

Foreword

In the beginning, the Hebrew Bible was formed as an anthology of Jewish texts, each shaping an aspect of Jewish identity. As the Israelite community and its various tribes became two parts: a Diaspora and its complement, the community in the Land of Israel—competing interests formed a canon that represented their various concerns. Over time, the communities grew, interacted, and focused on local religious needs, all the while ostensibly proclaiming fealty to the Jerusalem Temple. Even so, some communities rejected the central shrine that the Torah's book of Deuteronomy proclaimed to be »the place where the Lord chose for His name to dwell« (Deut. 12:5, et passim). Still other Jewish communities had their own competing shrines. Yet for all their dissensions, disagreements, and local politics, there was a common yet unarticulated core of beliefs and practices that unified the early Jewish communities across the ancient world.¹ As the Second Temple period (516 BCE–70 CE) drew to a close, the biblical canon took its final shape, and a world-wide Jewish community—no longer Israelite—emerged as a moral and spiritual power.²

That canon, by definition, excluded certain Jewish texts, even as it codified others. And the political processes of the Persian and Hellenistic empires confined and defined the polities of their local Jews. From east to west, at the very moment in 70 CE when the centralized Jerusalem cult was reduced to ashes, Judaism, like the mythical phoenix, emerged. Across the oikumene, with each locale finding its own expressions, communities that had formed around the study of the biblical canon produced commentaries, codes, chronicles, commemorations, and compendia about Judaism. Some of these were inscribed on stone, others on parchment and paper, while still others were committed to memory. The devotion to this varied literature helped shape a Jewish culture and history that has persisted for two millennia.

This three-volume compendium, *Judaism: I. History, II. Literature, and III. Culture and Modernity*, considers various aspects of Jewish expressions over these past two millennia. In this Foreword, we the editors: an American rabbi-professor and an

1 The idea of a »common Judaism« remains debated but was introduced by Ed P. Sanders in his *Judaism: Practice and Beliefs, 163 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992) and embraced as a scholarly consensus in Adele Reinhartz and Wayne McCready, eds., *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

2 See, inter alia, Timothy Lim, *The Formation of the Jewish Canon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

ordained German Protestant university professor, will discuss what led us to choose the chapters in this compendium. Obviously three volumes, even totaling a thousand pages, cannot include consideration of all aspects of a rich and robustly evolving two-thousand-year-old Jewish civilization. And so, we will assay to lay bare our own biases as editors and acknowledge our own shortcomings and those of these volumes, where they are visible to us. To do this we need to have a sense of perspective on the scholarly study of Judaism over the past two centuries.

1 *Die Wissenschaft des Judentums*

Dr. Leopold Zunz (1794–1886) began the modern study of Judaism by convening his *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* (the Society for the Culture and Critical Study of the Jews) exactly two hundred years ago, in late 1819 in Berlin.³ Although the *Verein* was small and lasted but five years before disbanding, it included such luminaries as co-founder Eduard Gans, a disciple of Hegel, as well as the poet Heinrich Heine.⁴ The scholarly *Verein* failed to gain traction in the larger Jewish community. None-the-less, Zunz and his German Reform colleagues introduced an academic study of Judaism based upon comparative research and use of non-Jewish sources. Their historical-critical approach to Jewish learning allowed for what had previously been confined to the Jewish orthodox Yeshiva world to eventually find an academic foothold in the university.

In that era, history was often seen as the stories of great men. Spiritual and political biographies held sway. Zunz accepted the challenge with his groundbreaking biography of the great medieval French exegete, »*Salomon ben Isaac, genannt Raschi*.« The work marked the end of the *Verein* and was published in the short-lived *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*.⁵ The monographic length of the article and its use of what were then cutting-edge methods ironically helped assure the journal's demise. Further, the attempt to write a biography that might assay to peek behind the myth of the towering medieval figure, assured that the orthodox yeshiva scholars who passionately cared about Rashi would find the work anathema. Nevertheless, the study was a programmatic introduction not only to Rashi, but to the philological and comparative methods of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. It would set a curriculum for critical study of Judaism for the next century and a half.

Zunz solidified his methods and his agenda in 1832, when he published *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwickelt* (The Sermons of the Jews

3 Ismar Schorsch, *Leopold Zunz: Creativity in Adversity* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 29ff.

4 Both Gans and Heine subsequently converted to Christianity for the ease of cultural assimilation. Schorsch, *ibid*.

5 *ZWJ* (1823) 277–384, Schorsch 42.

in their Historic Development).⁶ Here, Zunz surveyed rabbinic exegetical and homiletical literature, and by focusing on this literature, he conspicuously avoided both the study of the Talmud and Jewish mysticism. Zunz began his survey in the late books of the Hebrew Bible and continued to review the form and content of the genre up to German Reform preaching of his own day. His work was not without bias. Zunz separated what he imagined should be the academic study of Judaism from both the Yeshiva curriculum—primarily Talmud and legal codes—and from the Chassidic world, which had a strong dose of mysticism.

Zunz's acknowledgement of the mystic's yearning for God came in his masterful survey of medieval liturgical poetry, *Die Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*.⁷ Indeed, Jewish mysticism only finally came to be acknowledged in academic circles a century later by the efforts of Gershom Gerhard Scholem (1897–1982). Leopold Zunz essentially set the curriculum for the academic study of Judaism until the horrible events of World War II irreparably changed the course of Jewish history and learning. Even so, Zunz's agenda still affects Jewish studies to this day and has influenced the content choices of these volumes.

2 World War II and Vatican II

The world of Jewish academic study had its ups and downs in the century following Zunz. A year after his death, the Jewish Theological Seminary was founded in New York. It continues to be a beacon of Jewish scholarship in the western world. But the shift to America was prescient, as European Jewry as a whole suffered first from the predations of Czarist Russia, then from the decimation of World War I, and finally from the Holocaust of World War II.

The absolute destruction that the Holocaust wrought upon European Jewry cannot be exaggerated. Much of what is described in these volumes came to an abrupt and tragic end. Yet following World War II, two particular events had a dramatic effect on the future of Judaism. Both have some relationship to the attempted destruction of Jewry in Germany during the war, yet each has its own dynamic that brought it to full flowering. We refer to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 and the declaration of the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate* document in 1965. The former has been a continual midwife for the rebirth of Jewish culture and literature both within and outside the Diaspora. Of course, there is an entire chapter of this compendium devoted to Israel. The Vatican II document, which revolutionized the Catholic Church's approach to Jews and Judaism, is reckoned with in the final chapter of this work, describing interreligious dialogue in the past seventy years.

6 Berlin: Asher Verlag. The work was translated into Hebrew by M. Zack and expanded by Hanokh Albeck as *HaDerashot BeYisrael* (Hebrew, reprinted many times by Bialik Publishing: Jerusalem).

7 Berlin: Julius Springer Verlag, 1855.

3 Jacob Neusner resets the agenda

A graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary's rabbinical school, Jacob Neusner (1932–2016) earned his doctorate with Prof. Morton Smith, who was a former Anglican cleric and professor of ancient history at Columbia University.⁸ Although they broke bitterly in later years, Neusner imbibed Smith's methodology, which served to undermine the very foundations of Zunz's *Wissenschaft* curriculum. Neusner was exceedingly prolific and succeeded in publishing over 900 books before his death.

Among these was his *A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai: 1–80 CE*.⁹ This work was a conventional biography of one of the founding-fathers of rabbinic Judaism, not unlike Zunz's much earlier work on Rashi. Yet eight years after the publication of the Yohanan biography, Neusner recanted this work and embraced Smith's »hermeneutic of suspicion,« publishing *The Development of a Legend: Studies in the Traditions Concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai*.¹⁰ With this latter work, Neusner upended the notion of Jewish history as the stories of great men and treated those tales instead as ideological-didactic legends which exhibited a strong religious bias. He and his students continued to publish in this vein until they put a virtual end to the writing of positivist Jewish history.

This revolution came just as Jewish studies was being established as a discipline on American university campuses. For the past half-century, scholars have been writing instead the history of the ancient literature itself, and carefully limning what could and could not be asserted about the Jewish past. Due to Neusner's polemical nature, there has been a fault line between Israeli scholars and those in the European and American Diasporas regarding the reliability of rabbinic sources as evidence for the history of the ancient period, describing the very foundations of rabbinic Judaism.

4 Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Judaism and Hellenism)

Even as this monumental shift in the scholarly agenda was taking place, another significant change affected our understanding of Judaism. This transformation followed from the theological shift evinced by Vatican II and was apposite to the ending of what has been characterized as the Church's millennial »teaching of contempt« for Judaism.¹¹ European-Christian scholarship had, from the time of

8 See Aaron W. Hughes, *Jacob Neusner: An American Jewish Iconoclast* (New York: NYU press, 2016).

9 Leiden: Brill, 1962.

10 Leiden: Brill, 1970.

11 The phrase was the title of the book by Jules Isaac in the context of Vatican II, idem, *The Teaching of Contempt: The Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964).

the separation of Church and Synagogue,¹² characterized Christianity as the direct inheritor of Greco-Roman Hellenism while Judaism, often derogated as *Spätjudentum*, was portrayed as primitive or even barbarian. In 1969, Martin Hengel (1926–2009) wrote a pathbreaking work of heterodox scholarship exploring the Hellenistic background of Judaism and how it was a seed-bed for subsequent Christian Hellenism.¹³

Hengel himself was relying in part on Jewish scholars such as Saul Lieberman, who wrote in the decades before him of Greek and Hellenism in Jewish Palestine.¹⁴ Lieberman, however, wrote particularly of influences on the literature of the ancient rabbis and targeted his work to scholars of Talmudic literature. Hengel, a German Protestant scholar, wrote for scholars of New Testament, and achieved a much broader reach and influence. Finally, one hundred fifty years after Zunz gathered his *Berlin Verein*, Hengel granted Jewish studies and Judaism itself a seat at the table of Christian faculties, even as he felt that Jewish theology of the ancient period erred in rejecting Jesus.

5 The New Academy

Since Hengel, there has been a vast expansion of Jewish Studies in universities in North America and throughout the world. Today, there is nary a university without Jewish Studies. In part this waxing of Judaica was due to the theological shifts in the Catholic Church and Protestant academy. In part, especially in the US, the explosion of Jewish studies departments was due to a general move towards identity studies that began with women's studies and African-American studies, expanded to include Jewish studies, and other ethnic and religious departments, majors, or concentrations. But Jewish Studies itself has changed in many profound ways. To wit, Christian scholars have also excelled in the field. At the time of this writing, the president of the Association for Jewish Studies, Prof. Christine Hayes of Yale University, is the first non-Jew to lead the organization in its 51-year history. Similarly, Peter Schäfer served as Perelman professor of Judaic Studies at Princeton University for fifteen years, having previously served as professor for Jewish Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin (1983–2008). Both Schäfer and Hayes specialize in Talmud scholarship. By this focus, we highlight not so much the anomaly of a gentile studying Talmud, as it is a sign of the integration of Jewish Studies into the

12 See James Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991) and in response Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

13 M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jahrhunderts vor Christus* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 10) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969).

14 Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942) and idem., *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950).

broader academy. Indeed, as early as 1961, the late Rabbi Samuel Sandmel served as president of the otherwise overwhelmingly Christian membership of the Society for Biblical Literature.

6 Kohlhammer's *Die Religionen der Menschheit*

Since 1960, Kohlhammer in Stuttgart has published the prestigious series *Die Religionen der Menschheit* (The Religions of Humanity). While the series was originally conceived of as thirty-six volumes almost 60 years ago, today it extends to fifty plus volumes, covering virtually all aspects of world-religions. That said, a disproportionate number of the volumes (often made up of multi-book publications) are devoted to Christianity. This is unsurprising, given Kohlhammer's location in a German-Lutheran orbit.

In the earliest round of publication, Kohlhammer brought out a one-volume *Israelitische Religion* (1963, second edition: 1982), which covered Old Testament religion. This also demonstrated Kohlhammer's essentially Christian worldview. By separating Israelite religion from Judaism, it implies that Israelite religion might lead the way to Christianity; viz. that the Old Testament would be replaced by the New. Its author was Christian biblical theologian Helmer Ringgren.

In 1994, though, Kohlhammer began to address the appearance of bias with its publication of a one-volume (ca. 500 pp) work *Das Judentum*, Judaism. Although it was edited by German Christian scholar Günter Mayer, (who specialized in rabbinic literature), and had contributions by Hermann Greive, who was also a non-Jew; the work featured contributions by three notable rabbis: Jacob Petuchowski, Phillip Sigal, and especially Leo Trepp. German born, Rabbi Trepp was renown as the last surviving rabbi to lead a congregation in Germany.

In its current iteration, twenty-five years later, this edition of *Judaism* is a three-volume, 1000-page compendium with contributions by thirty experts in all areas of Judaism, from the destruction of the Second Temple and the advent of rabbinic Judaism, until today. We, the co-editors, are Dr. Burton L. Visotzky, Ph.D., a rabbi who serves as the Appleman Professor of Midrash and Interreligious Studies at New York's Jewish Theological Seminary. The other co-editor is Dr. Michael Tilly, a Protestant minister, Professor of New Testament and head of the Institute of Ancient Judaism and Hellenistic Religions at Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen.

Further, the individual chapter authors are a mix, albeit uneven, of men and women (our initial invitations were to the same number of women as men, but as will be apparent, the final number favors men over women). And there are more Jews than Christians writing for these three volumes, although we confess to not actually knowing the religion of each individual participant. Scholars from seven countries make up the mix, with a preponderance of North-Americans; there are also many Germans, Israelis and then, scholars from England, France, Austria, and Poland. We are not entirely sure what this distribution means, except perhaps that the publisher and one of the editors is German, the other editor is American, and the largest number of Jewish studies scholars are located in America and Israel.

The relative paucity of Europeans indicates the slow recovery from World War II, even as we celebrate the reinvigoration of Jewish Studies in Europe.

In this volume devoted to Culture, we survey the cultural movements that have affected Jewish identity development over recent times. Much of what we can discern regarding Jewish culture in antique and medieval times necessarily is found in the literature that survives. But more recently, in addition to literary evidence, the scholar of Jewish culture can turn to other artifacts and evidence to write a fuller appreciation of the various Jewish cultural environments.

We have chosen cultural moments that are readily discernable through the existence of scholarly disciplines devoted to them. It is not our intention to express preferences for one form of culture over another. Rather, we are attempting to draw a map of the various forms and movements of Jewish culture in the pre-modern and modern periods. We cannot be all inclusive, as Judaism has been blessed with a surfeit of cultural movements and expressions in the past century. We hope this volume celebrates that abundance.

Michael Tilly / Burton L. Visotzky, January 2020