

INTRODUCTION

THIS MIGHT BE THE FIRST BOOK EVER CONCEIVED AS A RESULT OF driving kids to religious school. In 2008 my life seemed consumed by two activities: writing a book on the history of humanitarianism, and carpool duty. On one occasion as I was driving up to the temple I noticed that the large banner above the entrance exclaiming the temple's support for Israel had been replaced by another: "Save Darfur." I then walked into the foyer and took a long look at the announcement board. For as long as I could remember items on Israel-related activities had dominated the space. They were now few and far between and arrayed on the edges, seemingly shunted aside by the far more abundant notices of opportunities to volunteer outside the Jewish community: serve in a homeless shelter, work in a soup kitchen, help distribute foodstuffs at a food bank, deliver used furniture to the needy, assemble care packages for victims of humanitarian emergencies. Darfur and other social action programs were part of the broader phenomenon of *tikkun olam*, a Hebrew expression that means "to repair the world." Tikkun olam had become quite popular at my temple, just as it had in much of the American Jewish world.

What accounted for all this activity around humanitarian action? Some self-congratulatory explanations credited Judaism and Jewish ethics. But these essentialist arguments require several miracles and leaps of faith to draw a straight path from ancient text to contemporary tikkun olam. If religious commitment correlated with tikkun olam, then the Orthodox Jewish community would put the Reform and Conservative movements to shame. Yet the former focused almost exclusively on the needs of the Jewish community while the

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latter wanted to repair the entire world. And tikkun olam was not sweeping all Jewish communities alike; it was popular among American Jews but far less prominent among Israeli Jews.

My work on humanitarianism gave me a broader perspective. I knew that since the 1990s voluntarism and humanitarianism had grown in scale across the secular and religious worlds. Individuals and communities increasingly wanted to “give back.” While most gave at home, more and more were donating to global causes and even traveling abroad to build schools, staff public health clinics, and work in orphanages. Many intersecting factors contributed to the expanding scale of humanitarianism: the end of the Cold War provided opportunity for Americans to think about how most of the world lives; new communication technologies made it possible for people to know instantly about the suffering of others; new logistical technologies made it possible to make a difference; a renewed cosmopolitanism and intensifying discourse on human rights was encouraging the fortunate to think about their responsibilities to distant strangers; and rising incomes meant they had more to spare and more guilt to relieve. Religious communities were doing more than their secular brethren in a period of religious resurgence, as there was a growing emphasis on compassion to express one’s religious identity, and the integration of secular notions of humanness into religious doctrine and practice.

These secular and religious forces could easily account for the rise of tikkun olam in the Jewish community. American Jews have a long history of favoring doctrines, traditions, and movements that emphasize a duty to help the poor and vulnerable, that there is no basis for favoring one group over another, and that the same ethical principles should be applied to all people. Notwithstanding the cosmopolitan sentiments, in practice the American Jewish community focused on the overwhelming needs of a large, impoverished immigrant population. Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, the American Jews were becoming a success story, and the circumstances of the Jews around the world were improving, allowing American Jews to begin practicing what they had preached for over a century. Most Jews now lived in liberal democracies where they were accepted rather than reviled. Israel once needed help protecting its borders and resettling hundreds of thousands of impoverished Jews who had outlasted the Holocaust and

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fled Arab lands, but no more. It has been decades since Israel's survival was in mortal danger, and the river of immigrants has slowed from a flood to a trickle. Israel no longer depends for its survival on American Jewry's financial support. As the comedian Sarah Silverman put it in her plug for the American Jewish World Service (AJWS): "This is Jews helping *goyim*. Let's face it. The Jews are doing quite well."

Yet the images lingered in my mind of a Darfur banner replacing the one supporting Israel and the relative absence of Israel from the announcement board. Although I worried about taking the symbolism too far, I began to think about the possible relationship between *tikkun olam* and Israel. My temple had not withdrawn its support for Israel. But I also knew that many members, much like the broader American Jewish community, were increasingly ambivalent about Israel and its policies. But was *tikkun olam* part of this "distancing" from Israel? I kept running through four possibilities: One, there might be no relationship whatsoever. Two, *tikkun olam* might be crowding out Israel. There could be only one banner at the temple, and Israel had made way for Darfur. Three, American Jews might be turning to *tikkun olam* as a consequence of their distancing from Israel. In other words, they were first souring on Israel, then finding their way to *tikkun olam*. And, four, American Jews could choose to enact their identity either through Israel or through *tikkun olam*, and they were increasingly choosing the latter. If so, why? Was it because Israel raised ethical quandaries while Darfur had a presumed purity? Might *tikkun olam* demonstrate that Jews could be on the right side of social justice, especially at a time when the Jewish state seemed to be living on the borderline? Perhaps they share the view of the American Jewish World Service's Ruth Messinger, that *tikkun olam* will "deter anti-Semitism by demonstrating that Jews work to provide social justice and dignity for all people regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity."¹

My research on humanitarianism led me to try and address these possibilities by asking a broader question: how do political communities understand their obligations to others? The ethical core of humanitarianism is a consideration of our duties to distant strangers in need. Modern humanitarianism rests on the presumption of a shared humanity that leads us to care about all those in need and not just those we like or who look and act like us. These sorts of arguments

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draw heavily on normative theory and theology because they tell us how we should feel and what we should do. Yet, as a practical matter, we do play favorites, often because of blood and feelings of belonging. To capture this moral unevenness, scholars sometimes refer to concentric circles of compassion, suggesting how our felt duties start at the most intimate and intensive and then dissipate as they move outward. Our family before our friends. Our friends before our village. Our village before our nation. Our nation before the world. Our religious brethren before other religious communities. This is a reasonable starting point, but it cannot explain why the moral imaginations of political communities shift over time. For centuries slavery was an accepted practice, but a movement developed in the late eighteenth century that eventually led to its global prohibition. Public and private giving to distant strangers has dramatically expanded over the decades. What accounts for these changes in the moral imagination? This is a central issue in the study of practical ethics: how a political community, religious or otherwise, defines its obligations to others.

My research on humanitarianism linked these issues in ethics to both material circumstances and identity. There are political communities whose socioeconomic conditions improved but whose compassion remained constricted. Conversely, there are political communities whose socioeconomic circumstances have not changed but who nevertheless increased their concern for strangers. What does the identity of American Jews suggest?

The American Jewish identity is both American and Jewish. American Jews are Jews, and Jews are a transnational and diasporic people. And as a transnational people that exist in a world of states, the states system has weighed heavily on them. The modern history of world Jewry can be told as a story of a transnational and diasporic people attempting to adjust to a world carved into different territories that are intended to circumscribe identities and loyalties. Jews have responded in all kinds of ways to this challenge: assimilate into the national and Christian woodwork; join cosmopolitan movements such as socialism that imagine the disappearance of sectarian identities and territorial boundaries; champion a diaspora nationalism that imagines retaining the Jewish identity while residing in separate states; fight for liberalism, pluralism, and equal rights; advocate international

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law and institutions to protect minorities and other vulnerable populations; align with forms of liberal internationalism and the spread of democracy, human rights, and rule of law; and, finally and most famously, support a Jewish nationalist movement and a Jewish state.

American Jews have addressed this challenge largely by advocating the development and defense of liberalism and pluralism, creating international law and institutions, and supporting the establishment and defense of a Jewish state. While these beliefs and strategies could be pursued simultaneously, they had an order of appearance and could be in tension with each other. Early on, American Jews held that the best defense against anti-Semitism was the enshrinement of principles of equality in domestic law and institutions. A Jewish state was another option, but its particularity clashed with the commitment of many American Jews to principles of equality and inclusivity. Eventually American Jews did join the Zionist movement and became diehard supporters of the State of Israel, but they first had to be convinced that their American identity could be compatible with their Zionism. The desire to see an Israel that was consistent with their American identity reflects how American Jews have wanted Jewish nationalism and Israel to address the physical *and* spiritual survival of the Jews. American Jews did not imagine that they would need to flee to Israel as a place of refuge; they were safe and snug in their “golden Medina.” Instead, they invested Zionism and Israel with considerable meaning: they were a sign of the eternal struggle and indefatigable spirit of the Jewish people; a memorial to suffering and a testimony to their tenacity; a bridge between the ancient and modern; a Jewish point of light among the world’s nations; a spiritual and tangible reminder to hold onto their Jewish identity as they live in an America where the pressure to assimilate is constant.

For many American Jews, Israel has become part of their soul. A trip to Israel is a pilgrimage and, for many, an unexpected homecoming. Most American Jews trace their family trees to somewhere in Europe or Russia, but rarely does the old country spark any wistful longing. Little remains of the centuries-long Jewish presence in Europe except for artifacts collected in museums; plaques marking where a synagogue once stood; ancient synagogues that stand empty and whose upkeep is paid by Diaspora Jews; memorials for labor, concentration, and death camps; and run-down cemeteries and mass graves.

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In stark contrast, many American Jews who visit Israel, including those who go without any prior attachment, report a surprising sense of being “at home.” The Israeli novelist Amos Oz describes it as a “tribal feeling,” intimate and comforting.² Although American Jews pledge allegiance to the United States, and relatively few have emigrated, a trip to Israel nevertheless unleashes a feeling of warmth, comfort, and belonging that many never realized they had missed.

America is deeply ingrained in the American Jewish identity. American Jews closely identify with their nation’s ideals of human dignity, equality, and freedom of conscience. Jewish religious leaders have insisted on the centrality of these values to Judaism, which, not coincidentally, also foster Jewish survival. As a minority people, the Jewish people’s survival and well-being depends on being tolerated and accepted by their hosts; when their hosts have embraced these humanistic ideals, Jews have enjoyed security and its fruits. America has defined itself as a country that is constituted by these ideals. Although America does not always live up to them, life for the Jews was certainly better because Americans judged themselves against these ideals. It would be a mistake, however, to reduce Jews’ attachment to the United States to self-interest alone. American Jews are proud of the contributions they have made to American life. The chosen people in this chosen land helped to create a Judeo-Christian country.

American Jews have largely integrated their Jewish and American sides in much the same way other immigrant populations have created their own hyphenated identities, yet their attachments to Israel and America, at times, pull in different directions. I am not speaking of dual loyalty, the anti-Semitic canard that accuses the Jews of favoring their “own” over their country and that often becomes implicitly and explicitly resurrected in contemporary discussions of American Jewry’s support for Israel. Instead, I am referring to the fact that American Jews’ identification with the Jewish people and Israel pulls toward particularism and an inward-looking nationalism, while the values they associate with the American identity pull toward universalism and an outward-looking cosmopolitanism. American Jews are frequently living examples of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s saying that the “test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

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Particularism and universalism are enduring features in Jewish theology and history, providing different answers to the identity-defining issues of how Jews see themselves in relation to Gentiles, their obligations to those inside and outside the Jewish community, and their sense of the purpose of the world. Particularism inscribes Jews as a chosen people that dwells alone, with a calling to maintain their covenant with God and an obligation to help their own first to the relative neglect of others. Universalism calls on the Jews to be a prophetic people with obligations to Jews and non-Jews alike and with a mission to help create a world of peace, justice, and harmony.

A persistent theme in Jewish theology is the tension between particularism and universalism, present throughout the Torah, in sayings, and religious debates. What kind of people are they? Are they *Am Segulah*, a chosen people? Are they *Am Yoshev Lavad*, a people that dwells alone? Or are they *Or LaGoyim*, a “light unto nations”? What is their purpose in the world—to maintain their covenant with God or to be a prophetic people and serve humanity? How does their identity relate to their duty to their fellow Jews and others? Should they follow the Talmudic expression *Anijej Ircha Kodmim*, your city’s poor comes first, which advises Jews to tend primarily to their own? Hillel’s inspiring words, though, urge Jews to look beyond their own needs: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?” Jews have been asking themselves these questions for as long as they have been a people, and because there is unlikely to be a settled view, they will keep asking them.

The relationship between particularism and universalism also has been a feature of modern Jewish history. I am less concerned with the insolvable question of what the ideal balance would be, and more concerned with how different Jewish communities have imagined what balance might be more or less acceptable. Although best known for her inspiring words inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, Emma Lazarus also captured this challenge with these memorable words: “The truth is that every Jew has to crack for himself this nut of his peculiar position in a non-Jewish country.”³

A good starting point for understanding how different Jewish communities have cracked this nut is the following adage: If you want to understand the Jews, start by looking at the Gentiles. This piece of

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advice is attributed to Heinrich Heine, the nineteenth-century poet and writer who was born a Jew and then converted to Christianity. Not everyone is ready to accept the insights of a former member of the tribe. A Yiddish proverb offers a similar, though more fatalistic, conclusion: *Vy es kristit zikh, azoy yidlt zikh* (As the Christians go, so go the Jews).⁴ And then there is the unsettling statement by a nineteenth-century Jewish novelist: “Every country has the Jews it deserves.”⁵ These sayings underscore the insight that the Jews are a product of their environment. The Jews of course, predated Christianity; their foundational texts, religious beliefs, and prayers, many of their rituals, and their sense of themselves as a distinct community were forged centuries before the Jewish sect of Christianity became hegemonic. But once Jews lived in a Christian world, the opinion of the Gentiles could have as great an impact as God’s.

American Jews have cracked this nut in a way that favors the universal, but nevertheless sees the particular as flowing into the universal and the universal as providing a space for the particular. This makes American Jews slightly different from many other Jewish communities, past or present, that have tended to be more comfortable closer to the particular end of the spectrum. The American experience explains why American Jews are different. As scholars of American Jewish history are fond of saying: American Jews are different because America is different. And America is different because it did not treat its Jews as different. Although anti-Semitism certainly existed, and continues to exist, from the beginning Jews in America enjoyed greater rights than they ever had in Europe, lived in a land where politicians found it more politically advantageous to court the Jewish vote than to whip up anti-Semitism, and were allowed to live as both Jews and Americans. In the United States, Jews started with a clean slate in a country that was in the process of forming its national character around principles of individual liberty, equality, freedom of conscience, and the rule of law. And they did not just take advantage of the opportunities America afforded; they helped create their own opportunities by contributing to the development of an America that was safe for them.

The American experience had two enduring effects on the American Jewish identity. The first is a strong preference for political ideologies of liberalism and pluralism, which allow them to navigate the

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shoals of chauvinism and assimilation. The second is a strong attraction to non-Orthodox Judaism and its goal of fitting Judaism into the modern world. Simply put, the American experience produced American Jews who are overwhelmingly liberal and whose “liberalism is central to their conception of Judaism.”⁶ The fusing of the political and the theological produced what I will call a political theology of Prophetic Judaism—a belief that the Jews are a people connected to the world who should demonstrate their religiosity through acts of compassion to all, and whose diaspora will help catalyze global justice and a common humanity. This political theology addresses central demands of both identity and interests. By stressing what they share with others, by emphasizing universalism, and by championing political ideologies that are premised on equality, Jews, a minority population with a long history of persecution, are best able to safeguard their security and survival.

Scholars of American Jewish history have extensively cataloged how the American experience shaped the identity and political culture of American Jews, but they have neglected the ways it also has shaped their foreign policies. I will argue that this political theology has produced a foreign policy that is more cosmopolitan than tribal. Tribalism is an extreme form of communalism, where one’s identity and loyalty is tied to the group. A tribal foreign policy has the characteristics of a severe *realpolitik*: consumed by self-interest and survival; drawing stark boundaries between us and them; viewing the world as threatening and filled with dangers immediate or lurking around the corner; believing that values, ideals, and ethics are dangerous distractions from the primary goal of survival; and holding that security is best accomplished through might rather than mutual accommodation or acceptance. In this view, Jews can evaluate world events by asking that simple question: “Is it good or bad for the Jews?”

Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, holds that one’s identity and duties extend to all of humanity. It includes a belief that self-interest is intertwined with the community’s interests; all humans are equal and deserving of equal dignity, respect, and treatment; our obligations are not restricted to “our kind” but rather are universal; international law and institutions can help states and peoples settle their disputes through peaceful means; and peace is possible. For these Jews, the

cosmopolitan spirit flows from Prophetic Judaism and its call for Jews to be a “light unto the nations” and to help the world “beat its swords into ploughshares.” As they think about the world, they imagine how their own safety and well-being are bound up with global justice and peaceful coexistence of all peoples.

As I define it, “Jewish foreign policy” is the attempt by Jewish individuals and institutions to mobilize and represent the Jewish community for the purpose of protecting Jewish interests and advancing a vision of global justice inspired by Jewish political and religious thought. Jewish foreign policy has two overriding concerns: the Jewish Problem and the Jewish Question. The Jewish Problem is the potential of harm by non-Jews. To put the matter bluntly: when non-Jews see Jews as a problem to be solved, Jews are endangered. When Jews are under threat, this is a concern for Jews everywhere—not only for those in the line of fire but also for those watching from a relatively safe distance. Jews fortunate enough to be watching securely from afar instinctively sympathize with the plight of their coreligionists and want to help. They also worry that anti-Semitism is contagious and, like a virus, can jump across borders and quickly infect non-Jews at home. The Jewish Question concerns the relationship between Jews and the world. Are the Jews a people *apart from* the world or a *part of* the world? Are they a “people who dwells alone” or a “light unto the nations”? The mixture of universalism and particularism shapes Jews’ instinctual response to these questions.

So far I have emphasized how the American experience has shaped the foreign policies of American Jews, but three global factors also figure prominently. American Jews have been influenced by Israel, but, as we will see, Israel’s influence is difficult to predict and much depends on the form that Jewish nationalism takes. Global anti-Semitism has made a deep impression on American Jews. Conventional wisdom predicts that when anti-Semitism goes up, American Jews will go tribal, and when anti-Semitism goes down, they will go soft. Yet American Jewish tribalism is surprisingly uncorrelated with the ebb and flow of anti-Semitism; American Jews did not become more tribal during the interwar period when life was becoming more precarious at home and deadly in Europe, but they did when things were better than ever beginning in the late 1960s. Another global

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force is cosmopolitanism—not the cosmopolitanism of the Jews but rather the world’s feelings about cosmopolitanism and how those feelings shape its views of the Jews. There have been times when being labeled a cosmopolitan people is the kiss of death, while at other times that label has been bestowed as a compliment. Israel, anti-Semitism, and global cosmopolitanism have combined in different ways to alter the balance between universalism and particularism.

This book is an interpretive history of the foreign policies of American Jews. It immerses itself in the history of American Jews and traces how the American experience shaped the identity of American Jews; how this identity is intertwined with the political theology of Prophetic Judaism; how the political theology accounts for an outward orientation that is more cosmopolitan than tribal; and how this foreign policy orientation shaped American Jews’ responses to the Jewish Problem and the Jewish Question. As a work of history, this book is deeply informed by the historical record and draws from memoirs, archives, secondary research, and interviews. As a work of interpretation it is informed by what the social sciences and humanities tell us about the relationships between various kinds of political communities and their relations with others.

American Jewry’s approaches to the Jewish Problem and the Jewish Question exhibit several defining continuities and some striking differences. While struggling to identify solutions to the Jewish Problem, American Jews have instinctively gravitated toward policies of integration rather than segregation. Much as they have embraced liberalism and pluralism to maintain their communal security and identity at home, American Jews have stressed how similar institutions and values can help Jewish communities abroad. Simply put, what is good for American Jews is good for Jews elsewhere—and for the world. American Jews, in the main, are not pacifists—they recognize that often there is no alternative but to use force to protect Jews in danger. Yet because of principle and pragmatism, they have advocated forms of liberal internationalism that encourage the export of democracy and the rule of law; lobbied for the creation of international institutions, norms, and laws to protect Jews and other minorities and vulnerable populations; and generally pushed hard for universal human rights principles and institutions. In short, as Amer-

ican Jews have sought solutions to the Jewish Problem, they have tended to link their own fate to that of all humanity.

The other side of this cosmopolitan orientation to the Jewish Problem is a wariness by American Jews of tribalism and nationalism, both their own and others'. American Jews are committed to the survival of the Jewish people, but they have been of several minds regarding whether nationalism helps or hurts their cause. Jews know from personal experience how nationalism, especially when it turns exclusionary and vainglorious, can breed violence. American Jews, moreover have been highly skeptical of the claim that Jewish nationalism would increase their security. Instead of fighting nationalism with nationalism, American Jews have preferred to present themselves as a community that fits seamlessly into the American nation. The American Jewish establishment initially saw the first stirrings of Jewish nationalism and Zionism as potentially playing into the hands of anti-Semites who claimed the Jews were a separate people that could never live harmoniously with others. American Jews were relative latecomers to political Zionism and the belief that Jews needed a separate state. After World War II and the Holocaust they threw their support behind Zionism, but also continued to preach at international forums that nationalism represented a threat to world peace and security, and that international human rights, institutions, and law constituted the path to peaceful coexistence. Their nationalist sentiments were a labor of love and fear. Conventional wisdom proclaims that American Jews are deeply attached to Israel, always have been and always will be, but in fact the relationship is much more complicated, and the love affair began much more recently (and is possibly much more fragile) than is generally presumed.

Their cosmopolitan orientation also has influenced their answer to the Jewish Question. First and foremost, because of the American experience, American Jews have devoted more time to the Jewish Question than has perhaps any other Jewish community in modern history. Unfortunately, most Jewish communities have never felt secure enough to look beyond their own needs (the Jewish Problem) to consider what contributions they might make to human progress. American Jews, though, have enjoyed more security and acceptance than nearly any other Diaspora Jewish community in recent memory;

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consequently, they have been able to worry about the Jewish Question. When Jews no longer have to worry about their survival, they can worry about their values and purpose in the world. The American Jews, so to speak, have “fancy” problems. This is yet another example of how the American Jews are different because America did not treat its Jews as different.

The American Jewish response to the Jewish Question is complex. Cosmopolitanism comes in many shapes and sizes. The variegated nature of cosmopolitanism, how it is actually practiced, is sometimes neglected because of the literature’s bias for normative over political analysis. As a student of humanitarianism I have been interested in why a political community comes to see its ethics in a particular way, not whether it lives up to some abstract principles as defined by self-anointed keepers of the flame. Consequently, my instinct is not only to ask “why humanitarianism now?” but also “why humanitarianism rather than some other sort of cosmopolitan politics?”

Adjusting the question ever so slightly illuminates a curiosity in the foreign policies of American Jews. American Jewish organizations were at the forefront of international human rights, and played a leading role at home and abroad for much of the twentieth century. The cause of international human rights rose to prominence in the last part of the century, and has been on the international agenda ever since. Had American Jews said to those who joined after them, “What took you so long?” it would have been understandable. In fact, though, the more popular human rights became, the more American Jews appeared to distance themselves from that mission. What happened? The simplistic answer is that human rights no longer served American Jewish interests; in other words, the passion for human rights owed probably much less to their prophetic heritage and much more to their circumstances. But it was not simply a matter of Jews’ abandoning human rights; the shift in their commitment stemmed also from the fact that they saw the United Nations and the human rights movement as having become shamelessly politicized, stalking Israel, and harboring anti-Semites. If American Jews are turning toward *tikkun olam* but want to keep their distance from human rights, where do they go? Humanitarianism and social justice, which are viewed as more apolitical and thus more acceptable. In general, the

American Jewish experience and the broader Jewish experience remind us to treat cosmopolitanism as part of politics.

Thus far I have discussed cosmopolitanism and tribalism as if they are separate and independent categories, but the history of the foreign policies of American Jews reveals how intertwined and mutually constituted they are. A prevailing view is that the two exist in a zero-sum relationship—more of one means less of the other. Cosmopolitanism's rise will be twinned with tribalism's demise. There is only so much room on the announcement board at my temple. Yet American Jews have not necessarily seen the two as antonyms but rather as potentially existing in a positive-sum relationship. American Jews, even at their most cosmopolitan, have wanted to retain their communal identity. American Jews, even at their most tribal, have seen the Jews as part of humanity. There are times when American Jewish organizations see humanitarianism as a way to strengthen the Jewish community. We also will see how American Jews attempt to integrate Zionism into their universalism and cosmopolitanism. Israel, for many, was not supposed to be just an expression of tribalism but also another arm of Jewish cosmopolitanism.

I explore these themes of how particularism and universalism, and tribalism and cosmopolitanism, integrate, separate, and intersect in ways that alter the foreign policies of American Jews in two areas: human rights and humanitarianism, and Israel. For the prophetically minded, human rights and humanitarianism are the quintessential expressions of cosmopolitanism. To that extent, they are a direct reflection of identity. Yet, as I have suggested, political commitments are formed not just by spiritual connections but also by interests.

Israel looms over this book. However, this is not a book about the relationship between American Jewry and Israel. It is a book about the foreign policies of American Jews and their responses to the Jewish Problem and the Jewish Question. Israel is part of that history, but it is not all of it. My hope is that situating Israel in this broader perspective will illuminate how American Jewry's feelings about Israel are shaped and reshaped by these broader questions. What are American Jews talking about when they talk about Israel? Israel, but much more. Conversations about Israel are never just about Israel. They are also about Jews' concern for Jewish survival in body and spirit, their

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sense of place and purpose in the world, their obligations to those inside and outside the community, and how they want to see themselves and how they want others to see them.

OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 offers a manual for understanding the foreign policies of the American Jews, exploring how their beliefs were an outgrowth of, primarily, the American experience, and, secondarily, the world. It begins by situating American Jews in historical context, contrasting their history with that of the Jews of Western and Eastern Europe, and highlighting how the American experience explains American Jewry's affinity for liberalism and non-Orthodox Jewry. These commitments explain the rise and endurance of the political theology of Prophetic Judaism, which, in turn, explains American Jews' cosmopolitan sensibility when addressing the Jewish Problem and the Jewish Question. The chapter ends with a discussion of the foreign policy of a transnational people and considers how the foreign policy process is informed by the linking of identity, interests, and institutions. Although there is no such thing as a Jewish foreign policy, a central point of debate within and between Jewish communities is: how should Jews best protect their interests and promote their values in the world?

The changing American and global contexts have led to five distinct periods in the foreign policies of American Jews, periods distinguished by a changing balance between cosmopolitanism and tribalism and different ways that American Jews thought about the Jewish Problem and the Jewish Question. Chapter 2 examines the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the turn of the century, when American Jews were absorbed by the task of acculturation. As American Jews grew more settled, accepted, and confident, they began asking the US government to use its growing power to stop the persecution of Jews abroad. In the long run, American Jews placed their faith in the same sort of liberalism and rule of law that had been so good to them. Because illiberal states that were tormenting Jews were unlikely to become converts to liberalism, the Jews of France, Britain, and the United States hoped that their governments would

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impose these reforms. Additionally, they were antinationalists and anti-Zionists. In their view, the answer to the Jewish Problem was not a Jewish homeland in some godforsaken backwater in the Middle East where they were not wanted. Zionism was unrealistic, and it could potentially lead to questions American Jews would prefer were never asked.

Chapter 3 explores the period from 1914 and the beginning of World War I through the end of World War II. The world changed, and so too did the foreign policy beliefs of American Jews—but not as much as might have been expected given this long stretch of murderous anti-Semitism. The American Jewish Committee went to Paris after World War I with the agenda of convincing the victors to force the new national states of Europe to recognize the fundamental rights of minorities and to lobby for a League of Nations with responsibility for monitoring and enforcing those rights. At the same time, there was a slow, cautious acceptance of Zionism. However, not all Zionisms are alike, and as American Jews increased their support for Zionism, they also gravitated toward a version that did not hinge exclusively on the Jewish state. The first American Jewish Zionists imagined a homeland for the Jews in Palestine—a place where Jews would enjoy security and share power with the indigenous, non-Jewish inhabitants. It took the Holocaust to convince the American Jews that a homeland for the Jews was not good enough and, instead, a state controlled by and for the Jewish people was needed.

Chapter 4 covers the period between World War II and 1967. In many ways 1948 was a decisive moment in the foreign policies of American Jews. This is the year that two different solutions to the Jewish Problem and the Jewish Question took firm institutional shape—the State of Israel and the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. American Jews were involved in both developments. In retrospect, two elements stand out in this period. After decades of worrying about the tensions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, they began to relax. It also is surprising how little the creation of Israel affected American Jewry, and that tepidness stems partly from the fact that American Jews had never been die-hard nationalists.

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Chapter 5 examines the two decades following 1967—the year when American Jews turned into the zealots they are said by some to have always been. Israel’s victory in 1967’s Six-Day War gave American Jews a renewed sense of power and pride, and their Jewishness became increasingly defined by the twin experiences of suffering (the Holocaust) and redemption (Israel). This new Jewish identity created something of a tension for American Jews: their domestic political theology continued to run toward liberalism, but their foreign policy beliefs began exhibiting greater traces of tribalism. Moreover, global cosmopolitanism was developing in ways that were not necessarily sympathetic to Jewish concerns. The human rights movement, once seen as their friend, was increasingly viewed as a possible threat to Jews and especially to Israel. Fortunately, this was also a moment when American Jews could rely on something better than human rights—American power. An American Jewry that once saw security as bound up with a culture of acceptance now found greater reassurance in the threat and use of force. The campaign to free Soviet Jews was a product of these various elements—a concern for Jewish survival, a growing disenchantment with human rights, and a rising tribalism.

Chapter 6 explores the most recent period, from 1990 to the present. There are growing signs that American Jewry’s tribalism is tapering off and cosmopolitanism is experiencing a revival. Part of the reason for this shift is generational. We are now seventy years removed from the Holocaust and almost a half-century from the 1967 war; the Holocaust is an increasingly distant memory, and this generation of American Jews has few direct memories of beleaguered Israel but lots of images of Israel as a powerhouse. American Jews remain pro-Israel, but they also exhibit a growing ambivalence because of Israel’s ethnonational character and concern that the failure to solve the Palestinian conflict will erode Israel’s ability to be both Jewish and democratic. This generation also has few personal experiences with anti-Semitism, and it is increasingly affected by globalization and a cosmopolitanism of suffering that emphasizes obligations to those most in need—and Jews, increasingly secure, wealthy, and citizens of liberal states, no longer automatically claim the attention of those seeking to help the world’s victims. American Jews have embraced

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tikkun olam, social justice, and humanitarianism. But not necessarily human rights, which has its eyes on Israel and, at times, carries the stench of anti-Semitism. If American Jews are becoming distant from Israel and reacquainted with cosmopolitanism, they might simply be returning to where they have always been most comfortable. The aberration, historically speaking, is quite possibly their post-1967 tribalism.

A book about the history of the foreign policies of American Jews must conclude by addressing the years ahead. Yet the future tense is likely to sound much like the past tense. American Jews will continue to have a political identity that is equal parts Jewish and American—a belief that they have special responsibilities to their fellow Jews as well as an obligation to show compassion to all peoples and to help the world find a common humanity. In other words, the tension between tribalism and cosmopolitanism will continue, although because of a more multicultural America and globalized world, cosmopolitanism is likely to be more attractive than before. Cosmopolitanism might become even more alluring if American Jews perceive Israel to be an ethnonational state whose values clash with their own. There is no reason to imagine a rupture—such histrionics belie the evidence that American Jews continue to support Israel. Yet to ignore the signs of a fraying relationship is to engage in willful disbelief. If it does come to pass, history can tell us why.