Jewish Thought Adrift

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Part Three

A Memoir of German Judaism

The Book

Wiener wrote his book, *Judaism in the Age of Emancipation*, in the hope that it would gain him entrance into the faculty of the University of Berlin. The year he completed it, however, 1933, was the same year Jews were expelled from the halls of German universities. The book, a penetrating history of Jewish religious thought and theory, became a refugee, like its author. Nevertheless, more than five decades later it is still esteemed by many as a standard work, the best work on this period of Jewish religious history.\(^1\) It found its way to Israel, where it was translated into Hebrew in 1974. Sympathetic critics have recognized that Wiener documents the failure of the religious movements of the nineteenth century to reconstruct Judaism from the ruins of the eighteenth, and that he thus prepares the theological ground for the Zionist enterprise.\(^2\) In Orthodox

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\(^{1}\) *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia*, vol. 10, 329. I thank Theodore Wiener for the reference.

circles, its sensitive portrayal of orthodox piety has been appreciated.\textsuperscript{3} It has also gained recognition for its impartial treatment of the Reform movement.\textsuperscript{4}

The book is a bold analysis of the transformation of Judaism in the modern era, and has been largely ignored in the world of Anglo-Jewish letters. Wiener argues that the emancipation of the Jews was a social and political phenomenon which precipitated an irreparable rupture on the religious plane: it brought on the demise of halakhah. He envisions the pre-Emancipatory era, the Jewish middle ages, as an age of wholeness in which halakhah functioned as an all-encompassing system, a life-context. This wholeness was fractured by the Emancipation. On a pragmatic plane, the curtailment of the authority of rabbinical law was the price of admission to the rights of citizenship in modern Europe.\textsuperscript{5} Wiener's argument, however, is that the pragmatic change in political status required more than a mere pragmatic response, and that one fails to understand the religious movements of the nineteenth century if one understands them only as efforts at pragmatic, or even opportunistic accommodation to changed social conditions. The social change compelled Jews—or ought to have compelled them—to forge a new idea of religion. Until the Emancipation, halakhah was simply the given medium of Jewish life; the principle of the halakhic way of life had never been challenged or questioned. It had never been, and could never have been, "a problem."\textsuperscript{6} Now, however, it had become one.

\textsuperscript{3}See Mordechai Breuer, \textit{Jüdische Orthodoxie im deutschen Reich 1871-1918} (Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum [Jüdischer Verlag], 1986), 154, where Breuer attests to Wiener's "profound understanding" of Orthodoxy.

\textsuperscript{4}In the bibliographical essay appended to his \textit{Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism}, Michael A. Meyer writes that "Wiener's treatment of the subject represented an important breakthrough. For the first time [in the history of books on the Reform movement], the author's own predisposition was not a significant factor. Wiener did not write as the partisan of any one faction in modern Jewry and therefore was remarkably able to see the strengths and weaknesses of competing positions." (476f.) It is true that Wiener has an uncanny sense for such strengths and weaknesses, but equally true that his own position is made clear in the book, as this exposition will show. Arthur Hertzberg, in one of his published lectures, calls Wiener's book "a very important book...that hardly anyone has read." He writes: "Max Wiener makes the point that those who were trying to maintain Jewish life after the Emancipation did so in a posthalakhic, postbelieving age. The preservative movements of Jewish modernity, those which wanted to find a reason for continuing some form of separate Jewish life, are thus a set of substitutes for the earlier unquestioning faith in the divinity of the revealed traditions." "Varieties of Jewish Modernity," in Arthur Hertzberg, \textit{Being Jewish in Modernity} (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 8.

\textsuperscript{5}JRZE, 27.

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 34.
This, according to Wiener, is the particular Jewish variant of the general transformation which religion underwent upon crossing the threshold between the middle ages and modernity. Religion relinquished its exalted position as the unifying principle of culture and became a particular, discrete sphere of existence. Vanished was the wholeness of the middle ages.\(^7\)

This characterization of the difference between medieval and modern culture was commonplace in German historiography. Jacob Burckhardt speaks in his *Culture of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) of the unity of the medieval mind, in which people saw themselves not as individuals, but only as a part of an organic whole, be it of a race, a people, or a corporation. Only in the Renaissance did the individual become conscious of itself.\(^8\) Closer to Wiener’s generation, Ernst Troeltsch distinguishes medieval Christian culture from its modern successor in similar terms, calling the former a “Church-civilization.” Everywhere modern civilization opposes it and “is substituting for it ideals of civilization independently arrived at, the authority of which depends on their inherent and immediate capacity to produce conviction.” The church functions as a “bond of union.” When it disappears, “the immediate consequence is a splitting up...”\(^9\)

Wiener argues, however, that there is a distinction between the Christian and Jewish versions of this transition. In the middle ages both Christianity and Judaism were “holistic cultures.”\(^10\) In Christianity the fragmentation of this holistic culture was gradual, whereas in Judaism it was abrupt and sudden. In Christianity the movement toward change originated from within, whereas in Judaism it came from without.

The Christian world underwent a transformation beginning with the Renaissance and the age of Humanism which can only be described as an emancipation from the autocratic rule of religious values. The religious difference between this general European emancipation and the Jewish emancipation, however, is clear. In the extra-Jewish sphere, this change took place in a particular way. In part, the secularization of the totality of life was a consequence of the further development of the idea of religion itself, similar to the consequences of the Reformation for the medieval spirit. In part, changes in social conditions and world-view brought about changes in religion. In either case, it was an internal process taking place in one society.... In Judaism,

\(^7\)Ibid., 5.

\(^8\)Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860; reprint, Vienna: Phaidon Verlag, n.d.), 76.


\(^10\)“Einheitskulturen,”JRZE, 6.
however, the decisive impulse came from without. As a result of the transformed circumstances in the surrounding world, the whole organism of Judaism was confronted with a new situation. The new problems were not intrinsic, but were imposed on Judaism by momentous intellectual and cultural upheavals in Europe which either washed away Judaism's previous existence or dislodged its foundation. Hence, religious life, embedded in the social, was drawn into powerful currents and eddies which were produced from without.11

In this way the Jews were thrust into the “post-halakhic age,” suddenly, and unprepared. The task of constructing a new conception of religion was thrust upon Judaism by the flood-tides of modernity, which traditional religious society could not withstand.12

As Wiener tours the Emancipation era, describing the attempts at this reconstruction, one senses an air of nostalgia for the middle ages, for the harmony of life under halakhah, real or romanticized, for le temps perdu. The Jewish middle ages is seen not so much as a “vale of tears,” but as a period in which Jews were still firmly rooted in the soil of national life. Like the medievals of Burckhardt’s vision, Jews saw themselves as part of an organic whole.13

Wiener, among thinkers with Zionist inclinations, was not alone in this wistful view of the ghetto of the middle ages. Max Nordau, in a speech before the Zionist Congress, muses upon the ghetto as a manifestation of autonomous Jewish life.14 Before the intrusion of modernity, life was whole. There, as in Wiener, one senses that a polarity is being exaggerated, and both Nordau and Wiener display something of what Peter Gay has identified as the “hunger for wholeness” which permeates Weimar culture.15

11Ibid., 27.
12It is worth noting that Jacob Katz, in his Tradition and Crisis (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1961), writes the social history of the Jews at the end of the middle ages from a parallel point of view. Medieval Jewish society was a traditional society, “a type of society which regards its existence as based on a common body of knowledge and values handed down from the past.” (3) While Wiener offers only an historiographical sketch, Katz documents these political changes. (247f.) Wiener’s book, which is included in the select bibliography of Katz’ English edition, may well have influenced the plan of Katz’ study.
13“National” is, in this context, less a political term than a religious and cultural one, referring to the cohesion of the “Jewish nation.” This conception of Jewish history we find echoed in Katz’ claim that the national unity of the Jewish people is an “indisputable fact,” reflected in the history of its middle ages. Ibid., 7-9.
Indeed, the very word *halakhah* takes on a valence in Wiener’s book which confirms this impression. *Halakhah* refers not only to the corpus of rabbinic law and its observance. It is Jewish life itself, a “system of existence” which has formed the character of Judaism.\(^{16}\)

The position of religious law as the backbone of the totality of Jewish life is so firmly and clearly established in all periods of Jewish history, that it appears as the fixed form which assimilates to itself all ideas and strivings...The *Halakhah* has always been sensed to be the reality of Judaism.\(^{17}\)

Wiener uses *halakhah* as an all-embracing category, as a principle of the “wholeness” of traditional Jewish life. It becomes a term for Jewish life itself, a way of life prescribed by law, “a system of existence.”\(^{18}\) It becomes apparent why, in Wiener’s scheme, the breach of this way of life brought about by the Emancipation necessarily precipitated a religious crisis. *Halakhah* is anchored, after all, in the bedrock of revelation. Wiener’s own position provides the backdrop here: in Judaism revelation becomes articulate as law. If religious law is undermined, the validity of revelation is undermined as well.\(^{19}\) The Emancipation was a social and political earthquake which shook the edifice of the *halakhah*. Its aftershock on the theological plane threatened to claim another victim: the belief in revelation. Inasmuch as Wiener sees the Emancipation in this light, as a socio-political process with a profound, destructive theological impact, there is a certain pathos in the largely dispassionate text of this book.

Because it is this problem which engages Wiener, he set out to write a book which would be more than yet another discussion of the liturgical reforms of the nineteenth century as a manifestation of religious change. He wants to probe the “inner processes of change within the religion itself.”\(^{20}\)

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\(^{16}\) Note the use of the term, for example, in *JRZE*, 40, *halakhah* as “gesetzlich formulierte Lebensordnung,” and on 113, in Wiener’s juxtaposition of “halakhic” and “philosophical” piety.

\(^{17}\) *JRZE*, 28. “Fixed form” renders “geprägte Form,” an allusion to Goethe’s poem “Daimon,” (in his “Urworte. Orphisch”) which is a veritable celebration of the idea of organic growth. The *daimon* is the “fixed form.” “Und keine Zeit und keine Macht zerstückelt / Geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt.”


Civil Emancipation assumed here the character of a spiritual movement, which not only led out of Judaism, but also made a serious effort to rejuvenate its ideas and vitality.\footnote{Ibid., 3.}

Wiener describes these attempts at rejuvenation, as signals of the beginning of a new epoch. His thesis:

> We believe that the religious-spiritual history of Judaism [in this period] represents, in fact, an entirely new edifice, a reconstruction from the ruins left behind when Judaism collapsed. \[It represents\] not an unbroken, straight continuation, but a selective creation of new realities from possibilities contained in the old.\footnote{Ibid., 24.}

Wiener’s specific question, then, is this: whether these new creations of the Emancipation era succeeded in forging a new principle of Judaism, a surrogate for the principle of halakhic piety which had been the sinew of Jewish life, and which was buried in the ruins of the Judaism that was. He measures the religious movements of the nineteenth century by their success or failure in establishing a new “critical principle of religion” which could function in the post-halakhic age as the halakah had functioned before.

The inquiry is not historically exhaustive. Wiener seeks instead to provide a survey of typical forms in the struggle for a new “principle” of Jewish religion. To be sure, the fact that, with the exception of S. D. Luzzatto, all the typical personalities and movements he includes are German, makes the book appear to be not so much an account of the Judaism in Europe during the age of Emancipation as a memoir of German Judaism alone. Chronologically, the veritable eruption of Jewish nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century marked, for Wiener, the end of the Emancipation era. The books presents, then, one epoch. The events of Wiener’s own day loomed forebodingly over its publication and cast their shadow over the foreword, which, written in September, 1933, closes with these words:

> The structure of this book was prepared long before the tragic events of our day befell German Judaism. Present experience, therefore, has not influenced its form. To be sure, religious life operates according to its own laws and occupies its own spiritual sphere. However, the sphere of its existence is not hermetically sealed off. When we consider the immense influence exercised by the external fate of the Jews in the last century on the earnest—and not always opportunistic—endeavors to endow Judaism with contemporary meaning, then we are justified in the assumption that the experiences of the present will have
their effect as well. Hence, events themselves have defined, unambiguously, the end of our period. It has now truly become “historical.”

Similarly, Wiener’s book has become a true memoir.

In keeping with his circumscription of the topic, Wiener does not give any space to Zionist thinkers. But, as we have seen, the existence of the Jewish nation is, for Wiener, a “theological fact.” Whether, and how, the thinkers of the nineteenth century take it into account is a question which attends nearly every discussion in his book.

The book is structured into four sections. The first theme which Wiener addresses is the question of the integrity of the halakhic way of life or its disintegration, and he addresses it under a heading which reflects, once again, the holistic sense in which he understands “law”: “Religious Law and Life-Form.”

In the second part of the book, “Philosophy and World-View” he surveys, with all the technical refinement of the scholar of philosophy, the nineteenth century attempts to construct a system of Jewish philosophy. At the same time, he documents his own antipathy toward such systems as unsuccessful attempts to provide a surrogate for halakhah. Furthermore, with some notable exceptions, the philosophers of Judaism of the nineteenth century, in Wiener’s view, have proven to be either blind or inimical to the national character of Judaism.

In the third part of the book Wiener seeks to lay bare the idea of religion motivating the labors of the founders of the “Scientific Study of Judaism,” the “Wissenschaft des Judentums.” Although he acknowledges his debt to Sinai Ucko, his work is pioneering. Wiener seems to be the first to reflect on both the social and religious significance of the Wissenschaft movement. Finally, he concludes the book with what may seem like a postscript, but is not. He calls it “Judaism as a State of Mind,” and presents a number of figures, among them Heinrich Heine, Moses Hess and Gabriel Riesser: poet, socialist thinker and vigorous defender of the civil Emancipation of the Jews. In the work of none of these does one detect an endeavor to establish a new “principle” of Judaism, but all their lives represent a metamorphosis of Judaism, its sublimation into a state

23Ibid., 4.
26“Die religiöse Idee in der Wissenschaft vom Judentum,” ibid., 175-257.
27In recent years, the social and religious motives of the Wissenschaft movement have been the subject of debate. See below, p. 150 n. 108.
28“Judentum als Stimmung,” 258-274. I thank Michael A. Meyer for suggesting that I translate “Stimmung” as “state of mind.” The meaning of the word is discussed below, p. 159.
of mind, a "mood" or ethos. As an historian of Judaism, Wiener takes their creativity as an expression of the Jewish national spirit, and as a surrogate for the vanished "halakhic atmosphere." For this reason, they may take their places in the text of Wiener's book.

In reviewing the arguments of this book, my method will be the same as that which Wiener himself employed in analyzing the Emancipation period: to strive not for exhaustiveness, but for the typical. I select those interpretations which clearly reflect the theological positions Wiener took in the 1920's, and those which seem especially revealing for his stance as historian or theologian. My aim, then, is not to retell Wiener's history of the Emancipation era in capsule form, but to use his history to extract part of the story of the historian.

**National Character and Halakhah**

In an essay occasioned by the two hundredth anniversary of Mendelssohn's birth, Wiener skilfully shows how Mendelssohn's understanding of Judaism leads, almost by necessity, to its "denationalization" and "confessionalization." It is Mendelssohn's definition of Judaism as "revealed legislation," he argues, which is responsible. It "explodes the fabric of the totality of Jewish life" first by rending the spheres of halakhah and belief asunder, and then, by confining the substance of halakhah to matters of ritual. In his book, Wiener calls this an "oddly distorted assessment of the relationship between belief and law."

Mendelssohn figures centrally in Wiener's scheme, and, indeed, has to figure centrally, because in Mendelssohn's Jerusalem all the tensions are present which Mendelssohn's posterity had to attempt to resolve. Judaism, with regard to its beliefs, is equated with the rational truths of eighteenth century Deism. Its doctrine is universal, identical to the—purportedly—universally acknowledged truths of reason. At the same time, Judaism's laws, the very content of its specific revelation, are declared politically inert. As a nation, the Jews had received the laws, and the practices they enjoin had, in turn, defined the Jews as a nation throughout the millennia. Their validity, while

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30 *JRZE*, 34.
grounded in historical revelation, *par excellence*, is now declared to be both voluntary and temporary. A Judaism without specific Jewish beliefs—this is one unresolved tension which Mendelssohn left to the nineteenth century.\(^{31}\) In his own life, Mendelssohn was able to combine theistic belief and traditional Jewish practice. But the history of Judaism demonstrates that the situation was an anomaly.\(^{32}\)

Hence, in Wiener’s eyes, Mendelssohn’s thought represents the philosophical anticipation of the consequences of Emancipation. Wiener reports with some satisfaction on the remonstrations of Saul Ascher, who, in his *Leviathan* (1792), was the first to recognize the full gravity of the theoretical problem cast in Judaism’s path by Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem*. Ascher develops a theory of Judaism which is just the opposite of Mendelssohn’s: Judaism is, above all, a religion of faith. Its laws are merely a constitution which clothe the spiritual, more important core. To be sure, where Ascher argues that the internal reformation of Judaism is a prerequisite for the improvement of the civil status of the Jews, Wiener faults him for a common sin of the Reform movement: the obfuscation, by opportunistic concerns, of the legitimate critique of religion.\(^{33}\)

In spite of this opportunistic lapse, Ascher earns praise from Wiener for seeing the profundity of the theoretical problem of the post-Mendelssohn age much more clearly than the leaders of the Reform movement saw it. The latter waged their battles with halakhic weapons, seeking changes in liturgy and worship, not seeming to understand that it was the very principle of *halakhah* itself which had been undermined. Ascher, however, attempted to erect a new Judaism on a foundation of dogma.\(^{34}\) This discussion of Mendelssohn and his first critic exemplify Wiener’s sober impartiality. He appreciates Ascher’s unyielding determination to achieve theoretical consistency—to establish a new principle of the Jewish religion.\(^{35}\)

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*31*On the history of Mendelssohn’s contention that Judaism is a religion without dogma, see above, p. 86f.

*32*JRZE, 45.

*33*Ibid., 40.

*34*Ibid., 46.

*35*His predilection for Ascher is reflected in the fact that, in addition to the attention he gives Ascher in this book, he wrote articles about him as well. One manuscript was translated into Yiddish for the journal of the YIVO Institute: “Shaul Ascher un die Teoria vegen Yidentum vi a Religie,” *Yivo Bleter* (New York, 1944), and later, “An Early Theory of Liberal Judaism: Saul Ascher, Forerunner of Liberal Judaism,” *Liberal Judaism* 17, no. 3, 22-26. For a more recent study, see Ellen Littmann, "Saul Ascher, First Theorist of Progressive Judaism," *LBIY* 5 (1960), 107-121.
The young Geiger also receives approbation from Wiener for his correct diagnosis of the "inadequacy" of the early Reform. This diagnosis, in the private letters Geiger wrote to Joseph Dernburg in the 1830's, show a Geiger who is radical in his demand for the formulation of "the Jewish idea," which is to be the ideal of a universal humanistic religion. What Wiener detects here is a profound aversion on Geiger's part to the ceremonial law. To Geiger it represents the outward manifestation of the particularistic national character of Judaism, which Geiger would like to shed, and the way of life it prescribes is simply insufferable! Wiener thus likens Geiger to Ascher in a fundamental way: they are both seeking the "idea of Judaism." Indeed, in one of those youthful letters to Dernburg, Geiger writes that the Jews, as a religious and cultural minority, stand in need of such an "idea" far more than the Christians, the predominant majority. It is an existential need; only such a "Jewish idea" will provide the argument which will justify remaining unflinchingly at one's post. The elaboration of the "Jewish idea" preoccupied Geiger. It would provide the surrogate for the particularistic *halakhah* which he so loathed. Indeed, according to Wiener, his preoccupation with the struggle to distill an "idea of Judaism" blinds him to the predicament of real Jews in his own time.

Wiener's interpretation makes it possible to understand Geiger's well-known and puzzling comment on the Damascus affair:

That Jews in Prussia may have the chance to become pharmacists or lawyers is much more important to me than the rescue of all the Jews in Asia and Africa, an undertaking with which I sympathize as a human being.... [T]his is my honest conviction, intimately interwoven with the entire structure of my intellectual view of things.

The pain he felt over the tedious progress of the emancipation of the Jews in Europe had numbed any sense he might have had for the cohesiveness of the Jews as a nation.

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37 *JRZE*, 51.

38 Ibid. See the letter to Dernburg of Sept. 30, 1833 in Wiener, ed., Abraham Geiger and Liberal Judaism, 83.

In Wiener's judgment, such obtuseness is symptomatic of the early Geiger's aversion to the complexities of the life prescribed by halakhah. The halakhah is, however, what constitutes the genuine substance of actual and concrete Judaism. He and the majority of his allies are lacking the elementary awareness that this constitution of [Jewish] existence—whether one considers it legitimate or not—represents the result of the life of the entire Jewish nation, which, like it or not, historical fate has assigned to this Jewish religion.40

From this perspective Wiener understands Geiger's envy of the universalism of Christianity, and his desire to liberate Judaism from its restrictive national bonds. Geiger thus seeks a universal Jewish idea, which can answer the universalism of Christianity. He argues that the "concretization" of Judaism into a specific community was a deviation from the pristine meaning of religion. The latter found its purest expression in the religion, or more precisely, the ethics of the prophets. This, then, is the positive side of Geiger's critique: the recovery of the universal ethics of the prophets as an antidote to the narrow formalism of rabbinic tradition.

Hence, the "principle for the critique of religion" which is Geiger's achievement, while vague and unfinished, offers some guidance: it calls for a ruthless critique of rabbinic tradition, which Geiger attacks with zeal. In the early letters to Demberg, Geiger declares not only the rabbinic tradition, but the entire Bible—including the Pentateuch—fair game for "reform."41 At the same time, the goal of such scientific, but clearly pragmatically motivated study of religious texts, is to lay bare the prophetic ethic in its pristine state.

Geiger and the early Reform movement receive a treatment from Wiener which is at once sympathetic and censorious. He defends the Reform movement against the charge of opportunism, and grants that Geiger was seeking to develop a new, positive concept of Judaism. But he takes Geiger to task for failing to recognize that halakhah is more than a burdensome accumulation of rabbinic practices; it is itself the religious life of a "nation." The concept of nationality is the yardstick which Wiener uses here.

Accordingly, the figure portrayed as a counterpoint to Geiger is Samuel David Luzzatto, in whom Wiener discovers a kindred spirit. In fact, although Wiener does not mention Luzzatto in his earlier writings, one has the feeling that he certainly would have, had he turned his attention to him earlier. Wiener later planned to write a biographical study of Luzzatto which, however, never reached

40Ibid., 54.
41Ibid., 50.
fruition. Furthermore, one of the last editions of the Schocken-Almanach announces an anthology of Luzzatto's correspondence, translated and edited by Wiener, which likewise never saw print. It may have been among the many manuscripts which Wiener abandoned when he left Berlin. Among his unpublished papers in the Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, I happened across a complete outline, extensive notes and sketches for an ambitious biography of Luzzatto, with chapters on the Jews in Italy, on the history of the Luzzatto family, on Luzzatto as scholar, as teacher of rabbis, his extensive correspondence, his researches in Hebrew literature, his thought, and finally on his personality. The outline of the chapter on Luzzatto's thought mirrors the discussion in the book. Wiener seems to have drafted only the chapter on the Jews in Italy; for the other chapters there are only unorganized notes. These studies on Luzzatto only corroborate the affinity for him apparent in his published book.

In Luzzatto, he writes, Judaism permeates the whole man, and this Judaism is rooted in a strong feeling of nationhood. From this root Luzzatto's views grew: his condemnation of the civil Emancipation as an denial of the Jewish national character; his call for an "inner emancipation," a liberation of the Jewish spirit from all "Atticism," as he calls it; his literal belief in revelation as recorded in the Biblical history of Israel's miraculous origins; his romanticizing vision of medieval Judaism as a "noble period" of Jewish history when halakhah, moral and ethical law, were one indistinguishable whole. In his unpublished draft on Luzzatto, he ranks him, as a Jewish scholar, above the practitioners of the "Scientific Study of Judaism" movement, because he never faltered in his faith in revelation, and because he always remained actively engaged in Jewish institutions and Jewish life.

It is especially the nature of Luzzatto's belief in revelation and the particular brand of religious nationalism flowing from it which explain Wiener's affinity for him. Revelation, transmitted through tradition, renders the search for philosophical certainty superfluous. Wiener cites a letter in which Luzzatto writes that philosophical proofs for the existence of God do not mean as much as

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42LBIA 3760, Nr. 11
43"Luzzattos Jüdischkeit geht, wenn man so sagen darf, aufs ganze." (JRZE, 69) On the "feeling of nationhood," see citation from Luzzatto's letter to Jost, JRZE, 50-51.
44JRZE, 60, 61, 65.
45LBIA 3760, no. 11, p. 3. On Wiener's view of the "Science of Judaism," see below, p. 149f.
the belief in Moses as a personality and the belief in miracles, attested by valid historical tradition, like the life and the deeds of Julius Caesar. For me there is no modern belief. My religion commands or prohibits actions.\textsuperscript{46}

What Luzzatto intends here is not a Mendelssohnian position, according to which Judaism is “revealed legislation,” which might someday, having led its adherents to the eternal truths, outlive its utility. What surfaces here is Luzzatto’s profound anti-metaphysical posture, which, in turn, resounded sympathetically in Wiener’s anti-philosophical ear.\textsuperscript{47}

Wiener makes clear that for Luzzatto all of the spheres of halakhah have a common quality and goal: they engender a feeling of religious edification and solemnity. On this scale, no single commandment, to apply the Talmudic dictum, is “heavier” or “lighter” than the other. Luzzatto does not accept any hierarchy of moral and “ceremonial” law. As a parallel to this unitary view of the revealed law, Luzzatto derives the whole corpus of Jewish law from a universal psychological principle: sympathy.\textsuperscript{48} The Jewish nation, entrusted with this uniform law code, cannot therefore outlive its purpose and render itself obsolete. The laws are not, as in Mendelssohn’s scheme, a propaedeutic for the messianic age.\textsuperscript{49} Luzzatto’s religious nationalism is of the essence. It is only characteristic that Luzzatto developed an idealized form of Zionism in his later years, advocating the renewal of a Jewish agricultural society in Palestine, such as he imagined existed in Biblical and Talmudic times.

Wiener proceeds to show that, although Luzzatto’s position may bear a superficial resemblance to that of Samson Raphael Hirsch, the latter’s Neo-Orthodoxy is actually very different.\textsuperscript{50} While Hirsch represents, in Wiener’s view, the “most integrated personality of the period,” his system, as such, is untenable.\textsuperscript{51} Both points, the difference between Hirsch and Luzzatto, and the inner inconsistency, are brought into clear focus in Hirsch’s understanding of the

\textsuperscript{46}\textit{JRZE}, 61.
\textsuperscript{47}Luzzatto’s polemics against Maimonides are well-known, and Krochmal lambastes him for them in a letter to S.L. Goldenberg, the editor of \textit{Kerem Hemed}. See \textit{Kitvei RaNaK}, ed. Simon Rawidowicz (Berlin: 1924; repr. ed. London and Waltham, Mass.: Ararat Publ., 1961), 432-443.
\textsuperscript{48}\textit{JRZE}, 64. Hebrew hemlah. The outline of the biography of Luzzatto which Wiener never wrote shows that he had planned to investigate the influence of Condillac, Rousseau and English “altruistic” ethics on the doctrine of sympathy. \textit{LBIA} 3760, no. 11, p. “g.”
\textsuperscript{49}\textit{JRZE}, 62-3.
\textsuperscript{50}Hirsch is discussed in \textit{JRZE}, 69-81.
\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Ibid.}, 79.
role and function of Jewish law, on the one hand, and of its concomitant, Jewish nationhood, on the other.

According to Wiener, Hirsch's understanding of Jewish law is ambiguous. On the one hand, he regards all Jewish law as rational and indeed argues that the ideal which is realized in the adherence to Jewish law is nothing less than the ideal of humanity itself. The cultivation of Jewish values is thus a step forward in the general moral progress of humanity. As Wiener astutely observes, in this regard Hirsch assigns Judaism the same goal as was assigned it by the very Reformers whom he so loathed: the ethical ideal. Wiener summarizes:

...the religious and the ethical thus coalesce, but the clear cognition and attainment of this goal can be achieved without fail only through the laws of Judaism and the Jewish way of life.52

At the same time, however, Hirsch knows that to render the halakhah rational means to nullify its character as positive revelation. Hence, even though Hirsch argues, in his classification of the commandments and his work on Jewish symbolism, that each of the commandments inculcates a certain idea—a line of thinking which might seem continuous with the Maimonidean-Mendelssohnian tradition—Hirsch's belief in the halakhic system is grounded in a belief in a positive revelation. Wiener has the following to say about Hirsch's Outlines of Jewish Symbolism:

Hirsch's Symbolism is certainly one of those books for which a generous measure of empathy with the standpoint of the author is required to keep the reader from being frightened off from the first. However simplistic and bland some of the ideas contained in these symbols may be, however rambling and arbitrary the use of fantasy in interpretation, and however much the entire book may be more an amalgam of unorganized thoughts than a philosophical treatise, one thing shines through the whole book with wonderful clarity: a profound belief in life under the yoke of the commandments as the true and indisputably certain expression of God's will.53

Hirsch assumes the rationality of Jewish law; but, at the same time, takes delight in its irrationality.

Wiener uses Hirsch's stance on the status of the Jewish nation to bring the distance between Hirsch and Luzzatto into clear focus. According to Hirsch, fidelity to the Torah is the mortar which has held the Jewish people together, even since Biblical times, and not cohesion as a nation. "Land and soil never func-

52Ibid., 71.
53Ibid., 77. Wiener refers to Hirsch's Grundlinien einer jüdischen Symbolik. (The reader who compares my translation with the original will notice that I have allowed myself some freedom to paraphrase.)
tioned as bonds of unity, only the common task of Torah." Hirsch spiritualizes the concept of Jewish nationhood, and this has consequences for his attitude toward the Emancipation. Since the "national" character of Judaism is of a purely spiritual nature, Jews will always be capable of attaching themselves to any "nation" in the conventional sense. Jeremiah's exhortation to the exiles, to seek the peace of the cities of their diaspora (Jeremiah 29), becomes Hirsch's motto.

Wiener's critique of Hirsch is then predictable. Hirsch believes that the Jewish nation, because of its spiritual character is, to use the term Rosenzweig would later coin, "metahistorical." As a spiritual nation, whose cohesiveness derives from its common devotion to commandments of the Torah, it is untouched by the vicissitudes of external fate, by political upheaval, persecution, or even emancipation. Hence, Hirsch does not conceive of the Emancipation as the event which has confronted Judaism with the greatest spiritual challenge of its history. "Hirsch does not want to see that, with the Emancipation, more has to change than merely one's external lot."

Wiener is aware, at the same as he criticizes the inconsistencies in Hirsch's thought, that his significance lies in the movement he founded, and here Wiener offers an observation which anticipates recent research on Hirsch's secessionist movement. Wiener realizes that the essential problem for Hirsch is the preservation of religious practice, and Hirsch resolves this problem by disengaging his "society" from the errant majority of the Jews.

We may leave aside the question whether, in reality, [Hirsch] is right. From a sociological point of view, his movement to rally the intransigent Orthodox signifies a kind of modern sectarianism... The conviction that one is preserving one's loyalty to Judaism alone and at the cost of great hardship evokes a pow-

54Ibid., 73.
55Ibid., 73. Hirsch's distinction between "spiritual" and "political" nationality represents a precursor to Rosenzweig's view. Both provide the intellectual underpinnings for the co-existence of "Deutschum" and "Judentum." See Franz Rosenzweig, Stern der Erlösung, 3rd ed. (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1954), Book 3, 49-59, esp. 55.
56JRZE, 73.
57In recent research, Robert Liberles' sociological study of the Neo-Orthodox movement has sought to show that Hirsch ought to be called less the founder of the Neo-Orthodox movement than its principal spokesman, and that important social factors led to the growth of the movement itself. See Robert Liberles, Religious Change in Social Context: The Resurgence of Orthodox Judaism in Frankfurt am Main, 1838-1877 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985).
erful feeling of chosenness, and a proud, often haughty rejection of all those who not belong to one's own circle.\textsuperscript{58}

Wiener's assumes the role not only of the intellectual historian, but of the sociologist of religion as well.

Revealing of Wiener's own understanding of the nexus binding halakhah to the collective life of the Jewish people is his discussion of Michael Sachs (1808-64). He takes Sachs as a figure representative of a centrist position known as "historical Judaism." Wiener speaks here not of a system, but of a style, albeit a theological style, "which cannot be couched in a definite formula."\textsuperscript{59}

What evokes Wiener's sympathy seems to be a combination of Sachs' rootedness in the practice, custom and culture of Judaism—his major work was his study of the liturgical poetry of Spanish Jewry—and the "natural" quality of his fidelity to revelation and to the forms of Jewish worship and practice which are the fruit of historical development. Wiener writes a paean to Sachs' religious personality:

His historical significance lies in his power as preacher and as a congenial herald of the poetical heritage of Israel. His devotion to Torah as an enduring standard shows such depth and such natural conservatism, his enthusiastic spirit endows the traditional way of life with such beauty, and his conviction has such a genuine and easy air about it, that his opponents on the right gradually became mute. And yet, in his scholarly attitude toward the origin and character of the tradition he takes the gradual evolution of tradition as a process of historical becoming and growth. To be sure, Jewish law had "always" been a present force in Judaism, but the Torah constitutes the center, around which the norms of the Oral Law grew in a process of 'gradual' expansion.\textsuperscript{60}

Hence, Wiener makes clear the distinction which must be drawn between Sachs and the thinking—one must assume—of the young Geiger. Sachs' standpoint is that of

a solemn pleasure in Jewish life determined by its religious system, just the opposite of that sullen and spiritually empty position to which religious law means nothing, and which therefore uses the study of antiquity as means to cast off its yoke. \textit{Nowhere is the primacy of the practical made apparent with more clarity than in the figure of Michael Sachs.} He is captivated by Jewish life, which he affirms with pride and enthusiasm; his high-minded idealism, which he does not allow to be called into question by the darker aspects of his faith, and which either overlooks whatever is aberrant or archaic out of a sense of the

\textsuperscript{58}JRZE, 80-81.
\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 85-86.
overarching value of the whole, or simply leaves it aside—all this requires no theoretical foundation in the belief in tradition. His solid classical education meshes beautifully with his Jewish erudition. And thus, in this eloquent poet and soulful translator of the prayerbook, there is revealed the totality of Judaism as an immediate reality in artistic form.\(^{61}\)

The tribute to Sachs is short—two pages in all—but is also infused with a warmth otherwise absent from Wiener’s book. Only here does Wiener’s language soar, where he sketches the vignette of a personality who seems to Wiener to have been successful in living the totality of Judaism as an organic whole and in achieving, at the same time, a symbiosis with the wider world of European culture.

Equally remarkable, but for different reasons, is the discussion of Samuel Holdheim (1806-1860) which follows. Wiener admires him certainly not for his religious position and personality, but for the energetic and inexorable manner in which he “by means of his hypercritical attitude toward traditional Judaism...has given a clear answer to a clearly stated question.” The question is, again, that of the nexus between halakhah and nation.

This, according to Wiener, is the question which is at stake in Holdheim’s critique of the Jewish laws of marriage and divorce, the subject of his best-known book.\(^{62}\) The principal question is whether the Jew, since the destruction of the Second Temple and hence the demise of political independence, is, in such personal matters, still subject to Jewish law. Holdheim’s answer is a resounding “no”. He is responding to Bruno Bauer, whose Die Judenfrage appeared in the same year, and who also published a number of articles in which he averred that the Jews were immovably bound to their law and history, and were thus irreparably unfit for integration into European society. As his counterargument, Holdheim proposes that political autonomy and nationality are identical. When the political autonomy of the Jews came to an end, so did their national existence. Jewish national law was only valid in the context of a politically autonomous Jewish nation. Eternally valid is the religious part only.\(^{63}\) On an analogy with Spinoza, who, having pronounced Jewish law dead, explained the survival of the Jewish nation as the tenacious cohesiveness of a people besieged by animosity from all sides, Holdheim explains the survival of Jewish law as an anomaly. It is a relic which has found a vacant niche in which to reside in the

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\(^{61}\)Ibid., 86. Italics added.

\(^{62}\)Über die Autonomie der Rabbinen und das Prinzip der jüdischen Ehe (1843).

\(^{63}\)JRZE, 89.
modern world, only because the state has neglected to fill it. If the jurisdiction of the state were complete, Jewish law would be extinct altogether.

It is at this point that Wiener voices his critique. The identification of nationality and political constitution is a theory, a response to the Mendelssohnian definition of Judaism as revealed law. Holdheim rejects that definition, because he seeks to develop a conception of Judaism as a religion. He retrojects this conception into the history of Judaism, arguing that the end of the Jewish polity also meant the end of Jewish nationality.

For Holdheim, who always equates nationality and citizenship, and who understands nothing of the varied strata of national life, of which the legal-constitutional stratum is just one, the national aspect of Judaism is thus non-existent, because the sole non-religious element, its particular legal constitution, was only meaningful within the context of a Jewish state. In the concrete historical reality of Jewish consciousness, things are seen differently, as Holdheim himself admits.  

Wiener uses Holdheim's proposals for the accommodation of the Sabbath to the life of the emancipated German Jew as the target for his critique. Holdheim engages in a lengthy discussion of the problems posed by Sabbath observance to the Jew who, for example, is drafted into military service, or who, as a civil servant, must work on a Saturday. Wiener criticizes the incongruity of these two examples, the former referring to a duty imposed on all male citizens, the latter to a job which, while desirable in the eyes of some, is not obligatory. To make his case, Holdheim argues that the Jewish state of ancient times made provision for the violation of the Sabbath under specific conditions. Certain commandments, such as timely circumcision, the sacrificial rite of the Temple, and the rounds of the messengers entrusted with the proclamation of the New Moon had precedence. Wiener's comment:

That the violations of the Sabbath adduced here were regarded as religious, and that subtle halakhic discussions are carried on over the question of the precedence of more significant over less significant sacred actions, and that, therefore, the entire discussion remains in the arena of the sacred and has no connection with a separate political sphere—there is no trace of such thinking in Holdheim, the Talmudist.

Hence, Wiener is emboldened to declare that Holdheim's reconstruction of the Jewish polity of old is a chimera, an impracticable Jewish fiction.

Was the Jewish state, sanctioned by religious law, feasible if all the stipulations which the Rabbis deemed necessary were observed? Is a polity comprised

64Ibid., 90.
solely of Jews even conceivable? a polity in which the perfected ideal of the rabbinic way of life is the norm? Holdheim concerns himself with the *raison d'être* of the German state, which seeks to accept the Jews as citizens and, to this end, abolishes Jewish law in great part, purportedly with the consent of Jewish law itself. Instead, he should have posed the fundamental question, whether a state can possibly endure, if its populace consists only of the religiously observant. The answer probably would have been that the Jews can observe the totality of Jewish law in any other state better than in a Jewish one... instead of such deference to the modern state, which is compelled, for its own sake, to curtail the observance of the Sabbath for a handful of Jews, Holdheim could have taken the issue by the horns and shown that the Jewish way of life which he criticizes was, altogether, only the product of the ghettoized segregation of the Jews, not the fruit of a whole, full, deep, self-sufficient and self-sustaining national life.\(^{65}\)

Once again, Wiener’s critique can be anticipated, and it comes clothed in the language of the romantic nationalist, speaking of the many layers of national life, and of the concreteness of Jewish national consciousness. Holdheim concocted a fictional Jewish state, and a Jewish “religion” which, as a discrete element, was also fictional. Holdheim’s system bears the stigma of artificiality, because his principle, the distillation and then the rejection of the political and legal component of Judaism, ruptures the natural wholeness of the Jewish nation.\(^{66}\) In theory, such a change may be possible; but in reality it is not.\(^{67}\)

At the same time, Wiener betray s a certain appreciation of Holdheim for the consistency with which he adhered to the principle of the “denationalization of Judaism,” to its reform into a *religion*. This side of Holdheim shines through Wiener’s analysis of the controversies aired at the three rabbinical Conferences held mid-century.\(^{68}\) Holdheim was consistent: at the Braunschweig Conference, he advocated abolishing the authority of the Talmudic law to determine what constitutes a violation of the Sabbath. Solemnity, he argues, can be achieved without absolute abstinence from all those activities deemed to be work according to Jewish law. At the Breslau Conference two years later he was more radical. He argued that the purpose of the Sabbath was not that it be hallowed, but that, on the Sabbath, man hallow himself. Whatever might be an obstacle to that end—such as one’s occupation—should be avoided; for this reason Holdheim

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\(^{65}\)Ibid., 93.  
\(^{66}\)Ibid., 95.  
\(^{67}\)Ibid., 98.  
\(^{68}\)At Braunschweig (1844), Frankfurt am Main (1845), and at Breslau (1846). See Wiener’s analysis, *ibid.*, 98-113.
advocates the celebration of the Sabbath on Sunday, to save Jews from such conflicts with their societal obligations.\textsuperscript{69}

The lengthy discussions at the Frankfurt Conference on the permissibility of organ music in the synagogue on the Sabbath are evidence to Wiener of a "peculiar confusion in the argumentation" used by the Reformers, and again, of Holdheim's consistency of principle. The Reformers, and even Geiger, looked to the Talmud for some halakhic precedent, seeking to derive the license to use an organ in the synagogues of Germany from the use of instruments in the Temple at Jerusalem. "Only Holdheim's radicalism is more straightforward in this matter; he makes short shrift of all such considerations [of Talmudic precedent], dismissing them as an impediment to religion"\textsuperscript{70}

The debate over the organ is, to Wiener, an example of the theoretical malaise which beset these conferences.

\textit{[A]side from a few rare exceptions, the halakhic character of Judaism was not denied, but ... all the attempts to work out clear guidelines for simpler norms were unsuccessful...}\textsuperscript{71}

Wiener's verdict on the Rabbinical Conferences and the Synods which followed them is a verdict on the Reform as a whole. It fails to clarify a new "critical principle of religion."\textsuperscript{72} This elusive phrase seems to point to a principle which would function as a tribunal from outside the halakhic system. Hence Wiener criticizes those reformers who are unable or are too timid to venture beyond the halakhic boundaries. It is a new definition of religion which is needed, of the religion into which Judaism ought be reformed.

This should not be misconstrued to mean that Wiener would style himself a supporter of the Reformers of the nineteenth century. He faults the reformers for lack of consistency or courage, and even admires the one reformer—Holdheim—who does not lack these virtues, but he also would not have endorsed an emboldened reform. For it could only lead, one has to conclude, to the abandonment of halakhah altogether. This should also not be misconstrued to mean that Wiener was arguing for a renaissance of halakhic observance. He would later remark that he considered the halakhic way of life defunct. Nonetheless, halakhah remains the "fixed form" of Jewish life, and reborn in

\textsuperscript{69}Ibid., 100 and 108.

\textsuperscript{70}Ibid., 105.

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., 110.

\textsuperscript{72}Ibid. I have translated this phrase, "das...religionskritische Prinzip," which occurs not only here, as "critical principle of religion."
new forms, will continue to set the dominant tone of Jewish life. Wiener concludes with a note on the contemporaneity this chapter of the book:

...however much Judaism may splinter into religious factions, the natural gravity of the rabbinic way of life and of the halakhah which sets its norms still molds its character. What position to take regarding this system of existence, whether it is to be accepted, rejected, or selectively modified, will, for a long time to come, continue to be the central problem of Jewish life.73

The Philosophers

Wiener enters into his portrayal of the Jewish thinkers of the nineteenth century with reservations, which ought come as no surprise from one who has relegated philosophy of religion to the periphery of religious life. Throughout the preceding decade he had argued that religion does not seek to establish universal theoretical truths or to formulate a “world-view,” that it is irreducible to a “philosophy.”74 At the same time, he enters this chapter with all the conceptual equipment of the trained student of philosophy, and dispatches philosophy with philosophical expertise.

The controversies which Wiener describes in the first part of his book all seek to justify the repudiation, preservation or modification of the traditional function of religious law. The focus of controversy was the sacred texts of Judaism, which were regarded as documents of revelation, and the tools to decide their status were the tools of historical and philological research.75 For Wiener the history of these controversies has a particular, and characteristic meaning.

Judaism as a concrete historical entity is the subject of this inquiry. Indeed, it is the actual existence of the bearers of Judaism which is the focus both of the reformers and of the opponents of innovation.76

The subject of the inquiry, then, is the Jewish people. Its particularistic character is anchored in the revelation on Sinai. Even the belief in the universalistic mission of the Jews presupposes the concrete existence of this particular nation. A certain Jewish exclusivity is taken for granted:

73Ibid., 113.
74See above, Part 2, “Anti-philosophy, Dogma and Christianity,” 84f.
75JRZE, 114.
76Ibid., 114.
The inclusion of a ritual and moral code in one system, the indifference, if not aversion, to propagandizing among adherents of other religions, the general sense of self-sufficiency in one's own milieu, the cultivation of the collective historical memory, now become an essential part of the religion; all these show in manifold ways that the body of Jewry is felt to be the substantive and necessary complement of the idea of Judaism.... Halakhic Judaism...regards the ethnic community as the actual subject of religious life.77

The philosophical attitude, however, represents the antithesis of halakhic Judaism, for it sees in Judaism only the expression and articulation of religious truth.

From the outset, then, Wiener is not inclined to regard as "complete" the systems of Jewish philosophy which were produced by the nineteenth century. Their goal is a theory, and not a "concrete" historical reality. Wiener brings his own criterion to bear upon these systems, measuring them by their positions on "peoplehood"—"Volkstum"—whether they can account for the necessity of the "body of Jewry" as the complement to the "Jewish idea."

Wiener's earlier endeavor to set revelation apart from all modes of knowledge is also reflected in this chapter. Formstecher and Samuel Hirsch emerge as "rationalists" on this question, whereas Steinheim is obviously favored as the critic of contemporary Jewish theology who understood that the central problem is the nature of revelation and that revelation must be essentially distinct from any rational knowledge. Steinheim, in whom, like Luzzatto, Wiener must have discerned a spiritual forebear, receives a thorough discussion.

Samuel Formstecher (1808-1889) stands in the discussion as an example of the "rationalist" because of his view that there is no revealed truth separate from truth of reason. Jewish "belief" is the belief in certain facts of history.

...a religious duty to believe, which requires accepting any doctrine as a truth of religion, even if it contradicts reason, and only because it is communicated by a higher divine authority, is alien to Judaism... [F]or this reason, God ought not be the object of belief, but ought to be known through his works, as part of a world-view.78

Formstecher lays out a position reminiscent of Hegel: Judaism can be accounted for because it is a necessary stage in the development of world history; the phenomenon of Judaism is the reflex of an Idea. Revelation is not distinct from ra-


tional knowledge; it signifies the beginning of any knowledge of existence by the mind. 79

According to Formstecher, then, Judaism passed through a stage in which its national character was indeed fully articulate. Of significance for Wiener is the fact that Formstecher regards this national character of Judaism exclusively as the manifestation of an idea. However, the stage of its history in which the cohesion of the Jewish nation was rooted in a homeland or commonwealth has been overcome. 80 That notion prepares the way for Formstecher’s philosophy of history. The task of religion is to come to know an ideal and to realize that ideal within a community. 81 For Judaism the object of knowledge is God and his moral qualities; its task is their translation into action. Hence, Jewish theology in its pure form is ethics. 82

Wiener lays out Formstecher’s scheme of world history in some detail. To Wiener, Formstecher represents the rationalist who, in spite of his immersion in the discourse of German Idealism, still bears the legacy of the Enlightenment, identifying the truth of religion with the truths of reason, and the task of Judaism with ethics. In such a scheme, in which history is only the manifestation of the idea, in which phenomena come and go, but the idea from which they flow abides, there could be no place for the “concrete” existence of the Jewish people. Wiener refrains from pronouncing judgment on Formstecher’s thought, citing only its pale generalizations. Nevertheless, from the little that has been said, it is obvious that Formstecher’s philosophy of Judaism is the philosophy of a chimera, a disembodied Judaism, which, to Wiener, is simply incomplete. 83

Samuel Hirsch, in Wiener’s view, is much more thoroughly influenced by Hegel, and is also closer to traditional Judaism. However, on a general plane, the two thinkers have much in common. 84 Wiener’s exposition is straightforward; he begins by laying out Hirsch’s scheme of the history of religions, in which paganism is a necessary stage, Judaism stands out as a pinnacle, and Christianity represents a lapse into paganism. The history of religion in general

79 JRZE, 122.
80 Ibid., 126.
81 Ibid., 122.
82 Ibid., 131.
83 Another figure who receives a brief citation for “spiritualizing” Judaism is I.A. Francolm (1788-1849), whose writings rarefy Judaism into a system identical with universal ethics. Ibid., 118-120.
84 The exposition of Hirsch covers 131-147.
JEWISH THOUGHT ADRIFT

is the history of the evolution or the realization of the ethical. Human reason suffices to overcome the stage of paganism. This is the meaning which Hirsch derives from the story of the migration of Abraham, adding his own note to an old midrashic tradition. Human reason is a sufficient tool to free oneself from nature—and from the apotheosis of nature which is paganism. Thus, in his system, "no extraordinary revelation is required." Hirsch interprets the rationalistic, or rationalistic sounding passages in the Bible and Rabbinic literature in such a way that positive revelation appears superfluous.

One need not reproduce Wiener's exposition in much detail to see that both Formstecher and Hirsch, situated in the tradition of German Idealism, stand as lucid examples of the monistic philosophy which was the target of Wiener's critical essays of the 1920's, or, perhaps more accurately, that the critical position he adopted then is providing the framework of his interpretation here.

That same critical position explains his affinity for Salomon Ludwig Steinheim (1789-1866). Steinheim is a thinker who, since his own generation and until quite recently, had been almost entirely ignored. Wiener writes:

What distinguishes S.L. Steinheim's work from the systems treated above, and is indeed outstanding about it, is the consciousness that the problem of Judaism is one of the meaning of religious knowledge in general, and only secondarily a problem of the content of religious knowledge, which is then to be compared with knowledge acquired by some other philosophical or systematic method. Personally Steinheim was remote from knowledge of traditional doctrine and, probably, from Jewish practice as well, and yet he is the only one of this series of thinkers to whose mind the problem of religion as a sui generis was clear from the first. The characteristic title of his work, Revelation according to the Doctrine of the Synagogue, focuses on that criterion which is peculiar to religion: that it is the product of revelation.

Here is a figure who is wrestling with Wiener's problem: revelation. The task of Jewish philosophy is not to rationalize the content of revelation, nor to reconcile it with some other truth, but to determine the specific criterion of its own truth.

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85 JRZE, 134.
86 Ibid., 136.
88 JRZE, 147.
(Hence the sub-title of Steinheim’s book: “A Shibboleth.”) And the criterion must come from revelation itself. Revelation must validate itself.

Steinheim poses this problem against the backdrop of a critique of the inadequacies of other justifications of religious truth, and in this, too, Wiener will have sensed an affinity. Religious truth might be taken to be of the same kind as historical truth, as with the belief that historical revelation is true in the same sense as any account of an historical event. Or it might be taken to be of the same kind as metaphysical truth, as is with rationalism. In either case, however, religion is reduced to a matter of knowledge. 89

The “religion of revelation” is an historical religion; that means that it is the religion of a revelation which has occurred at a specific time, a disclosure of something to the human being which was, until then, unknown. That event cannot be subsumed into some other continuity, such as the eternal validity of rational ideas; nor can it derive its legitimacy from being a propaedeutic, in typical Enlightenment fashion, for the realization of a rational ideal. In such modes of thought, revelation is transferred into the realm of “non-revelation.” 90

It is an equally grievous error to conceive of religion as a particular psychic state, as the feeling of dependence, for example. When Steinheim published the second volume of his work, two decades after the first, he included specific arguments against the “theologians of feeling,” specifically Schleiermacher, whom he saw as the contemporary representative of a tradition which places the source of religion in some kind of religious faculty. He also criticizes Hirsch and Formstecher for their use of philosophical idealism as a surrogate for a religion based on true revelation. To be sure, Steinheim counters the “theology of feeling” with his program of “belief as an exact science,” and the function of reason in that program entails problems which Wiener discusses, but his arguments against both the “theology of feeling” and against philosophical idealism demonstrate that his fundamental position on the uniqueness of revelation does not change. 91

Wiener acknowledges that this conception of revelation involves difficulties. Steinheim argues that his conception of revelation is historical, that it is the conception of an event of disclosure which takes place at a specific time. He says as well that this revelation is the special possession of the people Israel, indeed that the event of revelation was the formative event in the history of the

90Ibid., 149.
91On the arguments of the second volume of Steinheim’s magnum opus, see ibid., 160-161.
people Israel. More than that, it is revelation which has made Israel a "people" in an ideal sense; "Jewish peoplehood" is the eternal problem of the translation of the sole genuine idea of God and humanity into word and deed. But Steinheim must first establish what he means by the concept of revelation, and what kind of "knowledge" it is which revelation yields.

Steinheim is of the view that revelation is necessary because reason, in its effort to arrive at true ideas, necessarily and unavoidably becomes enmeshed in antinomies. Confronted with the contradictions inherent in its own claims, it concedes the necessity of some other source of knowledge. For, according to Steinheim, it is revelation which reveals reason's inadequacy to itself. The doctrine of creation out of nothing is such a revelation, which contains its own self-validation. Creation confronts reason with the miracle of the "incomprehensible personality"—God—and his free act of the will. Freedom of the will is equivalent to "the power of absolute creation." Revelation proves itself just because it flaunts the logic of reason. Credo quia absurdum.

Steinheim's conception of revelation is fraught with paradox, and Wiener takes note of that. If revelation makes itself known by its irrationality, if irrationality is its "shibboleth," how are we to distinguish true revelation from simply any absurd idea? Steinheim's answers seem restricted to rhetorics; it is easier to say what true revelation is not than to say what it is. Furthermore, Steinheim, like any thinker after Kant's "Copernican revolution," cannot ignore the problem of how it is possible for reason to have knowledge of revelation and yet not render the knowledge of revelation in some way rational. If reason mediates knowledge of revelation, even if that knowledge is only the recognition of its irrationality, has not revelation then been brought into relation with the rational and thus, so to speak, under its control? Wiener does not formulate the problem in exactly that way, but does point to the problem which Steinheim must address. He criticizes Steinheim for failing to make any distinction between reason and spirit, implying that "spirit" could be regarded as a non-rational faculty which is receptacle of revelation.

92Ibid., 150. Steinheim may have given the impetus here for Franz Rosenzweig's idea of the Jewish people as the "eternal people" in his Stern der Erlösung, 3rd ed., Part 3, Book 1, 86-96. Wiener makes no mention of it, but is generally reticent on Rosenzweig.

93JRZE, 151.

94Ibid.

95Ibid., 153.

96Ibid., 150.
Steinheim does give an exact account of the religious ideas which are the content of "revelation," and constructs them in such a way that each follows from the preceding.\textsuperscript{97} The first is the idea of the unity of God. To the medieval idea of an incomparable "unity" he adds the aspect of personality. The second is the idea of creation, the idea in which reason is somehow compelled to acquiesce because of its own incapacity to comprehend it. From the idea of creation, which functions as a paradigm of the free act, the idea of freedom is derived in turn. Just as the one, incomparable, that is, "wholly other" divine personality acted in utter spontaneity to create the world, the possibility is given to human beings to act freely, to choose the ethical deed. Rational knowledge does not lead humankind to the awareness of this freedom. It is a "pure product of revelation."\textsuperscript{98} Steinheim also threads the doctrine of the immortality of the soul into this fabric.

Wiener is not the only historian of Jewish philosophy to have noted that Steinheim's scheme bears a formal similarity with Kant's doctrine of postulates.\textsuperscript{99} Kant is the philosopher of the antinomy, of the unresolvable contradiction: the questions of the existence of God, human freedom, and the immortality of the soul all frustrate human reason. Kant's postulate of freedom, "postulated" because ethics "requires" it, breaks the stalemate by allowing a glimpse into the realm beyond the confines of human knowledge. Steinheim's appeal to revelation functions in an analogous way. Wiener arrives at the judgment:

\begin{quote}
[A]s willful and headstrong as the way may be in which [Steinheim] believes he must distinguish [his doctrine] from all philosophical dogmatics, it agrees, in content, with Kant's postulates of practical reason. According to Steinheim, however, they are derived not from reason, but from revelation.\textsuperscript{100}
\end{quote}

Wiener's analysis is astute. He shows that Steinheim, with all homage to the Tertullian motto, is really a rationalist. For when Steinheim speaks of reason being "taken captive" by the ideas of revelation, it can mean nothing other than that these ideas are incorporated into consciousness.\textsuperscript{101} The criterion of their unreasonableness is reason itself. The true scope of Steinheim's version of \textit{credo quia absurdum} is this: \textit{credo} means to believe empirical facts, even though the belief be absurd in the light of rational demonstration.

\textsuperscript{97}Wiener's account in \textit{ibid.}, 157-160.
\textsuperscript{98}\textit{Ibid.}, 159.
\textsuperscript{99}Julius Guttmann arrives at the same conclusion in his \textit{Philosophie des Judentums}, 341.
\textsuperscript{100}\textit{JRZE}, 164.
\textsuperscript{101}\textit{Ibid.}, 162, 164.
The much-celebrated absurdity thus amounts to irrationality.... Thus the systematic theology which Steinheim seeks to inaugurate, with regard to the character of the evidence for its propositions, comes close to an empirical natural science. Accordingly, Steinheim would require that the theologian should be schooled in the method of inductive knowledge. What Steinheim acknowledges as a "taking captive" of reason is thus a meaningful act within the confines of reason itself, which retains the final authority to decide what is to be credited as truth.\textsuperscript{102}

I have given such generous attention to Wiener's discussion of Steinheim for two reasons. One is that so many of Steinheim's ideas are familiar from Wiener's own thought. One need only recall his polemic against Spinoza to see the kinship: God as personality with the spontaneity of free will; creation out of nothing as an empirically unsupportable, indeed, irrational doctrine, and yet true because revealed. Another affinity is to be seen in Steinheim's aversion to those philosophical systems which would make the truths of religion rationally transparent. Revelation cannot be reduced to a rational system because it is disclosed to the human being from outside the rational sphere. The kinship with Wiener's version of the ideas of Dialectic Theology is apparent as well. Indeed, it is remarkable that Wiener does not mention Steinheim in any of his earlier writings. In this book, by virtue of historian's integrity, he had to give him his due, and so probably "discovered" him, the only Jewish thinker of the nineteenth century who recognized the crucial question of religious philosophy: the problem of the nature and validity of revelation.

\textit{The Religious Meaning of Jewish Scholarship - "Wissenschaft des Judentums"}

Wiener was one of the first to attempt to elucidate the religious character of the "Scientific Study of Judaism," or \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums}, the name purportedly given to the movement by one of its vanguards, Eduard Gans. The nature of that movement, its formative influences and its motives have since become the focus of polemic and debate. In Wiener's discussion we detect this debate in its nascent stage. Furthermore, his assessment of the \textit{Wissenschaft} movement is not always consistent, with the result that he anticipated some of the arguments on both sides.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{102}JRZE, 162, also for Wiener's discussion of Steinheim's division of knowledge into the mathematical and empirical.

\textsuperscript{103}The relevant chapter is "Die religiöse Idee in der Wissenschaft des Judentums," JRZE, 175-257. See also 16, 53. On the name \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums}, which Eduard Gans
On one hand, Wiener is well aware that the aims of its practitioners were not simply academic or even antiquarian. His view is more nuanced than that espoused and popularized by Gershom Scholem, even taking into account the ambiguities in Scholem’s position. Wiener recognizes that to the proponents of *Wissenschaft* the times posed a challenge which was religious through and through: how, while affirming one’s place in European culture, the Jew could preserve his or her Judaism. In this task, scholarly inquiry was the key to the recovery of the past, and thus to the creation of a Jewish history:

In the situation in which Judaism found itself at the beginning of our period, the discovery and illumination of the past was necessary not only in order to understand it, but in order to continue altogether to lead a life in accordance with Jewish ideas. The light streaming in from without so dazzled these Jews, who were suffering from a past which they did not understand, that it became a question of life and death to enlighten them about their history and the ideas of their tradition, to instill pride in their heritage, so that they might look to the future confident and joyful. That—one might say—is the existential meaning of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

Wiener argues that *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is scholarship serving a two-fold pragmatic purpose. One is the quest for a genuine form of Jewish life “in accordance with Jewish ideas” which could serve modern times; the other is the effort to present the noble history of Jewish culture and religion to Jews themselves, to illuminate their role on the grand stage of “world history.” The labors of the practitioners of *Wissenschaft* thus had the dual aim of reform and *apologia*. As reformers, they sought to create a modern form of Judaism; as apologists, they sought to inculcate pride in their co-religionists and to create for them a usable history, to remedy the other side of assimilation, “the loss of respect for one’s own past.”

Most telling, however, are those characterizations of the *Wissenschaft* movement which Wiener gives incidentally in some other context, in passing, or

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105 *JRZE*, 176.

106 Ibid., 177.
as a summation.\textsuperscript{107} Then he writes that the \textit{Wissenschaft} movement is scholarship with an ulterior motive. These scholars want to obtain equal rank for Judaism in the world of the European spirit. The reformer may reap some incidental benefit from their efforts, but the \textit{Wissenschaft} scholars, Wiener argues, are more concerned with matters theoretical than practical.\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Wissenschaft} was an apologia directed not only at Jews, but at Christian culture as well, and sought to achieve for Judaism what Emancipation was supposed to achieve for Jews: equal status. Elsewhere Wiener draws a parallel between the turbulent anti-Rabbinism of the young Geiger, which he regards as religiously motivated, and the attitude of the young intellectuals who gathered in Berlin to form the Association for Culture and Scientific Study of Judaism, the \textit{Culturverein},\textsuperscript{109} whom he regards as opportunists who were all too willing to abandon Judaism entirely when their efforts were frustrated. He delivers a disdainful verdict:

\begin{quote}
At its base, the intent of the members of the \textit{Culturverein} was really only to lend a hand to the integration of the Jews into German society, which was advancing entirely on its own in any case. They gave up all too soon—the first was Eduard Gans himself, their standard-bearer—when harsh reality did not yield so readily to their lofty intentions. If the Jewish world did not wish to be happy, then, for the individual, there was still a most convenient path, that of the “ticket of admission” to the world at large in which alone salvation was to be found.\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

Wiener’s interpretation of the origins of \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums} as an opportunistic movement was based on a reading of the early documents of the Association, culled from the papers of Leopold Zunz by Sinai Ucko, and analyzed in his study of its early history. Wiener dissents, however, from Ucko’s conclusions. From Ucko’s article, which was later published, one can reconstruct the substance of the disagreement.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{107}For two examples, see \textit{ibid.}, 16 and 53.


\textsuperscript{109}Its full name was the \textit{Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden}.

\textsuperscript{110}\textit{JRZE}, 53. The “ticket of admission” (\textit{Entréebillet}) was Heine’s mocking locution for the social acceptance which many Jews, like Heine himself, hoped to achieve by conversion to Christianity.

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{Ibid.}, 276, n. 34. Sinai (Siegfried) Ucko (1905-1976) was a former student at the Berlin Hochschule and rabbi in Offenburg in Baden. The study in question was the manuscript cited above, n. 103. The history of the \textit{Verein} has now been vividly reconstructed by Ismar Schorsch, “Breakthrough into the Past: The \textit{Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden},” \textit{LBIY} 33 (1988), 3-28.
Mindful of the philosophical atmosphere in which the young intellectuals comprising the Association were educated, Ucko argued that the articulation of a \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums} amounted to the entrance of Judaism into "general culture."

Only when Jewish existence is made the object of inquiry by Jews themselves, and the methods of this inquiry are not determined immanently by an established concept of revelation, with all its consequences, when, instead, one takes the bold step of regarding the phenomenon of Judaism as a phenomenon of general culture, only then has one entered the latter.\footnote{Ucko, \textit{op. cit.}, 315.}

To Ucko the inauguration of a \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums} signified the beginning of self-reflection. The task of traditional learning was the explication of "revelation"; the task of \textit{Wissenschaft} was to bring an external idea, "general culture," to bear upon Judaism.

In Ucko's view, these first proponents of Jewish \textit{Wissenschaft} are seeking to make \textit{Wissenschaft} the organ of a vital national Jewish culture. As one "national spirit" among others, Judaism may then take its rightful place in the arena of general culture. The struggle for equality is carried into the realm of popular philosophy. The theme is a familiar Hegelian one, but the vehicle is now scholarship, aiding in an abstruse and yet fervent attempt to crystallize and articulate the eternal national essence of Judaism. In a letter to the Association which Ucko cites, I.A. List calls this national essence a "pure nationality, which is no mere product of the times, no mere passing phenomenon."\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 325.} \textit{Wissenschaft des Judentums} seeks to articulate the "Idea" of this pure national Jewish existence; only consciousness of this essence as an idea can establish the necessity for the continued existence of the culture which manifests it.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

This is, of course, a Hegelian motif, or, more accurately, an antiphony to Hegel. For it is intoned by those whom Hegel's philosophy of history had relegated to a stage of history overcome in the past. Ucko's argument, which presents the early \textit{Wissenschaft} movement as a response to the marginalization of Judaism by Hegel, is quite plausible. In Hegel's scheme, the Jews as a "nation," as a \textit{Volk}, have a special role, just as does any other nation on the stage of world history. To be sure, the Jewish nation did manifest a certain aspect of the Spirit at a certain time. Its role was to accomplish the negation of paganism, proclaiming the religion of pure spirit. Thus, it represents the concept of the religion of
sublimity, the negation of nature.\footnote{Hans Liebeschütz, Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1967), 36.} According to Hegel it was the consciousness of this pure idea of God which defined the Jewish nation. Judaism, however, jealously guarded this national treasure, confined it to its national existence, and was thus unable to mediate this idea to the world. That task was delegated by world history to Christianity, and it is in the light of the world-historical role of Christianity that Hegel reconstructs all the events which precede its appearance. In Judaism, the idea of God remains chained to one nation; Christianity opened the horizon to all humanity.

The particular stigma to which the early proponents of \textit{Wissenschaft} were reacting, then, was the sublimation imposed by Hegel on the Jewish nation. Having fulfilled its role in world history, it should have vanished from the stage long ago, as the empires of Greece and Rome did. Its existence is certainly no longer necessary.\footnote{The Hegelian idea—shared by Herder—that the Jewish nation has a particular role in world history, was appropriated and turned to advantage by intellectual precursors of the Zionist movement as well. In Krochmal’s hands, for example, the Jewish nation becomes the one enduring bearer of a pure God-idea. The lines which lead to Jewish nationalism are clear. See Avineri, \textit{op. cit.}, chs. 1 and 2 on Krochmal and Graetz.} The Hegelian conception of history taught that the very religion which the Jews of the nineteenth century sought to save from obsolescence was indeed obsolete, a spent force in world history.

The Hegelian antiphony is most audible in the speeches of Eduard Gans, the philosophical dean of the group and the most valuable witness for Ucko’s case. Gans speaks of living in an age which desires not merely “to be,” but also “to know itself,” and to know oneself is to know that one’s existence is \textit{the necessary consequence of an idea}. Jewish culture must become self-aware, conscious of itself, must become spirit reflecting on itself. In short, it must become, in the Hegelian sense, \textit{Wissenschaft}. What the times demand, Gans argued, is consciousness of itself; not merely “to be,” but know oneself is the goal.\footnote{Ucko, \textit{op. cit.}, 344.}

This concern with the philosophical legitimization of Jewish existence had, of course, a very pragmatic purpose. It was to integrate the Jew into modern culture by rescuing him from it. The leaders of the \textit{Verein} sought to nurture Jewish national culture, to demonstrate the necessity of its existence and to foster and perpetuate it by drawing up ambitious plans for Jewish education. According to Ucko, these efforts comprised a kind of “ethical nationalism.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 348.}
He saw a further motive in the leaders of the Verein as well: the substitution of a faith in the course of world-history for the traditional belief in a messianic age. Their adoption of the Hegelian conception of history meant for them that their culture and their epoch needed, once again, to acquire world-historical significance. Ucko sums up the motives of the founders of the Wissenschaft des Judentums:

Only once in world history...can a nation, as a complete entity, produce an [historical] epoch; then—after this one time—its spirit lives on as a wave in the ocean of the spirit, which, by means of self-knowledge, advances towards realization. The Jews outlived their national epoch—that is the verdict of the times, from which not even the young Jew can escape. One is helpless, confronted with the anomaly that the Jew still exists as an independent entity, while the spirit which once issued from him has become a component of the spiritual cosmos of Europe, of humanity. If the Jew wants to find purpose, then he can only do so by advancing the knowledge of this spiritual cosmos, by bringing it closer to human consciousness. In the knowledge of Judaism, which is a part of the whole, a part of world-reason and of world spirit, Jewish existence is justified, because the part which one can comprehend in Judaism is a part of the whole, and the whole lives in its parts.119

Thus, in Ucko's interpretation, by exposing the Jewish national spirit to the light of consciousness, Wissenschaft enables Jews to participate in the history of the advancement of consciousness, that is, in world history itself, in its Hegelian conception. That is the labor which will inaugurate the messianic age, which is seen not in a "world to come," but in the full realization of the Spirit of this one.

While Ucko is attuned to the philosophical matrix of the Association, and interprets it as a manifestation of "ethical nationalism," Wiener is loath to concede any such clear positive purpose in its activities.120 Where Ucko sees the healthy seed of a strong movement, Wiener sees a vague concept of Wissenschaft capable neither of producing a positive idea of the Wissenschaft des Judentums for the future nor of fostering any ethical nationalism. List's appeal to "our pure nationality," for example, evokes severe critique from Wiener. List argues for the necessity of continued Jewish national existence, but never defines what Jewish nationality means.121 He shares the general contempt of the Association for the institutions of Rabbinic Judaism and for the halakhic system, and this contempt, Wiener argues, only further attests to the shallowness of their nationalism. Zionism, by contrast, would later appreciate Rabbinic

119 Ibid., 351.
120 JRZE, 184.
121 Ibid., 186.
Judaism as a manifestation of a vital national spirit and a part of Judaism’s national heritage. The nationalism of the theoreticians of the Verein, however, is empty.  

Wiener’s discussion of the later history of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* remains critical. The approach to texts employed by the scholars of the nineteenth century is faulted for being half-hearted. Casting his glance back on the accomplishments of Geiger, Zunz, Steinschneider, Jost and Graetz, Wiener comes to the conclusion that *Wissenschaft des Judentums* never wrestled fully with the question of the authority of the texts themselves as documents of revelation.

For it is a characteristic of this scholarship (*Wissenschaft*) that it is concerned far more with the peripheral religious literature than with the core itself. Torah, the other parts of Holy Scripture, Mishnah, Gemara, the extra-Talmudical targumic, midrashic and rabbinic literature all represent concentric circles of descending grades of sanctity, so to speak, which any critical inquiry must heed. The farther removed one of these spheres is from the center of the Torah, the greater the candor and resoluteness with which it is considered open to purely academic, historical inquiry. The greater its proximity to the core, the less accessible the sphere is to dispassionate research.

Wiener sees no distinction, in principle, between the more Orthodox and the more liberal scholars, but only a distinction in the distance they each maintain from the center, the Torah. They all, however, maintain their distance. Thus he gains a standpoint from which to evaluate the debates within the *Wissenschaft* movement. In general, it fails to grapple with the philosophical meaning of the historical-critical approach: that religious truth is established by the use of reason, which thus supplants belief in historical revelation as the criterion of validity.

What Wiener means here by belief in historical revelation is belief in the historicity of the Torah. The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement takes up all manner of historical and literary questions, but never the textual core of Judaism. "The Torah remains, even for most of the uninhibited critical spirits, a *noli me
Once again, the attitude towards Biblical revelation becomes the touchstone.

Isaak Markus Jost is criticized for deceiving himself that historical research can be theologically neutral. He denies the historicity of all the miracles recounted in Scripture—all except that of the revelation at Sinai. Nor does Graetz escape notice in this context, inasmuch as the critical approach to the Pentateuch is absent from his History of the Jews. Graetz subscribes neither to the orthodox belief in the unity of the Pentateuch, nor to the historical-critical approach to the text. Wiener illustrates Graetz' ambivalence with the example of his account of the book of Deuteronomy. Graetz discusses the book in connection with the reign of Josiah, revealing his concurrence with DeWette, on the one hand, that the book is to be dated to Josiah's reign. On the other hand, Wiener finds that he evades, and then dismisses as immaterial, the questions which ought to engage any historian: what does it mean that the book was "discovered"? When was the book actually written, during Josiah's reign or centuries before? Wiener attributes this indifference to historical questions in Graetz to his "personal attitude toward Judaism."

To him, his nation has existed from the first, without having emerged as a nation from a complex process of development. It is the bearer of the most noble ideas of the one God and of an unsurpassable ethical truth.... That is why philological critique may not lay its interpretive hand on the most important documents.

Even Geiger is subjected to similar criticism. To be sure, Geiger's purpose in the Urschrift was to demonstrate that it was not so much inspiration as historical circumstance which molded the text of Scripture, yet he shies away from demonstrating this for the Pentateuch itself.

Thus, Wiener's criticism of the Wissenschaft movement focuses on two points: its alleged opportunism, and, more seriously, its lack of theoretical courage. It skirts the main theological problem: the status of Scripture, which it still regards as sacrosanct, and therefore off-limits for critical scholarship.

Nevertheless Wiener singles out certain figures within the Wissenschaft movement for more sympathetic treatment, and it is worthwhile to note why.

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124 Ibid., 229, 230.
125 Ibid., 211.
126 Ibid., 233.
127 Ibid., 236.
128 Ibid., 251.
One of these figures is Zunz.\textsuperscript{129} Here we find Wiener sympathetic to the earnestness of purpose which is manifest, for example, in Zunz' programmatic essay “On Rabbinic Literature.” The history of Jewish literature is not simply history with an antiquarian interest, it is the history of the Jewish people itself, even its “core.” Wiener attributes Zunz’ despondency about the future of the Jewish people—he urges scholars to assemble a catalog of Jewish literature that very year, in 1818, “when Hebrew books are not yet as difficult to obtain as they will be in the year 1919”\textsuperscript{130}—to his personal attitude. He argues that such moody utterances, which have been exploited by scholars since Wiener as testimony that these alienated men thought Judaism was moribund, must be kept separate from Zunz’ conception of Judaism.\textsuperscript{131} Wiener understands Zunz as one who is seeking an “idea of Judaism” which will serve as a surrogate for Talmudic authority. He reconstructs from scattered statements in Zunz’ writings—and it is indeed possible to do so—the pieces of a quasi-Hegelian organic conception of the Jewish nation. All the departments of Jewish \textit{Wissenschaft} are actually organic parts of this unity. To take the outstanding example, liturgical poetry was, to Zunz, such an expression of the national soul. His goal was to understand all the productions of culture “as the spiritual forms of a total national life, by which, in turn, they are ‘commanded’…”\textsuperscript{132} To be sure, the elevation of the idea of the Jewish “nation” to the status of a commanding authority is problematic, but it is precisely this side of Zunz’ thought to which Wiener was sympathetic. Here is the language of the romantic: the organic unity of national culture, and a striving to establish a religion based upon it, in some amorphous way.

In fact, Wiener interprets the ethos of the men of the Breslau Jewish Theological Seminary, of “the movement of the middle,” as a nostalgic, romantic Judaism. The Historical School possesses less of a clear theoretical underpinning for its religious and practical outlook than the Neo-Orthodoxy of Samson Raphael Hirsch. Wiener charges the Historical School with inconsis-

\textsuperscript{129}Ibid., 179. Wiener is defending Zunz against the criticism of Fritz Baer, who concluded that Zunz had a comprehensive plan, but executed only a small part of it, literary history, and even then did not formulate any \textit{idea} of Judaism. Fritz Baer, *\textit{אודות ההיסטוריה הלודית ישראל} (Jerusalem, 1931), 6f. Cited in \textit{JRZE}, 277, n. 179.
\textsuperscript{131}\textit{JRZE}, 181.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., 183. “...die geistigen Formen eines totalen Volkslebens...”
tency. Neo-Orthodoxy lamented the forfeiture of whole sectors of religious law to accommodate modern life, while upholding the "fiction" of an all-encompassing system of law which regulates the lives of the individual and the collective. The centrist position of the Historical School lacked even this theoretical rationale. In the Historical School "everything is feeling, mood, which is both imponderable and indisputable." Wiener writes:

It assumed the distinctive name Historical School because it sought not only to maintain a continuity of development, but also to reject the all-too-prevalent imitation [by Jews] of alien customs and institutions. And yet, this was all a vain attempt at a concrete formulation of something which can be handled in this way or that, as soon as a firm norm is wanting. The most probable interpretation of this appeal to history is to see it as the result of national sentiment, national not in the modern Zionist sense with its definite political and cultural aims, but national in the sense of that bond of Jewish humanity, forged by history and fate, which, while conceding and even stressing the universalistic nature of Jewish doctrine, nevertheless maintains the concrete unity of the Jewish nation and its sense of a responsible community. Thus they are devoted to the Hebrew language and fight to assure its precedence or even exclusive rights in worship.... They seek to preserve a large share of the holy customs of religion, because such customs are symbolic of the link with past generations as well as of the unity of the present.... They neither declare the Shulchan Aruch binding, nor do they explicitly annul it.... But it does not represent an inviolable duty, neither in theory nor in practice. And thus it can come about that many, and probably the majority of German Jews, preserve, in their personal lives, only some meager remains of the old customs and the old outlook, and yet hold fast, with a kind of romantic love, to the notion that the Jewish way of life is Judaism itself, which they neither repudiate, nor affirm.

In some measure this wistful critique of the Breslau position is autobiographical. It is worthwhile to note that Wiener, for all his critique of the theoretical faklessness of the Breslau school, does accord it importance as a variation on the theme of a nationalism of the Jewish spirit.

Wiener is able to illustrate this quality of the Historical School with other figures as well. Wiener counted Michael Sachs among its adherents, as well as Manuel Joël. Joël, the author of the Breslau prayerbook, articulates an understanding of prayer in a dispute with Geiger which, in turn, offers an example of the meaning of the term "historical." Joël refuses to allow the prayers for the return to Holy Land and for the restoration of the Temple sacrifices to be re-

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133Ibid., 236-7.
134Ibid., 237.
135Ibid., 85-86.
136Ibid., 256. The Joël prayerbook figures in the history of the Stettin Jewish community. See above Prologue, 7f.
moved not because he, unlike Geiger, might still find them vital and relevant, but because they are so deeply anchored in the collective memory of the Jewish nation that they are worthy of commemoration. Wiener argues that, while Geiger’s position may be the more consistent one, the more radical and therefore easier to formulate, Joël’s illustrates once more the power of feeling in the Historical School. And here the reason for Wiener’s sympathy with this trend within the Wissenschaft movement comes into sharp focus. The controversy with Geiger, he writes,

may serve as an illustration of the power of feeling within the Historical School, which, to a rationalist spirit like Geiger, had to appear...to be a theology of compromise. For indeed, the Jewish religion more than any other is unable to endure a reform motivated by pure reason. Everything which the Left either rejects as “mere form,” as ritual and ceremony, or at least judges, dismisses or modifies solely on the principle of contemporary relevance, was, after all, in truth the concrete manifestation of the life process of a religious-national totality.137

A familiar motif reappears. Wiener sees in the Historical School a subliminal acknowledgement that Jewish religious life cannot be regulated by “rational” reforms and yet survive, because it is anchored in the irrational. The Historical School, whatever its theoretical inconsistencies, acknowledged this. Its concern with history of Judaism was a “symbol which signified that Judaism was still experienced as an organic historical entity...”138 Indeed, its lack of an articulate principle is reckoned not as a shortcoming but as a sign of Jewish authenticity.

Religion as State of Mind

By interpreting the Historical School as an ethos or “mood,” for which the lack of a clear doctrine does not signify a shortcoming,139 Wiener opens another horizon for the historian of Judaism. He concludes the book with a short chapter, “Judaism as State of Mind,” which seems at first blush like a postscript, but which, in fact, is an additional component of his description of the “totality of Jewish national life.” The insight from which the chapter flows is one which Wiener had argued ten years earlier, in “Jewish Piety and Religious Dogma.” Millennia of Jewish communal life, with its consciousness of being charged, as a

137Ibid., 256. Emphasis added.
138Ibid., 257.
139Stated explicitly in JRZE, 258.
people, with the fulfillment of the commandments, continue to reverberate as a feeling or as an "ethos" long after that halakhic system itself, in any whole form, has ceased to hold sway in daily life. The German word here, "Stimmung," is a musical metaphor, derived from the word for voice, "Stimme," and evocative of the language of Romanticism. A "Stimmung" is a mood, but more than a mood, not merely a fleeting emotion, but a dominant tone, the keynote in the musicality of existence. These reverberations still fall within the orbit of Jewish life.

Distinct alike from both the traditional faith of Orthodoxy and from the Reform theology of Liberal Judaism, there developed a mode of Jewish life which, although it cannot be classified in any definite categories, nonetheless still represents Jewish reality.

Here Wiener writes that whatever the attitude toward a conscious principle of Jewish life may generally prevail,

the historical consciousness of being Jewish, of being rooted in a nation with its own mode of spirituality and religion, the communal memory of which is alive in every Jew, whether he delights in it or would rather extirpate it from his soul, these represent a powerful force, even if neither its sources nor its manifestations can be defined with precision.

Wiener presents a number of portraits, case studies in amorphous Judaism: Heinrich Heine, Moses Hess, Gabriel Riesser and Ludwig Börne, to name some of them. In each case, he argues that Jewish "feeling" functions as a matrix in which their activity in a general cultural sphere—literature, socialism, and politics—is embedded. Since the common matrix is the Jewish ethos or "mood," they are cut from the same cloth. It is that matrix which links them them to historical Judaism, but it is their lack of devotion to the traditional Jewish life which distances them from it. In this context, Heine is the foremost example of the Jewish romantic, the "most pregnant example of a Judaism rarefied into pure mood," whose Judaism was of a detached sort. Wiener even regards Heine's so-called "return" to Judaism as a return to a "soil in which he had never been very deeply rooted."

Hess also belongs in the ranks of the Jewish romantics. Wiener discerns the Jewish element in his religious conception of history as a development which will culminate in a harmony of nations, and which, therefore, will not be complete until all nations—among them the Jewish nation—are free to take their

140Ibid.
141Ibid., 258.
142Ibid., 259.
143Ibid., 261.
places in the community of autonomous equals. Wiener stresses that Hess is a Jewish nationalist of a unique stripe, remaining throughout his life the universalist-socialist he was from the first. At the same time, the tone of his Jewish nationalism is religious, envisioning a harmony of the nations reminiscent of Hebrew prophecy of world peace. Wiener argues that the motives underlying Hess' *Rome and Jerusalem* are more religious than socio-economic, more Jewish than Marxist.144 Hess represents a middle ground between Liberal Judaism and the footloose Romanticism of a Heine. With the former he shares the idea of a Jewish mission to the world. With the latter he shares the love of the Jewish national spirit.145

To be sure, both Heine and Hess are presented here to serve a specific argument, and Wiener's interpretations require critical evaluation. Wiener's portrait of Hess, for example, ignores entirely Hess' alienation from Judaism in his early years. Shlomo Avineri has shown that, in fact, it was Hess' vitriolic essay "On Capital" which provided his friend Karl Marx with all the polemical ammunition for the latter's "On the Jewish Question."146 Wiener, however, confines his discussion to the later *Rome and Jerusalem*. In fact, what Wiener later says of Marx holds for the younger Hess as well: that any trace of a personal fidelity to his religion had yielded to a "rationalistic" view of Judaism solely as a sociological factor.147 Hess revived his earlier fidelity; Marx did not.

Gabriel Riesser and Ludwig Börne appear here as examples of the sublimation of Judaism into politics, which Wiener understands

not in the sense of the oft-heard anti-Semitic charge that "concrete Jewish interests" become influential, but in the sense that one hopes, with the attainment to universal civil liberty...to achieve the final integration of the Jews into society.148

This general political goal then becomes the overarching interest into which religious energies are absorbed.

The conclusion of the book is vague, and its argument elusive. What is it which makes the work of each of these men "Jewish"? Their parentage? or a Jewish "ethos"? or some other criterion? The content of this ethos is left undefined, except that Wiener asserts the existence of a deeply rooted consciousness,

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144Ibid., 264-5; 273.
145Ibid., 267.
147*JRZE*, 271.
148Ibid., 271.
be it ever so concealed under layers of secular culture, a collective Jewish memory working quietly but persistently in the Jewish subconscious. This Jewish national spirit was eclipsed in the minds of fighters for emancipation such as Riesser or Börne because they sought an Enlightenment ideal of universal enfranchisement for individuals, in which national allegiances become immaterial. Such allegiances, however, did assume importance again with the resurgence of European nationalism in the nineteenth century. That development, as Wiener poignantly remarks in 1933, would eventually reverse many of the accomplishments of the Emancipation, and lead to the invigoration of Jewish nationalism.

**Reflections**

Jewish nationalism appears as the destination towards which all the paths in Wiener's book lead. He writes that his times are a period of great fluidity: the Zionist movement has compelled Jews of all stripes to reassess the meaning of Judaism. That was the challenge which confronted German Jewish thought at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was in this period of fluidity that Max Wiener, too, conceived the plan of his book and executed it. Having returned from the First World War transformed into a Zionist, he now turned to the reassessment of the legacy of the nineteenth century from the shifted perspective of the twentieth. At the conclusion of his book, Wiener writes:

The national movement in Judaism has long since recognized that the Jews are not one nation among other nations, that not only their fate, but also their spiritual make-up and a deeply-rooted world-view have molded them into a community *sui generis*. And even the opponents of the national movement are no longer satisfied with a mere confession of faith, to which Judaism was reduced, at any price, during the period when assimilation was the goal. Things are fluid now. What kind of a synthesis it will be which, one day, in calmer times, will once again will provide Judaism with a clear self-conception, no one can foretell.\(^{149}\)

Wiener never does offer that synthesis. It was not the task of the book, and even his later theological essays are only variations on earlier themes, even if they hint at the direction a constructive Jewish theology might take.\(^{150}\) His accomplishment in this 1933 book is a critical retrospective on the legacies of the nine-

\(^{149}\)Ibid.

\(^{150}\)For example “Aufriß einer jüdischen Theologie,” *HUCA* 18 (1943), 353-39.
teenth century from the threshold of the new era marked by the eruption of Zionism.

He was conscious of this particular perspective. While he surveys religious movements, philosophical trends, and the religious significance of the Wissenschaft movement with an acumen which has rightly earned him praise, he is ever evaluating the thinkers and their ideas by a nationalist measure, albeit a vaguely defined one. His abiding concern throughout the book is the positions of these nineteenth century movements and thinkers on Jewish nationality: whether it is acknowledged or denied, explicitly or implicitly, whether it is recognized as a social reality or as an ethereal, eternal idea.

The conclusion of Wiener's chapter on "Religious Law and Life-Form" bears out this claim. There is an autobiographical tone in Wiener's observation that "since the end of the last century the vigorous interest in a secularized Judaism of national orientation has led to renewed self-examination and new formulations in the Liberal camp." Some simply trot out the old arguments—Judaism is a religion of ideas, not bound to its own nationality and therefore compatible with any other. All of these arguments bear the "stigma of obsolescence." The Jewish national movement, Wiener argues, is prompting a change in Jewish consciousness in particular among those for whom the religious bond connecting the Jews of the world is "a fundamental, non-negotiable fact." He speculates that this renewal might yield a form of Jewish life of a particular hue, "comparable with that which the men of 'Historical Judaism' lived more as a feeling than as a system of thought." In the "Historical School," the terms "positive" and "historical," rather than signifying a doctrine, denoted something which was felt to be desirable.

One may conclude: on the one hand, Wiener's book is a reminder, addressed to the "post-halakhic" age, that the special character of Judaism consists in a way of life guided by a corpus of religious law, by halakhah, and furthermore, that this corpus of law, communicated to a people, indeed forming that people in an act of revelation, has so molded the daily life of Jews for millennia, that it is yet and shall remain enmeshed with Jewish life. In whatever direction Judaism may develop, halakhah shall be there like a river Jabbok and a man in the night, with whom it must wrestle. On the other hand, Wiener also points in

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151 JRZE, 113.
152 A translation of the phrase Wiener coins at the end of his book: "das Stigma der Vorgestrigkeit." Ibid., 274.
153 Ibid., 113.
154 Ibid., "...mehr erfühlt als erdacht haben."
another direction: in the post-halakhic age, a sense of Jewish nationality may emerge in the vacuum left by the lapse in the vitality of Jewish law.

That Wiener did indeed envision such a development is confirmed from another quarter. He speculates that it was the lapse of the authority of tradition among the laity with leanings towards the “Historical School” which prepared the ground for the Zionist movement:

Thus there is a parallel: at the same time as traditional Judaism is on the decline, as Jews drift away from the customs which were a part of it, and as they detach themselves from the set forms and formulae of historical faith, in these same circles Jewish interest and Jewish yearning intensifies. All these feelings merge at the end of the century in Zionism...

Wiener does not offer the evidence for this historical hypothesis, but its validity is not of concern here. What the hypothesis shows is the pattern which Wiener assumes: as the authority of halakha wanes, nationalist stirrings grow, in the twentieth century no less than in the nineteenth.

In Wiener’s view, the Zionist awakening similarly marked the end of the dominance of the rationalist theological constructions of the nineteenth century. These had reached their culmination in Hermann Cohen’s equation of the task of Judaism with the ethical task of humanity. Zionism, which to Cohen was “an aberration,” imposed a corrective. In a curious, contradictory comment, Wiener proposes that the roots of modern Jewish nationalism may also lead to the rationalist equation of the ideals of Judaism with the ideals of humanity in general. But this path of inquiry, like many he suggests in the book, is left a road not taken.

For every chapter and theme in this study, then, Zionism is the foil. It does not always occupy the center of the stage, but it always reappears. At the same time, it must be noted that Wiener’s constant invocation of the organic quality of Jewish nationhood and his evaluation of the relationship of thinkers to their own “nation,” is seemingly devoid of content. It is itself a feeling, not an argument which Wiener makes, but a position which he invokes.

This may explain the abrupt and tentative ending of his study of the Emancipation. We hear that we live in the post-halakhic age, and we hear faint hints of what might ensue, but there is no bold statement, only a demonstration that all of the attempts of the nineteenth century to formulate a new “idea of Judaism” have failed, in some way, to point the way towards a Jewish future, all

155 Ibid., 238.
156 Ibid., 174.
except the Zionist idea, which awakens to life at the close of the period of Emancipation.