pronouncements. Quite the contrary, Frankel understood Judaism as an organic entity that evolves gradually, and therefore any abrupt reforms that were out of harmony with the common Jewish folk (who at this time were mostly traditionalists) were to be rejected as illegitimate.

As an alternative to the extremes of inflexible traditionalism or radical reform, Frankel established a new program that he called "Positive-Historical Judaism" that combined a commitment to Jewish halakhah with openness to the rational analysis of religious and theological issues. Against the traditionalists, he argued that the authority of Jewish law rests not only on the supernatural revelation of the written and oral Torahs, but principally on its acceptance and observance by Jews over the generations. He was therefore willing to introduce aesthetic changes to synagogue liturgy and practices provided that they did not violate the norms of the halakhah. Unlike the Reformers, Frankel affirmed the fundamental human need for concrete religious symbols embodied in ritual. Consistent with his stress on the religious importance of Jewish history, Frankel, who possessed both traditional rabbinic training and a university degree, was a prolific and distinguished contributor to academic Judaic scholarship and produced important scholarly publications on rabbinic law and literature. As the head of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau, he was able to train students who shared his approach and exerted a significant influence on the German Jewish communities. His *Introduction to the Mishnah* provoked an intense controversy with the traditionalists by denying the claim that the Mishnah and the oral law had been literally dictated to Moses at Mount Sinai. Nevertheless, Frankel was not ready to entertain the "documentary hypothesis" that was fashionable in liberal Christian scholarship and had been adopted by many Jewish Reformers, according to which the Torah was assembled in Exilic times from diverse documents and traditions.

Orthodoxy and Neo-Orthodoxy

Although the promise of equal rights was welcomed by most European Jews, many traditional Jews believed that the price of Emancipation was too high. Authentic Judaism, they felt, could not be squeezed into the confines of synagogues and theological doctrines, but must encompass areas of civil law and institutional structures. Oppressive as it might have been to the Jews inside their walls, Jewish segregation also functioned as a bulwark against the penetration of heretical or immoral values from the outside world. As their traditional beliefs and lifestyles were increasingly beleaguered and eroded, the rabbis were convinced that even

minor concessions to modernity would introduce cracks into their venerable structures that would eventually result in the complete collapse of Judaism as it had evolved over the previous centuries. This perspective produced an tendency to automatically oppose every proposal for change, even ones that involved only minor breaches of local custom. The paradigmatic exponent of this approach was Rabbi Moses Schreiber, (1762–1839) (known in Hebrew as the *Hatam Sofer*) who served as rabbi in Pressburg (Bratislava). He was uncompromising in his resistance to all appearances of innovation or reform.

The term "Orthodoxy" is applied to Jewish traditionalist movements that have consciously resisted the influences of modernization. The word is not normally used to designate Jewish traditionalism prior to the eighteenth century, nor did the phenomenon arise in communities that were unaffected by the Reform movement, such as North Africa or in eastern Europe before the mid-nineteenth-century.

The adjective "Orthodox" ("correct belief") was taken from the conceptual world of Christianity, where it denotes a conservative and ritualistic religious outlook as viewed from the perspective of liberal Protestantism. Evidently, it was first applied derisively to Jewish conservatives by a Reform polemicist in an article published in 1795. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (who will be discussed below) commented bitterly in 1854: "...it was not 'Orthodox' Jews who introduced the word 'orthodox' into Jewish discussion. It was the modern 'progressive' Jews who first applied the name to 'old,' 'backward' Jews as a derogatory term. This name was at first resented by 'old' Jews." Yet so pervasive was the use of the term that in 1886, when Hirsch established an alliance of the traditionalist congregations in Europe, he named it the "Freie Vereinigung für die Interessen des Orthodoxen Judentums" (Free Union for the Interests of Orthodox Judaism)!

Of all the movements on the contemporary Jewish scene, Orthodoxy is the least centralized and the most varied. Whereas the Conservative and Reform movements in America each have a central seminary and institutional leadership, an association of rabbis and a synagogue union, the Orthodox world is fragmented into diverse institutional structures. Though they agree on basic issues of religious authority (such as the divine origins of the Bible and oral tradition) and share a commitment to the study and observance of Jewish law, Orthodox Jews diverge on a broad range of secondary issues, such as: the importance or legitimacy of mysticism, attitudes towards Zionism and Jewish nationalism, the eschatological status of the state of Israel, educational philosophies, leadership models, whether or not to cooperate with non-Orthodox Jews, differing ethnic styles and local customs.

The most influential attempt to formulate a traditionalist school in opposition to the reformist and modernist trends was that of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888). Hirsch was born in Hamburg and raised in an “Enlightened” environment, including a full secular education at a German public school. He trained in philology at the University of Bonn, where he was friendly with the Reform leader Abraham Geiger and was profoundly influenced by German writers and thinkers like Schiller and Hegel. During Hirsch’s first rabbinical post, as regional rabbi at Oldenburg (1830–1841), he published some of his most influential works. *The Nineteen Letters* (1836) was a fictitious exchange of letters between a teacher (the young rabbi-philosopher Naphtali) and a young intellectual (Benjamin), containing a well-argued case for the rationality of traditional Judaism. In 1838, he published *Choreb*, a rational explanation of the 613 commandments of the Torah.

Between 1841 and 1851, Hirsch served as rabbi to several German communities. He now turned his energies to an active campaign against the Reform movement, as well as formulating his doctrine of “*Torah im Derekh Erez*,” of integrating Torah with secular culture (see below). His moderate brand of traditionalism brought him acceptance by both traditionalists and modernists, though those at both extremes found him problematic.

An important turning point in his career occurred in 1851, when Hirsch resigned his prestigious office of chief rabbi of Moravia and Austrian Silesia to accept the leadership of the beleaguered traditionalist community (Adass Yeshurun) in Frankfurt-am-Main. In a controversial move, he brought about the withdrawal of the minority Orthodox community from the general Jewish organizational structure that was dominated by the Reform. From 1871 to 1873, he fought to have the Orthodox minority recognized by the Prussian government as a separate congregation, a policy that was opposed by some Orthodox leaders. His efforts bore fruit in 1876 when the Prussian parliament passed the “Law of Secession” allowing the creation of independent traditionalist communities. Hirsch’s first priority was to establish religious schools to inculcate Jewish tradition. He erected beautiful modern buildings for schools and a synagogue. Hirsch’s Frankfurt community became a model for similar projects in Mainz, Darmstadt, and Berlin.

Apart from his polemical and communal activities, Hirsch is best known for his doctrine of “*Torah with Derekh Erez*.” Taking his inspiration from a talmudic expression, Hirsch used the expression to refer to the integration of traditional Judaism with secular education, which he equated with German literature and culture. He maintained that the esthetic style and externals of Jewish practice could legitimately be changed, but (unlike the Reform and Positive-Historical schools) he did not tolerate extensive changes in religious law or traditional beliefs. The ideal product of Hirsch’s educational model was the “Israel-Mensch,” the enlightened religious personality who integrated the finest elements of both Jewish and humanistic values.

Hirsch was uncompromising in his conviction that the Torah, both the written and the oral components, originated in divine revelation, and hence the obligatory character of Jewish religious law is not subject to historical development or change. Israel is a religious community, and only the Torah is the ultimate purpose of Jewish peoplehood. In contrast to the historical model of religious development advocated by the reformers and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement (see Chapter 13), Hirsch argued that Judaism was fundamentally impervious to change. Though the rest of humanity, who have not been favored with a supernatural revelation, are in need of a gradual historical process in order to evolve towards a recognition of truth, Israel was given the truth from the start.

The "Agudat Israel" movement

Unlike the situation in central or western Europe, where challenges to Jewish beliefs and institutions were dealt with through religious and theological reforms, or through conversion to another religion, in eastern Europe Jews were more likely to choose between traditional Jewish religion and a broad spectrum of secular Jewish ideologies. The result was that the influence of non-Orthodox Jewish religious movements was marginal in eastern Europe.

In 1912, an organization known as Agudat Israel (the Israelite Union) was established to serve as the political arm of traditional Orthodoxy, representing a wide range of anti-modern branches. Active in the Agudat Israel were several Hasidic groups, alongside advocates of Lithuanian-style yeshivahs (see below) and followers of German Orthodoxy. It even developed a Labor wing that called for the establishment of strictly religious agricultural settlements in Palestine outside the framework of the Zionist movement. The Agudat Israel in Europe wielded considerable political power, sending representatives to the Polish parliament.

Policy decisions of Agudat Israel must be ratified by their "Council of Torah Scholars," which consists of leading rabbis from the main constituent groups. When participating in Israeli government coalitions, they have generally refrained from accepting actual cabinet posts. Agudat Israel does not have clear positions on issues related to Israeli security or foreign policy. Because they do not attach eschatological or religious significance to the State of Israel, they generally approach such questions pragmatically.

The Agudat Israel established a broad assortment of religious institutions in Europe. Most of these institutions have been transplanted to Israel and America. In Israel they have maintained their separate school system (*Hinnukh 'Atzma'i*) outside the state-run religious school system.

finds actual expression in Jewish religious life. The severe consequences of failed messianic movements, such as those of Shabbetai Zevi and Jacob Frank, persuaded many to oppose subsequent manifestations of messianic enthusiasm. Others, however, have been stalwart in the conviction that this fundamental Jewish value must be cultivated, especially to remedy the despair of persecution and massacres. Many are convinced that the active striving for redemption is itself a means to hasten its coming. Influential segments of the religious Zionist community are convinced that Zionism and the creation of the state of Israel are the fulfillment of the biblical prophecies, with the Nazi Holocaust as its catastrophic prelude.

Among more liberal Jews, there has been a general discouragement of literal acceptance of traditional messianic imagery. The notion of a monarch who will restore the institutions of ancient Israel was antithetical to several cherished values of the Emancipation. Nevertheless, few have been willing to jettison entirely this profound and appealing motif of Jewish thought, particularly when it was also legitimized by the surrounding Christian culture. The modernized Jewish messianic ideologies tend to equate the traditional concepts with faith in human progress, and the "messianic age" has been identified with an assortment of ideologies, such as enlightenment, tolerance or socialism.

Homeland and exile

Although the original covenant between God and Abraham stipulated that the patriarch's descendants would dwell in the land of Israel, since the destruction of the biblical kingdoms of Israel and Judah most Jews have lived outside the boundaries of their historical homeland. In the traditional vocabulary of Jewish texts, there was no question that the this situation is "exile" (Hebrew: *golah* or *galut*), a term that has unmistakably negative connotations. The expectation that the final redemption will include an ingathering of the exiles remained a permanent feature in Jewish eschatological thought and prayers. The tension between the centrality of the holy land and the reality of the exile is a constant theme in Jewish religious thought over the ages. Throughout history, prominent Jewish religious leaders like Judah Halevi and Moses Nahmanides were sensitive enough to the religious imperative of dwelling in the holy land that they forsook comfortable lives and distinguished positions in the diaspora to take on the difficult journey to the land of Israel. There was scarcely an era in Jewish history when Jews were not migrating to the holy land, even if it was only to enjoy the spiritual merit of dying and being buried there.

Under the influence of the European Jewish Enlightenment, as many Jews sought admission into secular societies, all expressions of ethnicity and nationalism were perceived as awkward. The ethnic solidarity among Jews who dwelled in different lands was regarded as incongruous with the demands of patriotism, and questions of dual loyalties were raised. In response, Enlightenment Jewish thinkers tended

to stress a more positive interpretation of Jewish dispersion, claiming that its main purpose was to spread monotheism and morality to the previously heathen world.

When the Zionist movement arose in the late nineteenth century, it was a secular political movement whose leadership was largely antagonistic to traditional Jewish religion. Most leaders of traditionalist Judaism were hostile to political Zionism, more because of its anticlericalism than because they disagreed strongly with its key objectives. In fact a few significant Orthodox rabbis anticipated Theodor Herzl in arguing that a sovereign Jewish homeland was the only solution to the urgent social and political perils that were besetting European Jewry. Unlike their secular counterparts, these religious proto-Zionists usually attached eschatological significance to the Jewish national movement. Among the most prominent precursors of religious Zionism were: Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874); Rabbi Judah Alkalai (1798–1878); and Rabbi Samuel Mohilewer (1824–1898).

Orthodox supporters of Zionism organized themselves as a separate party in the Zionist movement known as the Mizrahi movement (derived from the Hebrew acronym for "Spiritual Center"). The party was founded in 1901 at a conference of religious Zionists convened in Vilnius, Lithuania, by Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines (1839–1915), who served as the organization's first president. The ideology of the Mizrahi movement saw Jewish nationalism as an instrument for realizing religious objectives, especially of enhancing the opportunities for the observance of the Torah by a Jewish society dwelling on its native soil. In addition to its important network of modern religious schools (which later became the basis for the Israeli State Religious School System), in which spoken Hebrew and biblical studies were taught (unlike the traditional yeshivas), the Mizrahi party participated fully in Zionist congresses and other political activities, and trained its members for agricultural labor in Palestine. Largely through its youth movement, B'nei Akiva, it established communal farms in Palestine, notably in the Beth Shean valley in Galilee.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, the Jewish community in Palestine was polarized between two groups: the "old yishuv (=settlement)," the traditional religious community who lived a religious life of study and prayer in the "holy" towns, subsidized by donations from Jews abroad; and the "new yishuv" consisting of Zionist settlers, largely socialist and anti-religious, who strove for Jewish economic productivity, especially in agricultural settlements.

While the traditionalist leadership, organized politically as the "Agudat Israel" movement, was largely hostile to Zionism as a movement, and argued that the Jews are a religious community defined by Torah and not a normal nation, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 made that antagonism largely irrelevant. In Israel the Agudat Israel have represented the interests of the "Hareidi" or "ultra-Orthodox" constituency in the national parliament, the Knesset. Owing to the nature of Israel's proportional representation system, the relatively small numbers of Agudat Israel representatives have often been crucial for the survival of government coalitions, and

this leverage has allowed them to be very effective in channeling resources towards their yeshivahs and other institutions. They have advocated religious legislation, such as public enforcement of Sabbath and dietary laws, and the rejection of non-Orthodox conversions in the definition of "Jew" for purposes of entitlement to automatic citizenship under Israel's "law of Return."

Polarization between militant secularists and religious communities has remained an ongoing feature of Israeli society. The most intransigent and extreme of the Orthodox anti-Zionist organizations is the Neturei Karta movement, a small but vocal group that was founded in 1935 to promote total separation from the Zionist Jewish community in Jerusalem. The name Neturei Karta, Aramaic for "guardians of the city," was first used in 1938, and alludes to a talmudic statement that religious scholars, not soldiers or police, are the true guardians of a city. Neturei Karta have tried as much as possible to avoid using the facilities of the Israeli state, including courts, identity cards, schools, currency and public utilities. They have been outspoken in propagandizing against the legitimacy of the Jewish state. They have gone so far as to negotiate privately with hostile Muslim states and leaders. There are other Orthodox streams who oppose Zionism on similar religious grounds. The most visible among these has been the Satmar Hasidic sect led by the Teitelbaum dynasty. In more recent years, statements in a similar spirit have been expressed by some exponents of the Sephardic "ultra-Orthodox" faction associated with the Israeli "Shas" movement.

One towering rabbinic leader emerged from the traditionalist world who was determined to overcome the mutual hostility of the religious and secular camps. This was Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935). Rabbi Kook was born in Latvia where he received a traditional Jewish religious yeshivah education. He went on to achieve prominence in the Lithuania yeshivah world as a brilliant scholar. In 1904 he arrived in Palestine, which was then under Ottoman Turkish rule, and would become a British Mandate after World War I. In 1924 the British appointed him Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazic community in Palestine.

Rabbi Kook devoted much of his public life to the goal of reconciliation between the Zionists and the religious traditionalists, and even between the leftist and rightist factions of the secular Zionist movement. His halakhic rulings tried to accommodate the needs of the struggling and economically fragile Zionist settlements; notably, by permitting agriculture during the sabbatical year (when Torah law forbids agricultural labor in the land of Israel) by means of a farfetched legal fiction. Rabbi Kook's sympathy for the anti-religious Zionist pioneers was rooted in his conviction that those idealistic atheists were performing a religious mission, even if they were unaware of it. He recognized that their commitment to their cause was fueled by altruistic motives.

Rabbi Kook was motivated by his strong belief in the idea of progress, which asserted that history was moving irreversibly towards the creation of a perfect and

enlightened society. His writings, though composed in a flowery rabbinic Hebrew, show unmistakable influences of Hegelian and Marxist ideas, which he integrated with traditional Jewish messianism and kabbalistic eschatological themes. Although historical hindsight now makes his optimism appear pathetic, Rabbi Kook was thoroughly convinced (as were the champions of various secular ideologies at the time) that universal enlightenment would soon cause the world to recognize and support the just Jewish claim to national restoration in their homeland.

Rabbi Kook was disappointed by the positions of his fellow traditionalists. Having abandoned full involvement in day-to-day life in favor of narrowly "religious" pursuits, these people were, in Rabbi Kook's view, products of the anomalous predicament of Jewish exile, and hence their model of Judaism was as inauthentic as that of the atheistic Zionists who desired a physical, national "redemption" devoid of spiritual content. Rabbi Kook argued that the approaching stage of Jewish history would embrace both spiritual and material redemption. The Jewish people would be the vanguard of a universal spiritual revival. However, for this to happen, Judaism itself must undergo an internal spiritual revival. Merely to live according to the commands of Jewish law is no longer sufficient. By the same token, political Zionism must have religious content, and cannot be limited to a narrow, parochial nationalism. His eschatological vision drew from the symbolism of the Lurianic Kabbalah and from Hasidism. Rabbi Kook died before the Nazi Holocaust and before the establishment of the state of Israel. We cannot know how his optimistic outlook would have been affected by these events, or by the resurgence of anti-Semitism at the end of the twentieth century.

In the early decades of Israeli statehood, the mainstream religious Zionist movements encouraged full participation with the secular majority. A prayer for the welfare of the state of Israel was formulated and is recited in many synagogues. It refers to the Jewish state as "the first flowering of our redemption." The Chief Rabbinate (with separate Ashkenazic and Sephardic branches) was appointed by the government and accepted as authoritative by religious Zionists. Under Israeli law, matters of family law (marriage and divorce) and personal status were placed under the exclusive jurisdiction of religious (that is, Orthodox) courts. A special arrangement (*hesder*) was established in order to allow full participation in military service within a program of yeshivah study.

Until 1967 religious Zionists in Israel were marginalized both by the secular majority, and by the more visibly religious groups that seemed to offer a more authentic, uncompromising brand of religion. The place of the religious factions within the Zionist movement and the state of Israel was altered radically by the Six Day War of June 1967, which resulted in the capture of east Jerusalem (which had been occupied by Jordan in the 1948 War of Independence) and other territories of the biblical land of Israel. The long-range fate of these territories, and of their Arab inhabitants, became a major controversy of Israeli policy makers. From a purely

political perspective, the main choice facing the nation was between the military security that was offered by the expanded borders, and the relative demographic stability that would be achieved by excluding a large Arab population from the borders of the Jewish state.

A religious claim provided powerful justification for those who wished to hold on to the occupied territories: if the state of Israel was viewed as the unfolding of a messianic scenario, then the miraculous victory of the Six-Day War was an essential stage in that process. The territories belong to the Jewish people by divine decree, and consequently they may not be handed over to foreign hands. The issue of territories, viewed in its eschatological context, became the defining feature for broad segments of religious Zionism in the post-1967 era. Under the spiritual leadership of Rabbi Kook's son Zevi Judah Kook thousands of modern young religious Jews campaigned actively against any territorial compromise and established numerous settlements throughout Judea and Samaria. Many of these settlements, though originally founded illegally, were subsequently granted official recognition by Israeli governments. The most powerful political voice of the movement against territorial compromise was "Gush Emunim" (the Bloc of the Faithful). However the fundamental values of Gush Emunim filtered down to the mainstream of Israeli society, particularly to religious educational networks, in which a land-centered nationalism was presented as the highest form of religious activism, and the histories of Zionism and the state of Israel were viewed as irreversible steps in the unfolding messianic fulfillment. The aspirations of Gush Emunim were widely respected by much of the Jewish public, especially when Arab intransigence made the return of the territories a far-off theoretical possibility.

When peace agreements with Egypt (1977) and the Palestine Liberation Front (1993) put the return of occupied lands onto the actual political agenda, Gush Emunim found itself in active opposition to the policies and laws of the Israeli government. In the 1990s mainstream rabbis were instructing religious Jews to disobey military commands to evacuate occupied lands, and branding Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin a "traitor" to the higher Jewish cause. An adherent of these views assassinated Rabin in November 1995. For many Israelis, this event resulted in a sobering realization of the dangers inherent in extreme religious nationalism. However with the breakdown of the peace process, the outbreak of Arab violence (Intifada) against Israeli civilians and the increased popularity of the fundamentalist Hamas movement among the Palestinians, messianic religious Zionism enjoyed a revival, which now pitted them against former allies in the secular right wing parties who had accepted the premise that a democratic Israel could not hold on indefinitely to a large Arab population.

The Gush Emunim movement was generally vague or ambivalent about the long-term status of the non-Jewish residents of the occupied territories. A more extreme position was taken by Meir Kahane, whose banned racist party "Kach" condemned democracy as an un-Jewish import, and advocated laws that would prohibit sexual and

social contact with Arabs, actively calling for the eviction of Arabs from territories that belonged by rights to the Jews.

Key points you need to know

- Biblical religion focused on the history of Israel as the unfolding of a divine plan.
- Post-biblical Judaism evolved diverse expectations about the culmination of history, based on biblical themes and responses to contemporary events.
- Classic Jewish eschatological concepts include the restoration of the Israelite state to be led by a descendant of King David, the ingathering of the exiles, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its Temple, the universal recognition of God, and the resurrection of the dead.
- Medieval philosophers often interpreted the imagery of the earlier sources in a non-literal manner, as metaphors for intellectual wisdom.
- Kabbalistic writers, especially the Lurianic stream, formulated an intensely metaphysical doctrine of simultaneous national and theological redemption. This approach inspired mystical messianic movements, such as that of Shabbetai Zvi.
- Non-traditional modern Jewish thinkers downplayed the nationalist elements of Jewish eschatology, but retained a faith in a "messianic age."
- Some religious Zionists attach eschatological significance to the rebirth of a Jewish state in the twentieth century.

Discussion questions

1. How does Judaism's concern with history find expression in ritual practice?
2. How would Jews who believe that the Bible is the literal word of God account for conflicting eschatological scenarios; for example, that the unbelievers will be violently overthrown and that they will voluntarily come to worship God?
3. How did the obscure title "anointed one" (messiah) become the most common term for designating the future redemption?

Further reading

Jewish historiography

Baron, Salo Wittmayer, *History and Jewish Historians: Essays and Addresses*, 1st ed. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964.