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**THE JEWISH COSMOLOGY OF VICTIMHOOD (Part 2)**

"I also tried to avoid becoming uncomfortably hooked on anti-Semitism as the main problem in the world. Many Jews I knew divided the world into Jews and anti-Semites, nothing else. Many Jews I knew recognized no problem anywhere, at any time, but that of anti-Semitism ... Such is the blindness of people that I have known Jews who, having deplored anti-Semitism in unmeasured tones, would, with scarcely a breath in between, get on the subject of African-Americans and promptly begin to sound like a group of petty Hitlers. And when I pointed this out and objected to it strenuously, they turned on me in anger. They simply could not see what they were doing. I once listened to a woman grow eloquent over the terrible way in which Gentiles did nothing to save the Jews of Europe. 'You can't trust Gentiles,' she said. I let some time elapse and then asked suddenly, 'What are you doing to help the blacks in their fight for civil rights?' 'Listen,' she said, 'I have my own troubles.' And I said, 'So did the Gentiles.' But she only stared at me blankly. She didn't get the point at all." -- **Isaac Asimov**, *I. Asimov. A Memoir*, 1994, p. 20, 21

For nearly fifteen centuries in their diaspora, after the Jewish/Roman historian Josephus, the Jewish community taught and re-taught only its religious dogma and martyrological mythos to define its past, present, and future. Until the Enlightenment in the late 18th century, the Jewish ghettos were filled with people cloistered away under rabbinical blinders. Jewish "history" was all history, and it was entirely framed in the religiously-based conventional framework for understanding the world: Jewish exceptionalism, Jewish martyrology, and an apocalyptic vision entwined in Jewish suffering in search of atonement. [LOPATE, p. 306] As Jacob Neusner notes:

"What strikingly characterizes the imagination of the archaic Jew is the centrality of Israel, the Jewish people in human history, the certainty that being Jewish is the most important thing about oneself, and that Jewishness, meaning Judaism, was the dominant aspect of one's consciousness." [NEUSNER, J., 1972, p. 62]

Simon Dubnov, a prominent and well-respected Jewish historian, notes that Jews were so self-isolated from the non-Jews around them that for centuries their own history was merely the recycled metacommentaries about their seminal myths of Chosen People victimhood:

"Talmudic literature (including the Midrashim) ... hardly contained any material concerning social dynamics which is necessary for history in the true sense. The leaders of the nation that was deprived of its kingdom seemed to have lost interest in the events of the world around them ... The historian is greatly distressed when, in the scores

of volumes of talmudical literature, he finds merely vague hints at events of the first five centuries of the Christian era, and searches in vain for chronological data. He has a sense of shame for the nation ... which... lost its ability to perpetuate its experiences, even in simple chronicles... The one-sidedness of the Jewish sources, which illuminated only the spiritual side of life, created a false historical perspective." [DUBNOV, p. 436-438]

Robert Goldenberg notes that, in Jewish tradition,

"great rabbinic leaders ... became both disembodied bearers of an elaborate legal tradition and also heroes of a marvelously rich tradition of legend ... From the historian's point of view, the Talmud thus becomes a terribly frustrating book. It is rich with stories that may -- or may not -- reflect the way certain events happened, and it is full of legal discussions that may -- or may not -- report the actual content of early rabbinic scholarly activity. Everything is fascinating, everything is potentially an open window on the past, but nothing can be trusted." [GOLDENBERG, R., 1984, p. 157]

"Jews have suffered and Christians have suffered [throughout history]," wrote Rabbi Richard Singer, "Mankind has suffered. There is no group with a monopoly on suffering and no human beings which have experienced hate and hostility more than any other. I must say, however, that it is my impression that Jewish history has been taught with a whine and a whimper rather than a straightforward acknowledgement that man practices his inhumanity on his fellow human beings." [ZUKERMAN, p. 66]

"[A] disability for the Jews in modern times," says Barnet Litvinoff, "has been their own obscurantism. If all the questions of how to live were to be answered only in the wisdom of the Talmud, there could be no intellectual explorations, and therefore no progress." [LITVINOFF, p. 10] "[Rabbis] had cut off [the Jewish community] from the community of nations," wrote Bernard Lazare in 1894 about the Jewish ghetto mentality, "They had made of it a sullen recluse, a rebel against all laws, foreign to all feeling fraternity [with others], closed to all beautiful, noble, and generous ideas; they had made of it a small and miserable nation, soured by isolation, brutalized by a narrower education, demoralized and corrupted by an unjustifiable pride." [LAZARE, p. 14] "The Eastern European Jews," notes Raphael Patai, "(with a few very notable exceptions) considered interest in all realms of non-Jewish intellectual endeavor as un-Jewish and therefore prohibited. Even the readings of books other than the Bible, the Talmud, the codes, and the Midrashim was strictly forbidden, and has remained so to this day in those circles in which the Eastern European Yeshiva tradition survives." [PATIA, R., 1971, p. 294]

"Jews lived with memory, so that redemption might be hastened," adds Stephen Whitfield, "but they did not live with history. The rabbis ... made little effort to record the history of their own post-Biblical era ... The first post-medieval attempt at a history of the Jews was written by a gentile, Jacques Basnage ...

Only ... under the impact of modernization ... could Jews ... wrest meaning from Jewish life and identity. [WHITFIELD, p. 29-30]

Basnage's 17-volume work, published between 1706 and 1711, has been called by one twentieth-century Jewish reviewer "the basis for the science of Jewish history; and though his work was far from perfect, it remained the best for a century to come." [GOLDBERG, M. H., 1976, p. 212]

Although Jewish history usually highlights Christian intolerance and the periodic burnings of the Talmud, the earliest printings of even this religious tract were accomplished with substantial Christian support. As M. Hersch Goldberg notes:

"Pope Leo X, who reigned from 1513 to 1521, encouraged the printing of the first complete edition of the Talmud. Under his patronage, fifteen volumes of the Babylonian Talmud were printed in Venice beginning in 1519 ... Another Christian played an important part in preparing that historic edition of the Talmud. The printer Daniel Bomberg (whose name may sound Jewish, but who was a Christian) had set up his press in Venice in 1516. He devoted great care and attention in printing the Talmud ... Seemingly fascinated with Jewish literature, Bomberg is said to have done more to spread Jewish learning than any other printer of his time ... Over the years, Bomberg printed approximately two hundred books of Jewish interest." [GOLDBERG, M. H., 1976, p. 210-211]

The Talmud itself, of course, is not history, but religious polemic. "Memory of the past," says Yosef Yerushalmi, "was always a central component of Jewish experience; the historian was not its primary custodian." [WHITFIELD, AMERICAN, p. 30] "The [Israelite] prophet," notes Old Testament scholar John Allegro, "saw Yahweh [the Israelite God] as a cosmic deity, lord of the heavenly hosts and forces of nature, but at the same time still the special god of Israel, a tribal deity whose main interest was the welfare of his Chosen People. Thus it followed that whatever the grand strategy in the Creator's mind, it involved the destiny of the Jews, and all history was directed to their glorification." [ALLEGRO, J., 1971, p. 58]

"Most Jews have a slight knowledge of Jewish history," says Chaim Bermant,

"This is true even of those in Yeshiva (college of higher learning), for the Yeshiva is devoted largely to the study of the Talmud, and the Talmud, though encyclopaedic in scope, was completed by the sixth century and events beyond that date are largely *terra incognita*, except where they are echoed by liturgy and lore." [BERMANT, C., 1977, p. 18]

The above observations, and one of the theses of this volume, point to a Jewish identity that is at its conceptual roots -- even for the secular today -- religious in complexion and fundamentally *ahistorical*.

Firmly going against the grain of popular Jewish proclamation that they, and their old religion, Judaism, are the root of everything wise and wonderful on earth, a Jewish author and social activist, Maurice Hindus, wryly observed in 1927 that

"The force that first pried the Jewish mind open to radical doctrines of a modern nature had its origin not in Jewish but in distinctly non-Jewish intellectual associations ... [Political philosophers] Marx and Lassalle were steeped in Western, that is, modern Gentile culture, Gentile philosophy, Gentile science ... It is only after the Jew began to ram down the gates of the ghetto and to make excursions into the intellectual temples of his Christian neighbors, only after he had laid aside the Talmud and the Shulcan Aruch for modern, western, that is Gentile, history, biology, psychology, science, that he embarked on a career of achievement in modern arts and science ... The old Jewish civilization, with its rigid orthodoxy and its emphasis on Jewish superiority, compelled aloofness from worldly intellectual intercourse even as it compelled social isolation. It frowned on the perusal of modern literature, philosophy, social theory, even on the study of foreign, that is Gentile, languages." [HINDUS, p. 369-370]

"Guided by the dictum that 'all that is new is forbidden by the Torah,'" says Charles Silberman, "the rabbis spoke as though the slightest deviation from tradition was a lapse into heresy." [SILBERMAN, p. 171]

"The Jewish nature does not produce its rarest fruits in a Jewish environment," noted Israel Abrahams, "... It was ancient Alexandria that produced Philo, medieval Spain Maimonides, modern Amsterdam Spinoza." [FEUERLICHT, p. 38] "One can be ignorant of all the sayings of the wise old rabbis," notes Ann Roiphe, "and still acknowledge the Magna Carte, the Declaration of Independence, the words of Rousseau, Hobbes, Emerson, the art of Leonardo da Vinci, Michealangelo and Dante, the science of Darwin, Newton and Galileo. These were not Jewish, and the great Jewish thinkers, Freud, Marx and Einstein, Claude Levi-Strauss, studied at Christian universities and learned form Christian scholars ... The great universities of the West were founded without Jews ... The Christian world created Oxford, Cambridge, the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Yale." [ROIPHE, 1981, p. 209]

These perspectives do not reflect the mainstream current of modern Jewish history, however. For most, the self-repeating myths of the wonders of Jewish Talmudic scholarship and its attendant Jewish martyrology were -- and are -- central to Jewry's understanding of its past. In the late nineteenth century, for example, Heinrich Graetz, the seminal "modern" Jewish historian, was only following a long

line of self-portrayal when he introduced one of his volumes of Jewish history with what he felt to be the essence of their story:

"The long era of the dispersion, lasting nearly seventeen centuries, is characterized by unprecedented sufferings, an uninterrupted martyrdom, and a constantly aggravated degradation and humiliation unparalleled in history ... " [GRAETZ, v. 4 Intro, in LIBERLES p. 104]

In 1911 a Jewish anthropologist, Maurice Fishberg, blamed common Jewish "nervous disposition" largely on historic persecutions:

"Considering that in medieval times massacres of Jews were quite frequent ... it may be said that many of the survivors have remained with unstable nerves, and that a fair proportion of neurotics and psychopaths have inherited their nervous disposition from their maltreated grandparents ... Any people, no matter what race, could not remain with healthy nerves under the ban of abuse and persecutions to which the Jews were subjected." [FISHBERG, p. 532]

In 1917, H. G. Enelow framed the same world view this way:

"There is no history as full of hardship and suffering as the history of Israel. But there is none so heroic, either. That is just what has made it the most heroic history in the world. That because the Jews were chosen for a divine work, they have to suffer a great deal." [ENELOW, p. 45]

Likewise, another nineteenth century Jewish scholar, Leopold Zunz, made the convergence of Jewish superiority and "aristocracy" through suffering explicit in a quote that eventually became "perhaps the best known in modern Jewish literature" [ROTH, Most, p. 136]:

"If there be an ascending scale of sufferings, Israel reached its highest degree. If the duration of affliction, and the patience with which they are borne, confer nobility upon man, the Jews vie with the aristocracy of any country." [SCHULMAN, p. 34]

A 1954 "High Holy Days Prayer Book" for Jewish congregations even devoted two pages to quotes (including the one immediately above) by secular Jewish commentators, a legendary Jewish martyrological history framed here as the expression of *religious faith*. Other lamentations in the prayer book included:

- "Combine all the woes that temporal and ecclesiastical tyrannies have ever inflicted on men or nations, and you will not have reached the full measure of suffering which this martyr people was called upon to endure." [Leopold Zunz]
- "The thousand years' martyrdom of the Jewish people, its unbroken pilgrimage, its tragic fate, its teachers of religion, its martyrs, its philosophy, champions -- this whole epic will, in days to come, sink into the memory of men." [Simon Dubnov] [SILVERMAN, M., p. 386-387]

Fredda Herz and Elliot Rosen understand such self-definitions as "aristocratic" victims to be essential to modern Jewish temperament: "Jews anticipate attack from non-Jews, while privately reassuring themselves that they are 'God's chosen people.' The assumption is that suffering is a basic part of life. This suffering may even reinforce the notion that they are superior to others by virtue of their burden of oppression." [HERZ/ROSEN, p. 367]

In 1993, one of England's chief rabbis, Jonathan Sacks, framed Jewish resistance to assimilation in the land they lived as a noble sacrifice, the willingness to stand loyal with a relentlessly subjugated, oppressed people: "For the most part, Jews [through history] did not say, 'What advantage is it to remain part of the people of Israel, seeing that they are humiliated and persecuted? It is better for me to join my destiny to those who have power.' They declared their willingness *liheyet miyisrael*, to be counted among Israel." [SACKS, J., p. 131]

"[The] self-image of Judaism," says Philip Sigal, "as originating in bondage and redemption indelibly engraves itself upon the group memory and it became the permanent mythos of its origin. Beside that, documentable history is irrelevant. All that has transpired since antiquity is wedded to that theology." [SIGAL, p. 1] Israeli scholar Boas Evron notes that

"Long historical memory, delving into centuries-old, even millennia-old, disasters, massacres and wrongs (accompanied by the convenient forgetting of wrongs and atrocities perpetrated by ones' own people against others), lachrymose self-righteousness, are all characteristics of groups whose experience is basically passive, as the Jews have been politically for thousands of years. In such groups, the consciousness of being victims accumulates and poisons the very being of its members. At times these characteristics become the primary content of their self-awareness as a group, a perverted focus of their self-identity. Finally, this suffering becomes a source of pride. ('I am persecuted and hated, a sign that I am valuable and unique, for which I am envied and hated'), rather than engendering a desire to be rid of it." [EVRON, p. 109]

The cloaking of Jewish martyrological legend over an authentic Jewish history in the real world is noted by another Israeli, Meron Benvenisti:

"It is an *ahistoric* philosophy of an *ahistoric* people. It sustained us for two thousand years and is so imbued in our psyche that it was not altered even when we made the profound leap from an *ahistoric*, *dispensed*, and *powerless* people to an *historic*, *independent*, and *powerful* nation [Israel]." [BENVENISTI, p. 73]

"The belief that the Jewish people had always been the passive sufferer of Christian persecution," says Hannah Arendt, "actually amounted to a prolongation and modernization of the old myth of chosenness." [FEUERLICHT, p. 35] "The more desperate the oppression," writes Raphael Jospe, "the more oppressors reinforced the Jewish view that they, the victims, were the Chosen People, and that the oppressor religions were all the more morally spiritually bankrupt." [JOSPE, R. p. 130]

Michael Aronson notes the way that riots against Jews in Russia in the late nineteenth century were simply plugged into traditional interpretive Jewish martyrological frameworks focusing on categorical Jewish innocence:

"In Jewish consciousness, three biblical images are deeply ingrained as archetypes of Jewish oppression. First is that of the Pharaohs, who enslaved the Children of Israel in Europe. Next, are the treacherous and murderous Amalekites, who attacked the Children of Israel in Sinai after their exodus from Egypt and became the symbol of causeless hatred. And third is the archetypical murderer Haman (by tradition a descendant of Amalek), who tried to destroy all the Jews in the Persian Empire. From the very beginning of anti-Jewish outbreaks in 1881, the biblical images must have sprang to people's minds and influenced their interpretation of events. Indeed, these images were invoked repeatedly in both journalistic and historical literature on the pogroms written by Russian Jews, and others." [ARONSON, p. 9]

Like many Jewish or Gentile historians tainted by martyrological contagion, Bryan Moynahan's index to the Jews' role in his book about the last 100 years of Russian history reflects almost solely the Jewish victimology theme:

"Jews:

- accusations against
- anti-Semitism
- behavior toward
- emigration
- in Great War
- massacre
- pogroms against" [MOYNAHAN, p. 266]

Prominent Jewish psychoanalyst and child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim once wrote an article about the popular social psychology surrounding (famous Nazi victim) Ann Frank, noting the special state of "innocence" the Jewish people decree about themselves, a blanket character afforded no one else:

"Some time ago I questioned in print why there is such vast admiration for The Diary of Ann Frank. I received many reactions, positive and negative, but whether those who let me know their reactions agreed or disagreed, they all shared one feature: a deep compassion for what they called the 'innocent' victims of Nazi aggression ... I was further startled to find that in the many communications I received, the adjective 'innocent' was applied only by Jews to Jewish victims. Nobody referred to the innocent Gypsies or the innocent Jehovah's Witnesses, though they, like the Jews were internal minorities, one of which, the Gypsies, was exterminated *in toto*. Maybe I overlooked it, but despite search I can recall no popular reference to the innocent Norwegians, for example, who the Nazis also killed in numbers."  
[BETTELHEIM, 1991, p. 257]

"Jewish consciousness is cultivated consistently from the moment they are capable of understanding the spoken word," observed Maurice Feurlich in 1937,

"... I had the theme, Children of a Martyr Race, dinned into my consciousness so deeply that it became the basic element of my emotional life. Almost the first words I understood were "oppressed people," "martyrs," "prejudice," "persecution." Like all other Jewish children, I emerged with a 'Persecution Complex' which grew stronger as I grew older ... [This] more than anything else constitutes the Jewish consciousness we have today ... Our persecution complex makes us abnormal in dealing with our neighbors ... For few of us have the courage to admit that the fault might rest in our personal makeup. It is true of human nature generally that men seek to blame for failure everywhere but their own doorstep, but we Jews divulge from the normal when this becomes a mental habit with which we constantly salve the wounds of our failures." [GOLDSTEIN, p. 116]

"It became customary [in the Middle Ages] to record the names of the victims of persecutions," says Leon Poliakov, "many lists are preceded by the evocation of the 'cities of blood' ... Thus the memory of the first martyrs was perpetuated and a tradition was created and strengthened, inspiring succeeding generations to follow the lead and example of their ancestors." [POLIAKOV, p. 84] The ancestors have followed the lead well. In a 1984 survey, 94% of American Jews were found to believe that "Jews have a uniquely long and tragic history of persecution." [LIEBMAN/COHEN, p. 31] "One critical element in this



statement," note Charles Liebman and Steven Cohen, "is the word unique. The image of Jewish victimization has its political and psychological uses, and as a result Jews often have a deep emotional investment in preserving their image as a uniquely long-suffering minority. Leading Jewish spokesmen have resisted efforts to deny Jews their history of extraordinary persecution and to diminish the singularity, the distinctiveness, of Jewish victimization." [LIEBMAN, COHEN, p. 31] "All the Jews must internalize past events as if they happened to them only yesterday," explains Meron Benvenisti about traditional Jewish victim identity, "My father still feels the agony of the expulsion from Spain as if it happened to him personally and not five hundred years ago." [BENVENISTI, 1989, p. 73]

Jewish religious history -- and Jewish identity itself -- has always been founded upon the idea that non-Jews are out to destroy them. "For Thy [God's] sake are we killed all the day long," proclaims the Torah/Old Testament. "We are counted as sheep for the slaughter." [PSALMS 44:22] "*Eysor soyneh I'yaakov*," wrote Joshau Halberstam in 1997, "[is] a phrase well known to Jews brought up in traditional homes. The literal translation of the phrase is 'Esau hates Jacob,' but the names are always understood as referring to the gentile hatred of Jews, an enmity that is presumed to be perpetual." [HALBERSTAM, p. 215] Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neriyah, director of a network of religious Zionist high schools in Israel, and a former member of the Knesset, publicly declared that there were two kinds of Gentiles, "those that simply hate us and those who attempt with all their power to destroy us." [LIEBMAN/COHEN, p. 59] "The Holocaust is not a national insanity that happened once and passed," remarked a former Israeli Minister of Education in 1984, "but an ideology that has not passed from the world and even today the world may condone crimes against us." [LIEBMAN/COHEN, p. 61]

A number of Jewish *religious* fast days, including the traditional ninth of Av, the tenth of Tereh, the seventeenth of Tammuz, and the third of Tishri, commemorate "national and communal catastrophes." Most are linked to the destruction of the First Temple (physically memorialized today in Jerusalem at what is widely known as the "Wailing Wall") by non-Jewish enemies. At one time in Jewish history thirty-six such fast days of mourning were observed each year. [YOUNG, p. 263] "Three times a day," notes Howard Sachar, "and oftener on special occasions, pious Jews prayed for the Restoration [of the destroyed Temple]." [SACHAR, p. 309] Even at Jewish marriages, wrote Alfred Siegel, "you know how it is to be a Jew. In the hour of pleasure he remembers his pains, and even in the ecstatic instant of a wedding he breaks a glass under his foot to remind himself of the crash of the Temple in Jerusalem. A Jew is never entirely happy." [GOLDSTEIN, p. 115]

Samuel Heilman notes the way the story of the biblical Samson is treated in an ultra-Orthodox religious school he visited:

"This Samson was not the Jewish Hercules as much as the weakened and tormented Jew who begs God to allow him to avenge the injustices he has suffered." [HEILMAN, S., 1992, p. 247]

Heilman also notes that the traditional Queen Esther story (in which she saves the Jewish people in Persia from destruction from an arch-enemy), and the yearly Jewish celebration of the story at Purim,

may be simply a borrowed tradition from another people, plugged into the Jewish martyrological base. As Heilman notes,

"Purim in Israel comes at the end of winter and commemorates the deliverance of the Jews of ancient Persia from the genocidal decree of Vizier Haman ... There are some scholars who argue that in fact the [Purim] holiday precedes the scroll [about Esther] and simply enshrines the principle of Jewish salvation from all those who have tried to destroy the [Jewish] nation. And indeed, Jewish tradition is filled with many local 'Purims,' each with its own 'megillah' commemorating the deliverance of the Jews in question from disaster. Some of those scholars who see Purim in such relative terms argue that it arose in Persia as a Jewish counter holiday to many of the pagan winter festivals. Others cite the absence of any evidence of a king named Ahasuerus in Persian records as well as the similarity of the names Esther and Mordechai to the ancient Babylonian gods Ishtar and Marduk as evidence of a linkage with precursor non-Jewish traditions." [HEILMAN, S., 1992, p. 109]

A tradition of reciting the names of local "martyrs" to the faith was a widespread tradition among Jews in Europe for centuries; modern Israel has its own remembrance "Day of Holocaust and Heroism." The mass suicide of 900 Jews at the fortress of Massada rather than surrender to Roman attackers is a major icon in modern Israeli mythology. In the Biblical Exodus tradition, the Egyptian Pharaoh also chases Jews to annihilate them; in the Book of Esther, as noted above, Jews are saved from an evil Persian court minister, Haman, who sought their destruction. Still recited today as part of the yearly Jewish Passover rituals, Jews say, "In every generation they [non-Jews] rise against us to annihilate us: *Bekhol dore omdm alaynu l'khalotaynu*." Other aspects of the Passover seder, notes Stephen Whitfield, include the identification "with the fate of [Jewish] ancestors so fully that the distinction between past and present has in effect been obliterated." One way to attain this collapsing of time is "to raise a piece of matzah and announce (in the present tense): 'This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.'" [WHITFIELD, American, p. 29]

Other forms of Jewish martyrology reportedly evidenced in the Middle Ages were occasions of mass suicide (including the slaying of fellow family members) if threatened with forced conversion to Christianity. "Medieval Christians ... tended to perceive it not as the extraordinary behavior of individual Jews but as behavioral practices sanctioned by the Jewish community and law. In the minds of some it encouraged and confirmed the perceptions of the Mosaic law as harsh and Jews as murderous." [REL.&THEO. 38, 863, 1995] The rabbinical tradition itself, notes Nahum Glatzer, is rooted in a martyrological world view: "Talmudic tradition preserves the memory of the chief scholars who suffered martyrdom rather than bow to the imperial [Roman] decree that forbade the study of the Torah ... The story of the Ten [rabbi] martyrs became one of the motifs of medieval Jewish liturgy." [GLATZER, p. 175-

176] One talmudic tradition even notes 400 Jewish children who were reputedly "captured for shameful purposes. "They all leaped to their deaths into the sea." [GLATZER, p. 183]

The Jewish cosmology of eternal victimization is virtually celebrated in our own day. In a 1985 "fact-filled, fun-filled" book for children, for instance, The Jewish Kids' Catalogue, there is a section on the Jewish experience in World War II, including a full-page photograph of children walking towards Nazi box cars. The caption reads: "Orphan children from the ghetto of Lodz boarding a train that will take them to death camps." [BURSTEIN, p. 67] In 1987 a Jewish psychologist, Ruth Bers Shapiro, took public exception to another children's book entirely about the Holocaust entitled The Children Remember; it was created for 4-8 year-olds. Such early socialization to the Jewish Cult of the Persecuted worried Shapiro; she suggested that the Jewish community "needs to anticipate how this information will be absorbed and shaped by the child's inner life." [GALLOB, B., p. 15]

(Emblazoning perceived martyrdom in communal memory is central to Jewish tradition. "The Hebrew Bible," notes Peter Novick, "contains the verb 'to remember,' in its various declensions, 169 times (along with numerous injunctions not to forget). Yet what Jews are enjoined to remember is almost always God's handiwork; secular history, insofar as such a category is even admitted by tradition, gets short shrift. Mourning and remembering the dead are, of course, traditional Jewish obligations.") [NOVICK, P., 1999, p. 10]

Jewish author Paul Cowan notes the socialization of his half-Jewish son into Jewish tradition:

"One night in March 1973, we were invited to a puppet show dramatizing the story of Purim. At the dramatic high point, when the evil Persian vizier Haman threatened to murder all the Jews, Matt ran across the room and threw himself into Rachel's arms, pleading for comfort. 'Mom, he won't get me, will he? I'm only half-Jewish.'" [COWAN, P., 1987, p. 24]

In 1986, Ze'ev Chafets, a Jewish American immigrant to Israel, and eventual head of the Israeli Government Press Office, noted something wrong with his six-year old daughter Michal:

"I noticed a change coming over her. Suddenly she became afraid to go to bed in the dark; often she had a hard time falling asleep. A few times she cried out in the middle of the night and woke up with a headache. Obviously, something was bothering her."

Eventually Chafets managed to get his daughter to tell him what was wrong. As he tells it:

"Abba [Father]," she sobbed, "Why does anyone want to kill us?"

"Michali, what do you mean? Who wants to kill us?"

"Us, the Jews. Everyone wants to kill the Jews. But why, Abba? What have we done wrong?"

I was stunned by the question, and by Michali's fear. One of the reasons I had decided to live in Israel was to bring up children free of tics and neuroses of diaspora life. And now here was my sabra [Israeli-born] daughter shaking with insecurity. "Who told you that everyone wants to kill Jews?" I almost shouted.

"Our teacher. She told us about Haman and Pharaoh the King of Egypt. And Hitler. Abba, he puts Jews in the oven and burns them up. And the Christians too." Michali burst into tears. "Abba, is John one of those Christians?"

John was a friend of mine who worked for the international Red Cross. "Yes, baby, John is a Christian, but he doesn't want to hurt you." [CHAFETS, p. 89-90]

Similarly, in 1993 an Israeli scholar noted with concern the comments of a colleague's kindergarten-age daughter:

"Daddy, I know that on Passover we celebrate our freedom from the horrid Egyptian Pharaoh who wanted to keep us as slaves. On Purim we are happy because brave Queen Esther convinced the King to hang the wicked Persian Haman who wanted to destroy all the Jews. On Hanukah we celebrate our freedom from our Greek enemies. Daddy, tell me -- who were our enemies on *Tu Bi-Shevat* [Israel's national tree-planting day]?"

Myron Aronoff calls such a story a manifestation of Israel's "national paranoia." [ARONOFF, p. 57] This paranoia, of course, is not just Israeli; it is a foundation of Jewish identity. And for the little girl who wondered about the Jews' enemies against trees, they are there to be conjured. In a 1987 appeal by the Jewish National Fund to Americans for money to plant trees in Israel, a recent forest fire was highlighted as a "suspected arson" by Arabs, and fund-raising for trees is often requested to honor children Holocaust victims. [LIEBMAN/COHEN, p. 32]

Steven Cohen notes four main themes in the Jewish victimization mythology (Cohen frames them in the past tense, but they are, for most Jews, as viable as ever):

1. "premodern Jews viewed life among Gentiles as *galut*, exile.
2. Jews believed that Gentiles hate Jews.
3. They believed that Christian culture and civilization are inferior to Jewish civilization.
4. They believed that individual Gentiles have personality characteristics which are inferior to those of Jews." [COHEN, Uses, p. 26]

In our own time "Pulitzer prize-winning" Jewish historian and former president of the American Academy, Barbara Tuchman, is typical. (In 1967 Tuchman argued in the New York Times that the United States should intervene militarily for Israel in its war with Arabs. [FEUERLICHT, p. 196] Tuchman, daughter of wealthy financier Maurice Wertheim and niece of a former secretary of the treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., obviously can't -- with a straight face -- claim victim status herself without some serious help from the Jewish martyrology tradition). [CHRISTOPHER, p. 219] In her 650-page volume on "calamitous" European society in the fourteenth century, originating in her interest in the Bubonic plague, Jews are represented solely in relation to her own sense of their socio-political victimization. Of all the possibilities of a group of human beings over a century, (including the story of their own experience with the epidemic) Tuchman frames virtually the entirety of Jewish experience as merely a sponge for abuse from Gentiles. This is the book's complete index for the heading "Jews":

- money lenders --
- resented by Pastoureaux --
- persecution of --
- blamed for plague --
- rights of --
- accused of ritual murder --
- Talmud tried for heresy --
- badges worn by --
- sexual relations with Christians forbidden --
- ransom of Jean II --
- attacked in working class revolts --
- in Spain --
- pogrom in Prague --

If fourteenth century Jews spent every moment of their lives fielding insults and running away from vigilante mobs, when did they have a moment of freedom to record the chain of misery that always wrapped so tightly around them, so that their progeny might still agitate with authority about their lack of relief, 600 years later? Jews did find time, however, in the Middle Ages to regularly memorialize lists of martyrs during synagogue services, emphasizing "Jewish suffering and its exaggeration."

[MACDONALD, p. 219]

Tuchman's conviction of non-Jews' unrelieved hatred of Jews through the centuries as one of the foundations for her perspective of history is evidenced in her following quote about the Holocaust:

"What lurks in the shadows of ancient memory [was] a bitter recognition that a Gentile world ... would fundamentally have felt relieved by the Final Solution." [BAER, p. 64]

Jewish historian Arnold Wiznitzer reflects the Jewish martyrological base to understand history in his books about Brazil. As Jonathan Schorsch notes:

"Much of the American Jewish historiography from the 1960s continued the monumentalist, nationalist orientation of its predecessors, and Arnold Wiznitzer's work could easily be included here. A historian of Brazilian history whose work to this day practically constitutes the field in the English language, Wiznitzer summed up his findings in his now classic book, *Jews in Colonial Brazil*. There he takes great concern to memorialize every 'Jewish' victim of the various Inquisitions."  
[SCHORSCH, J., 2000]

In the Jewish cosmology, Jews can only be victims, even when they are pre-eminent in the society in which they live. In 1987, David Schers, for example, explored "the oppression of those [Jews] who are 'well off' in Latin America." "Is it possible," he asked, "to speak of those who eat well, have attractive lives, and live in relative prosperity? The case of the Jews of Latin America demonstrates that it is indeed possible. [They have] alienation, self-hate, and family conflict ... The very invisibility of Jewish suffering ... makes it more painful than might otherwise appear." [SCHERS, CULTURE, p. 285-286] Jews, insists Sarah Horowitz, bizarrely, are also

"victimized by their own positive stereotypes, which mask the gender, class, ideological and ethnic differences that distinguish them from one another ... The invisibility of Jewish studies as an academic field [?!] moreover, is hidden behind the presence of Jews as scholars in all fields." [HOROWITZ, p. 123]

Jews, who are collectively the wealthiest, most comfortable ethnic/racial group of people in modern America, [see later chapter] nonetheless remain insistent in clinging to the identity core as themselves being *victims* and never oppressors, economic or otherwise. "If Jews are, by definition, victims," notes Edward Shapiro, explaining the common Jewish world view, "then those Jews who do not sympathize with this cult of victimization are inauthentic Jews who betray the essence of Jewishness." [SHAPIRO, E., 1998] Even Jewish multi-millionaires like financier Harry Solomon, (whose 1989 estimated worth was \$50 million) apparently fail to see the irony in claiming that "We [Jews] are all the victims of our backgrounds." [KOTKIN, p. 45] When Celia Heller wrote her book about the Jews of Poland, she completely ignored historic Jewish commercial dominance of Eastern Europe [see earlier chapters] and traditional Jewish self-segregation to preposterously link the Jewish situation there to that of oppressed African-Americans, evolving from the shackles of slavery: "The concept of caste is extremely useful in understanding the situation of Jews in interwar Poland just as it was in understanding the situation of the Negroes in the United States before the Civil Rights struggle." [HELLER, C., 1977, p. 59]

Robert Greene wrote an entire volume about professional "hustler and swindler" Mel Weinberg [GREENE, preface] and his role in "Abscam," an FBI sting operation to investigate white collar crime in

America. Even as a six-year old, however, the future master scam artist was already primed to his identity as a Jewish victim:

"His mother answered his knock on the door.

'You're late. How did it go in school today?' she asked.

'Not so good,' answered the boy.

'What happened?'

'I got left back,' he replied.

His mother stared at him. The message short-circuited her ability to comprehend, much less believe.

'You must be mistaken,' she said, clearly aware that something was amiss. 'Nobody gets left back in the first grade. Besides, you bring home all those gold stars every day. That means you are doing wonderful work in school. Why would they leave you back?'

'Because I'm Jewish,' he sighed, fixing his mother with his most earnest look.

'Because you're Jewish,' she replied in a voice that took on a slightly hysterical edge. 'How can that be? This is the Bronx, in New York, not Poland. Your teacher is Jewish. Why were you left back?'" [GREENE, 1981, p. 17-18]

"When I was a little kid," says controversial talk show host Howard Stern,

"I was a victim. Many times I would turn the other cheek when I should have stood tall. I was overly polite when I needed to be firm. There was something in my personality that avoided confrontation because I always felt I would lose in a two-way struggle. I never excelled at anything ... I had 'victim' written all over my freakish face. I was a gawky lamb available for slaughter. I had lived my entire young life as a sniveling coward. I was the half-Jew who bowed his head and walked into the gas chamber without putting up a fight." [STERN, H., 1995, p. 255]

The *Cleveland Jewish News* notes this about famous feminist Gloria Steinem:

"Steinem was born to a 'gentle, nurturing' Jewish father and a Protestant mother who believed in theosophy, a set of beliefs based on mystical insight. Largely home-schooled until the age 12 while her 'itinerant' father packed up the family

and traveled around the country, Steinem does not identify with any organized religion, except when there's antisemitism. 'Then I identify with the Jewish person.'"  
[KARFELD, M., 10-22-1999, p. 20-]

"As Jews," a "leader in the Jewish community" of Brooklyn, New York, told researcher Jonathan Reider, regarding the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979, "we know what it means to be hostages. We have been hostages since day one." [REIDER, J., 1985, p. 256]

A. M. Rosenthal (eventually Executive Editor of the *New York Times*) and *Times* reporter Arthur Gelb even titled their 1967 book about a Jewish Nazi "*One More Victim*." The subject of the volume is Daniel Burros, the King Kleagle of the New York Ku Klux Klan and former official in the American Nazi Party, who was a vehement hater of Jews. How, one wonders, is Burros a victim? Is he a victim of his own choices in life? Is he a victim of his own racism? Is he a victim of his own strange psychological dilemmas? Is he perhaps a victim of A. M. Rosenthal and the *New York Times*, who published an expose about Burros, noting that he was secretly Jewish? (Burros committed suicide immediately after publication of the article). No, insist the Jewish authors, Burros *is a victim of anti-Semitism* -- his hatred of Jews is something internalized from an ugly, exterior, *non-Jewish* world. The authors put it this way (and they are blaming Gentile society for the creation of the Burros Nazi identity):

"The fact that there is a Jewish condition disturbs many Jews and they rail against it, but it is a fact nonetheless, because it cannot be otherwise. It is a condition not inborn but created, created not so much by Jews but by Gentiles, and arising from the one simple fact that, being apart, Jews have no privacy [i.e., if a Jewish mother calls out in public to her son "Irving," everyone knows they are Jewish. Rosenthal and Gelb go on to argue that Jewish "separateness" and "distinctiveness" is an attribute branded upon Jews by the non-Jewish world, completely ignoring this as an absolute pillar of historical, and current, Jewish identity] ... No number of laws, no strength of others' traditions, and no faith in morals or even religion, can protect the Jew -- German Jew, Russian Jew, Brazilian Jew, and American Jew -- from knowing that he was born into a tribe of victims ... From the moment he is aware of his Jewishness and of the history of Jews he is aware that this history is the biography of the scapegoat, the martyr, the dispossessed, the wanderer, the outcast, the tortured, the despised or the pitied, the beaten, the murdered -- the victim. What is a Jew? 'A misfortune!' There is not a Jew who has not said that to himself, sometimes in a whisper he can hardly hear ... Every Jew now alive has lived in the memory of the ghetto's stench, remembers Torquemada [of the Spanish Inquisition], and every Jew now alive has an Auschwitz number on his soul ... What is a Jew? A Jew, among other things, is a prisoner caged in the ugliest of ages, the mind of his own enemy." [ROSENTHAL/GELB, 1967, p. 57-60]

Hence, we are led to believe -- somehow in all this -- the Jewish Ku Klux Klan leader, is born, "victim" of an anti-Semitic society.



How weird does the Jewish persecution thing get? Jewish publisher Lyle Stuart even recalls an incident he had with William Gaines, also Jewish and the publisher of *Mad* magazine: "One day Bill and I were riding in his Cadillac and he said, 'You know, sometimes when I pass a bus stop I see those people standing there. I think they hate me. And I said, 'Bill, you have to get some self-esteem.' And I suggested he see a psychiatrist, which he promptly did.'" [TEBBEL, R., 1999]

Jewish author Ben Stein once noted the mood among the wealthy producer/writer elite of Jewish-dominated Hollywood [See later chapter about this subject]:

"There was a distinct feeling that, despite the high pay and the access to powerful media that TV writers and producers enjoy, they are still part of a despised underclass, oppressed psychologically, and (potentially) physically by an Aryan ruling class of businessmen and others. This feeling was by no means confined to Jews. [?]

The belief in a ruling class of white, East Coast Protestants meeting occasionally in corporate board rooms to give its orders to whoever happens to be elected to office is so strong that no amount of argument to the contrary makes a dent. And hostility to that real or imagined class is just as strong." [in ROTHMAN/LICHTER, 1982, p. 107]

Despite the fact that the exploitation, oppression and sovereignty over non-Jews, as we have seen, is a very foundation of talmudic Judaism, Jews commonly portray themselves as victims even in their exploitation of others. In a relentless apologetic and Zionist-inspired volume (see the later chapter on Zionism), *The Jews of Germany*, Nachum Gidal asserts that "the Jews were forced into the role of pawnbrokers, money changers, and usurers, very public offices and therefore often hated ... Thus 'the Jew' became the tool and the scapegoat of the rising capitalist economic system." [GIDAL, p. 40]

Even if this apologetic myth -- often cited in the Jewish community -- was true, that they were somehow "forced into" their historic roles as oppressors of the non-Jewish populace, such self-preserving actions still represent a self-centered, self-protective amorality where self-preservation ("self" being either the individual or ethnocentric community) is considered the paramount concern. If we may this way dismiss collective Jewish responsibility for negative actions against others over centuries, we may likewise conveniently excuse all Germans who were also "forced" to join the Nazi movement (or any other collective expression of evil) because there were no alternative options (short of personal trouble, hardship, and, of course, danger and self-impairment).

In modern America, even Jews responsible for a huge share of communist-instigated terror in post-war Poland, are reconceived as "victims" through a lens that can see nothing else. As Stefan Korbonski says,

"The ten years of Jewish rule in Poland [in the Stalinist era] could not

easily be forgotten. It was an era of the midnight knock on the door, arbitrary arrests, torture, and sometimes secret execution. Most of those responsible for that reign of terror left Poland and upon arrival in the West represented themselves as victims of Communism and anti-Semitism -- a claim which was readily believed in the West and earned them the full support of their hosts." [PIOTROWSKI, p. 63]

"In other words," notes Tadeusz Piotrowski, "these [Jewish] executioners were transformed into victims." [PIOTROWSKI, p. 63] [More information about these people in the Holocaust chapter]

Jewish celebration of communal victimology is the cornerstone of Jewish identity. Simon Wiesenthal, the famed hunter of Nazi fugitives and namesake of Holocaust remembrance organizations, has even written the ultimate coffee table book for Jews (Every Day Remembrance Day: A Chronicle of Jewish Martyrdom) who wish more specific attachment to their self-perception of historic victimization; the book is a kind of calendar, listing selected atrocities against Jews throughout history, at least one for every day of the year.

"That collective Jewish consciousness (of suffering and martyrdom)," writes Lucy Dawidowicz, "has been and remains -- with justice, I think -- one of the central myths of Jewish history, being an essence distilled from real events and reinforced in nearly every Jewish generation until our own time by brute reality." [DAWIDOWICZ] "Every Jew," declares Milton Steinberg, "at some time or other has reason to conclude that he has been penalized for his Jewishness." [NEUSNER, J., 1972, p. 77] "The Jews," observed Sir Lewis Namier, both a Jew and Zionist, "do not have a history, they have a martyrlogy." [RAPHAEL, p. 30] "Being a Jew and sufferer go together," a Jewish senior citizen told anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff, "When we stop suffering, we get rich and secure, we stop being Jews. We become like everyone else, living for enjoyment only. Without it we don't know what our purpose is." [MYERHOFF, p. 198] "Moral decency, sympathy for the victim, sympathy for those who suffer," claims Ann Roiphe, reciting the myth she deeply believes, "these are the building blocks of the mystical connection Judaism. It seems not so much to be a matter of indulging in masochism as to be a matter of aligning oneself with innocence." [ROIPHE, 1981, p. 187]

Molly Katz, in a book of humor, Jewish as a Second Language, highlights a number of Jewish cultural traits. Finding humor in the enduring truths of what the Jewish community recognizes in itself, she notes that a Jew must "always agonize, resent, be disappointed, gloat, get even, suffer, [and] be positive something terrible is going to happen." Conversely, Jews can "never be satisfied, think everything is fair, be a good sport, feel undeserving, let go of a grudge, ease up, [or] acknowledge the possibility of any light at the end of a tunnel." [KATZ, M., p. 72]

"I share ... an identification with the tribal suffering," wrote senior editor Jack Newfield in the Village Voice, "I don't know why, but if I read of Russian Jews waiting outside a visa office, if I read that a synagogue was blown up in Brussels, or I read [Jacob] Timmerman's book, it affects me more on a certain level than when I read about a massacre in El Salvador or if I read about some atrocity in South Africa.

There is a sense that those are my brothers and sisters." [BRENNER, p. 55] "Although American Jews seem rooted, comfortably integrated in Christian America," wrote Jewish art critic Donald Kuspit in 1997, "their long history has taught them, with paranoid precision, that one never knows what persecution and ostracization the future may bring." [KUSPIT]

"It isn't easy to find a Jew whose personality hasn't been warped by his feelings toward gentiles," wrote Jewish commentator James Yaffe in 1968, "Sometimes the damage is great, sometimes slight; many individuals succeed in overcoming it, or in learning to live with it, or even in making something valuable out of it. But the damage, in one form or another, is almost always there." [YAFFE, J., 1968, p. 57]

"How can a Jew not be bitter," wondered Ann Roiphe in 1995, "how can a Jew not be bent by the stories we know, stories that have come to us through the generations, so many stories of communal disaster, of individual pain, of lies and exclusions, of expulsions and blood libels, of Cossacks riding down on our villages, inquisitions and their instruments of torture, of cold shoulders and cold murders, of blame placed on our children's heads for plagues, for draught, for flood, despised for our enforced poverty and envied and loathed for our assumed wealth? ... [ROIPHE, p. 443] ... It is hard for a Jew not to feel that the plot of the world, its most central story, is about his or her destruction, exclusion, failed attempts to find a safe spot." [ROIPHE, p. 446] "According to the Hebrew Bible (and its Christian analogue, the Old Testament)," notes Jewish feminist Andrea Dworkin, "Jews are God's chosen people. It is not easy to see the benefits, if any, of this divine chosenness, since the history of the Jews is one of persecution and oppression ... In the often-joined race for having suffered most, Jews are the group to beat." [DWORKIN, A., 2000, p. 109]

The Jewish novelist, Bernard Malamud, took chauvinist Jewish martyrology so far as to subsume all human suffering under the Jewish umbrella, claiming that "suffering makes all men Jews." [WHITFIELD, Mult, p. 10] Jewish philosopher Jacques Derrida "says we are all Jews, insofar as people in the contemporary world are nomads and displaced." [STEYN, J., 1999, p. 11] The ridiculousness of such notions may be quickly dismissed in many ways, most poignantly with a comparison of Jewish consummate "suffering" to an almost unfathomable kind known by so many, even today, in the Third World. As Pascal Bruckner describes his experience with overwhelming poverty in a Third World train station:

"Here, the suffering are not just little groups scattered in a crowd; they are laid out, row upon row, on the bare cement. There are far more of them than there are travelers. Creatures are lined up in rags made of bags and cloth, with arms that are eaten away by gangrene and repulsive pustules sticking out.

You walk uneasily past these prostrate figures, as if you were walking in a swamp, and make your way to the ticket window. Bodies are strewn about like damaged goods, as if waiting along with their emaciation, eczema, and lumps for street cleaners to sweep them up. It is impossible to tell if they are living or dead. Nobody pays them any attention ... It is

an entire race of crushed, reviled, beaten down remnants, and this tide of flotsam begs you, calls to you, pulls at you, but so weakly that you push them aside with a simple movement of your foot." [BRUCKNER, P., 1986, p. 53]

This is no episodic "holocaust" against a people who are declared by Evil Ones to have too much power and influence in surrounding society. Bruckner's description here is a norm of survival for entire defined castes in places like India for centuries. Do these people, an underclass that is an unchanging fixture in Indian history, merit status as *honorary Jews*, history's declared foremost sufferers?

Further along on the Jewish martyrological bandwagon, a Marxist and atheist, Isaac Deutscher, rejected all cultural, religious, and Zionist definitions of his Jewishness, but said

"I am, however, a Jew by force of my unconditional solidarity with the persecuted and exterminated. I am a Jew because I feel the Jewish tragedy as my own tragedy." [SHAPIRO, p. 8]

"Deutscher's Jewish identity," explains Edward Shapiro, "was dependent on Jews remaining among the persecuted." [SHAPIRO, p. 8] "With the invention of nuclear weapons the world has become Jewish," decides Eli Wiesel. [ROSENBERG, D. , p. xiv]

The emotions of the Jewish Persecution Complex are deep, powerful and often vengeful, as evinced by left-wing publisher Michael Lerner:

"There are moments when I become so overwhelmed by the feelings of anger at what was done to my family and my people that I become sympathetic to the most extreme fantasies of the Israeli right wingers." [LERNER, *Goyim*, p. 430]

On another front, in an article in the feminist MS magazine, one of its founders and editors, Letty Pogrebin, solicits "Christian sisters ... to try to understand the immediacy of our [Jewish] mourning and the 5,000 years of terror that echo in our souls." [POGREBIN, Antisem, p. 46] Another "liberal feminist," and regular contributor to the Village Voice, Ellen Willis, echoed this view in her own public utterance:

"It is what all Jews, religious and secular, Zionist and non-Zionist, have in common -- our status as outsiders, of being persecuted." [COHEN, Uses, p. 26]

There are even intra-Jewish concentric circles of this ideology of incessant victimhood. In Israel, Orthodox Jews have taken the tool of self-perceived oppression to understand themselves systematically discriminated against and persecuted by secular Jewry around them. "This Orthodox self-perception as victims," says Meir Lockshin, "in its most extreme forms, involves seeing the

discrimination against Orthodoxy as systemic. A number of Orthodox Jews are now saying that the basic structures of Israeli democracy -- the Knesset, the police, the army, and the courts -- all discriminate against observant Jews." [LOCKSHIN]

Meanwhile, not to be outflanked in the hierarchy of fellow Jews' feelings of persecution, Shlomo Cohen wields his own Jewish essence by counter-claiming that

"I am a secular Jew, a member of a group that is probably the most oppressed in Jewish life today, certainly in Israel." [COHEN, S. p. 23]

Also in Israel, with the influx of Jews from Russia to the new Jewish state, "Russian mafia" head Grigori Lerner (who was imprisoned in Israel) "in Israel's Russian language press ... is being portrayed as a [victim] of ethnic persecution." [GROSS, N., 1997, p. 22] And what about the hyper-religious, far-right Messianic Gush Emunim movement in the Israeli-Occupied Territories? Israeli psychologist (and apologist) Tzvi Moses sees something familiar in their self-obsessions:

"The [Gush Emunim] settlers developed a feeling of persecution as a defense mechanism, similar to what was essential in its time to the Jewish nation in exile for its defense and adjustment in an inimical environment. The existence of such a mechanism in the psyche of the Jewish nation creates a problematic system in which change is difficult ... Obstinacy and inflexible thinking typify the thinking of the Gush today." [GROSSMAN, D., 1988, p. 42-43]

Even within the elemental unit of the household, Jewish women have traditionally cultivated complaint of personal suffering and victimhood abuse to practical ends. Zborowski and Herzog note that "vulnerability becomes a weapon, especially for the mother. Her suffering serves not only as a rebuke for the past but also as control of the future." [ZBOROWSKI, p. 297]

Oppression of Jews is commonly understood by Jews to have always existed, in varying but usually harsh degrees, everywhere they went in their exile from the Holy Land. Most of the world's Jewry, by the Middle Ages, ended up as a minority people in Christian Europe. Their experiences there, particularly in relation to the Christian faith throughout medieval times, are widely believed by Jews today to have lain a foundation for the Nazis' savage treatment of their people in the twentieth century.

Ann Roiphe goes out to do some calisthenics and lose some calories and, apparently, this is what runs through her mind:

"Even here in America stepping up and down in the aerobics classes of our local Jewish community centers we remember the trains of the Christians, those nation builders who called us 'Christ killers' as they killed us." [ROIPHE, p. 444]

Psycho-socially and religiously then, since ancient history, to be Jewish has always meant exilic misery -- exile from one's country (driven out of the Holy Land in ancient history by the Babylonians and Romans), from one's God (who has been traditionally understood to be angry with too much Jewish disregard for His dictates), and --increasingly for some, with the rise of rationalism a couple hundred years ago and estrangement from Jewish tradition in a sea of non-Jews -- from ones' own people. But always, to be Jewish over the past millennium there has been an anchoring in the belief that Jews -- the Biblical "chosen people" -- are exceptional, and bound, at least, for some glorious leadership destiny. Many Jews today -- secular or religious -- still quite literally believe that they are God's gift to mankind (often self-described as "the light unto the world.") It is also a widely believed article of Jewish dogma, however, that, even in today's comfortable Western Diaspora, a Jew's non-Jewish neighbor might at any time turn on him -- the Jewish Other, the ultimate scapegoat -- with animosity. *For essentially no reason.* (Traditional Orthodoxy's reason for Gentile hostility, however, is Gentile jealousy because God selected Jewry as His Chosen People). The successful creation of the modern state of Israel in recent times (as a direct consequence of Nazi Germany) -- and its overwhelming support by worldwide Jewry -- is a communal defense of such perspectives.

By the end of the 20th century "being Jewish" had reaffirmed its ultimate expression as both religious and supra-religious collective complaint, codified as a militantly arrogant politic against the rest of humanity.

There is, of course, considerable evidence across history -- over seventeen hundred years of it -- of destructive acts by others against Jews in their Diaspora ("dispersion"): restrictive laws, harassment, and sometimes large scale violence. We are not, however, talking about a weekend time span. Nor are we speaking of anti-Jewish actions that were systematically *reasonless*. We are talking about nearly two thousand years of exile and, quite literally, the life experiences of many millions of people. Lost to Jewish ideology is the fact that their mistreatment at times by others has always had a context and that perils, misery, and misfortunes have also been the common lot of all peoples everywhere -- of all faiths, politics, and social persuasions. Whenever and wherever Jews suffered, non-Jews suffered too. Human history is a long and torturous catalogue of social, economic, and political upheavals; everywhere the struggle for power, everywhere the struggle for survival. Other peoples have always suffered too, sometimes catastrophically, in sequence across history, with their own dilemmas, strife and tragedies, and much of Jewish misfortune has resonated, inevitably, from others' painful struggles. Often enough -- and this is hotly and routinely denied, or reductively qualified, by common Jewish discourse these days - - Jews *caused* other people suffering too. Whatever the case, few peoples have had the **good** fortune to survive as an ideological unit as long as the Jews who culminate a trans-historical diary of troubles and grievances across thousands of years as a unified expression of their modern selves. Most other peoples quietly assimilated into surrounding communities, woefully perished, or began anew.

Many Jews see the presence of a divine hand to account for the fact of their longevity, that -- after 4,000 years and innumerable historical obstacles -- they are still here. Such commentators -- and they are legion -- always fail to recognize, however, that untold billions of other human beings are "still around"

too who are NOT Jews, by divine hand or otherwise. And while not all non-Jews exactly mirror the same habits, ethnicity, and self-image of their own direct ancestors thousands of years ago, neither do Jews. Things have changed. Always and everywhere. The Talmud itself (a sacred compilation of Jewish religious opinions over centuries) is a map of such changes. No Western Jew today -- who represents the cumulative absorption of Hellenism, the Enlightenment, and a myriad of other extra-Jewish historical influences, as well as a long line of interbreeding with other racial types -- would be recognized as brethren by illiterate Jewish goat-herders living in tents 4,000 years ago. And meanwhile, untold billions are not descendants of Abraham. Who cares? Somewhere back up the ancestral line we all merge souls to our common human ancestors, of whom no greater covenant in this world has ever been made. For Jews who take too much pride in (however drastically changed) a 4,000-year-old identity linked to a particular individual (the early Abraham-Isaac-Jacob lineage), one need only scan the jungles of New Guinea, Africa, and the Amazon to find remote tribes whose modern religious and ethnic identity still very closely echoes their **unfathomably** ancient origins. So what? Does their longevity confirm -- as so many Jews would have it for themselves -- the Divine hand of favoritism? A hand that in some cases far outdistances the Jews?