

THE JEWISH COSMOLOGY OF VICTIMHOOD (Part 1)

"I have frequently had hotheaded romantics assume that our family fled Russia to escape persecution. They seem to think that the only way we got out was by jumping from ice flow to ice floe across the Dnieper River, with bloodhounds and the entire Red Army in hot pursuit. No such thing. We were not persecuted and we left in a quite legal manner with no more trouble than one would expect from any bureaucracy, including our own. If that's disappointing, so be it." -- **saac Asimov**, *I. Asimov. A Memoir*, 1994, p. 19

Ask any non-Jewish American what his or her personal link is to the Roman era, the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, and other epics of human history and he will tell you: nothing. He knows nothing about it. And he doesn't care. For such a late twentieth century American to reflect on his own roots back to, say, medievalism, is to look with the naked eye for Mars: it is a vague dot, reputed by others to exist, in the remotest distance. Indistinct. Unfathomable. Something eternally elusive, lost forever.

Few Americans can trace their family history more than a few generations, if that. Throughout anyone's own ancestral lineage, however, going back deeply into time, there obviously exists their own share of participants -- as both perpetrators and victims -- in great and minor wars, massacres, invasions, famines, epidemics, and other disasters of every kind. Presuming five procreative generations per century, exponentially, any human being alive today can theoretically claim direct genetic lineage to over a thousand ancestors back to 1800, over 37,000 people to 1700, over a million back to the year 1600, and over a staggering billion human beings back to 1400 (thirty generations). Whatever the mathematically realistic number, (and Jewish history claims 4,000 years) the deeper we go back into history, the more we must consider the veritable Milky Way of humanity that preceded us in direct ancestral lineage; people of every imaginable sort, and they all knew well the melancholic chords of human suffering, sometimes subtly, sometimes brutally. Every single one of them.

Today's Americans of French, British, Italian or other European descent find themselves today lumped together in the generic "white" American community. Their respective ancestries are stirred together, gone. Their European origins mean little to them; they are homogenized in the New World, their identities now expressed -- for better or worse -- in the icons of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Billy the Kid, Babe Ruth, the hallowed Constitution, even McDonald's hamburgers, or other superficial national icons that ancestrally have nothing directly to do with them.

The typical American's alienation, disinterest, and lack of connection to distant history is not characteristic of modern Jews. On the contrary. A stone thrown in spite through a Jewish window in Italy in the fourteenth century is a stone thrown into Jewish hearts today. The actions against Jews by desperate thugs in Poland in the eighteenth century are dumped on Gentile doorsteps in our time by

Jews who are still grieving, still embittered, still seeking redress. And when we turn, in more recent history, to the bestial deeds of Adolf Hitler to conquer the world, we find that Jews have pulled tightly in a circle to proclaim that everything sinister in the whole world malevolently labors against them, and them only.

Ultimately, it is a central article of modern Jewish faith -- reflecting both secular and religious attitudes, formed and hardened over the ages -- that to be Jewish is to be always maltreated for innocence by others. Or, perhaps more correctly to Jewish eyes, as part of this innocence, being Jewish is to be a victim for the crime of being superior to their persecutors. This claim to superiority was originally religiously based, as God's "Chosen People" of Old Testament tradition. And this Jewish preoccupation -- as being victims of their self-presumed superiority -- has been passed down, religiously, over the ages (traditionally epitomized in Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem's Wailing Wall to bemoan their communal fate, manifest also in the likes of the volume Sefer Yosifon, anonymously compiled in the tenth century as a litany of Jewish complaints and miseries). In the aftermath of Hitler's atrocities against Jews during World War II, this world-view has come to define, more tightly than any other aspect of Jewish tradition -- and now highly politicized -- modern Jewish self-identity.

But is this true? From the evidence we have already seen, are Jews correctly depicted as history's consummate, incomparable, and innocent victims? Have Jews preeminently and collectively suffered more than all other human beings, "victims of centuries of persecution and bigotry?" [UROFSKY, M., 1978, p. 378] And for no reason?

In the American context, "one commonly finds a sentence like this in many [Jewish] books or articles," says Joshua Rothenberg, "... *'Jews came to the shores of this country from the ghettos of the shtetlekh [Eastern European Jewish villages] as a result of the pogroms.'* Each phrase in this sentence is untrue or oversimplified to the point of untruth. There were no ghettos in 19th century Eastern Europe (except in the metaphysical sense) ... And the pogroms were not the principal reason for emigration: proportionately more Jews came to the United States from Austrian-ruled Galicia -- where there were no pogroms -- than from Tsarist Russia." [ROTHENBERG, p. 3]

"It has been discovered," says Henry Feingold, "that religious persecution, even its physical manifestations of pogroms, rarely furnishes sufficient impetus for Jews to uproot themselves. Moreover, it cannot account for the thousands of Jews who chose to leave areas relatively free of religious persecution ... [FEINGOLD, p. 60] ... Historians have taken a closer look at the early acculturation process and have discovered that the highly touted ability of the Jewish family to withstand the stresses of transplantation have been overstated. New studies on Jewish vice and crime and criminality and the discovery of a relatively high divorce and desertion rate among immigrant Jews present a picture of a community paying a dear price for establishing itself." [FEINGOLD, p. 61]

"The lachrymose recollection of the *shtetl*, which are still with us," says Daniel Bell, "fail to recall its narrowness of mind, its cruelty, especially to schoolchildren (to whom a whole series of memoirs, such as Solomon Ben Maimon's, testify), and its invidious stratification." [BELL, Reflections, p. 318] Little

remembered is this oppression of Jews by Jews. "Prior to World War I," adds Rothenburg, "the Kehilah [Jewish governing bodies] were ruled, in most cases, by an oligarchy of the rich and the [Jewish] clergy. Their excesses, especially in the area of indirect taxation (kosher meat, etc.) and the silencing of the protesting voices of the poor, are well-known and documented. The Kehilahs remained a source of bitter complaint for the majority of the Jewish population, which had no say in the conduct of their own community affairs." [ROTHENBURG, p. 5]

American Jews today hold dear many nostalgic "Fiddler on the Roof"-type myths about their Eastern European ancestors. As, however, Jewish author Ivan Kalmar notes

"A stalwart Jewish peasant, with a native wit and a naive religiosity, ever sturdy in the face of unending adversity, he is the epitome of Jewish nostalgia ... The Fiddler is so much part of the way we think of our Jewish background ... The Fiddler image has some basis in reality, but it is also very much part of a nostalgic reconstruction of our past, an example of what anthropologists call 'invention of tradition' ... Jewish authors [like Sholem Aleichem, creator of Fiddler on the Roof] tried to create stereotypes of the Jews that would identify them with less wealthy groups who were looked at more favourably by the greater society. Sholom Aleichem's Tevye [hero of Fiddler on the Roof] is very much a Ukrainian peasant. To counter the idea of the Jew as a 'parasite,' Sholom Aleichem presents Tevye as a dairy farmer, who sells not the Gentile peasant's products but his own. North American Jews have enthusiastically accepted the validity of Sholom Aleichem's Tevye as a metaphor for the Eastern European Jew of old ... Where finally Tevye finally shows unique character, he turns out to be a modern Jew. Where he is being a 'typical,' folksy, traditional East European Jew, he resembles the romanticized Ukrainian peasant ... Of course, there were in reality Jewish peasants like Tevye, but compared to the Slavs, the percentage of Jews who farmed was miniscule." [KALMER, I., quoted by PRYTULAK, L., UKRAINIAN ARCHIVES]

"Having ... turned their backs on Poland," notes Jewish scholar Victor Seidler about modern Jewish perceptions of Eastern European heritage, "it can be difficult for the second generation [of Jews in America] to recognize just how Polish their parents were. Things we learned to think of as 'Jewish' turn out to be Polish." [SEIDLER, V.J., 2000, p. 74] "Indeed," notes George Mosse, "when the first German-Jewish painter, Mortiz Oppenheim, painted scenes from the ghetto shortly after emancipation, it was

transformed, as we have seen, into a community permeated with German middle-class values." [MOSSE, G., 1985, p. 80]

Jewish author Howard Jacobson notes Jewish historic myth-making at an exhibition of photographs of Eastern European Jews at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. Particularly troubling to him was the depiction of the stereotypically "studious Jew":

"Something is wrong with this exhibition. Something is wrong with the way we modern Jews idealize a past we wouldn't touch with a barge-pole if it were offered us again ... Why is Jewish study always made to look so soulful in these sorts of photographs, so unrelieved, so unvarious, so fucking miserable and desolating? What is it about Jewish books that make absorption in them such an invariably heart-rendering business? What a sell! How have the Jews done it, how have we persuaded ourselves, but gentiles as well, that anguish and lamentation and self-abnegation and bodilessness and pathos attach inalterably and exclusively to our studies? You don't see [St. Thomas] Aquinas looking into a book like that." [JACOBSON, H., 1995, p. 192-193]

The distinguished Jewish historian, Salo Baron, of Columbia University, whose twelve-volume Social and Religious History of the Jews is the most extensive Jewish history by a single author in existence, argued a view that, post-Holocaust, has been swept to the wayside by modern Jewish discourse. His view was that Jewish suffering in the European Middle Ages, and throughout history, has been exaggerated. That is, that the Jews of Europe, as a group, in comparison to their Christian neighbors, actually had a better life in the Middle Ages, to the 20th century. For all the claims of massacres and pogroms, according to surviving documents, the Jewish population actually grew more rapidly than the Gentiles around them. [LIBERLES, p. 42] This accelerated in later centuries. "The two and a half centuries from 1660 to 1914," says Baron, "the Jewish population grew numerically some fifteen times ... while mankind at-large increased by only 250 per cent, Europe by 350 per cent ..." [BARON, H and J.H., p. 50] This thesis, addressing later years, is supported by a non-Jewish scholar of the Ukraine, Orest Subtleny:

"Throughout the nineteenth century, especially in its latter part, the Jews experienced a tremendous population rise. Between 1820 and 1880, while the general population of the [Russian] empire rose by 87%, the number of Jews increased by 150%. On the Right Bank, this rise was even more dramatic: between 1844 and 1913 the number of its inhabitants rose by 265% while the Jewish population increased by 844%! Religious sanctions of large families, less exposure to famines, war, and epidemics, and a low mortality rate because of communal self-help and the availability of doctors largely accounted for this extraordinary increase." [SUBTLENY, p. 276]

Salo Baron argued that his people, the Jews, were so privileged, relative to non-Jews throughout the European Middle Ages, that with the coming of the Enlightenment era "emancipation" and "equality" amounted to "a net loss [to Jews] in status and lifestyle." [SCHORSCH, p. 383] Elsewhere, he wrote that "it is likely ... that even the average medieval Jew, compared to his average Christian contemporary ... was the less unhappy and destitute creature -- less unhappy and destitute not only by his own consciousness, but even if measured by such objective criteria as standards of living, cultural amenities, and protection against individual starvation and disease." [LINDEMANN, Esau's, p. 11]

"Throughout the Middle Ages," notes David Biale, "the Jews enjoyed considerable influence in many of the lands in which they lived ... In addition to their interest Court politics, these Jews participated in political life in defense of Jewish interests." [BIALE, POWER p. 69] "The situation of the Jews in the first half of the Middle Ages," says Abram Leon, "was ... extremely favorable. The Jews were considered as being a part of the upper classes in society and their juridical position was not perceptibly different from that of the nobility." [LEON, p. 128] "At least some of the Jewish dress of the Middle Ages," adds Biale, "such as the Jewish hat, originated out of choice rather than compulsion ... The yellow patch [worn by Jews] ... was not originally intended as an instrument for segregating and humiliating the Jews ... but to proclaim publicly that its wearer enjoyed official protection." [BIALE, POWER, p. 67]

One of the privileges Jews enjoyed throughout Europe until relatively modern history was that they didn't have to serve in the local military organizations. "During the continuous wars of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries," wrote Baron, "... the Jews were neutral and suffered few losses. If they had been combatants they might have lost more than in all the pogroms." [LIBERLES, p. 42] Yet Medieval Jews were allowed the extremely significant privilege of carrying weapons, a privilege equal to knights and one to which all commoners (the overwhelming majority of the population) were forbidden. [GOLDBERG, p. 123] Baron also noted that, while there were certainly Jews who suffered poverty, the surrounding Christian population was worse off. And if the Jewish ghettos were, as widely claimed, abject holes of enforced degradation, "is it not remarkable that the most typical Ghetto in the world, the Frankfurt Judengasse, produced in the pre-Emancipation period the greatest banking house in history?" [LIBERLES p. 45]

"The Jews," says Israel Shahak,

"in spite of all the persecution to which they were subjected, formed an integral part of the privileged classes ... Jewish historiography, especially in English, is misleading on this point inasmuch as it tends to focus on Jewish poverty and anti-Jewish discrimination ... The poorest Jewish craftsman, peddler, landlord's steward, or petty cleric was immeasurably better off than a serf [most of the non-Jewish population]. This was especially true in those European countries where serfdom persisted until the nineteenth century, whether in a partial or extreme form: Prussia, Austria (including Hungary), Poland,

and the Polan lands taken by Russia. And it is not without significance that, prior to the beginning of the great Jewish migration of modern times (around 1889), a large majority of all Jews were living in those areas and that their most important social function there was to mediate the oppression of peasants on behalf of the nobility and the Crown." [SHAHAK, p. 52-53]

Jews in Eastern Europe understood the people around them as, categorically, persecutors. And "the Jews saw their persecutors as an inferior race," noted World Zionist Organization President Nahum Goldmann, "Most of my [physician] grandfather's patients [in Lithuania] were peasants. Every Jew felt ten or a hundred times the superior of these lowly tillers of the soil; he was cultured, learned Hebrew, knew the Bible, studied the Talmud -- in other words he knew that he stood head and shoulders above these illiterates." [GOLDMANN, 1978, p. 13]

"It would never have occurred to us," said one Jewish immigrant to the United States, "that the Gentile world [in Eastern Europe] was happier ... On the contrary, we considered our world happier and finer." "We thought they were unfortunate," says another, "We were above them, this was the feeling [towards peasants]." [MORAWSKA, p. 17] In the face of the commonly cherished belief among modern Jews that their brethren of Eastern Europe were terribly and uniformly impoverished, it is a fact that Jews were doing so well (relative to the non-Jews around them) that non-Jewish servants in Jewish households were common.

Apart from racist folk tales, Zborowski and Herzog note that most Jewish children in Eastern Europe learned fragments of the surrounding non-Jewish culture via the Gentile servants in their homes. "These impressions [of non-Jewish life]," the scholars write, "[were] available not only to the children of the rich, for [Jewish] women of modest circumstances who worked in a store or at the market often had the help of a [non-Jewish] peasant girl in the house." [ZBOROWSKI, p. 155] "[Jewish life] was certainly better than the life of the Russian peasant," remarks Howard Sachar. [SACHAR, p. 215]

"Even when the Jewish common people were known to be desperately poor," adds Albert Lindemann, "as in Austrian Galicia or parts of the Jewish Pale of Settlement in tsarist Russia, their overall per capita wealth still seems to have been greater than that of non-Jews, mostly peasants, among whom they lived." [LINDEMANN, *Esau's*, p. 21] "On the whole," says sociologist Stephen Steinberg, "Eastern European Jews [prior to immigration to America in the late nineteenth century] were unquestionably poor, though decidedly better off than the surrounding peasant population." [STEINBERG, p. 97]

What, one wonders, is to be read between this relativity of being "poor?" How poor could Jews have really been if they were "decidedly better off" than the non-Jewish peasants (who were most of the Eastern European population), even hiring Polish servants for their homes?

Another part of Jewish popular mythology is that the Jews were *forced* against their will into ghettos in Europe. The widely-believed accusation that Jews were forcibly segregated, particularly into ghettos, is a

distortion of historical fact. In the Middle Ages most Christian towns themselves had walls, gates, and locks for protection from outsiders. The enclosed Jewish ghetto was, in origin, a Jewish construction, conceived for both protection and self-segregation from the taint of non-Jewish ways.

"In the thirteenth century," writes Max Weinrich, "segregated living quarters for Jews were made compulsory. The fact of the matter is that separate Jewish streets had existed all along ... If the Jews lived together long before segregated living quarters were imposed upon them, then their segregation must have been voluntary. It was. Living apart, no matter how bizarre it may appear in the light of present day concepts and attitudes, was part of the 'privileges' accorded to the Jews in conforming with their own wishes." [WEINRICH, p. 105]

As president Nachum Goldmann of the World Zionist Organization notes:

"It is wrong to say that the *goyim* forced the Jews to separate themselves themselves from other societies. When the Christians defined the ghetto limits, Jews lived there already." [GOLDMANN, N., 1978, p. 66]

For centuries Jews isolated themselves from their surrounding non-Jewish neighbors except, of course, for the necessities of commerce. "Had the Jews not possessed a deep-rooted conviction of the truth of their religion," says Jacob Katz, "and had they not actively sought to maintain their separate identity, the tendencies inherent in medieval conditions would inevitably have ended by breaking down the social barrier erected by Jewish ritual." [KATZ, Ex, p. 40] "In Orthodox Judaism," wrote anthropologist Maurice Fishberg in 1911, "a Jew must not eat at the same table with a Gentile, nor any food prepared by the latter; must not eat or drink from dishes, with spoons, forks, knives, etc. which have been used by a Gentile; must not drink wine with the container of which has been touched by a Christian, Mohammadan, or heathen ... I know Jews to feel nauseated and even vomit when told that the food they have consumed was not *kosher*. ... It was the intense tribal spirit engendered by his religion which kept the Jew from intimate contact with the Gentiles, more than the laws promulgated by Christian states for the purpose." [FISHBERG, p. 536]

"We [Jews] formed the ghetto ourselves," wrote the Zionist leader Vladimir Zabolinsky, "... voluntarily, for the same reason for which Europeans in Shanghai established their separate quarter, to be able to live their own way." [KORBANSKI, p. 8] "The Ghetto was rather a privilege than a disability," notes J. O. Hertzler, "and sometimes was claimed by the Jews as a right when its demolition was threatened." [HERTZLER, p. 73] Boas Evron cites the work of fellow Israeli scholar, Yehezkel Kaufmann, in noting that

"the popular assumption that external anti-Jewish pressures forced group identify and exclusivity on the Jews is unconvincing, since historical evidence shows that Jewish exclusivity and aloofness preceded outside hostility and were thus its cause, not its result ... Jewish communities were always borne by host societies ... They never shared in political, military, administrative, or technological

responsibilities." [EVRON, p. 53]

In articles in 1928 and 1932, Cecil Roth, one of the foremost Jewish scholars of his day, set out to debunk the Jewish myths of incessant persecution by non-Jews through the ages. "In the first place," wrote Roth, "... the Jew has always tended to regard as a martyr all persons who died at Gentile hands ... even if he died in a drunken brawl ... All those [Jews] who met a violent end, no matter under what circumstances, were included under the head of martyrs in the Jewish popular consciousness and recollection." [ROTH, Most, p. 136-137]

This martyr tradition and schema has even been outrageously used, quite the same, with the identical religious base, in Orthodox Jewish messianic political quarters in our own day. Baruch Goldberg, the American-born Orthodox Israeli doctor who murdered 29 Arabs with an automatic weapon this decade as they prayed in a Hebron mosque, and who was subsequently beaten to death, was proclaimed by some Jews to be *kadosh*. (This word is commonly translated as meaning "holy;" it also has connotations meaning "separate" or "apart.") "A Jew who is killed because he is a Jew," wrote Dov Leor (a rabbi for the messianic Gush Emunim organization) about Goldberg's violent death, "must certainly be called ... a holy martyr ... without investigating their previous conduct." [LEOR, p. 61] "Baruch Goldstein was the greatest Jew alive," declared a Jerusalem teacher, Samuel Hacoheh, "not in one way, but in every way ... There are no innocent Arabs here, and thank God that one Jewish hero reminded us that it had become almost legal to kill Jews in the street. He is the only one who could do it, the only one who was 100 percent perfect. He was no crazy ... Killing isn't nice, but sometimes it is very necessary." Rabbi Yaacov Perin also announced at Goldberg's funeral that "One million Arabs are not worth a Jewish fingernail." [BROWNFELD, A., 3-99, p. 85]

A 1908 pamphlet, notes Cecil Roth, was widely circulated in the Jewish community under the title, Jews Hanged or Burned Alive in Rome.... Because They Refused to Change Their Faith. Of the hanged Jews listed, all but one were in fact executed for specific crimes, a harshness rendered no differently to any other people of past eras. "This instance," says Roth, "... is symptomatic of the attitude which Jewish historiography has consistently adopted. Any popular attack or any governmental persecution in which Jews were victims is set down outright as an expression of anti-Semitic sentiment."

In another example, in 1278, on charges of money clipping [skimming gold or silver content from coinage], 267 Jews were hanged in London. This punishment was not merited out to Jews as Jews, but to those who were disproportionately "in possession of the greater amount of ready money." Those who accumulated money in the Jewish money-lending and usury era happened to be overwhelmingly Jews, but also included a lesser number of Christian goldsmiths and such who were similarly arrested and executed. "What seems at first blush," says Roth, "[to be] an act of sheer persecution appears in a closer examination one of primitively sharp justice." [ROTH, p. 137]

In the early years of Christianity, in Alexandria (of today's Egypt), attacks upon Jews rendered in Jewish historical consciousness as acts of anti-Semitism were really what Roth says today would be called "an interracial riot." [ROTH, p. 138]

Roth underscored the precarious existence of all peoples' lives in the Middle Ages:

"The modern reader frequently fails to realize that, generally speaking, life in the Middle Ages was not secure. For every section of the population the probabilities of meeting a violent death were high, even in times of comparative peace. Country people were continually subject to the onslaught of bandits or of lawless barons, as well as the marchings and counter marchings of armed forces. [Even] city dwellers ... [ran] the risk of sack and wholesale murder. The whole of medieval, and a great part of modern, history is studded with instance of the sort: the devastation of Attila, the Scourge of God; the ravaging of the Vexin by William the Conqueror; the sack of a score of German cities during the Thirty Years War. There were frequently cases when only a minority of the population survived, the vast majority being piteously massacred. These events and their like should be borne in mind when one considers the vicissitudes of any particular racial or religious minority. The scarlet of Jewish persecution does not stand out on a ground of virginal white. [ROTH, p. 138]

In medieval Poland, says Bernard Weinryb, "In an epoch and a country where most of the time people were in danger of attacks by Tatars and Turks, of wars, soldiers, and robber gangs on the roads, insecurity became the normal way of life for people who had never known anything different." [WEINRYB, p. 159]

The miseries caused by the sack of Rome in 1527, Christian crusades against Muslim-controlled Jerusalem in 1096, Leon in 1197, Malaga in 1487, Naples in 1494, Padua in 1509, Tunis in 1535, or "a hundred other occasions" were at least equivalent tragedies to Jewish descriptions of "Jewish martyrdom." [ROTH, p. 138]

"It is probably the fact," says Roth, "that in the course of the medieval wars and disorders, the Jews normally suffered more than any other section of the population. This was not necessarily, however, because they were Jews, but simply because they belonged to the more opulent class ... on the capture of a town (by an army), the first objective of the assailants would naturally be the streets of the goldsmiths and the street of the Jews." [ROTH, p. 139]

Likewise, Jews -- perceived as affluent and exploitive outsiders to native populaces --suffered the same way at the hands of mobs as did Italian traders in London in 1439 and 1455, and at the "Hansa Steelyard" in 1494. Jews were also subject to random "acts of rapine," like any Christian -- or other community -- of the Middle Ages, as happened in the Jewish part of Asolo, in northern Italy, in 1547. Perpetrators in that case were punished by the central government.

While Jews were sometimes required to wear special badges of identification in the European Middle Ages, it was a norm of discrimination for the era. Muslims also had to wear such marks of "outsider" distinction in Christian societies. Conversely, in the Muslim world, Christian communities were also faced with such laws and legislation of discrimination, sometimes even in clothing. And of course Jewish law itself has various nomenclature and attendant rules for treatment of various categories of non-Jews as second-class, or worse, people. (Even in modern Israel, Arabs are discriminatorily noted as such on national identity cards).

"Some current histories," said Roth in 1932, "appear to assume the Jews were sole victims of the Spanish Inquisition ... Strictly, this is so far from the truth that a precisian might retort that [the Jews] never came under the [Inquisition's] scope, save in exceptional cases, since the activities were essentially confined to [Christian] apostates and renegades." [ROTH, p. 141] Those "Jews" who risked trouble were those among the Marranos/Conversos, who disingenuously represented themselves as *Christians* and were thereby subject to the same scrutinization for religious conformance as that directed upon any other Christian. Widely targeted were Christian heretics, not the Judaic faith. As M. Hirsh Goldberg notes,

"Contrary to popular belief, Jews who openly remained Jews were not tortured or killed as part of the inquisition proceedings. The Inquisition was specifically authorized by the Church to root out heresy among Catholics, so only heretical Christians and Jewish converts to Christianity accused of secretly reverting to Judaism were prosecuted." [GOLDBERG, M. H., 1979, p. 16]

"[T]he Holy Inquisition in Portugal," notes Arnold Wiznitzer, "did not persecute Jews who never had been Catholics. Only persons of Jewish origin who had been born Catholic, or those, born Jews and baptised later, who had deserted Catholicism openly or secretly were subject to the Inquisition since they were considered as being apostates." [WIZNITZER, A., 1957, p. 64]

"The Inquisition," notes Joachim Prinz,

"is considered one of the many traumatic experiences of Jewish history, and as such, it is always spoken of with dread. But, of course, the Inquisition had no power over Jews at all. It was established for the purpose of dealing with Christians who had deviated from their faith. The Marranos who were called into account for their secret practices appeared not as Jews but as allegedly heretical Christians ... No unconverted Jews were ever called to the tribunals." [PRINZ, J., 1973, p. 44]

"Living under the Inquisition," adds Goldberg in another volume,

"caused Jews to make some curious adjustments, as can be seen

in the family of Manoel Pereira Coutinho, who had five daughters -- all nuns in a convent in Lisbon -- while in Hamburg his sons were living openly as Jews." [GOLDBERG, M. H., 1976, p. 109]

"All Jews know about the Inquisition," wrote David Goldstein, a Jewish apostate, "but of Jewish [-perpetrated] injustices they know hardly anything." [GOLDSTEIN, p. 117] "The name of Torquemada," wrote Jewish author John Cournos in 1937, "the loathsome Grand Inquisitor, was a byword among us children, as it was in other Jewish households." [GOLDSTEIN, p. 117] This view that the Inquisition somehow centered on Jews still remains widespread in the community today, as proclaimed in a 1990 issue of the American Jewish Congress magazine devoted to the subject of Jewish identity. Ignoring the Christian target groups of the heresy trials, Zvi Bekarman remarked that "The Inquisition is brought to us as one more proof of the suffering of the Jews." [BEKERMAN, p. 14]

Despite all the Jewish lamenting of pogroms and massacres upon their ancestors, the Catholic-Protestant massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day in the 1500's was as spectacularly horrible as any Jewish medieval misfortune to that time. Nor, adds Roth, "was persecution of the Jews in its acutest form [ever] systematic." (The later World War II Holocaust scenario, which of course was systematic, will be addressed later at length in its own chapter).

Jews were often blamed for the epidemic of the Plague and the Black Death that swept Europe in the Middle Ages (while Jewish communities were relatively free from the disease, [HERTZLER, p. 95] but such causal connection to medieval minds was not to the detriment of Jews only. Non-Jews were also accused of, and murdered for, causing the Plague in Palermo in 1526, in Germany in 1530, 1545, and 1574, at Casale Monferrat in 1536, and other places throughout Europe. In Breslau, in 1349 sixty Jews were executed for having caused a town fire, "but," says Roth, "when one recalls that 300 years afterwards the Great Fire of London was [blamed upon] the Papists, one realizes that the Jews had no monopoly on unjust accusations." [ROTH, p. 144]

Jewish communities themselves had irrational superstitions to scapegoat others and to explain disease and other misfortunes. Says Zborowski and Herzog:

"If an epidemic strikes the *shtetl*, prayers are, of course, offered up. Other steps consist chiefly in marrying off two orphans or cripples, so that God will be mollified by the good deeds of the worshippers... Whenever there was an epidemic in the *shtetl* they used to blame it on peoples' sins. They tried to find the guilty ones and expose them to the public ... Another method for getting rid of an epidemic was to get two orphans if possible and to marry them off on the cemetery ..." [ZBOROWSKI, p. 224]

Throughout Europe, "it was.... dangerous to be an old woman in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" when witch hunts put 100,000 unfortunates on trial for sorcery in Germany alone. [ROTH, p.

145] Some 30,000 such victims are reputed to have been burned alive or torn to pieces in England, and over a two hundred year period in Scotland, an average of two hundred "witches" were burned at the stake each year. Throughout Europe gypsies were sporadically singled out for persecution and blame, and various Christians and other non-Jews from time to time were executed for the charge of cannibalism.

Lest modern Jews feel too smug in the brutal superstitions of the ancient Gentiles, the Talmud itself notes an instance when eighty Jewish women were hung at one time at the instigation of a fellow Jew, "Simeon the Son of Shetach," in Ashkelon for the crime of being witches. [HARRIS, p. 174] When coming across a witch, the Talmud recommends that the passerby "should mutter thus, 'May a potsherd of boiling dung be stuffed in your mouths, you ugly witches!'" [HARRIS, p.189] Some rabbis even opined that a witch may be either male or female, but "most women are witches." [HARRIS, p. 190] Even "the best among women," said Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, "is a witch." [HARRIS, p. 191]

The Talmud also details the various manners of stoning, strangling or beheading Jewish "blasphemers and idolaters." Such criminals were also buried up to their knees in manure, and their mouths forced open by strangling. Molten lead could then be poured "into his bowels." [HARRIS, p. 170]

The persistence of the Jewish mythology of unique persecution, says Roth, has much to do with their longevity and communal dispersal throughout Europe and the world. The persecution of the Albigensians of France, for instance, is known by hardly anyone today because their destruction was singularly localized, they were completely wiped out, and there is no one interested in heralding their suffering. Likewise the Waldenses of France, and various others. "The Jews," notes Roth, "are an inseparable element in the history of every country in Europe ... and thus have an advantage, as it were, of a superior publicity service; and no historian, even a Gentile, could fail to be impressed by this insistent, pathetic, unique record." [ROTH, p. 147]

Roth goes to the essence of the Jewish mythos of communal agony:

"In the classical period ... with its holocausts and heroes, the lot of the Jewish people was much the same as that of the ancient Britons, the Iberians, and the Gauls; and the leaders of those peoples' struggles for freedom deserve to be remembered as much as the Jewish martyrs who are commemorated each year on the ninth of Ab. But this is far from the case. Generally, they are forgotten, save by a few industrious antiquarians; and they have no place today in the proud memories of any people. The reason is very plain. The races for which they fought are long since dead. The Jews are still alive." [ROTH, p. 147]

These insightful observations were written by Roth in 1932. The rise of German fascism and its institutionalized inhumanity was still only rising. Yet we can see here in Roth's unusually honest overview of Jewish history the broader, foundational context for current Jewish thinking about

themselves to this day. Of course the so-called Holocaust of World War II has completely solidified the traditional view of the persecution of Jewry and obliterated Roth's broadly realistic brand of Jewish historiography.

To a now militant Jewish polemic, their community's European experience in World War II merely confirms the Jewish mythos of unique and eternal victimization and martyrdom. It is monolithic, irrefutable, immutable, and immovable: Jews argue they were uniquely "singled out." There will be a great deal more about the Holocaust and its part in Jewish identity in its own chapter. For immediate purposes, it is enough here to recognize the historical context for modern Jewry's fundamental self-conception: that of humankind's foremost -- and superlative -- victims, passed along as part of religious faith century after century, reified in Jewish cosmology at every turn.

Roth's early 1930's view, in the context of rising Nazi fascism and worry about anti-Semitism spreading in America, has been completely muted in our own day, and Jewish apologetics about Jewish identity and history began rising in direct proportion to the gravity of the growing German threat. By 1941, a Jewish author, Oscar Janowsky, reviewed -- in the same Jewish journal that earlier published Roth's critiques of the Jewish victimization cosmology -- two new books that championed Jewish history. Each book was authored by well-respected Jewish scholars. One of them was Cecil Roth. Janowsky's title for his article was "Apologetics for Our Time." In the context of German Nazism, even Roth was swallowed by the demands for Jewish positive image-making against all and any self-critical Jewish commentary. "Both authors," wrote Janowsky, "would readily concede that the purpose [of these books] was not to write 'history' of the accepted variety. Our age requires apologetics, and this sad need has been filled by the authors." [JANOWSKY, p. 225] This "sad need" was so great that a 1951 volume entitled The Hebrew Impact on Western Civilization even stated bluntly in its very first sentence: "This book is a book of propaganda." [RUNES, D., p. vii]

In 1947, Milton Steinberg wrote a volume, Basic Judaism, explaining the faith for both Jews and "those many non-Jews who happen to be curious about Judaism." [STEINBERG, p. viii] Here Steinberg's apologetic, in doing his part to engender a positive Jewish public image (like so many others to our own day), was grossly untrue: "Judaism is totally unaware of race. Though the Tradition loves to trace the House of Israel to the Patriarchs, blood descent is no factor in its calculations." [STEINBERG, M., p. 99]

With World War II and the disaster that befell humanity -- and the Jews within it -- looming soon over Europe, this apologetic methodology (as well as a resultant Jewish militancy) about Jewish history has continued in a rarely interrupted straight line to the present day. (Examine, for example, the gushingly laudatory content of the popular 1999 bestseller by a non-Jewish author: The Gifts of the Jews). In fact, the mythology of perpetual Jewish victimhood was well along as an exploitable tool by American Jews and Zionists as a political devise at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, where Jewish woe centered upon anti-Jewish riots and attacks in Eastern Europe, particularly in Russia. "Some of the atrocities [against Jews] initially reported," writes Albert Lindemann, "were exaggerated or simply did not occur, and some Jews made false claims in the hope of getting relief money from Western Europe and America." [LINDEMANN, p. 154]

Many of the exaggerations were also created to enhance Zionist propaganda to garner sympathy and support for a Jewish state in Israel. An important target of Zionist propaganda and historical exaggeration was American Jews. "You have to speak to American Jews in superlatives," remarked Nachum Goldman, for many years the president of both the World Zionist Organization and World Jewish Congress, "Cool, balanced, analysis makes no impression on them, and exaggeration is almost indispensable." [GROSE, p. 162] Elsewhere, in 1978 he noted that his Zionist group alone had spent "millions of dollars on propaganda." [GOLDMANN, N., 1978, p. 63]

A pioneer strategist in the use of the accusation of anti-Semitism as a propaganda device was Theodore Herzl, a Viennese journalist and playwright, the man most credited for the successful promotion of the Jewish "return to Israel" Zionist ideology. Herzl "understood the true nature of propaganda," notes former Israeli diplomat, Moshe Leshem, "of the emotional appeal." "In truth ... noise amounts to a great deal," Herzl noted in his diary, "A sustained noise is in itself a noteworthy fact, world history is nothing but noise." [LESHEM, p. 85]

Among the most reported Russian anti-Jewish pogrom sites at the turn of the century was Kishinev. (This incident led to the creation of the Jewish lobbying agency, the American Jewish Committee in 1903). [HALKIN, p. 54] Chaim Weitzmann, another Zionist activist and the first President of the state of Israel, wrote to a member of the wealthy Jewish Rothschild family (instrumental in funding early Jewish settlements in pre-Israel Palestine):

"Eleven years ago ... I happened to be in the cursed town of Kishinev ... In a group of about 100 Jews we defended the Jewish quarter with revolvers in our hand, defended women and girls ... We slept in the cemetery -- the only safe place and we saw 80 corpses brought in, mutilated dead..."

"Thus Weizmann," says Albert Lindemann, "reports that he personally saw eighty mutilated corpses in a single place, when the death toll for the entire city was later generally recognized to be forty-five. But there is another problem with the account he provides. It is pure fantasy. Weizmann was in Warsaw at the time." [LINDEMANN, p. 164]

The long -- and continuing -- Jewish defamation of Poles and Poland, as part of a broad Zionist propaganda policy and secular Jewish victimization theology, has been going on for a long time. For all western Jewry's complaints about massive Polish violence against Polish Jewry, in 1919 Hugh Gibson, the United States minister to Warsaw, wrote that, "It is ridiculous as we are told about every incident where the Jew gets the worst of it and a great many incidents that never happened at all. These yarns are exclusively of foreign manufacture for anti-Polish purposes." Two prominent and powerful American Zionists -- Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter (both United States Supreme Court justices) -- confronted Gibson to complain about his dispatches to Washington. "They complained that my reports on the

Jewish question had gone round the world and undone their work [in proclaiming enormous violent Polish anti-Semitism]," said Gibson,

"... They finally said that I had stated that the stories of excesses against the Jews were exaggerated, to which I replied that they certainly were and I should think any Jew would be glad to know it ... [They] seemed to be interested in agitation for its own sake rather than in learning the situation ... Their efforts were concentrated on an attempt to bully me into accepting the mixture of information and misinformation which they have adopted as the basis of their propaganda ... Felix handed me a scarcely veiled threat that the Jews would try to prevent my confirmation by the Senate [then pending] ... They made it clear to me that they do not care to have any diagnosis made that is not based entirely on Jewish statements as to conditions and events and doesn't accept them at face value. If they are not ready to go into the question honestly I don't see how they can hope to accomplish anything for their people... [American Jews have embarked upon] a conscienceless and cold-blooded plan to make the condition of the Jews in Poland so bad they must turn to Zionism for relief." [GROSE, p. 94-95]

In 1923 the United States Vice Consul to Warsaw, Monroe Kline, added that "It is true that the Pole hates the Jew ... The Jew in business oppresses the Pole to a far greater extent than does the Pole oppress the Jew in a political way." [GROSE, p. 95]

More recently, Leonard Fein notes Jewish fears of assimilation that could erase them as a people, and the emotional cloud that informs Jewish perception of the facts of history:

"Deep down -- and sometimes not so very deep -- we [Jews] still believe that we depended on the pogroms and persecutions to keep us a people, and that we have not the fibre to withstand the lures of a genuine open society. It is seduction, not rape, that we fear the most, and nowhere is the seducer more blatant, less devious, than here in America." [in SILBERMAN, p. 165]

The Jewish limited historical memory (and corresponding embracement of legend) and its singular focus on its martyrological tradition has also been systematically exploited to buttress Zionist reasoning for the necessity of the modern state of Israel: a home for Jews from worldwide anti-Semitic persecution. The lengths some Jews will go to enforce -- and *create* -- the martyrological/persecution tradition for political purposes was noted by Wilbur Crane Eveland, a former CIA agent stationed in Iraq in the early years after the foundation (1948) of today's Israel. A few months before his arrival to that country in 1950, a bomb went off "outside a Passover gathering," underscoring Arab hostility to Jews and encouraging 10,000 to move to the new Israeli state. Eveland wrote that

"Just after I arrived in Baghdad, an Israeli citizen had been recognized in the city's largest department store: his interrogation led to the discovery of fifteen arms caches brought into Iraq by an underground Zionist movement. In attempts to portray the Iraqis as anti-American and to terrorize the Jews, the Zionists planted bombs in the United States Information Service Library and in synagogues. Soon leaflets began to appear urging Jews to flee to Israel ... Although the Iraqi police later provided our embassy with evidence to show that the synagogue and library bombings, as well as the anti-Jewish and anti-American leaflet campaigns, had been the work of an underground Zionist organization, most of the world believed reports that Arab terrorism had motivated the flight of the Iraqi Jews whom the Zionists had 'rescued' really just in order to increase Israel's Jewish population." [FEURLICHT, p. 231]

Aware from personal experience about the facts in such matters, in 1998, an Iraqi-born Jew and former Zionist activist, Naeim Giladi, wrote that he wanted "to tell the American people, and especially American Jews, that Jews from Islamic lands did not emigrate willingly to Israel; that to force them to leave, Jews killed Jews." [GILADI, p. 1]

In 1975 Jewish CBS reporter Mike Wallace journeyed to another Arab nation, Syria, to do a 60 Minutes program on the country. Years later, he noted his own biases (about alleged Syrian anti-Semitism) that were destroyed when he actually went to Damascus:

"[Before I went to Syria] I had a strong impression of what life was like for [Jews] there. From Jewish friends in America, I had heard the same stories over and over again: The Jews in Syria were confined to ghettos and were constant victims of persecution. A tight curfew was imposed on them and they were not allowed to have telephones or drives automobiles. Nor were they permitted to worship in synagogues of study in their traditional language, Hebrew. In short, the Syrian Jews were forced to live as prisoners within their own country." [WALLACE/GATES, 1984, p. 282]

All this, as Wallace soon learned upon visiting Syria, was complete nonsense. Jews owned cars; Jews had classes in Hebrew. Although the Jewish community was under close surveillance by the Assad regime, Wallace is careful to note that so was *everyone* in that police state. The CBS reporter interviewed a variety of Jews in the Arab country. Speaking to a Jewish teacher, Wallace notes his surprise to her response about the myths he had heard about Syrian anti-Semitism :

"Then I mentioned all the stories I had heard about how badly the

Jews were treated in Syria, and when I asked her where she thought they came from, she replied in an almost malevolent tone: 'I think that it's Zionist propaganda.'" [WALLACE, M., 1984, pl. 285]

Cecil Roth, in his overviews of Jewish history with its attendant polemics and apologetics (let alone some of the fraudulent escapades of modern Zionism), argued that the continued suppression of an honest evaluation of the Jewish past could come back to haunt them:

"By suppression we play into the hand of the anti-Semite, who may one day make capital out of the innocent humanity we have chosen to ignore. But, above all, by repression we are faithless to the most sacred charge of history, which is the pursuit of truth." [ROTH, p. 423]