

Jews & Race

Edited by
Mitchell B. Hart

WRITINGS
ON IDENTITY
& DIFFERENCE,
1880–1940

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Jews and Race

An Introductory Essay

Mitchell B. Hart

The well-known Israeli writer A. B. Yehoshua insisted some years ago that “Jews are not a race and never viewed themselves as such.”¹ These claims are popular assertions, in all senses of the word. They are popular because they are widely held, and because they are appealing and satisfying. They reinforce some deeply rooted and comforting ideas held by Jews and non-Jews alike about Jewish history, culture, and identity. The first assertion, that the Jews are not a race, would appear at present to be fairly unproblematic, at least if we look to science as our guide in such matters. Since many biologists have told us that races in general do not exist in any “real” or natural way—that they are, rather, a cultural or social construct—then it seems patently absurd to consider the Jews a race. As Steven Kaplan has asked, if there are no races, how can Jews be a race?² Yet, it turns out that things are not that simple. Science, it seems, has not made up its mind on the issue of race. Some researchers in genetics now insist, as the philosopher Ian Hacking has written, “that stereotypical features of race are associated both with ancestral geographic origin and, to some extent, with genetic markers.”³ In other words, “race” might not be just a social construct after all, though it certainly is that. Race no longer exists in the older version of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but modern genetic research may be in the process of redefining notions of identity that reanimate “the racial.”⁴

The status of the Jews as a race surely depends in part on the ontological and epistemological status of races in general. If science tells us that races do not exist, then the Jews cannot be a race. On the other hand, to invert Kaplan’s question, if there *are* races, can the Jews be a race—or, more precisely, a genetic community? Certainly many Jews as well as non-Jews continue to employ some sort of racial or quasi-racial language when they think and speak about Jewish identity (and many others, of course, reject such language). Many Jews in the past considered themselves members of a distinct race, one characterized by both positive and negative features. And Jewish thinkers employed the language and images of race to think about the Jewish past and present. Thus, Yehoshua’s

assertion that the Jews never understood themselves as a race is, despite what many wish to believe, patently incorrect.

The collection of source material that makes up this volume is but a small sample of a large group of texts, written by Jews about Jews, that engaged the vexed question of Jews and race. These are texts written in a number of languages and in different contexts, by Jewish scholars and community leaders living in different countries.⁵ Their work was published in a variety of media: in books, academic and popular journals, newspapers, and magazines. It was aimed at both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. Although the differences among these Jewish thinkers and writers were surely important, it is nonetheless possible to identify a common set of questions and issues that drove their inquiries into “the Jewish race.”

Are the Jews a race? If so, are they a pure race? If so, what accounts for this purity? If not, which of the various racial branches contributed to the makeup of the Jewish race? Do the Jews possess particular, even unique, traits or qualities that set them apart from other groups? If they do, what accounts for these traits? Are they biological and hereditary, or cultural and environmental? Are they the product of a Jewish nature or essence, or the vicissitudes of historical and contemporary external forces?

These broad, foundational questions led, in turn, to more specific questions. If the Jews are a race, then what is the impact of assimilation on the collective Jewish body and mind? Is intermixture—including intermarriage—with other races and peoples a boon, or does it produce decline and degeneration in the Jews? Do Jews suffer from certain illnesses more than other people? Are Jews immune to certain disorders? Are they prone to certain types of criminal behavior and other social pathologies? Are they naturally an urban rather than a rural or agricultural people? Are Jews predisposed to certain occupations or economic systems, such as capitalism?

How much does Judaism have to do with shaping the Jews physically and mentally? What, in other words, does religion have to do with race?⁶ Judaism, as a system of ritual observances issued as commandments or *mitzvot*, dictated every aspect of an observant Jew’s life. Racial thinkers queried the impact of the *mitzvot* on the “Jewish body,” both individual and collective. For instance, what is the relationship between the observance of the kosher dietary laws, circumcision, or sexual purity laws and the makeup of the purported Jewish body, or levels of Jewish health and disease? What role does the ban on intermarriage play in the history of the Jewish race? Have Jews actually adhered to the practice

of endogamy,⁷ and thus kept their blood relatively pure from foreign influence (to phrase the question in the terms that were used much of the time)? Or is the historical reality different from the religious and cultural demand and expectation? Is endogamy a healthy or unhealthy practice, considered from a racial and eugenic viewpoint? Does it lead, for example, to a decline in fertility—that is, to fewer and unhealthier offspring? Many scientists believed this was the case, and as the selections included in part 5, “Racial Mixing,” illustrate, Jewish racial thinkers took up this question in their own work.

Framing and undergirding the particular queries into purported Jewish traits and the relationship of Judaism to Jewishness was the larger question of causality: how might we account for such characteristics? By the middle of the nineteenth century, at the latest, it was a common belief—even a cliché—that Jews were predisposed to certain ways of thinking and acting because of their “racial nature.” At the same time, others insisted that Jewish traits were due mainly to external factors: dispersion, repressive legislation, concentration in certain occupations such as money lending, enforced residence in ghettos, and periodic outbursts of anti-Jewish violence. As we shall see, the question of biology versus environment—a question that seemed to preoccupy almost everyone who wrote about race—was central as well to the debate over the Jews and race.

Race or culture, biology or environment? Perhaps both external and internal forces worked together, so that certain physical and moral traits initially caused by external pressures or practices became hereditary over time. In the words of Felix Theilhaber, a prominent German Jewish racial scientist, “what originally was social or religious-hygienic practice could very well cause acquired traits to become part of the racial disposition.”⁸ Sigmund Feist asserts that certain physical deformities and gestures traditionally associated with Jews—crooked backs, the rocking back and forth of the upper body, the frequency of bowleggedness—are not racial traits per se, “but rather characteristics that have been acquired due to external conditions (sitting in a stooped position for long periods of time, traditional habits of prayer, rachitis [inflammation of the spine] due to deficient diet, and so forth).” These, Feist assures his readers, “will immediately vanish with a change in adolescent habits or behaviors.”⁹ This notion of “acquired characteristics” extended back to ancient times, but in the modern period it had come to be associated with the eighteenth-century French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. This Lamarckian approach to biological or physical attributes proved to be quite popular among Jewish thinkers, a point to which we will return later in this essay.

Such questions about anatomical and physiological traits and their causes, asked specifically about Jews, were being asked in one way or another about all races and nations. Jewish racial thinkers employed the common intellectual tools of the day to address what they understood as the fundamental issues of Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life. Those Jewish scholars who engaged with race drew on material from a wide variety of fields, including history, anthropology, biology, medicine, statistics, economics, and sociology. They created narratives that provided evidence and interpretations governed by a more or less clear sense of contemporary critical, academic questions and themes. In other words, this was genuine interdisciplinary work carried on with all the tools and methods of academic scholarship. As such, the writings included in this volume constitute a chapter in the intellectual and political history of modern Jewish studies and modern Jewish thought, and the history of the racial and social sciences—even if, for the most part, they have yet to be written into the normative histories of these intellectual traditions.

Jewish scholars who began publishing in the 1880s were joining a debate about “the Jewish race” that had already been going on for decades. To a large extent, non-Jewish scientists and thinkers set the terms of the debate, though of course Jewish scholars brought their own particular research interests and—perhaps more important—their own political or ideological agendas to their work (a matter to which we will return). The selections included in part 1, “General Overviews,” are intended to introduce the contours of the discourse about the Jews as a race, including the extent to which Jewish scholars based their arguments on an already well-established set of themes and questions.

Thus, Jewish and Christian scholars did not inhabit two distinct and separate mental worlds when it came to matters of race, including the matter of Jews and race. It is worth emphasizing in this regard that “race” was then commonly used as a conceptual framework with which to confront the vital questions of the day. Certainly all Jews did not adopt racial ideas and images, at least when thinking about their own group. The essay included here by the French Jewish scholar Salomon Reinach offers powerful testimony to this. But for those Jewish thinkers who did employ such ideas in their scholarly or popular writings, this use by no means placed them outside the bounds of respectable academic or Jewish society.

In pointing out the accepted and respectable nature of racial thought in the past, the aim is certainly not to build a case for the truth or accuracy of this research, or to suggest that Jews do, in fact, constitute a race. Rather, it is merely

to insist that we acknowledge the legitimate or normative status of this work in its own time and its own particular context. It is insufficient, to say the least, to label this material “pseudoscience” or “pseudoscholarship,” as if that explains anything that is not already obvious. It certainly does not help us understand how and why so many highly educated individuals embraced these ideas over such a long time and in so many places.

Race and Modern Jewish Thought

Thus, rather than ask how Jews could have become involved in such unpalatable and potentially dangerous ideas (or deny that they ever did), we might ask: What did Jews stand to gain by engaging with racial thought? Why was the idea of a Jewish race attractive to many Jews? What purposes did Jews serve by making “the Jews” into a race? And why does it matter for us to know that Jewish scholars and writers were actively engaged in debates over the racial history and identity of the Jews? Why, in other words, is it important to call attention to the fact that, at certain times and places, Jews believed in race; used the methods of the social sciences and of the systematic scholarly study of races that came to be known as racial science to analyze Jewish history and contemporary life; put this scientific knowledge to particular political purposes; and even at times engaged not only in racialism but also racism?

Part of the answer to the latter set of questions lies with the incompleteness of the historical record, and the urge to fill this in to the extent possible. Historians of Jewish life, as well as historians of racial thought, have told the story of the relationship between Jews and race largely within the framework of victimhood. And without a doubt, Jews have been victims of racial science and racism. Racial science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was one of the chief weapons used against Jews. Until recently, then, scholars for the most part have paid little attention to how race was used by Jewish thinkers, academics, and writers who took race and the idea of “the Jewish race” seriously.¹⁰

The subject of Jews and racial thought is of historical interest and importance not least because it forces us to reorient the way we think about the normative narrative of the Jewish past. In the context of this series, for instance, we are forced to ask, or to ask again, “What is modern Jewish thought?” Or, more precisely, of what exactly does modern Jewish thought consist, and how should the history of modern Jewish thought be written? Is it limited to philosophy and theology, traditionally understood? Or must we broaden the scope of our definition? Granted, individuals included in this volume—such as Arthur Ruppin,

Ignaz Zollschan, Samuel Weissenberg, and Maurice Fishberg—are, to say the least, far less well-known and celebrated than Moses Mendelssohn, Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Hannah Arendt, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Emmanuel Levinas. The canon of modern Jewish thought consists of the latter set of figures (and many others, of course), while the former are all but forgotten. And, to be sure, one could reasonably argue that the philosophers and theologians have been and remain more significant for the course of modern Jewish thinking and self-perception. But then the historian wants to know why this is so. Is it due to some intrinsic quality of the various scholars and thinkers? Are philosophy and theology necessarily more important and of more lasting interest and value than anthropological, biological, or social scientific thought? Or do the reasons have more to do with external forces or pressures, such as political and social developments, or events and trends that shaped the contours and definition of Jewish thought? In sum, what are the factors that determine the answer to the question, “What is Jewish thought?”

Jewish racial thinking, in fact, contains many, if not all, of those components that may be identified with Jewish thought: exegesis of Jewish texts, including sacred texts—both the Bible and the Talmud; exploration of the meaning of, or reasons for, the commandments (*ta’amei mitzvot*)—that is, the effects on the purported Jewish body and mind of the observance of the commandments or, conversely, the impact of their neglect; contemplation of the importance of the interaction of Jewish with non-Jewish society and culture; apologetics and polemics; the relationship of the Jewish past to the present and future; the meaning of Jewish history, both for Jews and more generally; the survival of the Jewish people, both historically and in the future; and the impact of key historical developments and structures—such as capitalism, emancipation, assimilation, and integration—on the lives of individual Jews and on Jewish collectives. Questions related to God’s existence and role in the world are, as one might expect, mainly absent from these writings. Nature, society, and history, rather than God, are understood to be the primary forces acting on individuals and collectives.

Thus, we ask, again, what qualifies as modern Jewish thought? What, if any, are the criteria of validity, legitimacy, and inclusion in the master narrative, if such a thing still exists? Are there recognized boundaries to the definition of modern Jewish thought? If a particular Jewish thinker employs the same scholarly methods as his or her contemporaries, invokes classical Jewish texts while at the same time citing the most current scientific literature, and seeks to contribute to the

ongoing development of the collective scholarly endeavor by querying the Jewish past and present, is this sufficient? Or is there a necessary ethical component, a boundary set not by form or content but by morality? In other words, is the fact that the thinkers included in this volume, or at least most of them, took race seriously as a reality and a conceptual category enough to disqualify them? If so, Buber and Rosenzweig—both of whom took race, and the notion of a Jewish race, quite seriously—would have to be cast out as well.

In another context, the preeminent Jewish historian of the twentieth century, Gershom Scholem, insisted that “there is no way of telling a priori what beliefs are possible or impossible within the framework of Judaism . . . The ‘Jewishness’ in the religiosity of any particular period is not measured by dogmatic criteria that are unrelated to actual historical circumstances, but solely by what sincere Jews do, in fact, believe, or—at least—consider to be legitimate possibilities.”¹¹ This sort of nonessentialism with regard to religion holds just as true for questions about other expressions of Jewishness or Jewish identity. The Jewish thinkers we are considering were sincere, and a Jewish racial identity was one legitimate possibility when Jews imagined who and what they are. Thus, the complex relationship of Jews to racial thinking and imagery offers another, though less well-known, side of modern Jewish thought. Knowledge of this relationship contributes to our understanding of the full range of possible realms and avenues of thought available to and taken by some Jews over the past few centuries.

The value or significance of Jewish racial texts, however, lies not only in the reconfiguration of modern Jewish thought that such texts suggest. In a recent work on Jewish historiography, Moshe Rosman has suggested that one of the values of Jewish history resides in the different perspective that knowledge of the Jewish past might bring to other historiographies.¹² I would argue that the subject of Jews and race promises to make a similar contribution. How might this history impact the narratives produced about racial thinking and racism in Europe and North America, to take only the two parts of the world covered in this book?

Jewish racial thinkers ought to be of interest not only to students of Jewish history but also to students of racial thought and racism more generally. This is so especially because including Jews necessarily complicates the history of racial theory and practice; if nothing else, it shows that at certain moments, in certain places, the objects of a racialized discourse appropriate the idioms of science and employ that science to analyze and criticize their own group. As

Nancy Stepan and Sander Gilman have shown, this appropriation process is highly complex and often treacherous, since it entails the internalization—of many of the negative images produced about one’s “self.”¹³ Nonetheless, the use of racial imagery by Jews involves a significant shift, a redefinition of agency in which the object becomes both subject and object of analysis.

The Jewish engagement with race offers historians of race, and of the social and biological sciences, a different set of ideas and images with which to analyze the broader history of their subject. As many historians have pointed out, race—particularly in the United States—is more often than not defined in terms of skin color, especially black and white. Even those who insist on greater complexity often achieve this by simply adding other “colors.” Yet, as studies of Jews and race have amply demonstrated, historically race has not only or even mainly been about skin color. In Europe and the United States, Jews were often considered to be “white” and yet could still be seen as a race apart. In Europe especially, definitions of racial traits and racial groups included components far beyond skin color, although this certainly was also an important ingredient. The “Jewish body,” as Sander Gilman has shown, was in its entirety an object of fascination for scholars and popular writers.¹⁴

“The Jews” in Racial Thought

This fascination, as we have said, also extended to many Jewish thinkers. In one respect, the Jewish engagement with racial discourse can be understood as a natural or normal development, a result of more general intellectual trends in the sciences that eventually attracted many educated and acculturated Jews. At the same time, such intellectual trends alone are not sufficient to explain this Jewish interest in the racialization of the Jews. The question of Jewish racial identity was also a question of politics: the politics of Jewish emancipation and assimilation, of antisemitism, and of Jewish nationalism (mainly Zionism) and its opponents. The last part of this volume is devoted to highlighting the political or ideological impulses behind Jewish racial writings, efforts that included both polemics and apologetics.

Thus, the Jewish engagement with race must be understood as the result of multiple forces, irreducible to one historical factor. The politics of antisemitism and nationalism were immediate driving forces, and we will return to these. Longer-term intellectual developments were also central in producing the conditions for a Jewish racial discourse. By the middle of the eighteenth century, at

the latest, naturalists and philosophers had begun to include human beings in the classificatory systems applied to the plant and animal worlds.¹⁵ Although not racial or racist per se, this sort of classification was instrumental in the development of racial thought. And more often than not, it did come with a fairly pronounced bias, creating not only divisions but also hierarchies that assumed white Europeans to be the apex of civilization and culture.

For example, in 1758 the Swedish naturalist Carl von Linné—generally known as Linnaeus—published the tenth and last edition of his great work *The System of Nature*. In it, Linnaeus classified *Homo sapiens* as a specific category of primates and then further divided it into six main categories, each with its own particular characteristics:

1. *Ferus* or Wild Man: on all fours, mute, hairy.
2. American (Indian): reddish, choleric, erect. Hair: black, straight, thick; Nostrils: wide; Face: harsh; Beard: scanty. Obstinate, merry, free. Paints himself with fine red lines. Regulated by customs.
3. European: white, sanguine, muscular. Hair: flowing, long. Eyes: blue. Gentle, acute, inventive. Covered with close vestments. Governed by laws.
4. Asian: sallow (ashen or pale), melancholy, stiff. Hair, black. Eyes, dark. Severe, haughty, avaricious. Covered with loose garments. Ruled by opinions.
5. African: Black, phlegmatic, relaxed. Hair: black, frizzled. Skin: silky. Nose: flat. Lips: tumid (bloated or puffy). Women without shame, *Mammae*; lactate profusely. Crafty, indolent, negligent. Anoints himself with grease. Governed by caprice.
6. Monstrous: Troglodytes.¹⁶

This classification includes many, though certainly not all, of the fundamental components of modern racial theory as it took shape in the eighteenth century. Human identity and development are approached in terms of natural science, and this classificatory framework demands that humans be described and defined, at a minimum, by their physical traits. Beyond this, though, already in Linnaeus we can see the link between science and aesthetics, between racial classification and judgments about beauty and ugliness, that was to become so central to racial thought. Moreover, we can see the link between science and morality, between racial classification and judgments about character and worth, as well as about the levels of civilization and culture—what philosophers used to call the “moral economy.” Thus, Europeans have long, flowing hair and blue

eyes, and are possessed of a gentle temperament; they are acute in judgment and inventive; finally, they are governed by laws. The other human races—red, yellow, and black—fall short of this white European ideal.

Where did the Jews fit in this early scheme? Linneaus does not mention them. But the logic of classification and hierarchy suggests, even demands, that Jews too be categorized. And indeed, very quickly Jews became of particular interest to naturalists, anthropologists, and others involved in the classificatory project. The “naturalization” of Jewish traits became far more widespread, a mainstay not only of literature and popular culture but also of science. “The Jews,” conceived of as a distinct entity or collective with their own essential physical and mental traits, became an object of research for scholars—including Jewish scholars—in the human sciences. In this sense, they constitute a vivid example of the social or cultural construction of race; we can see the Jews being made into a race through the discursive analyses produced about them.

The Jewish involvement with racial thought certainly must be understood as a response to, and participation in, this objectification or racialization of the Jews themselves—a process that began, many have argued, in the fifteenth century at the latest, only to reach its peak in the first half of the twentieth.¹⁷ Of course, racial thinking and racial science cannot be reduced to the discourse on Jews and race. The Jews were just one of the many “races” studied by social scientists. Nonetheless, given the long history of Jewish difference in Christian Europe, the Jews were also not just any other group. They were the objects of a racial science and mythology created in large measure by Christian European and American thinkers, who identified themselves as members of various racial subgroups that constituted the white or Caucasian race. Jews, obviously, were not Christians, and for most racial thinkers Jews also were not white—at least, not fully white. In Europe, historically, Jews were often cast as the embodiment or incarnation of the negative, the dangerous, and the degenerate. If the ideal of the good and the beautiful derived from, and was represented by, the art and ideals of the ancient Greeks, then the Hebrews represented the opposite.¹⁸ They were ugly and malformed, with long and beak-shaped noses, hunched backs, concave chests, and flat feet. Their physical deformities were said to have been accompanied by a host of mental and nervous disorders, everything from neurasthenia and idiocy (the former due to an excessive involvement in every form of modern, unhealthy economic and social activity; the latter a result of centuries-long inbreeding) to diabetes (known as a “Jewish disease”), gastritis, and hemorrhoids (the first two due to the purported inadequacies of the traditional Jewish

diet, among other things; the last to the long hours Jewish boys and men were required to sit on hard benches studying the Torah and Talmud). These physical, mental, and neurological disorders were taken, in turn, as evidence of a more fundamental moral degeneracy of the Jews.

It is important to note that not every researcher into issues of race who took up the question of the Jews did so in a spirit of hostility or antisemitism. There were many non-Jewish social scientists and thinkers who saw in the Jews a healthy, even superior, people—a racial or eugenic model for contemporary Christians. Had the Jews not maintained their collective identity over thousands of years? Had Moses not recognized thousands of years earlier the central importance of rules of hygiene and purity and set these forth in his laws? What were the laws of *kashrut*, circumcision, female hygiene, and the other rules found in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy if not the means by which the nation insured its physical as well as spiritual purity? Ezra, so the argument went, clearly understood the crucial role endogamous marriage plays in the maintenance of racial and national health and identity, and thus forbade intermarriage between Jews and others. Indeed, the Jews had raised the ideal of their separate identity and purity to a divine commandment. Thus, for many Christian as well as Jewish thinkers, the Jews were a perfect example of a racial or eugenic people.¹⁹

Thus, a racial analysis of Jews was not necessarily antisemitic. But as science assumed an authority and power to establish truth, antisemites increasingly invoked scientific language to frame their theories and to give their ideas a patina of objective rigor. Thus, one can speak of a scientific antisemitism, akin to a racial science, that employed the methods and arguments of anthropology, biology, statistics, medicine, economics, and history to construct a “truth” about the Jew. In seeking to understand the Jewish engagement with race, it is important to recall that a number of motives or impulses were at work, and racial antisemitism is only part of the explanation. Nonetheless, antisemitism, as it developed over the course of the nineteenth century, did indeed play a crucial role in eliciting a Jewish racial discourse. Racial science and racist mythology, when taken up by antisemites, became fundamental components of a larger ideological struggle to define the Jews as essentially different, and to limit or ban their participation in the modern nation-state. The idea of the essential or natural difference between the Jew and the Christian was nothing new. However, revolutionary transformations in intellectual, political, social, and economic life meant that the naturalization of the Jews would increasingly be framed in a different language, and the meaning and significance of that naturalization would change.

Racial Thought and Modern Jewish Identity

By the last half of the nineteenth century, some Jewish thinkers began to respond to the ongoing debate about “the Jewish race” and to racial antisemitism by producing scientific studies of their own.²⁰ These Jewish racial thinkers wrote about Jewish bodies and minds, and about Jewish social, economic, and cultural behavior. Like their non-Jewish counterparts, Jewish scientists took seriously what the statistics purportedly revealed about collective Jewish life. As the texts included in part 2, “Anthropology,” show, Jewish thinkers wove narratives from the data on the size of crania and chests; the shape of noses and the color of skin; and height and weight. Part 3, “Medicine and Biology,” takes up the issue of the susceptibility or resistance to particular diseases on the part of Jews, and the relevance of this to their racial identity. The texts contained in part 5, “Racial Mixing,” address historical and contemporary questions of sexual relations directly, though the issue of intermixture was so central to the concerns of Jewish racial thinkers that it is not surprising to encounter it in texts included in other parts.

Indeed, intermarriage, or what was often referred to as “racial intermixture,” went to the heart of the question of Jewish racial identity. Did the ancient Hebrew tribes that conquered parts of the land of Canaan intermingle sexually with the indigenous tribes? If so, to what extent? And what was the impact of such intermixture on the genetic makeup of the Jewish people? Similar questions have also been asked about later periods of Jewish history, up to and including the present. A related concern was the impact of conversions to Judaism, since this entailed the importation of “foreign blood” into the Jewish body. What impact did conversions to Judaism have on the Jewish collective—most famously, the conversion, sometime in the eighth or ninth century, of the Khazars to Judaism?

Jewish racial thinkers also took up the question of purported Jewish racial traits as they related to social and economic activities. Part 4, “Society and Economy,” offers examples of the debate over Jews and crime. Statistics seemed to show that Jews committed certain types of crime in greater numbers than their non-Jewish neighbors. Was this due to a racial predisposition, as many had argued, or should it be explained by sociological and historical factors? A similar debate ensued over Jewish economic or occupational patterns. The Jews were believed to be racially predisposed to capitalism, and thus to certain forms of making a living that revolved around the lending of money at interest, or buying and selling for profit. Again, was the claim that the Jews were genetically programmed for capitalist behavior accurate, or were certain occupational patterns

better explained by the history of the Jews in Europe and their relation to church and state?

From the myriad pieces of evidence produced about the Jewish body and mind, Jewish scholars sought to answer not only historical questions, but also larger questions about Jewish identity and difference, about the effects of modernity on the Jewish body and Jewish consciousness, and about the future of the Jewish collective.

Thus, by 1906, Arthur Ruppin, one of the most prominent and important Jewish social scientists writing in the first three decades of the twentieth century, could assert: "Almost all inquiries into the social, intellectual, and physical differences between Jews and Christians address the question of whether these differences have their root in the particular racial makeup or in the unique economic and political conditions of the Jews over the past two thousand years. One might, in fact, designate this question [the racial question] as the fundamental problem or issue of research about the Jews."²¹ This does not mean that all Jewish researchers and writers on the subject agreed on the fundamentals, let alone on the implications of racial theory for interpretations of Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life. At a time when the principles of heredity, of the transmission of traits over generations, and of course, of the relationship between nature and nurture, or biology and environment, were highly contested, Jews, too, could differ in their basic assumptions and approaches. We do, in fact, find examples of a biological or racial determinism within Jewish social scientific literature. This was the assertion that Jews possessed particular traits, and that such traits were better understood or explained as a product of race or biology than by culture or environment. Not surprisingly, perhaps, we usually see this when the author is discussing a purported positive or superior trait of the Jews: superior intelligence, talent, ability; the disinclination to alcoholism or physical violence; or immunity from particular diseases.

It was easier, of course, to subscribe to some sort of biological determinism, to a view of Jewish history based on heredity, when you were focusing on the purported positive or superior qualities of your people, and there is evidence of this scattered throughout the documents collected here. However, Jewish thinkers were confronted with a large body of scientific literature that had claimed to demonstrate objectively that the Jewish body and mind were diseased and degenerate. And it was this negative imagery that mattered more, since it undergirded a long-standing ambivalence on the part of many non-Jews toward Jewish emancipation and assimilation, a hostility to the presence of Jews that found

its way at certain times into the platforms of political parties and contributed to the continuing restrictions on the full participation of Jews in the workings of the state.

Thus, the discussion and debate over the Jews as a race was one element of a much broader debate about the identity of the Jews more generally, and the configuration of the modern nation-state, society, and culture. From the beginning of the debate over the place of the Jews in the modern nation, in the eighteenth century, those thinkers and public figures involved in it had to address a number of interrelated questions: What is a nation? What components or factors determine national belonging and identity? What are the Jews? What ultimately defines and determines their distinct identity and difference? Can they become full subjects or citizens of the nation-state, or is their difference from the majority so profound or essential as to make full membership impossible?

Matters of racial, religious, and national identity, and the interconnections between these, were fundamental to debates over Jewry. There was no one unequivocal answer to the questions raised above, either from Jewish or non-Jewish quarters. Indeed, each country in which Jews lived responded to the question of Jewish identity and difference in its own way, bringing to bear its own developing national traditions. At the same time, even within particular countries the approach to the Jewish minority was hardly homogeneous. A wide range of opinions could be found on the issue of the Jews as a race and nation, and whether or not Jewish integration and full equality were possible or desirable.

As Jews identified with their community or people, Jewish writers about race felt compelled to respond to those who employed racial ideas to construct an image of the diseased and dangerous Jew, and then used this negative image to make a case for reversing Jewish emancipation and assimilation. Jewish racial scientists assumed what the historian John Efron has called the role of “defenders of the race.”²² At the same time, they were critics, and their critique of “the Jews” was often severe. As scientists and scholars, or rabbis and public figures participating in a scientific debate, they accepted the data presented by science on the modern Jewish condition, including the data that showed Jews in a less than favorable light. Thus, in much of the Jewish racial writing, the Jews are represented as unhealthy, as a race or nation in decline.

At times, then, the images put forth by Jewish writers can seem surprisingly close to those used by antisemites at the time. However, while many or even most antisemitic writers embraced some version of an immutable or “eternal” Jewish

racial identity, Jewish thinkers could not accept the idea that the explanation for the damaged condition of Jewry resided in the nature of Jewry itself. They embraced an environmental and historical explanation for so-called racial traits. The vast majority of Jewish social thinkers in the decades before the 1930s did not reject biological determinism because it was scientifically wrong, or because it was politically incorrect or dangerous—that is, because it was frequently, though not always, aligned with right-wing, often antisemitic political movements. Rather, they rejected it because it could not serve their own particular political and social purposes.

Unlike a strict or strong hereditarian explanation for collective traits, the environmentalist tradition within the social and biological sciences opened up the possibility of progressive, meliorative change at the collective level. Theories of degeneration, it should be noted, also relied on a strong environmental framework; progress and decline were two sides of the same racist coin, and Jewish thinkers employed both related ideas in their work.²³ An environmental determinism allowed Jewish thinkers to admit the contemporary deficiencies of the Jews while simultaneously holding open the possibility of improvement in the future. And it cast the Jewish racial thinker in the role of expert, indispensable in this historical process of Jewish improvement. Jewish scientists would fill the roles of apologist and reformer, defending their own people from attacks by antisemites while offering suggestions for positive transformation based on their expert knowledge and the insights of science.

In other words, with regard to questions of race, Jews could accept the notion of a Jewish racial identity, rooted in common origins and even typical physical and mental characteristics—though they clearly recognized that Jews were not always identical in appearance. And they could accept the statistical and anecdotal evidence that demonstrated that contemporary Jewry had suffered a decline, that much of Jewry was “degenerate.” But what most Jewish social thinkers could not accept was a causal explanation for the Jewish condition rooted in a fixed, immutable racial or biological essence or identity. They could not accept the view that the Jews were degenerate *because they were Jews*. That, of course, would have made improvement impossible. It would have made social and racial scientific research into the Jewish condition nothing more than a quaint, antiquarian pastime, and it would have marked the social and political programs of reform—those of liberal integrationists or of Zionists—as futile and utopian.

Race and Jewish Politics

Racial texts were almost by definition politically charged, if not politically motivated. As we have seen, Jewish thinkers engaged with race partly in order to respond to a racialized antisemitism. Yet this was only one of the political or ideological uses to which racial thought could be put. Racial thought also played a role in intra-Jewish politics, most notably in the arguments between Zionists and so-called assimilationists.

The idea that the Jews constituted a race seemed especially attractive to Zionists. Embracing this notion allowed Zionists to redefine the Jews as more than just a collective held together by a common religious faith; they were a people, a Volk,²⁴ in the anthropological sense. If the Jews were a race, that meant that their identity hinged not solely on the subjective willingness of individuals to remain tied to the group but on objective, material realities, on bones and blood.

However, racial ideas offered Zionists more than just a way to demonstrate Jewish identity and unity. It also helped them clarify the urgency of the nationalist cause. The Jews were an ethnic group, a nation, a race essentially different from other nations with whom they had been asked, or forced, to integrate or assimilate. Yet Jewish identity, continuity, and survival were seen as under attack. The source of the threat was not, however, the traditional enemies of the Jews, the antisemites. The gravest danger now, in Europe and the United States, was not animosity but benevolence; not the distance and isolation that came with religious or racial antipathy, but the social and sexual mixing that came with the breakdown of barriers. Jewish elites were now not only being forced to confront the age-old problem of hatred of Jews—though this remained a palpable threat—but the recent, and for some far more difficult, challenges of freedom, acceptance, and material well-being or affluence.

The answer to this challenge or problem of assimilation, at least for the Zionists, was the re-isolation of Jews socially and culturally, in their own land, within their own commonwealth or state. This, Zionists insisted, would guarantee the continuity and survival of the Jewish people, while at the same time allowing the Jewish Volk to take its rightful place in the community of nations as a fully independent people. Zionism, in fact, was proposed as the only viable solution to the threat to Jewish collective survival. And race was seen as a necessary component of this national revival. Not all Zionist thinkers embraced such racialist notions, as the selection in this volume by Robert Weltsch testifies. Nonetheless, racial ideas and images proved quite attractive to many Jewish nationalists, offering

them a language with which to define Jewishness as an objective fact, a matter of biology and history as well as subjective will. Moreover, the fact that racial thinking was closely aligned with science, that it drew much of its content—as well as whatever claim it had to mainstream legitimacy—from the natural and social sciences, was also attractive to Zionism, a movement that portrayed itself as scientific.²⁵

In defining the Jews as a nation with its own particular—even unique—physical and mental attributes, Jewish nationalists believed they had refuted the older emancipationist assertion that Jewish identity and difference consisted almost entirely of religious adherence and sensibility. The Jews, in this view, were a *Glaubensgemeinschaft*, a community defined by a shared faith; religious faith was, in the end, the only thing that separated Jews from non-Jews. This notion had been central to the emancipatory and integratory project that Jews had made their own since the late eighteenth century. The modern nation-state, rooted in the commitment to breaking down the older forms of corporate identity and communal structure, demanded that Jews become citizens, that they fully embrace their identities as members of the nation-state and society—in other words, Germany, France, Italy, and so on. This demand left little room for a concomitant attachment to an ancient homeland and a dream of resurgent Jewish sovereignty. Thus, Jews set about becoming citizens. This did not occur overnight, nor did it happen in a uniform or homogeneous manner. As Todd Endelman, a historian of British Jewry, and others have shown, different national Jewish communities integrated in different ways.²⁶ Yet in each case, it did entail some emendation of the traditional Jewish belief that living outside of the Land of Israel constituted exile; that Jewish life in the Diaspora was a temporary and deficient condition, a product of either divine punishment or political defeat; and that at some future time a messiah would appear to lead the Jews back to the Land of Israel and return them to an independent nation-state. Why, many non-Jewish commentators wondered, would the Jews continue to believe in their own exile and pray to be returned to the Land of Israel if, as they insist, they love their new motherland or fatherland as much as they claim? Does insisting on a continued Jewish national identity not fly in the face of their identities as citizens? The argument that the only thing that differentiated Jews from their fellow citizens was religion—that in all other ways, Jews were as French or German or English as any other citizen—solved the problem of national identity. Or so the majority of Jews believed.

Regardless of the subjective belief of the Jews that they were, despite religious

differences, just as German or French as their Christian neighbors, many of their non-Jewish compatriots disputed this. The civic or legal emancipation of the Jews in Europe that began in France in 1789 and continued into the late nineteenth century did not do away with the challenge of Jewish integration; rather, it produced the conditions for this challenge. And for those opposed to Jewish equality, race became a critical tool in the anti-egalitarian arsenal. Racialism offered purportedly objective markers of collective identity and difference that would counter the subjective self-understanding of “inferior” groups and their advocates. Racial antisemitism, like racism in general, posited that difference lay in the blood, the body and mind, the physiological and nervous systems. You can change your religion, but you cannot change your ancestry, your blood, what today we would call your genetic makeup. Thus, race was a particularly useful weapon for those who insisted that the Jews remained, and ought to remain, separate and inferior despite all their efforts to assimilate, and despite all the rhetoric of equality.

At some level, Jewish nationalists accepted the argument that the differences between Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors were so vast, and anti-Jewish sentiment so deep, that the dream of Jewish integration and equality was a chimera (though, as we shall see, Jewish nationalists firmly rejected the antisemitic belief that the Jews were racially inferior). Other Jewish social thinkers, committed to Jewish integration into the larger, non-Jewish society and culture, obviously disagreed with the nationalist, particularly Zionist, analyses. Yet this in no way meant that non-Zionists were not also involved in researching and analyzing Jews along racial lines.

A Jewish racial identity could and did serve a liberal or integrationist agenda just as well as a nationalist one. The Anglo-Jewish scholar Joseph Jacobs, for instance, insisted that the Jews were a pure race, and he believed that this purity helped guarantee the Jews’ nobility and thus their qualification for full participation in English society. (In this belief, Jacobs was echoing to some extent an argument made in the middle of the seventeenth century by the Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel. In writing to Oliver Cromwell, urging him to readmit the Jews into England, Menasseh lists “the nobleness and purity of their blood” as one of the three attributes that recommend the Jews as trustworthy and productive inhabitants of a country.²⁷)

Others, such as Isidore Loeb in France and Maurice Fishberg in the United States, repudiated the idea of a pure Jewish race, arguing instead that the Jews were the product of a two-millennia-long process of intermixture with the various populations in whose midst they lived. Loeb insisted that all groups

or nations were the product of racial mixing that reached back to prehistory. The idea and ideal of racial purity were pernicious errors. National and cultural superiority came not from purity but from diversity, from the amalgamation of as many different races as possible. Accordingly, the argument that the Jews could not and should not fully integrate into Europe because they constituted a distinct race was baseless: “There is not a single people in Europe whose race is absolutely pure. The racial objection [to equal rights] pitted against the Jews is thus without merit and self-defeating.”²⁸ Loeb did not reject the reality of distinct races in general, or the idea that Jewish identity was in part racial. He spoke of “Jewish blood” and “Aryan blood” as if they actually existed. Rather, he rejected the argument that the Jews were a pure race, and that their racial identity prohibited them from becoming full-fledged Frenchmen, Germans, and so forth.

Nor did Maurice Fishberg altogether reject the idea that the Jews constituted a race; rather, he too insisted on the fluidity of this identity. For Fishberg, whose work came to be seen as representative of the integrationist position, the Jews’ strength and health as a race or people resided in their ability to assimilate, to adapt and thrive in new and different environments. In Darwinian terms (which Fishberg, like many other Jewish thinkers, readily employed), the Jews were a model of adaptation and survival. Assimilation, therefore, was not a danger, but a necessity and a virtue.

Thus, as important as the defensive or apologetic impulse was for Jewish thinkers engaged with questions of race, it alone cannot explain the lure that racial ideas held for many Jews. Intra-Jewish politics, especially the ideological struggles over the most pressing questions of modern Jewish collective life, also played a substantial role in making racial ideas attractive. Although some political or ideological impulse can be identified in almost all of the texts included here, those contained in the final part of this book, “Politics,” were chosen for their explicitly political engagement. These offer a glimpse of the role that race played in contemporary debates between Jewish thinkers and antisemitic racialists or nativist opponents of immigration, between advocates of Jewish integration and nationalists committed to Zionism, and, in some cases, between individuals or factions within the same political movement.

Race and Cultural Worth

There are a number of things, therefore, that help explain the attraction of racial ideas for many Jews. Yet, as noted repeatedly, Jewish racial thinking in the period between 1880 and 1940 cannot be understood without reference to

antisemitism. Jewish thinkers considered racial language and imagery to be a powerful weapon that Jews possessed in the struggle against antisemitism. Thus, Jewish racial thinking was born of both self-defense and self-criticism—of the intellectual and political engagement and struggle of Jews with the wider world and of ideological battles waged among Jews themselves.

Racial antisemites posited a natural, innate difference and hostility between Jews (or Semites) and so-called Aryans. Moreover, they insisted on the natural superiority of Aryans. Central to the argument was the insistence on a connection between race and culture, and the idea that only Aryans—particularly Teutonic or Germanic Aryans—were capable of producing genuine culture. Jews, these antisemites asserted, could mimic culture and could buy and sell cultural products, but they could not produce it in any meaningful way. They lacked the capacity for “genius” in the arts, as the nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner put it in his famous essay on Jews and music.²⁹ In fact, according to one strain of this argument, anything of worth or value in the history of civilization could only have been brought forth by Aryans. Civilization, then, became synonymous with one particular race.

What followed from this was that other races—particularly the Jews, at least in Europe—represented the antithesis of all that was civilized and cultured. The antisemitic argument about racial nature and culture had a comforting circularity about it: As naturally inferior, Jews by definition could not have participated in the development of civilization; that they have contributed nothing to civilization demonstrates their natural inferiority. This all went to prove, in the minds of antisemites, that the granting to Jews of their civic rights and efforts to integrate them into European society in the name of equality were dangerously naive and misplaced.

Of course, Jewish racial thinkers, like Jews in general, could not accept this notion of a natural Jewish inferiority and inequality. They might argue among themselves about the desirability of assimilation and the feasibility of the Zionist enterprise, but they agreed that the Jews, as a historical people or Volk, were equal, if not superior, to all other civilized nations—especially Anglo-Saxons and Aryans. Jewish thinkers, whether Zionist or integrationist, took it on themselves to refute the widespread and popular notion of Aryan superiority.

Indeed, a driving force behind the production of Jewish racial texts was the need that many Jews felt to address the question of the value or worth of the Jewish people. Again, these Jewish racial thinkers did not challenge the legitimacy of the intellectual enterprise itself; in this case, they did not dispute the category

of racial worth. Rather, they sought to overturn the judgment that the Jews were an unworthy or inferior race. The terms of the debate over national character and national survival and worth had been set by non-Jewish thinkers and can be traced back in large measure to the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder—though Herder, it should be made clear, was not a racial thinker, at least not in the nineteenth-century mode. Herder certainly evinced a highly ambivalent attitude toward the Jews. Yet he did articulate in the eighteenth century a philosophy of culture and of national or Volk identity that rested on an appreciation of what was unique about different groups, the Jews included. He advanced an alternative to the Enlightenment universalism that had left little room for protracted or permanent difference. Herder embraced difference at the collective level and understood difference or particularism as a necessary component of the universal. He put forth the idea that the Hebrews had indeed contributed something unique and valuable to the world.

For Jewish thinkers engaged with this question of national or racial worth, the notion that the ancient Hebrews, together with modern Jews, had something unique to offer the world, and that this justified their continued survival as a distinct Volk, held enormous power and appeal. It was a position that Jewish thinkers accepted a priori but also felt compelled to demonstrate scientifically.

As a number of the selections in the final part show, one important element of Jewish racial thought came to be the articulation of the Jews' uniqueness, their distinct collective identity, and the specific contributions to civilization that flowed from this. This was supposed to provide evidence of the Jews' racial and cultural worth, point to the likelihood of their future contributions, and thus justify their continued existence as a collective with a distinct identity.

Jews and Race into the Present

Jewish racial thinking was hardly universal: many Jews were undoubtedly ignorant of it, and many actively repudiated it. Nonetheless, it was a far more widespread phenomenon than most general histories of either modern Jewish or racial thought acknowledge. And it was normative, accepted by Jews as well as non-Jews as a valid means by which to discuss Jewish identity and difference, and their political and social implications.

Still, it must be admitted that the idea of Jews being involved in racial thinking produces an initial disorientation, a sense of incompatibility of categories. Jews were victims of racial ideas and racist actions; modern antisemitism is constructed out of racialist principles about the Jews' immutable body and

spirit. Ultimately, of course, it is the Holocaust that gives Jewish racial thinking, especially when it emerges in Europe, its strange—even paradoxical—quality. We have a sense of almost inherent contradiction, of an inversion that somehow doesn't quite make sense. How could Jews, who at least in Europe were the ultimate victims of racial discourse and practice, also have been believers in and practitioners of this way of looking at the world? And yet they were.

If we are going to arrive at an adequate understanding of Jewish racial thinking, we need to bracket the Holocaust—set it aside, or move behind or before it. All of the documents contained in this volume were produced before the Holocaust, and most before the Nazis' rise to power. They need to be read and interpreted with this fact constantly in mind.

We might imagine that the central role played by racial antisemitism in the ideology of Nazism and in the Holocaust would have placed any notion of a Jewish race entirely out of bounds in the post-Holocaust world. And this does seem to have been the case for about half a century. Invoking the Jewish race so soon after the revelations of the death camps to talk about Jewish identity could only invoke the enormous crimes committed in the name of racial difference. Even the scholarly efforts represented in this volume, in which Jews engaged seriously with arguments about the Jewish race, have seemed to be too incongruous and problematic, and thus for the most part have been ignored.³⁰

Yet, as scholars such as Susan Glenn and David Biale have argued, it would be a mistake to imagine that “blood narratives have lost their relevance to discussions of modern Jewish identity.” Some remnant of racial thinking appears to have survived among many Jews. Even though such thinking may have been submerged or made invisible for fifty years, many Jews still “think with blood” about Jewish belonging. What Glenn calls “blood logic” still seems to be at work: “Throughout all of the de-racializing stages of twentieth-century social thought, Jews have continued to invoke blood logic as a way of defining and maintaining group identity.”³¹

The matter of Jews and race is, therefore, of contemporary as well as historical significance, certainly for Jews. We began with A. B. Yehoshua's assertion that the Jews are not a race and that they never considered themselves as such. As even a denial of this sort indicates, the relationship of Jews to race continues to play some role in Jewish self-perceptions. In Yehoshua's case, it is the negation of such a connection that is desirable. This is understandable, given the injustices and horrors committed against Jews in the name of race. However, as others have demonstrated, the notion of a Jewish race nevertheless continues to appeal

to many Jews today; interestingly, it is no longer an idea that demands to be immediately dismissed or denounced.

The question “What are the Jews?”—a religion, a nation, an ethnic group, a race, or some combination of all these and more—continues to preoccupy many people, Jews and non-Jews alike. And biological and genetic arguments possess a power for many Jews as they seek to explain to themselves and others just what it is that constitutes Jewishness. This genetic understanding of identity has been validated or reinforced for many by the numerous studies that appear to demonstrate a connection between specific genetic communities or subcommunities, such as Ashkenazic Jewish women, and certain diseases such as breast cancer, or the studies that purport to show a genetic link between the ancient Jewish priestly class, *Kohanim*, and Jews living today who claim priestly descent (a notion already present in the essay by Redcliffe N. Salaman reproduced in this volume). In this sense, “race” is a significant component not only of scholarly or academic modern Jewish thought, but also of popular or everyday Jewish thought. It is one of the building blocks of contemporary Jewish identity construction, even if there are many who would dispute the applicability of biological or racial categories to Jews. To be sure, given the enormous developments in genetic and biological knowledge over the past eighty years, the information and analyses contained in the primary sources presented here can offer little to those who believe in and seek illumination about the genetic identity of Jews in the present. What these documents offer, instead, is evidence of a time when the shapes of skulls and noses and the colors of eyes and hair; questions of racial purity and mixture; and hereditary predispositions to certain types of social, political, and economic behavior were central to the most pressing questions being asked about the place of Jews in the modern world.

A final, brief remark about the selection of documents. The writings included here represent a small percentage of the material published by Jewish thinkers on race. As such, these texts are intended to be suggestive, not exhaustive—chosen to provide an introduction to the major themes and arguments. For the most part, they are rather obscure and not readily available. This is intentional. Most have not been translated into English before. Numerous texts have been omitted (including works of fiction), most because of limitations of space, and some of the better known because they are already available in English. Thus, selections from the works of Moses Hess, Benjamin Disraeli, Franz Rosenzweig,

and Franz Boas all deserve a prominent place in any discussion of Jews writing on race. Yet these were either originally written in English or have already been translated and are relatively easy to obtain. This is also true of less well-known pieces such as Max Reichler's essay "Jewish Eugenics," which is now available on the Internet (as are the two selections by Joseph Jacobs). Maurice Fishberg is an exception. His *Jews, Race, and Environment* is in print. Yet Fishberg's voice was such an important and influential one that it seemed necessary to include him in this volume.

Almost all the selections were written by individuals (all male) who were publicly identified as Jews. In two cases, I could not determine the background of the writer but included the pieces nonetheless, both because of the interest of the material contained in them and because they appeared in a journal, *Zeitschrift für die Demographie und Statistik der Juden* (The journal of demography and statistics of the Jews), that was explicitly identified as a Jewish journal. In their own way, then, they constitute a specific sort of Jewish thought or knowledge—or at least, they raise yet again the question of the limits or contours of these categories. Finally, in order to distinguish notes in the original from my own, I've placed my notes in square brackets.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the editor.

Notes

1. A. B. Yehoshua, "Who Is a Jew?," *Contemplate* 3 (2005–6): 73.
2. Steven Kaplan, "If There Are No Races, How Can the Jews Be a 'Race?'," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 2, no. 1 (2003): 79–96. On the argument that there are no biological races, see also James C. King, *The Biology of Race* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Alain F. Corcos, *The Myth of the Jewish Race: A Biologist's Point of View* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 2005); Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–18.
3. Ian Hacking, "Genetics, Biosocial Groups, and the Future of Identity," *Daedalus* 135, no. 4 (2006): 86. For a recent example of a "genetic history" of the Jews, see David B. Goldstein, *Jacob's Legacy: A Genetic View of Jewish History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
4. See Nadia Abu El-Haj, "The Genetic Reinscription of Race," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36 (2007): 283–300.
5. It is important to note that the sources collected here are limited to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and largely, though not entirely, to Central and Western Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. (The selections by Elkind and Weissenberg, though translated from the German, were written by Jewish social scientists living and working in Eastern Europe.) Jews, however, were deeply engaged with questions of race and identity in earlier centuries, and in many different parts of the world during the early modern and mod-

ern periods. Jonathan Schorsch has provided a wealth of evidence demonstrating the Jewish engagement with racial thinking in the early modern period, in both Europe and the Americas. See his two major works, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and *Swimming the Christian Atlantic* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2009). Eugene Avrutin explores the racialization of Jews, by both non-Jewish and Jewish intellectuals, in late imperial Russia in “Racial Categories and the Politics of (Jewish) Difference in Late Imperial Russia,” *Kritika* 8, no. 1 (2007): 13–40. Robert Weinberg has examined the uses to which Jewish scientists put racial and eugenic ideas in the 1920s in the Soviet Union. See his “Biology and the Jewish Question after the Revolution: One Soviet Approach to the Productivization of Jewish Labor,” *Jewish History* 21, nos. 3–4 (2007): 413–28.

6. The more general question of the complex relationship between race and religion is taken up by Gil Anidjar in *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), a work that brilliantly explores how the categories of “race” and “religion” came to be constituted, and for what purposes and to what effects.

7. Endogamy, or marrying only within one’s own group, was often called “inbreeding” in the racial literature. This has nothing to do with incestuous relations, a connotation that the English word “inbreeding” may carry.

8. See the selection by Theilhaber in this volume.

9. See the selection by Feist in this volume.

10. See the section on further readings at the end of this book for a list of those scholars who have explored Jewish thinking on race. Of particular importance has been the work of Sander Gilman, who has done the most to set the terms of discussion and to demonstrate that Jewish racial thought extended far beyond a few Jewish thinkers.

11. Gershom Scholem, quoted in David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 154.

12. Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish Is Jewish History?* (London: Littman, 2007), 47.

13. Nancy Leys Stepan and Sander Gilman, “Appropriating the Idioms of Science: The Rejection of Scientific Racism,” in *The Racial Economy of Science*, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 170–93.

14. Sander Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

15. The use of the animal world as a model for thinking about human traits and differences in ways that we might call “racial” reaches further back, at least into the sixteenth century. On the influence of animal breeding on the emergence of racial thought, see Charles de Miramon, “Noble Dogs, Noble Blood: The Invention of the Concept of Race in the Late Middle Ages,” in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 200–216.

16. Carl von Linné, excerpt from *The System of Nature*, in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 2008), 13. I have slightly amended the original wording.

17. Just when to begin the history of this racialization process is a difficult question, since historians do not agree on when the idea of race began. Many now believe that racial thinking existed in the ancient world; others continue to insist that true racial thinking began only in the early modern or modern periods, in the sixteenth century or later. For a few examples

of the naturalization of Jewish traits in the Middle Ages, see Peter Biller, "A Scientific View of Jews from Paris around 1300," in *Micrologus* 9 (2001):137–68. On the larger question of when racial thinking and racism began, see the essays collected in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Ziegler.

18. On the relationship between racial thinking and aesthetics, see George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

19. See Mitchell B. Hart, *The Healthy Jew: The Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

20. Jews were not the only minority group to do this. Native Americans and African Americans also produced studies in which they accepted fundamental aspects of racial thought while using it to respond to negative images and evaluations of their group. For instance, the African-American writer Martin Delany linked the Hebrew word for man, *adam*, with the word for red, *adom*, and saw this as scientific evidence that the original man was "clay color or yellow, more resembling that of the lightest of the pure-blooded North American Indians." This allowed Delany, as Colin Kidd has argued, to refute the dominant narrative of a white Adam and thus "undermine white pretensions." On Delany and others who argued in a similar vein, see Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The quotation from Delany and Kidd's comment appears on pages 31–32. See also Gilman and Stepan, "Appropriating the Idioms of Science."

21. Arthur Ruppin, "Begabungsunterschiede christlicher und jüdischer Kinder," *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* 2, nos. 8–9 (1906): 129.

22. John Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

23. For a detailed discussion of the theory of degeneration in the Jewish context, see Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2007). For the history of the idea of degeneration more generally, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

24. Throughout the German-language texts translated in this volume, I have chosen to retain the original word "Volk" (plural: "Völker"). It is one of a number of German terms whose resonance in the original does not carry over into English. In this case, the English word "folk" fails to capture the nationalist and racist components of the German. And though "Volk" can refer to "nation," "race," or "people," none of these English words quite captures the fullness of "Volk."

25. See Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 338–50.

26. See Endelman's groundbreaking *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002). This edition contains a valuable preface in which Endelman articulates the historiographical contribution of his work and its impact on our thinking about how integration unfolded. See also the essays collected in *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model*, ed. Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1987) and in *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, ed. Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

27. Menasseh ben Israel, "How Profitable the Nation of the Jews Are" (1655), in *The Jew in the Modern World*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1995), 10.

28. See the selection by Loeb in this volume.

29. Wagner's "Das Judenthum in der Musik" (Jewry in music) was published anonymously in 1850. Selections of this essay can be found in English in *The Jew in the Modern World*, ed. Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 327–31.

30. The major exception to this was the eminent historian George Mosse. See his "The Influence of the Völkish Idea on German Jewry," in *Studies of the Leo Baeck Institute*, ed. Max Kreutzberger (New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1967), 1:81–114. See also Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), chapter one; and the writings of Joachim Doron, who produced a doctoral dissertation in 1977 at Tel-Aviv University that dealt with the appropriation of racial ideas and images by Zionism. For a summary of Doron's arguments, see his "Classic Zionism and Modern Antisemitism: Parallels and Influences (1883–1914)," *Studies in Zionism* 8 (Autumn 1983): 169–204.

31. Susan Glenn, "In the Blood? Consent, Descent, and the Ironies of Jewish Identity," *Jewish Social Studies* 8, nos. 2–3 (2002): 139–40. See also David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).