On the final Saturday of October 1909, two members of Palestine’s intellectual elite met for an interview in Jerusalem. Eliezer (Perelman) Ben-Yehuda, fifty-one at the time, had immigrated to Palestine from Russian Lithuania nearly thirty years earlier. Muhammad Ruhi al-Khalidi, eight years Ben-Yehuda’s junior, was born in Jerusalem, though he spent much of his adult life outside of Palestine, in France and Istanbul. These men had much in common, aside from their shared city. Both had received traditional religious educations—Ben-Yehuda in the Hasidic Jewish world of Eastern Europe, al-Khalidi in the Sunni Muslim environment of Ottoman Palestine—and, like many of their intellectual contemporaries, both had also tenaciously pursued modern, secular studies. Ben-Yehuda made his career in journalism in Jerusalem, while al-Khalidi first became involved in academia in France and finally found his place in Ottoman imperial politics. Each believing that the fates of the Zionists and Arabs in Palestine were linked, Ben-Yehuda and al-Khalidi, friends for some time, met that Saturday, just before al-Khalidi was to return to Istanbul as one of Jerusalem’s three representatives to the newly reconstituted Ottoman Parliament (see figures 1 and 2).

I began my research for this book in an attempt to discern how Zionists like Ben-Yehuda and Arabs like al-Khalidi thought about one another in the earliest years of their encounter, in the Late Ottoman period. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—after about a hundred years of violent conflict—mutual hatred and delegitimization between Zionists and Arabs have dominated much of each side’s discourse about its counterpart. Many versions of such discourse circulate: there is no such thing as a “Palestinian”; contemporary Jews are merely Europeans with no connection to the Holy Land; there were hardly any Arabs in

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1 The classic work on Zionist-Arab relations during the Late Ottoman period remains Mandel, The Arabs and Zionism before World War I. See also Ro’i, “The Zionist Attitude to the Arabs 1908–1914”; Ro’i, “Yehasei yehudim-ʿarvim be-moshavot ha-ʿaliyah harishonah”; Ro’i, “The Relationship of the Yishuv to the Arabs”; Be’er, Reshit ha-sikhuskh yisraʾel-ʿarav, 1882–1911; Shafir, Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914; Marcus, Jerusalem 1913; Campos, Ottoman Brothers; Jacobson, From Empire to Empire.
2 • INTRODUCTION

Palestine before the Zionists came; Zionism is racism; Palestinian nationalism is nothing more than antisemitism; and so on. Notwithstanding sporadic strides toward peace, these are the terms through which many who are engaged in today’s Arab-Israeli conflict perceive one another.

Was this always so? The short answer is, of course, no; the mutual perceptions of Zionists and Arabs (and their latter-day descendants, Israelis, Palestinians, and others in the region) have not been static but rather have evolved over decades of political struggle and violence. How, then, did these communities view one another at the start of their encounter, before the century of violence that ensued? This book sets out to answer this question.

Exploring texts written by Zionists and Arabs about or for each other in the years before the Great War, before the political stakes of the encounter were quite so stark, I will argue that the intellectuals of this


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The book draws on texts written beginning in the mid-1890s through the years of the Great War; the bulk of the sources examined were produced during the final decade of Ottoman rule. The same period, in Zionist-centered historiography, would be denoted as the age of the first two aliyot (waves of Zionist immigration). In identifying the period studied in this book, I will also refer to it as pre-World War I or, conscious of its connections to contemporary trends in Europe, as the fin de siècle. On the use of fin de siècle in the Ottoman Middle East, see Hanssen, Fin de siècle Beirut.

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period often thought of one another and interpreted one another’s actions in terms of two central categories: religion and race. The historical actors, that is, tended to view their neighbors as members of particular religions—as Jews, Christians, or Muslims—or of genealogically, “scientifically” defined races (“Semitic” or otherwise). While the Arab-Israeli conflict is generally viewed as a prototypical case of a nationalist feud—and thus the Late Ottoman period is imagined as the first stage of that nationalist dispute—when we look carefully at the early years of the encounter, we see that the language and concept of “the nation” were not yet the dominant—and certainly not the only—terms through which the communities defined one another. This book explores in detail the implications of the religious and racial categories employed in the encounter’s first decades.

What I am proposing here is not that the ideas of nationalism (broadly, that humanity is naturally divided into nations, and that those nations should strive for cultural and political independence in their historic homelands) did not yet motivate many Arabs and Jews in the years before the Great War. On the contrary, this was precisely the age of the birth of modern Jewish and Arab nationalisms, and these years also witnessed the earliest stages of a uniquely Palestinian Arab nationalism.3 Nor am

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I suggesting that Arabs and Jews never saw one another as nationalist groups. Each side was certainly aware of the developing nationalism of the other. This book shows, however, that when we set aside presupposed categories and let our analysis of mutual perceptions in Late Ottoman Palestine be guided by the terms that emerge from the sources themselves, we find that the categories and interpretations were more expansive than a single-minded focus on nationalism would permit. Indeed, we begin to glimpse a new portrait of the early years of the Zionist-Arab encounter—one that is much richer, more nuanced, and in many respects more interesting than that of conventional accounts of the encounter between the communities represented by Ben-Yehuda and al-Khalidi; that is, between those whom we now commonly regard as simply “Zionists” and “Arabs.”

Moreover, as a study of reciprocal attitudes that examines the preconceptions and modes of interpretation employed by the various parties in this encounter, this book does not suggest that the various communities in Late Ottoman Palestine are most accurately defined—by those of us looking back a century later—as “religious” or “racial” communities. Modern theorists of religion, race, and the nation have compellingly demonstrated that these categories are historically con-

4 By referring to elites such as Ben-Yehuda and al-Khalidi as “representatives” of Palestine’s Zionist (or Jewish) and Arab (or Muslim) communities, I do not mean to suggest that they shared the qualities, life conditions, or experiences of the nonelites. Rather, they represented the various communities in the sense that each saw himself, and was seen by others within and beyond his own community, as speaking on behalf of the community. This was literally so in the case of al-Khalidi, as he was elected to represent the Jerusalem region in the Ottoman Parliament, and more figuratively so for Ben-Yehuda, who was recognized as a leader of the early Zionist community, even as he differed from other Zionists more focused on land and labor (rather than language and culture). On Ben-Yehuda, see the recent biography by Yoseph Lang, Daber ‘ivrit! On al-Khalidi, see Khalidi, Palestinian Identity; Kasmieh, “Ruhi Al-Khalidi 1864–1913”; al-Khateeb, “Ruhi Al-Khalidi.”

5 I borrow the phrase “a study of reciprocal attitudes” from Israel Yuval’s work on “Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,” the subtitle of his Two Nations in Your Womb. Yuval explains that his book is “intended to be a study of reciprocal attitudes of Jews and Christians toward one another, not a history of the relations between them.” Rather than presenting “a systematic and comprehensive description of the dialogue and conflicts between Jews and Christians, with their various historical metamorphoses,” Yuval aims “to reveal fragmented images of repressed and internalized ideas that lie beneath the surface of the official, overt religious ideology, which are not always explicitly expressed.” His objective, in other words, “is to engage in a rational and open discussion of the roles played by irrationality, disinformation, and misinformation in shaping both the self-definition and the definition of the ‘other’ among Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages” (1). While I, too, am interested in the place of “irrationality, disinformation, and misinformation,” I am as interested in the place of rationality and “accurate” information in the ways in which the communities I study understood one another.
tingent and socially constructed. As one scholar of race recently put it, it is at this stage “almost unnecessary to point out that ideas of race, in whatever form, are constructions of human culture and not an objective reality.” If this is true of race—the category that, among the three, claims the most “objective,” “scientific” authority—how much more so does this apply to religion and nation. By employing these terms throughout this book, I do not intend to reify them but rather to understand what they meant for the historical actors. Furthermore, especially at the very historical moment studied in this book—the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—these categories were particularly undefined and fluid, and the distinctions between them had not yet hardened. Part of the aim and the challenge of this book is to explore how these categories were employed in a period and place in which each was used inconsistently.

Paying more careful attention to religion and race as categories of mutual perception significantly alters our understanding of the early Zionist-Arab encounter in several respects. After so many decades of intensive local, regional, and global focus on the questions of whether and how to slice the pie of Palestine, it is common to presume, as one
prominent historian of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has claimed, that “the problem is, simply put, a dispute over real estate.”9 While Zionists and Arabs in the years before the Great War were surely becoming competitors for Palestine’s real estate, by expanding our view and becoming aware of the place of race and religion, we find that the Arab-Israeli conflict is “a dispute over real estate” as much as an inheritance fight between siblings is “a dispute over jewelry and china.” Yes, the inheritance might be jewelry and china, but these objects are laden with meaning and significance for the senses of identity and legitimacy of the inheritors. The Arab-Zionist or Palestinian-Israeli conflict has not merely been a dispute over the dunams of a land that can hardly be named without caveat or controversy. It has been a struggle over history and identity between people who regard themselves as acutely connected to each other—religiously and genealogically.10

In other words, these communities understood one another not as complete strangers, engaging with each other for the first time in a modern nationalist struggle over a contested piece of land, but rather as peoples encountering deeply familiar, if at times mythologized or distorted, others. Regarding both religious and racial modes of categorization, the sense of commonality was as salient as the extent of difference. The fact that the “Zionist-Arab” encounter was one between Jews, on the one hand, and Christians and Muslims, on the other, such that the individuals involved were members of religious civilizations with long and complex histories of engagement, was not incidental but in fact crucial to how all parties experienced the encounter.11 Similarly, the fact that this was an encounter between Jews and Arabs, peoples who were imagined by race theorists to be members of a single ancient race or, at any rate, close racial (Semitic) relatives was not consequential to either Jews’ or Arabs’ experience of this encounter but rather, for many, central to it.12 Whereas a focus on nationalism and territory raises issues of possession and sovereignty that imply conflict,  

9 Gelvin, The Israel-Palestine Conflict, 2nd ed., 2–3. Gelvin, of course, recognizes the conflict’s greater complexity. I cite his succinct formulation here to stand in for the territorial approach to the conflict.
10 On the social implications of genealogical thinking, see Zerubavel, Ancestors and Relatives.
11 In the historiography of this period, religion typically features in two limited arguments: first, whether the Christian Arabs of Palestine were more politically or nationalistically conscious and more anti-Zionist than their Muslim counterparts; and second, widening the geographical scope, whether Christian-edited Arabic newspapers in the Levant were more anti-Zionist than those edited by Muslims. See, e.g., Mandel, The Arabs and Zionism before World War I, 130; Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, 134; Bickerton and Klausner, A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 30.
12 On the concept of Semites, see, e.g., Anidjar, Semites; Gabriel Bergounioux, “Semitism.”
expanding and enriching our focus to include the parties’ ideas of religion and race permit a more nuanced and historically accurate story to be told. A number of thinkers regarded religion or race as elements of unity even as others understood them as grounds for hostility.

Furthermore, by excavating the religious and racial elements of the early encounter, we are able to see more clearly just how complicated the eventual bifurcation in Palestine was between Zionist and Arab, Israeli and Palestinian. For a time, some perceived three groups—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—while others actually saw just one group—Semitic. From multiplicity or singularity, a hardened binary emerged. Dividing the communities into two discrete nations, along the particular demographic lines that were ultimately drawn, was, however, neither obvious nor inevitable. Consideration of the place of race and religion helps expose not only the contingency of the eventual bisection but also its complexities.

A Journey of Intellectual Encounter

This book makes the case for the prominence of religious and racial modes of classification and explores the implications of these categories in Late Ottoman Palestine, by means of a journey through texts and among the individuals and communities that produced them. The journey begins in Jerusalem, the scene of the encounter between Ben-Yehuda and al-Khalidi (chapter 1). I situate the city in its multiple political, social, cultural, and intellectual contexts. By properly placing Jerusalem within these contexts—Palestine, the Ottoman Empire, the crossroads of Syria and Egypt, the target of European interest and influence—we are better able to understand why, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Palestine’s communities would have perceived one another in religious and racial terms, and what they might have meant by these terms. After offering this historical contextualization, chapter 1 provides a survey of the communities present in Palestine in the final years before the start of the Great War and a discussion of some of the challenges in identifying and categorizing these communities.

The journey continues with a focused study of an unpublished manuscript and its intriguing author, Muhammad Ruhi al-Khalidi (chapter 2). Al-Khalidi’s 120-page Arabic work, Zionism or the Zionist Question, was written in the final years of Ottoman rule. Through his composition, al-Khalidi sought to explain Zionism to his intended Arabic-reading audience. What is striking about this manuscript is that, though its subject is ostensibly Zionism—a phenomenon generally regarded by observers and practitioners alike as a modern and, especially
in its early years, secular (even secularist), nationalist movement—
the author devoted much of his manuscript to describing details of the
Jewish religion and Jewish history. For al-Khalidi, to understand Zion-
ism, both its origin and, in his mind, its folly, his readers would have
to understand Judaism. Religion was, at least for this prominent figure,
central to the way in which he perceived Zionism in Palestine. These
Zionists were, after all, Jews, and this author, trained in traditional
Islamic studies as well as European scholarship, interpreted the Jewish
nationalist movement through a distinctly religious lens.

If al-Khalidi looked at Zionists and saw Jews, defined religiously,
whom did Zionists see when they looked at their Arab neighbors? To
address this question, I turn in chapter 3 to the Hebrew Zionist press
published in Palestine in the years preceding the Great War. The Zion-
ists in Palestine maintained a vibrant press with numerous newspapers,
each of which represented a different political-ideological demograph-

ic of Palestine’s small Zionist population. Paying careful attention to the
terminology used to describe the non-Jewish natives of Palestine in a
sampling of Hebrew newspapers from three of the main Zionist groups,
we will find that, though Zionist nomenclature frequently employed the

term “Arab,” religious labels—“Christian Arabs,” “Muslim Arabs,”
and terms such as “Christians” and “Muslims” that made no mention
of the subjects’ “Arabness” at all—were also used regularly. I argue
that the use of religious labels reflected what appears to have been a
widespread belief that the way in which Palestine’s natives related to
the Zionists not only correlated with, but was actually determined by,
the natives’ respective religions. Muslims, members of a faith imagined
to be inherently tolerant and decent, would welcome Zionists into Pal-
estine, so it was argued, were it not for the instigation of Christians,
whose religion is essentially intolerant, violent, and anti-Jewish. In the
minds of Palestine’s Zionists in the Late Ottoman period, I contend,
they were engaged in an encounter with Christians and Muslims as
much as with a group they regarded as Arabs.

In my study of the Hebrew newspapers, I focus particularly on the
use of religious labels and the Zionists’ varying views regarding Chris-
tianity and Islam. However, in the course of this analysis, I show that

13 In this sense, Zionism is not unique, of course, as the phenomenon of national-
ism is broadly regarded as secular in nature. Describing a view he challenges as overly
simplistic, A. D. Smith writes that “it is usual to see in nationalism a modern, secular
ideology that replaces the religious systems found in premodern, traditional societies. In
this view, ‘religion’ and ‘nationalism’ figure as two terms in the conventional distinction
between tradition and modernity, and in an evolutionary framework that sees an inevi-
table movement—whether liberating or destructive—from the one to the other.” Smith,
Chosen Peoples, 9.
race-language also appeared in unexpected ways. In one particularly curious passage, Zionist editors described an Arabic newspaper that opposed Zionism as the work of “the Christian Arab enemies, who hate us religiously and racially.” These “Christian Arab enemies” were distinguished from “our Muslim neighbors” who had always viewed the Jews “like brothers to the Arabs and members of the same race.” This is but one instance of the slippage between religious and racial categories employed by some Zionists as they perceived their non-Jewish neighbors in Palestine. Religion was just one category through which Zionists imagined Palestine’s Arabs; race, too, was considered by some to be a critical component of the nature and identity of their neighbors.

Recognizing the utility of the press in exploring Zionist perceptions of the Arabs, I then turn back to the other side of the encounter. Here, though, I broaden the study beyond the geographic confines of Palestine, through an analysis of three of the wider region’s most influential Arabic intellectual journals (chapter 4). Because Palestine’s intellectual elite read and contributed to these journals—indeed, I conducted my research with copies of the journals that were present in Palestine during the Ottoman period—the journals are an essential source for discerning the ways in which Arab intellectuals in Palestine and beyond perceived the Jews and Zionism. In these journals—al-Hilāl, al-Muqtaṭaf, and al-Manār—and in other works by their editors, perhaps even more than in the Zionist newspapers, ideas concerning race, and particularly the Jews’ racial relationship with Arabs, were central to the way in which the Jews and Zionists were perceived. The focus on race, however, was certainly not to the exclusion of other means of categorization and interpretation of the Jews and Zionism; conceptions of the Jewish religion were crucial as well.

Through my reading of the Zionist press as well as my research in Zionist archives, I found that I was far from the first to take an interest in the ways in which the Arabic press portrayed the Zionists. Rather, Zionists of the Late Ottoman period, especially in the final half-decade before the First World War, were themselves already deeply concerned by Arab perceptions of Zionism and the Jews. In chapter 5, then, I move from a study of perceptions to a study of perceptions-of-perceptions. I begin by investigating Zionist programs aimed at understanding and influencing Arab perceptions of the Zionists, including efforts to translate Arabic newspaper articles about the Jews, to write articles sympathetic to Zionism for the Arabic press, and to fund Arabic papers that were supportive of Jewish efforts in Palestine. Through studying these efforts, we will discover the crucial role played by Arabic-literate Sephardic Zionists because of their linguistic capabilities. This will lead us, finally, to two Arabic books about Judaism and the Jews written...
by members of the Palestine-born Sephardic Zionist community: Shimon Moyal’s _at-Talmūd_ and Nissim Malul’s _Asrār al-yaḥūd_. The authors, Moyal and Malul, were also involved in the Zionist projects to translate and influence the Arabic press; these works of apologetics were another weapon in the battle against Arab opposition to Zionism. The books were written for non-Jewish Arabic readers with the explicit goal of diminishing “misunderstanding.” We will study these texts, then, to discern how certain Zionists, anxious about their native neighbors’ perceptions of Zionism, defended the Jewish religion and their community in the Arabic idiom of the fin de siècle. Through these works, the authors negotiated the complex terrain of bifrontal religious apologetics, directed at members of two religions, Christianity and Islam. Analyzing these texts permits us to understand how those raised in the Middle East, at home in Arab culture, and fluent and literate in Arabic, conceived of their neighbors and imagined how they might most effectively be persuaded to embrace Zionism. Tellingly, they chose to focus largely on religion.

As I have noted, this book’s emphasis on the religious and racial categories of perception should not be taken to imply that these were the _only_ categories employed in the fateful intercommunal encounter that occurred in Late Ottoman Palestine. Rather, what this book seeks to demonstrate is that, though often overlooked, religious and racial categories were prominent in the perceptions of this period, and that these categories prove essential for understanding the early encounter. Though for reasons that I will suggest relate to the new political discourse that emerged from the Great War (and was enshrined in the treaties signed at the war’s conclusion) these categories were often unspoken or even explicitly denied political relevance, they are also crucial, I argue, for making sense of later developments in Zionist-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian relations. I return to these more recent matters in the conclusion.

**Textual Encounters**

This book sets out to study the intellectual encounter between Zionists and Arabs in the Late Ottoman period in Palestine and beyond. Though I began with an instance of this encounter, namely, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda’s 1909 interview of Muhammad Ruhi al-Khalidi, records of face-to-face intellectual conversations (that is, discussions of ideas) between Zionists and Arabs in this period are scant. This lack of evidence, one suspects, is more a comment on the nature of the sources than on the frequency of such encounters historically, even if the latter
were uncommon. Nevertheless, to discern how Zionists and Arabs perceived and understood one another, it is necessary to look beyond texts that specifically document or narrate personal encounters. Instead, we are led to texts that reveal—whether explicitly or through close, critical analysis—the ways members of the various communities in Palestine and beyond conceived of this encounter. Through these texts, we are able to shed light both on the encounter and on the way participants perceived it.

While evidence of face-to-face intellectual encounters is elusive, through analyzing texts that reveal perceptions this book also studies what might be regarded as textual encounters, and of these there is ample evidence. In fact, most of the texts I analyze here were written with explicit reference to another text or set of texts. Consider the many points of contact. Al-Khalidi’s manuscript relies heavily on, and at times responds to and revises, both Shimon Moyal’s *at-Talmūd* and the *Jewish Encyclopedia*’s entry on “Zionism” by the American Zionist Richard Gottheil. Gottheil himself presumably read *Tārīkh al-isrāʾīliyyīn*, a book on the history of the Jews written by *al-Muqtaṭaf*’s editor Shahin Makaryus (the copy I located bears the stamp of Gottheil’s private library).14 Rashid Rida, editor of *al-Manār*, reviewed Makaryus’s *Tārīkh al-isrāʾīliyyīn* in his journal. *At-Talmūd*, though written by Moyal, was a project envisioned by the Arabic journal *al-Hilāl*’s editor Jurji Zaydan and was written to counter the antitalmudic claims of European books that had recently been translated into Arabic and disseminated in the Middle East. The publication of Nissim Malul’s *Asrār al-yahūd* was announced in *al-Hilāl*.15 Hebrew newspapers in Palestine, and soon the Zionists’ Palestine Office in Jaffa, translated and tried to influence the Arabic press. And Moyal wished to translate the Haifa-based editor Najib Nassar’s pamphlet on Zionism, which was itself a translation of Gottheil’s “Zionism.” In other words, the texts, if not always their authors, were in conversation.

While they often addressed or were informed by one another, the texts on which this book focuses vary widely in numerous respects. They range from the most private (e.g., an unpublished and uncirculated manuscript) to the most public (e.g., newspapers, journals, speeches, and published books) and many others in between (e.g., archival material reserved for internal Zionist Organization consumption). Some of

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14 Gottheil’s name is handwritten on the first page of the copy available in Columbia University’s collection.

15 The book is described in a brief notice as “a book in defense of the Jews and their religion, written by Nissim Effendi Malul. The first part has been published and is available from the author in Egypt.” *al-Hilāl* 19 (October 1910–July 1911), 448.
the sources are descriptive (e.g., accounts of day-to-day incidents in Palestine), while others are prescriptive and even polemical (e.g., religious apologetic literature). Finally, the texts were written in a variety of languages (Arabic, Hebrew, Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic, German, and French).

My aim in this selection is not to claim that these texts constitute a “representative sample,” a futile goal for an intellectual history project of this type, but rather to offer a wide variety of kinds of sources, each of which sheds light on another aspect of the mutual perceptions under review. For instance, through mining Zionist newspapers for references to the Zionists’ non-Jewish neighbors, I show how Zionist writers thought of their counterparts in Palestine when they were simply (that is, presumably reflexively and unselfconsciously) naming them. This is a type of observation that could not be obtained through the study of, for example, more philosophical or apologetic texts, such as those of Moyal or Malul. These latter—at-Talmūd and Asrār al-yahūd—allow us to understand how Judaism, Jewish history, and Zionism might be presented to non-Jewish Arabic-readers in a way that the Hebrew newspapers obviously could not. At the same time, though al-Khalidi’s manuscript provides a unique perspective on one influential Arab leader’s perceptions of the Jews and Zionism, fin de siècle Arabic journal articles offer insights into the way a far broader range of Arab intellectuals imagined the Jews and conceived of their relationship to them. Moreover, these articles were not generally concerned specifically with Zionism or even Palestine, so they permit us to view Arab perceptions differently from those proffered in a text explicitly focused on Zionism. The range of sources examined in this book, in other words, permits us to analyze perceptions in this encounter on both micro and macro levels.16

**Blended History and the Scholarly Taboos of Religion and Race**

Two final points are in order about the significance of this book, both historically and historiographically. First, it is worth highlighting one broader way in which this project attempts to contribute to the study

16 Because of the radical transformations that occurred in Palestine with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the British Mandate—not least the significant increase in intercommunal tensions—retrospective accounts of the Late Ottoman period are exceedingly problematic for a study of mutual perceptions. Therefore, though I appreciate the considerable utility of autobiographical memoirs and oral histories in certain historiographical projects, I have consciously avoided these sources here. For the potential benefits of such material, see Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 11–12. On the need for cautious skepticism, see Stanislawski, *Autobiographical Jews*.
of Palestine. For political and linguistic reasons, the histories of the communities of Palestine have generally been studied as just that: separate histories. This exclusivity of focus and narrowness of vision have left a more blended history as a clear desideratum. Joining other recent historians, I have tried to explore the interconnectedness of these histories and to argue that there is much one can learn about this society when we view it as a whole, however complex and fragmented. This book, then, is meant to serve as a bridge in overcoming the false dichotomy between the “Jewish history of Palestine” and its “Middle Eastern history,” revealing Palestine’s central place in the nexus between Europe and the Middle East and that between Jews and Arabs—Christians and Muslims.

Second, religion and race have, in different ways, been taboo subjects in the scholarship on the Arab-Zionist encounter, where nationalism is generally viewed as the critical category. Reasons for this include the blinding effects of secularization theory; the secularist nature of much nationalist historiography; the post-Holocaust Jewish inclination to obscure or ignore the pervasiveness of racial discourse among prewar Jews; the polemics surrounding the identification of Zionism with racism; and the reluctance to associate Arabs with race-thinking given this ideology’s prominent place in colonial discourses of oppression. Owing to these factors, scholars have generally shied away from exploring religion and race in the history of Jews and Arabs in Palestine. In defying these inclinations, this book joins a new wave of scholarship that has begun to examine the interplay of race and religion in the broader rise of nationalisms. Increasingly, in the words of one observer, scholars have contended that these categories must be viewed not merely as “interacting” or “intersecting” but as “inextricably linked” and “co-constituted.” While this scholarship has largely focused on the self-perceptions of groups, this book suggests that we can understand the nexus of race, religion, and nation only as part of a wider worldview, one in which the definitions and perceptions

17 An early effort in this regard was undertaken in Ben-Arieh and Bartal, Shilhei hatekufah ha-ʿotomanit (1799–1917). See also Lockman, Comrades and Enemies; LeBor, City of Oranges; Jacobson, From Empire to Empire; Campos, Ottoman Brothers.

18 This inclination has been challenged by scholars such as John Efron and Eric Goldstein. See Efron, Defenders of the Race; Goldstein, “The Unstable Other”; Goldstein, The Price of Whiteness. For a recent, important collection of primary sources on this subject, see Hart, ed., Jews and Race. See also Falk, “Zionism and the Biology of the Jews.”

19 On the “culture of silence—the refusal to engage in discussions on slavery and racial attitudes” in the Maghrib, see el Hamel, “ ‘Race,’ Slavery and Islam in Maghribi Mediterranean Thought.”

20 See Goldschmidt and McAlister, Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas, 6–7.
of others—neighboring and often competing groups—played an absolutely pivotal role. By reexamining the sources in which Zionists and Arabs of the Late Ottoman period depicted or addressed one another, the book not only reinflects their history of identity formation with the categories of religion and race; it also illuminates the often counterintuitive role of each of these categories in blurring perceived differences between members of the two groups.