

THE MIDDLE WAY

The Emergence of Modern Religious Trends in
Nineteenth-Century Judaism

VOLUME TWO

STUDIES IN ORTHODOX JUDAISM

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The Emergence of Modern Religious Trends in
Nineteenth-Century Judaism

Responses to Modernity in the Philosophy of

Z. H. Chajes, S. R. Hirsch,
AND **S.D. Luzzatto**

VOLUME TWO

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CHAPTER FOUR

Emancipation, the Spiritualization of Redemption, and the Neutralization of the Land of Israel

THE EMANCIPATION

A central modern phenomenon with which the Orthodox rabbis had to struggle was emancipation, which was granted to the Jews in one state after another in Europe. Generally, the Edict of Tolerance issued by the Austrian emperor Joseph II in 1781 is seen as the beginning of Emancipation. The process then gained impetus from the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, and the Revolutions of 1848.

Emancipation had important and critical effects on the Jews. The traditional religious scholars of the middle way examined the matter meticulously and found both positive and negative influences. On the one hand, the Jews were exposed to important sources of culture and allowed to engage in new professional fields, enabling them to take part increasingly in social, economic, academic, and political life, and many saw this as the beginning of the messianic age. On the other hand, there was great apprehension that the new openness might entice Jews to lose their bearings and convert, forgetting their uniqueness and special mission.

Indeed, in the wake of Emancipation and Haskala came acculturation and secularization, the desire to integrate into the non-Jewish

world and even to assimilate and blend in. Universalistic and pluralistic ideologies of society and politics developed among the Jews, calling for reform of the Halakha, diminishing Jewish particularism, and rejecting the ideas of a personal messiah and of national redemption in the Land of Israel. These positions sought to spiritualize the idea of redemption and combine it with the redemption of Europe and of humanity, according to the natural, universal religion of reason or purified Christianity, and to neutralize the idea of the Land of Israel as an actual, physical place to which people yearned to return. According to this new approach, Zion was in Europe, and full emancipation among the nations of reason was redemption.

In contrast to the aforementioned influence, which distanced the Land of Israel from the minds of the people, there was also another alternative, bringing it closer, which was also opened up by Emancipation. Jews were now free to move from place to place, and the shifting of awareness to the Land of Israel as a realistic option became possible. Should this possibility be rejected or encouraged? Was it beneficial or dangerous?

Being post-Haskala thinkers, who had internalized important parts of the ideas of the Haskala movement, the modern but traditionally religious men of the middle way embraced equality of rights and universalism, and the neutralization of the Land of Israel. However, they had to consolidate an ideology that would justify Jewish particularism, preserve the Halakha and messianic hopes, and explain the need for Judaism and the role of the Jewish people among the nations in the new situation, and which would resolve the issue of dual loyalty. The status of the Land of Israel as a focus of attraction, at a time when the goods of Europe, both material and spiritual, were available to the Jews in the Diaspora, was therefore a central question that reverberated in the air.

MODELS OF THE RELATION TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL, TO EXILE, AND TO REDEMPTION IN JUDAISM

To understand the attitude toward the Land of Israel in Jewish thought in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century, I will briefly

summarize the positions taken on this subject in the history of this thought. In four articles, Aviezer Ravitzky¹ analyzed the theories on this subject, and these opinions can be laid out as follows:

THE REALISTS: THE LAND OF ISRAEL AS A FOCUS FOR A PHYSICAL ATTRACTION IN HISTORY

1. Those yearning for the homeland

Attraction for the purpose of fulfilling the commandments that can only be performed in the land—the Tosafists of France.

Attraction to the sanctity of the land, a special land in essence, climate, and geography, the only place where there is prophecy and perfection is possible in observing the commandments—Judah Halevi.

Attraction for political actualization—the Land was chosen at the beginning of human and Jewish history as the only place where an independent Jewish monarchy is possible, and where redemption will take place.

The expected future will unfold in three stages. First, the rebirth in the world of a Jewish state according to the Torah; second, the adoption by the nations of belief in the One God; and third, full spiritual and social reform of humanity. Only the third stage is Utopian and meta-historical—Maimonides.

2. Those Fearful of Sanctity

Only a select minority is worthy of living in the Land of Israel—Maharam of Rothenburg [Rabbi Meir ben Baruch of Rothenburg] and Hashla [Isaiah Horowitz, know by the name of his most important book, *Shnei Luhot Habrit*].

1 “‘Hatsivi Lakh Tsiunim’ Letsion: Gilgulo Shel Ra’ayon,” in idem, *Al Da’at Hamaqom* (Jerusalem, 1991), 34-74; “‘Kefi Koah Haadam’: Yemot Hamashiah Bemishnat Harambam,” in *ibid.*, 74-105; “‘Shelo Ya’alu Baḥoma’: ‘Al Rishuman Shel Shlosh Hashevu’ot Betoledot Yisrael,” appendix to *Haqets Hamegule Umedinat Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1993); “Erets H̄emda Veḥarada: Hayahas Hadu-Erki Leerets-Yisrael Bimqorot Yisrael,” in *Erets Yisrael Bahagut Hayehudit Hapadasha*, ed. idem (Jerusalem, 1998), 1-41. Referred to below respectively as “Tsiunim,” “Hamashiah,” “Haqets,” and “h̄emda.”

The land has essential, mystical qualities; it is connected to the divine world and draws influence from it. It is the only place where observing the commandments has essential inner value. It is a religious duty for anyone who is capable of dealing with its sanctity to move there—Nachmanides.

THE UTOPIANS: THE LAND OF ISRAEL IS DISTANT, OUTSIDE OF HISTORY

1. Those Yearning for the Land

Kabbalists and mystics who sever themselves from the land because of fear of sin, awe of its sanctity, and the prohibition against “forcing the end” (the “Three Oaths” of BT Ketubot 111a)—Rabbi Isaac of Acre, Rabbi Ezra and Rabbi Azriel, Ḥasiduti Ashkenaz, Abraham Galante, the Maharal of Prague, the major Hasidic rabbis, Jonathan Eybeschütz.²

2 These are the references to Ravitzky, according to the date of publication, as listed in the previous note: the Tosafists—1993, 283; 1998, 19. Judah Halevi—1991, 46; 1998, 290. Maimonides—1991, 75-82; 1993, 282; 1998, 21. Maharam—1998, 5. Hashlah—1993, 297; 1998, 7. Nachmanides—1991, 42; 1993, 287. Philo—1998, 15. Meiri—1998, 15. Samuel Jaffe—1993, 292. Emden—1993, 299. Mendelssohn—1993, 301. Isaac of Acre—1998, 15. Rabbi Ezra and Rabbi Azriel—1993, 282. Ḥasidei Ashkenaz—1993, 284. Galante—1993, 293. Maharal—1991, 61; 1993, 294. The Major Hasidic rabbis—1993, 301; 1998, 15. Eybeschütz—1991, 64; 1993, 300; 1998, 23. On Judah Halevi and Maimonides, see also E. Schweid, *Moledet Veerets Ye'uda* (Tel Aviv, 1979), 59-78, and on the kabbalists and Nachmanides, 79-82. On the mystical, neutralizing position of the kabbalists versus that of Nachmanides, see M. Idel, “‘Al Erets-Yisrael Bamaḥshava Hamistit Shel Yemei-Habeinayim,” in *Erets Yisrael Bahagut Hayehudit Biyemei Habeinayim*, ed. A. Ravitsky et al. (Jerusalem, 1991), 193-215. On the position of Nachmanides versus the neutralizing positions of Rabbi Ezra and Rabbi Azriel, see H. Pedaya, “Erets-Shel-Ruaḥ Veerets Mamash: R. ‘Ezra, R. ‘Azriel Veharamban,” in *ibid.*, 233-90. On the qualities of the Land according to Nachmanides, see Halbertal, *Haramban*, 173-75, 230-32, 260-65. According to his comprehensive explanation, the Land of Israel possesses a cosmic link with the Divine Presence [Shekhina], and it also possesses its own qualities and essences. As a result, in an ontological, non-voluntary fashion, liberation from the rule of inert nature takes place, and it is in a constant state of hidden miracles, with which the righteous is privileged, and the sinner is punished because of it by being driven out of the land. On the position of Judah Halevi, see also Guttman, *Hapilosofia*, 120. On Maimonides’s position, see S. Rosenberg, *Be’iqvot Hakuzari* (Jerusalem, 1991), 252; I. Twersky, “Erets-Yisrael Vegalut Bemishnato Shel

2. The Neutralizers

Philosophers and scholars who strengthened consciousness of exile and Jewish historical passivity.

Within history there are physical or spiritual substitutes for the Land of Israel: a person's body or intelligence, his present location, the community, *Kneset Yisrael* [the Jewish collective], the Torah, the human spirit, or the world. The spiritual substitute for the Land of Israel makes it possible to achieve religious fulfillment and moral and religious perfection even outside of the Land of Israel. Those who take this view are likely to refer to the Three Oaths, and they seek to strengthen Jewish life in the Diaspora and to encourage communities in difficult times or to maintain their achievements—Philo, Meiri, Samuel Jaffe, Jacob Emden, Mendelssohn.³

Below I show how the modern religious thinkers fit into this model.

EXILE AS THE JEWISH MISSION TO THE NATIONS

The idea of the mission or destiny of the Jewish people being the reason for the exile and part of God's plan in history is not a new one. In the early nineteenth century, after the French Revolution and the

Harambam," in *Erets Yisrael Bahagut Hayehudit Biyemei Habeinayim*, 90-123; A. Funkenstein, *Tadmit Vetoda'a Historit Bayabadut Uvisvivata Hatarbutit* (Tel Aviv, 1991), 103-56. On the mission according to Judah Halevi and the parable of the grain, see Rosenberg, *Hakuzari*, 87-88. On Judah Halevi's attitude toward the special merit of the Land and the people and the attitude toward exile and living in actual Zion, see *ibid.*, 317-320. On the meaning of exile and Jewish passivity and activism in the course of history, see Funkenstein, *Tadmit*, 232-42. Compare the opinions on Maimonides and Nachmanides mentioned above to that of M. Z. Nehorai, "Erets-Yisrael Betoratam Shel Harambam Veharamban," in *Erets Yisrael Bahagut Hayehudit Biyemei Habeinayim*, 123-38, and on Judah Halevi, to the opinion of Y. Silman, "Artsiuta Shel Erets-Yisrael Besefer Hakuzari," in *Erets Yisrael Bahagut Hayehudit Biyemei Habeinayim*, 77-90. Naturally the model presented here is general and does not go into the nuances between the various positions. A different model is offered by Schwartz, *Hara'ayon*, regarding the medieval thinkers. He distinguishes between the apocalyptic messianism of Sa'adia Gaon (28-38) and the personal, naturalistic messianism of Maimonides (69-89). Judah Halevi (55-69) is one of those who led the process from the Geonim to Maimonides, and there are motives of both kinds of messianism in his work.

3 On the neutralizing philosophers, see Ravitzky, *Haqets*, 292, 299, 301; "Hemda," 15.

beginning of Emancipation, when it seemed as if, finally, humanity had truly embraced ethical monotheism and progress was clearly emerging, the idea moved to the center of the arena. However, this idea had already existed among medieval thinkers:

Judah Halevi

In the *Kuzari* 4:23, the Rabbi says:

God has a secret and wise design concerning us, which should be compared to the wisdom hidden in the seed which falls into the ground, where it undergoes an external transformation into earth, water and dirt, without leaving a trace for him who looks down upon it. It is, however, the seed itself which transforms earth and water into its own substance, carries it from one stage to another, until it refines the elements and transfers them into something like itself, casting off husks, leaves, etc., and allowing the pure core to appear, capable of bearing the Divine Influence. The original seed produced the tree bearing fruit resembling that from which it had been produced. In the same manner, so it is with the religion of Moses. All the religions that have come after it are, in truth, being transformed to be like it, even though outwardly they reject it. These religions [Christianity and Islam] are thus only a preparation for the awaited Messiah who is the fruit. And all of them, when they acknowledge this, will come to be his fruit, and the tree will be one. Then they will exalt the root. Then they will revere the origin which they formerly dispersed, as we have observed concerning the words: "Behold My servant prospers."

Maimonides

In *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhot Melakhim, the end of chapter 11 (in the uncensored Venice and Amsterdam editions), Maimonides explains who the Messiah is and speaks of two false messiahs who nevertheless were chosen by Providence to spread the principles of Judaism in the world: Jesus and Muhammad. Jesus was executed by a rabbinical court after causing the loss of Jewish lives and the dispersal of Jews and misleading the world, as if the Torah had been replaced and one should worship a different god:

Nevertheless, the thoughts of the Creator of the world are not within the power of man to comprehend, for His ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts, our thoughts. Ultimately, all the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth and that Ishmaelite who arose after him will only serve to prepare the way for Mashiach's coming and the improvement of the entire world, motivating the nations to serve God together as Tzephaniah 3:9 states: "I will transform the peoples to a purer language that they all will call upon the name of God and serve Him with one purpose." How will this come about? The entire world has already become filled with the mention of Mashiach, Torah, and mitzvot. These matters have been spread to the furthest islands to many stubborn-hearted nations. They discuss these matters and the mitzvot of the Torah, saying: "These mitzvot were true, but were already negated in the present age and are not applicable for all time." Others say: "These mitzvot contain secret matters and are not to be understood to their external [literal] meaning. The Mashiach has already come and revealed these secrets." When the true Messianic king will arise and prove successful, his position becoming exalted and uplifted, they will all return and realize that their ancestors endowed them with a false heritage and their prophets and ancestors caused them to err.

[Trans. Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, available online: http://www.chabad.org/library/article__cdo/aid/682956/jewish/mishneh-torah.htm]

Nachmanides

In his sermon "Torat Hashem Temima" [The Torah of God is Perfect], which he gave following the Barcelona Dispute, Nachmanides used the words of Maimonides to clarify his position on this subject and copied them almost verbatim, except for the sentence, "the improvement of the entire world, motivating the nations to serve God together," and the quotation from Zephaniah 3:9. He apparently omitted these because it seemed excessive to him to share the worship of God with other religions, and he preferred Maimonides's following remarks, which clearly imply that they are erroneous.

MENDELSSOHN'S POSITION

Mendelssohn's views stand in the background of nineteenth-century trends in Judaism. His point of departure was philosophical, rationalist,

and universalist, according to which, by means of reason, which was the common property of all human beings, it was possible to reach the eternal metaphysical truths that every person needed in order to attain happiness and moral and intellectual perfection. The man who maintained this position was a proud, religious Jew, who observed the commandments and believed in the revelation to the Jewish people and in their messianic hopes, and he had to struggle with two cardinal questions, which are raised in his writing. These questions preoccupied all the Jewish thinkers of the nineteenth century.

The first question, raised in his *Jerusalem*,⁴ is: how can Mendelssohn, if indeed this is his view, continue to believe in Revelation, for which there was no need? Alternatively, “If, therefore, mankind must be corrupt and miserable without revelation, why has the far greater part of mankind lived without *true revelation* from time immemorial?”⁵ Mendelssohn answers this question as follows:

I believe that Judaism knows of no revealed religion in the sense in which Christians understand this term. The Israelites possess a divine *legislation*—laws, commandments, ordinances, rules of life, instruction in the will of God as to how they should conduct themselves in order to attain temporal and eternal felicity. Propositions and prescriptions of this kind were revealed to them by Moses in a miraculous and supernatural manner, but no doctrinal opinions, no saving truths, no universal propositions of reason.⁶

Here Mendelssohn makes the famous distinction between eternal metaphysical truths, whose source is in the divine intelligence, or God’s will, and founded on reason, and temporary historical truths that are connected to time and place, and based on the senses, experience, and reliable tradition. The powers of human reason are sufficient to prove the eternal truths demanded for human happiness. What was conveyed to the Jews on Mount Sinai were particular historical truths for the Jewish people regarding their removal from Egypt by God, who had

4 See Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, trans. Allan Arkush (Hanover, 1983), 89-100, 126-28.

5 Ibid., 94

6 Ibid., 89-90.

made a covenant with them, and a practical legal constitution to be observed in their land to assure their success. These truths were ratified with signs and wonders. These laws, founded upon eternal truths, recall and summon everyone to these truths, but are not supposed to teach or prove them. The Jewish people cannot free itself from the covenant and the constitution except “if it pleases the Supreme Lawgiver to make known to us His will on this matter, to make it known in as clear a voice, in as public a manner, and as far beyond all doubt and ambiguity as He did when He gave the law itself.”⁷

The second question is that of the dual loyalty of the Jews in the Diaspora, both to the law of the state where they are subjects and to the law of the Torah, in which they believe. Mendelssohn gives Jesus’s answer to this question:

Adapt yourselves to the morals and the constitution of the land to which you have been removed; but hold fast to the religion of your fathers too. Bear both burdens as well as you can! It is true that on the one hand the burden of civil life is made heavier for you because of the religion to which you remain faithful, and, on the other hand, the climate and the times make the observance of your religious laws in some respects more irksome than they are. Nevertheless persevere; remain unflinchingly at the post which Providence assigned to you, and endure everything that happens to you as your lawgiver foretold long ago.⁸

However, the question is deeper. Mendelssohn relates to the questions raised by Professor Johann David Michaelis, who doubted that it was possible for the enemies of Christianity to be enlightened humans, but was prepared to consider according certain rights to the Jews. He also relates to the liberal German intellectual Christian Dohm, who proposed in his book *Ueber die Bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* [On the Civil Improvement of the Jews] changing the attitude of the authorities toward them, to recognize them as human beings and to allow them to become citizens, so that they could improve their morality and their physical condition and contribute to society. As impediments he

7 Ibid., 133.

8 Ibid.

presented, on the one hand, the poor status of the Jews and their low ethical level—for in Dohm's opinion they were cheaters and thieves—and, on the other hand, the contradiction between the loyalty to the state demanded of a German citizen and the aspiration of the Jews to return to the Land of Israel and establish their own sovereign state there.

Regarding the first problem, Mendelssohn counsels caution making comparisons with the rest of the citizens, both because one must take into account the more serious ethical sins of which the Jews are not guilty, and because the comparison must be made only between merchants and peddlers, and not with the entire population. Moreover, one must remember that the Jew chooses this profession because of poverty and need and not by free will. Indeed, among the Jews there are many receivers of stolen goods, but most of them change their ways as soon as they have made enough money to purchase the right of protection.⁹

Regarding the contradiction of dual loyalty, Mendelssohn writes:

The hoped-for return to Palestine, which troubles Herr M. [Michaelis] so much, has no influence on our conduct as citizens. This is confirmed by experience wherever Jews are tolerated. In part, human nature accounts for it—only the enthusiast would not love the soil on which he thrives. And he who holds contradictory religious opinions reserves them for church and prayer. In part, also, the precaution of our sages accounts for it—the Talmud forbids us *even to think* of a return [to Palestine] by force [i.e., to attempt Redemption through human effort]. Without the miracles and signs mentioned in the Scripture, we must not take the smallest step in the direction of forcing a return and a restoration of our nation. The Sages expressed this prohibition in a somewhat mystical yet captivating way, using the verses from the Song of Songs (Song of Songs, 2:7 and 3:5): I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,/ By the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field,/ That you stir not up, nor awake love,/ Till it please.¹⁰

9 Cited in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (Oxford, 1995), 48. On the attitudes of Dohm and Michaelis and Mendelssohn's response, see Katz, *Hayetsia*, 61-72, 92-95.

10 Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 48-49. Interestingly, in 1770 Mendelssohn corresponded with the Baron von Lynar, who presented himself

Settling in the Land of Israel is a matter for the end of days. It is utopian and miraculous, neutralized and thus removed from real history, and its place in the present time is only in synagogues and not in the real world. In the real world, the Three Oaths remain in force, forbidding any active measure to bring on the end and achieve actual settlement in the Land of Israel.¹¹

as an anonymous admirer, and he asked Mendelssohn's opinion about the idea of establishing a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. Mendelssohn rejected the proposal with cautious diplomatic courtesy—without entering into a theological or ideological dispute—with practical arguments regarding character traits that the Jews had acquired during thousands of years of exile and suffering, giving rise to a passivity and lack of energy, the dispersal of the Jews and the lack of unity among them, and the huge investment that would be required, and the political situation that was necessary but impossible. See “Letter to ‘a Man of Rank’” in *Moses Mendelssohn: Writings on Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible*, ed. M. Gottlieb (Waltham, MA, 2011), 37-38. On Mendelssohn's a priori neutralizing approach, on the one hand, and on his response to the baron's proposal, on the other, see Ravitzky, *Haqets*, 24-25. Ravitzky does not decide what Mendelssohn's “real” attitude was, but in any event he presents it as an ideology of passivity. While it is possible that Mendelssohn's answer to the arguments of the Gentiles was apologetic, in my opinion his answer to the baron showed cautious, practical diplomacy, appropriate to a practical proposal from a practical man. Mendelssohn's reply to Michaelis is ideological, and represents his deep opinion, which was passive from the start. W. Z. Harvey, “Moshe Mendelssohn ‘Al Erets-Yisrael,” in *Erets Yisrael Bahagut Hayebudit Ba'et Heḥadasha*, ed. A. Ravitzky (Jerusalem, 1998), 301-12, presents both positions in detail and reaches the logical conclusion that his real opinion was practical and not neutralizing. The argument is that in a polemical situation you are likely to employ apologetics. In my opinion, it is difficult to accuse Mendelssohn, the straight-laced rationalist, of such apologetics. Another source on the subject, which Harvey himself cites on 309-10, is his commentary, *Habeur*, on Lev. 26:39, which fits in with the neutralizing position of awaiting a miracle. Harvey himself explains this passage in that way. Interestingly, Harvey regards the printing of Mendelssohn's paraphrase of “Tsion Halo Tishali” [“Zion, Will You Not Ask,” a hymn by Judah Halevi] in a prospectus for *Habeur*, as a demonstration of Mendelssohn's practical position that the final step of rehabilitating the nation within history will be the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. M. R. Niehoff, “Targumo Shel Moshe Mendelssohn Le'Tsion Halo Tishali' Shel R. Yehuda Halevi,” in *Erets Yisrael Bahagut Hayebudit Ba'et Heḥadasha*, 313-25, analyzes the paraphrase in detail and in depth, proving that the absolute neutralization of the Land of Israel is conspicuous throughout the poem. Harvey himself, who seems to disagree with Niehoff (and me), drew Niehoff's attention to the poem and reviewed her article before it was published. See also Katz, *Hayetsia*, 66, who tends toward neutralization.

11 This fits in with Ravitzky's model regarding the Three Oaths as a seismograph, according to which every time real traces of the land emerge, the oaths appear (see

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that the motif of the three oaths emerges from the inner Jewish dialogue between those in favor of immigration and those opposed to it, and serves as an argument for Jewish loyalty in a dispute with non-Jews. Mendelssohn concludes his remarks by advocating the universal principle of separation of religion and state: "I think, moreover, the laws should not take into account personal convictions at all. Laws should take their inevitable course, proscribing whatever is not beneficial to the general good. When personal convictions conflict with the laws it is up to the individual to resolve this problem on his own. If then the fatherland is to be defended, everybody who is called upon to do so must comply. In such cases, men usually know how to modify their convictions and to adjust them to their civic duty."¹²

Because reason is a constant factor, which does not change in the course of history, Mendelssohn does not accept Lessing's position regarding progress and the education of mankind throughout history. Lessing's view enables him to argue that Christianity succeeded Judaism and therefore is superior to it and represents an advanced stage in the education of mankind. Mendelssohn rejects the thesis of progress, so he can deny this argument.¹³ According to him, examination of human history refutes the theory:

Progress is for the individual man, who is destined by Providence to spend part of his eternity here on earth. Everyone goes through life in his own way.... But it does not seem to have been the purpose of Providence that mankind as a whole advance steadily here below and perfect itself in the course of time. This, at least, is not so well settled nor by any means so necessary for the vindication of God's Providence as one is in the habit of thinking.... As far as the human race as a whole is concerned, you will find no steady progress in its development that brings it ever closer to perfection. Rather do we see the human race in its totality slightly oscillate; it never took a few steps forward without soon afterwards, and with redoubled speed, sliding

Haqets, 280). Of course, Chajes, Hirsch, and Luzzatto, who also bring up the argument about the oaths, also fit into this model.

12 Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 49.

13 See E. Schweid, *Bein Ortodoxia Lehumanism Dati* (Jerusalem, 1977), 136-38; Feiner, *Haskala*, 67-68.

back to its previous position.... Mankind continually fluctuates within fixed limits, while maintaining, on the whole, about the same degree of morality in all periods—the same amount of religion and irreligion, of virtue and vice, of felicity and misery; the same result if one compares like with like.¹⁴

Mendelssohn adopts the idea of the mission of the Jews. It turns out that mankind does not always make proper use of reason, and the existence of the Jewish people among them, who keep the laws of the Torah, makes possible the preservation of truths:

The forefathers of our nation, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, remained faithful to the Eternal, and sought to preserve among their families and descendants pure concepts of religion, far removed from all idolatry. And now their descendants were chosen by Providence to be a *priestly nation*; that is, a nation which, through its establishment and constitution, through its laws, actions, vicissitudes, and changes, was continually to call attention to sound and unadulterated ideas of God and his attributes. It was incessantly to teach, to proclaim, and to endeavor to preserve these ideas among the nations, by means of its mere existence, as it were.¹⁵

A paradoxical question necessarily arises: if there is no progress, and humanity remains more or less as it was, what is the mission of the Jewish people in its two thousand years of exile? Conversely, if the Jews do in fact succeed in their mission during the exile, then there is progress! There is no alternative but to state that according to Mendelssohn, the mission of the Jews is static and not developmental: it is to preserve truths within history for a utopian future.

THE RADICAL NEUTRALIZING POSITION

Between the time of Mendelssohn and that of Chajes, Hirsch, and Luzzatto, nearly fifty years passed. During those five decades, many changes took place, mainly in Western Europe. The supremacy of reason as the means for knowing metaphysical truths was limited by Kant. Emancipation spread in Europe as a result of the French Revolution

¹⁴ Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, 96-97.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

and Napoleon's conquests. Secularization and the Enlightenment became widespread, and assimilation and Reform won over the Jews and eroded their communities, with the cooperation of the authorities, who wanted a strong central government. On the one hand, humanity seemed more advanced, ethical, and enlightened, while on the other hand there was a need to rehabilitate traditional Judaism.

Very soon, however, movement in the positive direction in Europe was blocked. The liberal Jews after Mendelssohn, who wanted to identify with universal values, to integrate into Europe, and to provide Judaism with a decent burial, were astonished by the change of atmosphere in Europe.

Universal rationalism gave way to particularist, chauvinistic romanticism, which gained momentum with the reaction after Napoleon's defeat. The hope of the members of the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden to integrate into the general civil society of Germany, bearing with them the Jewish values that were worthy of preservation, was disappointed, as was the proposal by Friedländer, to be attached to the Protestant church under certain conditions. Having no alternative, the men of the Verein developed an ideology of far-reaching reform from within. According to this ideology, the written Torah and the Oral Law were human creations, connected to the ancient times and places where they were written—the Land of Israel and Babylonia. Therefore, the Halakha had to be corrected according to the needs of the new time and to be adapted to modern Europe.

This ideology was meant to assure that, on the one hand, the average Jew would not abandon his Judaism and culture, claiming they were outmoded and unattractive, and, on the other, the Jews would be accepted as new Jews in the bosom of modern Europe. The reforms could achieve this by purifying Judaism of the cult of the past, of irrational beliefs that were out of date, and of the connection with Zion, and thus the Jews could be attracted to a new Judaism, and would be cleared of the accusation of dual loyalty.

This claim against the old Judaism, which until then had served those non-Jews who were opposed to granting emancipation to the Jews, now became an argument of the Reform in the internal dialogue

within Judaism. The Reform Jews developed a radical doctrine of mission: on the day of Redemption, the New Judaism would become the world religion of Europe, and the other religions would unite with it.

As early as 1812, David Friedländer published a pamphlet in which he outlined changes in the lives of the Jews and also called for the purification and rectification of everything that characterized the Jews as foreign. Among other things, he recommended removing from the prayer book any mention of the desire to return to Zion, the advent of a personal Messiah, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the renewal of the sacrificial cult. This was done in the Reform Temple in Seesen from 1810 on, in Berlin starting in 1817, and in Hamburg beginning in 1818.¹⁶ The Reform Jews who strove for total integration were radical neutralizers, and they effected full, universal spiritualization of the yearning for Zion. They argued: we have no interest in returning to Zion, neither real nor utopian; rather we want to be redeemed here in Europe.

CHAJES'S RESPONSE

As I have shown, although Chajes regarded himself as a rationalist, his unconscious absorption of the atmosphere of romantic idealism and his fundamentalism caused him to acknowledge the limits of reason. Hence he adopted, unlike Mendelssohn, a position according to which revelation was required as a standard for reason, which cannot always attain complete truth on its own.

This position reopened the question of why only the Jewish people were privileged with revelation, and Chajes addressed it. However, having internalized Haskala, with regard to the connection with the Land of Israel, the mission of the Jews, and universalism, Chajes leaned in the direction of Mendelssohn. Like Hirsch and Luzzatto, he wished to maintain and even to improve the achievements made by the Jews in their countries of residence, and encouragement of return to the actual Zion endangered these achievements. It should also be remembered that Chajes passed away before the appearance of the precursors of

¹⁶ Meyer, *Reform*, 44-47, 53-59; Rotenstreich, *Hamahashava*, 128-40.

Zionism in Europe—Alkalai and Kalischer—began to act and spread their appeal for settlement in the Land of Israel during the 1860s. From where he lived in Galicia, any practical thought about the Land of Israel was entirely irrelevant.

Emancipation

Chajes approved of the emancipation in Europe and hoped that in the Austro-Hungarian Empire as well the situation would improve and the Jews would receive more rights than they had so far attained. In his work against Reform, “Minḥat Qenaot,” he wrote:

It cannot be denied that God benefited His people in their political status, relieved them of the harsh servitude imposed upon them by their enemies, and thank the blessed God at this time we hear of no forced conversions, murders, loss, and expulsion at all, as we suffered in ancient days in Germany and Spain and France and Portugal and Naples and Sicily, and on the contrary in our generation everyone speaks honorably of us, and in the states of France, Italy, Holland, Belgium, and most of the states of Germany, the residents of the country are seen with no difference at all, and also in the Empire of Austria and in Britain there is hope, that the government will no longer make a difference between us and the rest of the residents of the state.¹⁷

The Arguments against Giving Rights to the Jews

Chajes was therefore aware of the relatively favorable situation of the Jews of Europe in his time, and says so elsewhere in almost exactly the same words.¹⁸ However, from time to time people argue that the Jews are unworthy of emancipation, and Chajes addresses this issue in “Derush Nikhbad” [Respectable Sermon] at the beginning of his book *‘Ateret Zvi*, published in 1841. He lists three models of antisemitism, the first two of which were mentioned by Maimonides in the third Epistle of Yemen, and the third of which is a new, contemporary type.

The first model is national and political hatred of the Jews’ bodies and strength. The second model is religious hatred of the Torah. The

¹⁷ Chajes, “Minḥat Qenaot,” 984.

¹⁸ Chajes, *‘Ateret Zvi*, 453.

third model is racial, antisemitic hatred of the supposedly corrupt and treacherous character of the Jews. This kind of hatred on the part of antisemites is expressed every time decent and honest Gentiles advocate granting freedom and civil rights to the Jews in any of the various institutions of the state, since the Jews bear the burden of duties like any other citizen:

Immediately Satan dances among them, and the opponents arrive with strange arguments, saying about us, “a people that shall dwell alone” (Num. 23:9), “and they have nothing in common with us” (ref. to Judges 18:7), the members of that nation regard themselves as sojourners, and they cling to their view that this land is not theirs, and their eyes gaze and are borne up to another place, and in addition to all this, they say of us that this nation is not yet ripe in manners and morals, and they will not walk together over time like the other subjects of the state, and besides this they also say, look at the flaw that clings to the traits of their spirit, and the morale of the Jewish people is very bad, they are lovers of idleness and their occupation is solely with commerce, peddlers who go about in the towns and villages, taking interest, to suck on the plenty of many nations, acting in cunning because they look only for lucre, rushing to get rich. And they add more and more strange arguments to strike out at us with various plots, exposing us to humiliation and slander, to justify their actions against us in broad daylight.¹⁹

These arguments are identical to those of Michaelis as presented by Mendelssohn. Chajes’s answer is similar in principle to that of Mendelssohn, but it is more detailed and comprehensive:

Indeed those who go deeply into the pure Torah of God, and who understand matters of the Oral Law, and who investigate the history of the nation with a penetrating eye, they are aware and know that not only to kings and ministers are we commanded by the Torah and again in the prophets and triply in the Oral Law to give honor, and to pray for their welfare, but also to every person, no matter who he may be, we were commanded to conduct ourselves with them with love and mercy, and all good virtues, merciful and bashful and compassionate. This has been found with us forever both regarding the individual and also regarding the generality, and we do not bear hatred at any time. Our way is only to be forbearing and to forgive....

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 355.

And he who looks deeply will see that our ancestors were only shepherds, and the sons have inherited the deeds of the fathers. In the land of their dwelling they knew no commerce and property, only pasture and working the land was all their planning and regard. They succeeded and bore fruit in that way, and the entire essence of the Torah of Moses comes only to strengthen the behavior of our ancestors, to distance them from commerce and property. It was forbidden to them by God to give and take interest and usury and usufruct, without which commerce is impossible.... And there are many more teachings of the Sages that guided us [to engage] only in matters of crafts and working the soil and cattle and flocks. In all the occupations of the Tannaim and the Amoraim we have found only working the field and vineyard.... Indeed after that, as much time passed, and we were driven from downfall to downfall, pursuit without letup, and we did not find rest for our weary souls. The residents of the land did not allow us to have a foothold in their state, and they prevented us from joining their estate in every manner of craft and public service, and nothing remained except commerce and lending. What could they do to preserve their souls, and the soul of the miserable members of their household? They were required to cling to their new way, strange to them, for more than two thousand years, and the nations forced us to do everything that we did, and because of them the evil of a few matters was caused.... For we are thought of as aliens in the land, and we have no part or estate in all the occupations related to settling and holding the land, and we are exposed at every moment to every mischance and misfortune—and they said (Yevamot 63a), “Disasters only come to the world for Israel,” meaning that in every sorrowful occasion upon which the misfortune comes from *midat hadin* [the severity of God], if a whip falls suddenly, the residents of the country say that it happened because of Israel, that they threw poison into the wells. If fire breaks out from God and burns down an entire city, behold, the Jewish people caused it. They constantly attributed everything that went wrong to the reviled sect of Jacob who hear their curse and do not reply.... And the splendid scholar Krug wrote in his essay on saving the Jewish people, even if we assume and decide that the Jews do some cunning things in business dealings—which is still not confirmed, and [when] honest and innocent people among those residents are asked, whose hearts were not swayed by hatred of the religion, and who do not give a heedful ear to the prejudice whose foundation is in the days of darkness, then they bring words out of their heart, that there is no one more fit and worthy in commerce than a Hebrew merchant, who does not rush to get rich, and satisfies himself with little, and is

not ardent with rage of fornication and other sensual appetites, such as drunkenness and gluttony, and a small amount is regarded as large by them, and because of that they do not raise the price—and while the Jews stood like a thorn in their eyes, here we have seen that in the hour of war, cunning is something permitted and acceptable for the weak, to overcome his enemies. Experience has shown to our eyes in our times, that in those states and regions where the yoke upon us was lightened, and those states took a step in our favor, then we stepped twenty steps upward, and France, and Holland, and North America, and some of the regions of Germany prove this: and thus we whose pleasant fate it is to be under the rule of Austria, a kingdom of mercy toward all the nations who take shelter in its shadow, behold we have seen that we have improved our ways greatly.... And deficiency does not cling to our law, perish the thought, only the length of exile and the weight of the yoke have caused matters to be spoiled with us.... And thank God we are still outstanding among the nations, in wisdom and wealth and good virtues, and this has stood by us that we clung to the perfect Torah of God.... Because in the matter of the third hatred, for the flaws they impute against us, that they [supposedly] have clung to us by nature, the prophet said[:] This is the estate of the servants of God and their righteousness is from me, spoke the Lord, because after what happened to them from the persecutions and the various exiles, they still shine in splendor of virtues and knowledge. This is a sign and wonder of the honesty of their path, and it testifies to their root, that they are the community of Jeshurun, a place in His estate, worthy to be called by the name of servants of God. Their righteousness was caused by His exalted Providence, by their cleaving and endeavors in the ways of the Torah forever: ... And our hope is firmly set in the Rock of Israel and His sanctity, that the days will come, and they will not be distant, when no outcry will be heard anymore and no outburst among the nations and various people, because of hatred of the religion. They will all know together that the name of God was called upon us, and they will not be evil and will not destroy the mount of My sanctity, for the earth will fill with knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea [Is. 11:9].²⁰

As sources for the argument about the attitude of respect and love that the Jews are commanded to adopt toward the nations and their kings, he cites the following in comments to the essay:

²⁰ Ibid., 255-58.

Midrash Shemot ch. 7: “and He ordered them to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and the Holy One said to them, treat him with respect,” and thus he did, as it is said, “all these servants of yours will come down to me,” and he did not say it about Pharaoh, and see (BT Zevaḥim 102a) (and BT Menaḥot 98a) “the veneration of kings must never be a light thing in your eyes.” From the prophets, Jer. 29 “Ask for the welfare of the city and pray for it”; from the Oral Law: Ethics of the Fathers, ch. 3, “Pray for the welfare of the kingdom.”²¹

Chajes therefore rejects the racist argument about the particularly low moral standards of the Jews and claims that their morality is good, and that circumstances caused their decline. The Jews had always worked as shepherds and farmers. Exile and persecution forced them to deal in commerce and money-lending for interest, and to scheme, because they were not permitted to settle on the land or to engage in any other profession. This scheming is understandable in the situation of struggle for existence against enemies who always regarded the Jew as a scape-goat. Jews are free of all sensual corruption and are commanded to honor and love those who grant them protection, and this is according to the Torah, the observance of which shaped their pure character; and the day will come when they will be recognized by all the nations.

Universalism

One can find decided expressions of universalism in Chajes’s writings:

In the Bible[:] This is the book of the generations of man on the day that God created man, in the likeness of God He made him (Gen. 5:1). Man is honored only on account of the beginning of intellection in him. (See *Guide of the Perplexed*, pt. 1, ch. 1 and ch. 2.) That

²¹ See *ibid.*, 255, notes. As was customary with preachers, Chajes is selective in his quotations. The Gemara in BT Zevaḥim 102a does present this opinion of Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rabbi Yanai, which represents a submissive and obedient attitude toward authority, which was apparently more accepted in the Beit Midrash. However, the oppositional, proud attitude of Resh Lakish is also presented there, regarding God’s instructions about how to behave toward the ruler Pharaoh. Resh Lakish apparently brought this attitude toward the evil enemy to the Beit Midrash from his experience as a robber in the practical world: Moses did not hesitate, “he slapped him and left,” and this is according to God’s instruction as to how to behave toward Pharaoh and not to fear: “He is evil, and you should be impudent to him.”

because of this it is said that He created him in the image of God. And as for souls, all the souls are quarried from the same place. United. And they have a single soul in regard to intellection. The intellectual soul that is in them, and in this respect it is a duty for man to love his fellow with essential love because of the unity of the soul, and this is a greater principle than “you must love your fellow like yourself (Lev. 19:18).”²²

Chajes adopts Maimonides’s universalism and states that rational human beings are equal, according to the phrase, “in the image of God He created him,” from which is derived the obligation to love everyone who was created in the image of God. This is a supreme, universal duty, higher than the commandment of the Torah to love one’s fellow. Elsewhere, Chajes stretches the literal meaning of the Midrash, “you are called man,” to make it fit his universalistic ideology:

You are called man—we see in this that the intention is not to exclude the other nations from the category of man, only the Sages came to interpret it that every time in the Torah and the Holy Scriptures just the word “man” is mentioned, it meant only the children of Israel, as in all the books and laws of religion that are unique to a single nation, everywhere that it is mentioned without qualification. For when a person is obligated or warned of such and such, the intention is only to those people who are required to listen to the voice of these commands. Thus in the Torah and the prophets, everywhere “son of man” is mentioned by itself, the intention is to the Jews, because only to them were their words preached, except for a place where they explicitly prophesy to the nations, and this is obvious.²³

22 Chajes, *Ḥidushim Vehagabot Lasbas*, Shabbat, fol. 31a. Chajes explains the opinion of Ben Azai here, in dispute with Rabbi Akiva (Bereshit Rabba 24:7), that the verse ‘This is the book of the generations of man’ (Gen. 5:1) is a more inclusive principle than “love your fellow as yourself.”

23 Ibid., Yevamot 61a. On this see A. Sagi, *Yabadut: Bein Dat Lemusar* (Tel Aviv, 1998), 178. There he discusses the various approaches within Judaism toward the difference between Jews and Gentiles, and he distinguishes between the ontological and the restrictive in relation to the words of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai, “You are called man,” and he correctly counts Chajes among the restrictive. It should be pointed out that both Luzzatto (*Meḥqerei Hayabadut*, I, 161) and Hirsch (on Lev. 1:2) should also be included in the restrictive category. Sagi states on page 180 that “the restrictive tendency is especially notable among rabbis of the modern period, who were exposed to human reality outside of Jewish society.” I add another

In an essay entitled “Tiferet Leyisrael” [Glory to Israel], published in *‘Ateret Zvi*, which was about the struggle concerning the Damascus Blood Libel, Chajes wrote at length about the universalism of the Torah and the Halakha in relation to Gentiles. He begins with quotations from the *Ethics of the Fathers*:

“Do not be contemptuous of any person” (4:3), [not] even a pagan from their day, as it implies, and they said: “Hatred of creatures [i.e. people] removes a person from the world” (2:11). The Mishnah uses the word “*briyot*” [creatures], meaning all humans in general and in particular. As long as they have not harmed us, it is forbidden to hate them, and they said, “Precious is man, for he was created in the Image” (3:14), as it is said, ‘God created man in His image’ (Gen. 1:27). The intention is to all types of people, since at the time of creation, only one man was created, and all the separate nations and peoples emerged from him, see the commentary of Tosfot Yom Tov there. And the prophet also proclaimed and spoke publicly: “Do we not all have one father who created us, why should one man betray his brother?” (Malachi 2)... Maimonides spoke about this at length (commentary on the Mishnah, Kelim 2:7), and see the pleasantness of his language there, how he repeated and tripled many times that the duty incumbent upon us is to behave toward them with honesty of measures and weights.... And our Sages of blessed memory commanded us to increase peace with every person, even worshipers of stars and constellations in the market (BT Berakhot 17b)... Because our nation is a wise and perfect one, behaving at all times with love and brotherhood and affection, with the circumcised and the uncircumcised, and the archetype of all these statements is the prayer of King Solomon of blessed memory, upon whom the spirit of prophecy descended, and the spirit of wisdom and knowledge, and he said in his prayer, “and also to the stranger who is not from your nation, Israel, etc.,” and if he comes to pray in this house, and You shall hear from heaven, your abode, and you shall do everything that the stranger calls upon you (1 Kings 8:41-43)... And the more so that they behaved with love and affection with the other nations in whose shadow they took refuge, as it is said, “seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you and pray for it to God, because its peace will be your peace” (Jer. 29:7), and Zedekiah, the king of Judah, was

reason: in the modern period for the first time the Gentiles granted emancipation to the Jews. Someone who accepts this offer gladly and seeks to strengthen and develop it cannot adopt the theory that there is an ontological difference between Jews and Gentiles.

punished because he violated his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, that he had sworn to him. It is said that he did what was evil in the eyes of God, and he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he had sworn by God (2 Chron. 36:12-13). The Mishnah said, pray for the welfare of the kingdom, that is, the ruling nation, whatever the nature of its rule might be, and see also Midrash Kohelet, s.v. "I [say]: keep the king's counsels," the Holy One said, I conjure you, that if the monarchy passes harsh decrees, do not rebel against it in any matter that it decrees against you, but keep the king's counsel, in everything they tell you [to do]. They said [BT Ketubot 111a]: the Holy One made Israel swear three oaths in exile, "One, that Israel shall not go up [all together as if surrounded] as a wall; the second ... that they shall not rebel against the nations of the world," and now, if we see the decency of their behavior toward worshipers of stars who sacrificed to Ba'al, and who did not believe in the existence of God and His unity, nor in Providence and reward and punishment, ever the more so toward Christians, who believe in religion and in Torah from heaven, and the existence of God, and recompense in the next world, and in the other fundamentals of faith, without doubt the laws of resident stranger [גר תושב] apply to them. Those who observe the seven [Noahide] commandments because they were commanded to by God, through Moses, they are like the righteous of the nations, and they have a part in the world to come, as the Halakha states for us (Maimonides, ch. 3 of Hilkhot Teshuva and ch. 11 of Hilkhot 'Edut and ch. 8 of Hilkhot Melakhim), that the righteous of the nations have a part in the world to come, also Christians who observe the seven [Noahide] commandments and believe in the Torah of Moses that came from the mouth of God to Moses, and who believe in the existence of God, even though they join another matter to their worship. The Ran [Rabbi Nissim of Gerona] and Rabbenu Yeruḥam wrote, in the name of the Tosafot (Bekhorot 2b), cited in Rema [Rabbi Moses Isserles], Oraḥ Ḥayim no. 156, that Gentiles were not prohibited from combining other entities with God: and the seven commandments are the totality of the natural laws. Both the Christians and the Ishmaelites discuss them in their places of judgment, and they also supervise with a sharp eye to see they are obeyed, such as incest, spilling of blood, courts, blessing God, stealing, and they are very particular about punishing transgressors, and even about eating part of a living animal they have a hint in the words of their apostle Paul, who warned them not to eat from strangled animals, and also the Ishmaelites are not idolators, see Yore De'a no. 124. Also they are careful about the seven commandments and also warned against any eating of pork and eating of blood and carrion, and also what was not slaughtered while

facing Mecca is not acceptable, see Yore De'a 4:7, see Koran, Sura two, called "Cow," and Sura five called "Table," and everyone who observes the seven commandments because he was commanded in the Torah by God through the hand of Moses, behold he is a resident alien among us, and see also what our rabbi Maimonides wrote, ch. 12 in *Hilkhot Melakhim* (Vienna printing) and see the *Kuzari*, pt. 4, no. 23, who [Halevi] wrote, "These religions [Christianity and Islam] are thus only a preparation for the awaited Messiah who is the fruit. And all of them, when they acknowledge this, will come to be his fruit, and the tree will be one. Then they will exalt the root." And from all that has been explained you will be wise and know correctly the roots of our holy Torah, how distant it is from us to cause pain even to unspeaking animals, and ever the more so to our brethren, ourselves and our flesh, who were created in the image and figure, and the Meiri wrote, as cited in *Shita Mequbetset* (Baba Qama 112b), "and in the matter of any ruling regarding the nations who are bound by the ways of the religions and worshipers of God in whatever way, even though their belief is far from our belief, they are not in this category, but they are entirely like Jews in every matter like returning a lost item to them and also if they erred, you have to return [the money they lost on account of] their error to them," and in all other things without any distinction at all, and the more so [not] to murder them [like the Damascus Blood Libel], and especially the mild children, who never tasted the taste of sin, and they did nothing evil. Why should their soul be taken from them? Who knows what will be their end? Perhaps they will grow into a splendid vine and be among those decent people, the righteous of the nations, who shine today upon the House of Israel in their splendor and stand as a shelter and hiding place for us, as in the kingdom of our lord the Emperor Ferdinand. Happy are his servants and happy are his officials, the consul from Damascus and the General Consul of Alexandria, and the honest and innocent, from the states of Britain, who were merciful to a scattered flock, and bring succor to us in times of trouble. Our eyes are raised to God who redeems Israel with eternal redemption, for those volunteers in the nation of the lord, the great minister of the Jews the honorable Moses Montefiore, from the capital city of London, and the great sage Herr Cremieux from the capital city of Paris. May they carry out their plan in the manner of emissaries to perform commandments who will not be harmed, and may iniquity shut its mouth, and for all the children of Israel may there be light in all of their dwellings.²⁴

24 Chajes, *Ateret Zvi*, 488-91.

Chajes employs verses from the Bible, citations from the Mishnah and Midrash, Halakhic rulings, the Three Oaths, and the writings of Judah Halevi, Maimonides, and the Meiri about Christians and Muslims in order to argue against the Damascus Blood Libel. These sources prove to anyone who doubts the morality of the Jewish people—the universalism of its laws and its warm relation toward any human being who was created in God’s image. This attitude is to be applied according to the principle of *qal vahomer* [a fortiori] or *lo kol sheken* [ever the more so] to those among whom the Jews have taken shelter during the exile. The Jews were sworn not to rebel against them; they have the Halakhic status of “Resident alien [גר תושב, *ger toshav*]” because they believe in God and His revelation, in which the Torah was given to Moses, including the seven Noahide commandments, and they are a stage toward redemption.

The Accusation of Dual Loyalty and the Neutralizing Response

As stated above, in the second decade of the century, the accusation of dual loyalty began to be voiced not only by Gentiles but also among the Jews themselves, particularly the Reform Jews, who used the accusation against those who observed the tradition, in seeking to negate the connection with Zion completely. They argued that this connection was a sword in the hand of those who opposed granting emancipation to the Jews, and it must be nullified and denied to assure integration into Europe. Chajes raises the question with all his vehemence both outwardly, toward Gentiles, and inwardly.

In addenda to the essay “*Torat Neviim Divrei Qabala*,” written in 1837, he responded to the arguments of the Gentiles that the Jews had dual loyalty, and that their aspirations for the Land of Israel were in fact rebellion against the government and betrayal of the fatherland. This was the essay that concluded his book *Torat Neviim* [The Teaching of the Prophets], published for the first time in 1835.

First Chajes mentions the punishment of Zedekiah, Jeremiah’s injunction to seek the peace of the city, the Midrash on obeying the king’s word, and the Three Oaths, which were also cited above—all of

which argue for obedience to the Gentile rulers and their nations. He adds:

Never has there been heard about us a hint of reproach in this respect, that our hands were raised to join those who plot against the ruling nation ... and such a thought never occurred to us ourselves, and it will not do so. For this is a legacy from our ancestors, not to rebel against the ruler, unless the Lord sends His angel before us, to take us out by miracles beyond the ordinary. Then, too the ruler and the minister must admit and proclaim that God is just, and the hand of God did this, and thus will be the future redemption, which we expect and hope for in every moment, then, God willing, all of the human race will rise up to heights such that in no way will there be a need or memory of rebellion... Indeed, before the advent of the hoped for man, far be it from us to raise a hand against a king and violate his law.²⁵

With these words, Chajes is taking Mendelssohn's path and neutralizing return to the Land of Israel by making it a miraculous Utopian event, supernatural and beyond history, in which all the nations will attain the exalted peak, even though he is loyal to the tradition that the end of history is likely to come at any moment, and that it must be looked forward to. In another passage in the seventh chapter of *Darkhei Haboraa* [The Ways of Ruling], of 1842, Chajes tries to maneuver between the concrete traditions found in some sayings of the Sages about an independent Jewish monarchy in the Land of Israel and the neutralization of this reality:

You must know that our brethren, the Children of Israel, are notable today among the nations in two ways: On the one hand, they have a particular religion and are separate in the roots of their belief from other religious people; on the other, they are also separate, as they were a particular nation in ancient times, with a separate language and particular customs, when they lived in the lands of Judah and Israel, and in the future, soon in our day, as we expect. In addition to the correct hope that the Temple will be rebuilt and prophecy and the Great Court will be restored in Israel, and the great court of the Jews will restore the glory and splendor of the Torah, and observing all the commandments in their original force, we also hope and yearn

25 Chajes, *Torat Neviim*, 177.

for the return of the Jewish people to be an independent kingdom, in the Land of Israel, which belonged to our ancestors, and is our inheritance.... And the Sages instructed us that there will be a future redemption, as there was with the Second Temple, the Temple was built first, and then the monarchy returned under the Hasmoneans. And only because there is no possibility of restoring the Temple, lacking prophets, who have to testify to the place of the Temple and the altar, and other things that have been forgotten.... And now, when no prophet or seer is among us, behold among us the principle and root in faith is that Elijah of blessed memory, who according to our true tradition is still living in the secret abodes of heaven, and he is the prophet who was living at the time of the prophets, will precede the Messiah, and he will restore the great court, and he will testify with the power of prophecy which is within him about things that were hidden and forgotten over a long time: behold in our exile, we maintain the Torah and the commandments, in part because we are members of a particular religion, we cling to the faith of our ancestors. On the other hand, since we are in exile today and have ceased being a separate nation, and we have been commanded by the Sages that while we are still submissive under whatever nation there might be, we must to place the load on our shoulder, to bear the yoke that is placed upon us and listen at all times to the governor, whatever he commands, and the fate of the nation and the government where we live must be our lot as well, for better or worse, to be joyful with their joys, to take part in their grief, nevertheless the Sages imposed a duty upon us, also to keep a memory and a sign of the return of the monarchy and the nation, and in addition to the necessity of using the Hebrew language in prayers, in the Priestly Blessing and the like, they have also been commanded to learn the holy tongue, and this is both so that they will have something to mark them among the nations, and to strengthen the cords of love and brotherhood among them and so that they can easily recognize one another.... To summarize: the commandments help us and assist us, in relation to the purity of the religion alone in spiritual life, and the customs that are practiced mainly publicly and openly in the synagogue or at the time of weddings and on festivals, they maintain the nation in external life alone, to keep the memory for days that will come, the days of the messiah, that the kingdom will return to us in the future in the land of our fathers.²⁶

26 Chajes, *Darkhei Hahoraa*, 239-40. On Chajes's connection with Kalischer regarding the offering of sacrifices in Jerusalem in the present, and on the letters that were suspected of being forgeries on Chajes's opposition to Kalischer's activity, see I. D. Beit Halevi, *Hayut*, 71-74, and Hershkovitz, *Maharats*, 229-32; Rotenberg,

The tone of this passage is closer to the formulations of Maimonides. Chajes vacillates here between a description of the events of Jewish uprising, ostensibly within history, as it appears in some teachings of the Sages and in the philosophy of Maimonides, and a utopian event, when Elijah the Prophet, who is in heaven, will come down to us and renew prophecy by revealing hidden things in a supernatural way, as a prelude to the future advent of the Messiah.

Chajes presents a realistic vision combined as it were with a Utopian one, in contrast to harsh daily reality, in which the Jews are subject to an earthly government. However, it should be noticed that, unlike his usual practice, Chajes does not quote Maimonides at all, though he discusses the topic at length, nor does he seek to read him differently, in his own way. Chajes's words are more reminiscent of Mendelssohn's neutralizing voice, calling to bear the yoke. There is no possibility of bridging the realistic, historical position of Maimonides in chapter 12:1 of *Hilkhot Melakhim*—"Do not presume that in the Messianic age any facet of the world's nature will change or there will be innovations in the work of creation. Rather, the world will continue according to its pattern"—and Chajes's neutralizing, miraculous, supernatural position.

Maimonides does mention the prophet who will come not to perform miraculous deeds, but only "to inspire Israel to be upright and prepare their hearts ... [to] establish peace within the world" (12:2). The subject is only raised incidentally, and it relates to the words of the Sages on these matters as legends that are not binding. Chajes, like neutralizers before him, does not answer the paradoxical question that arises from his words: what need will the Jewish people have for their land in the supernatural end of days? If all nations and human beings attain the height of spirituality and unity, what is the point of having the Jewish people live in their land? What can this add for them?²⁷

Ḥayut, 136, discusses this passage at length and concludes that Chajes—via his student Abraham Krochmal—influenced the national Zionism of Smolenskin. In my opinion, actual Zionism is very limited in Chajes.

27 See Ravitzky, "Hamashiah," 67-68.

Chajes responds with great vehemence to the internal arguments of the Reform Jews regarding dual loyalty in his essay “Minḥat Qenaot,” which he began to write in 1845, after the rabbinical conference in Frankfurt. He completed it only in 1849, and it was published a year later:

These conference people do not intend to benefit the general public, to retain the people in the Jewish religion, so they should not turn their backs to us. If as they say they select the minority that holds the majority [i.e. they retain the essentials], in order to correct the sinners, then why did they decide to hold prayers in the German language? And perish the thought that they should mention in prayer the matter of the messiah, the revival of the dead, the restoration of the Temple service, the flourishing of the kingdom of David. But how can these beliefs harm those who spend their time in the vanities of the world? For the essence of their intention is to make things easier.... These people might claim that the reason that they removed certain matters from the prayers is so that the government will not be angry at us, saying, “This nation lives among us, and we inundate them with everything good, yet their eyes look to the land of their fathers, and they are to be thought of as temporary residents in the land where they live.” But [the Reform Jews justify themselves by saying that] they do not intend to deny the principles of faith, but there is no substance to this apology, certainly because without doubt the Sages set these things in the prayers, and they change things that are the foundations of the religion. Without doubt they do it by reason of heresy, and what they say, that they do it all because of fear of the government, behold all the kings and ministers know that our yearning for the land where our fathers lived is strong. Nevertheless they do not think badly of us. In France, Holland, Belgium, and the like, we are thought of as residents of the land, with no difference from the other residents of the state, and we heard no reproach or challenge to us in that respect, because the members of our nation pray there every day for the restoration of the Temple service and the kingdom of the House of David. Experience has shown the opposite. Even though they pray for future redemption, nevertheless in every government service they show a strong effort for the good of the state, and they are faithful to their masters, in every aspect and respect, in that we were also ordered by the prophet: “seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you, and they prayed for it to God, etc.,” and also the Sages in the Mishnah say, “Pray for the safety of the kingdom.” The ministers of officers of the state of Holland have given strong testimony, that the

children of Israel are faithful and submissive at all times to the orders of their state, and they do not mingle with conspirators and rebels, and they also testified of them that they are brave soldiers and know how to win in war, as against the French in the fortress of Antwerp in the year 5591 [1831]. We saw that when the order went forth in Prussia, that they were not forcing the children of Israel to give their sons to the army, [the Jews] thought that matter was a great shame, and the whole Jewish people from the end made their request, to go as one man, as friends freely to the army in war. All the nations know our way in this respect, and therefore they do not accuse us in that respect, and in vain the new people [Reform Jews] will labor to flatter them, in that they show that they have removed belief in the Messiah and the restoration of the Temple worship from their prayers. Experience has also shown that they do not cure the wound by so doing, to contradict the slander of the adversaries. But on the contrary in those nations where they did not rise up against rabbis and preachers to uproot matters of Torah, the people love us and give us the legal status of residents and citizens of the country, as in France and North America and Holland, and our brothers the Sons of Israel still behave correctly there according to the religion of the Torah, and in our time [the Jews of] Belgium and Canada, even if they are not perfect in [observing] the commandments, nevertheless they are firm in matters of faith, and their thought is desirable in any event, which is not the same of some of our brothers the children of Israel in Germany. They set out first to destroy matters of religion, and what was their reward? All the accusations against us arose only in Germany, and all the hatreds and plots to harm us came only from them. Look and see their situation in the states of Bavaria and Saxony and Prussia—before the days of March 5608 [the Revolution of 1848]—even though the preachers tried to flatter them and to permit marriage with them and show them in the wording of the prayers that they do not place it upon their hearts to believe in the advent of the Messiah and the restoration of the kingdom of the House of David, and only the land of Germany is the land of their abode, where they were born and there they will end and there they will die. Nevertheless their political status is very bad, and not only do they not attain the desired goal that way, their status is only worsened from time to time, as has become evident to us by the behavior of the kingdom of Prussia from the year 5573 [1803] to 5607 [1847].²⁸

28 Chajes, “Minḥat Qenaot,” 927-31.

That is to say, the Reform claim that they were saving the people from irreligion by modifying the law and giving up certain dogmas was a lie, and the true reason for their action was the desire to make life easier for themselves and to throw off the yoke of Halakha. The claim regarding assuaging the anger of the Gentiles was also a falsehood: the true motivation was denial that the Torah and the Halakha were from heaven, and flattery to find favor and integrate. The desire for Zion is a prayer for Utopian future redemption, and the Gentiles know that. Experience shows that they find no fault with it, and that the Jews participate in every national task with the nations among whom they live. Actually, in places where the Jews remained loyal to their faith, the Gentiles did less harm to them.

Chajes was cautious in phrasing his claims, to avoid appearing to be neutralizing in cooperation with the Reform Jews, but he certainly went beyond hinting that the Gentiles knew the difference between a religious function and a practical functions, in which there was full cooperation of the Jews in every civil obligation, in accepting civil law, and even in military service—participation and excellence in wars. Chajes was not aware of the deeply rooted antisemitism of the German people and advanced the preposterous argument that the reason for the hostility was the dishonesty of flattery. As if in the other countries of Europe, where the Jews did not try to flatter and resemble the Gentiles in their beliefs and opinions, they received respect, and their rights were honored, whereas in Germany, where Reform was active, the Jews were oppressed. It is more likely that antisemitic Germany feared signs of closeness to the Jews and responded with hostility.

Interestingly, Chajes's claim that the Jews were loyal to the government and never rebelled against it took on a further dimension in his book *Imrei Bina* [Words of Wisdom], published in 1848. There, Chajes presented a renewed and current appeal on this matter:

We have been commanded by the prophets and the Sages to seek the peace of the government, beneath whose shadow we are sheltered, and to pray to God for it, and especially not to be in connection with rebels.... And especially the danger, which is very threatening, before rebels, who have made themselves liable to the penalty of

death, and the man whose hand is with the plotters is in danger of death at all times, endangering his soul always and regarded as a suicide.²⁹

The Reason for the Revelation to the Jewish People

I now return to the question to which Chajes owes an answer, which is why only the Jews were privileged with revelation. Chajes related this question in the introduction to his first book, *Torat Neviim*, of 1835. Surprisingly, Chajes employs an exceptional argument while using a familiar motif from Aggadic Midrash (which, in his view, is from Sinai), whose original purpose was different, to compel the Gentiles to keep heteronomous law and ethics to a minimum:

And this is one of the aspects of the religion, that the Torah that was given to our master Moses, may he rest in peace, is only the portion and lot of the Children of Israel alone, nevertheless the Merciful One, the Ruler of the entire world, did not leave the human race without Torah or instruction in the honest virtues that are needed and necessary to perfect a group of people in the value of their mutual status, and because of this he gave to Adam and also to Noah certain commandments necessary for private human life and for their settling and movement, and these the Sages included in the seven commandments of Noah, the second general father and progenitor of the human race after the Flood, and the details of these seven general laws multiplied, as is necessary by the nature of all things, that they increase at all times, and their branches and roots extended from a single principle for example laws, one commandment and the details grew greatly.³⁰

That is to say, the rest of humanity also was granted a revelation that enabled it to receive the necessary divine instructions, and there was no discrimination in favor of the Jews on that score. Chajes does not write this explicitly, but the wording he uses, “branches and roots extended from a single principle,” could hint that in this revelation as well, as in the revelation at Sinai, words were actually conveyed, but some details

²⁹ Chajes, *Imrei Bina*, 943.

³⁰ Chajes, *Torat Neviim*, 5-6.