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REASSESSING JEWISH LIFE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

This book reevaluates the prevailing notion that Jews in medieval Christian Europe lived under an appalling regime of ecclesiastical limitation, governmental exploitation and expropriation, and unceasing popular violence. Robert Chazan argues that, because Jewish life in medieval Western Christendom was indeed beset with grave difficulties, it was nevertheless an environment rich in opportunities; the Jews of medieval Europe overcame obstacles, grew in number, explored innovative economic options, and fashioned enduring new forms of Jewish living. His research also provides a reconsideration of the legacy of medieval Jewish life, which is often depicted as wholly destructive and projected as the underpinning of the twentieth-century catastrophes of antisemitism and the Holocaust. Dr. Chazan's research proves that, although Jewish life in the medieval West laid the foundation for much Jewish suffering in the post-medieval world, it also stimulated considerable Jewish ingenuity, which lies at the root of impressive Jewish successes in the modern West.

Robert Chazan is S. H. and Helen R. Scheuer Professor of Jewish History in the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. His most recent books are *God, Humanity, and History: The Hebrew First Crusade Narratives* (2000), *Fashioning Jewish Identity in Medieval Western Christendom* (Cambridge, 2004), and *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom* (Cambridge, 2006).

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Once again, the settings from which this book has emerged have been stimulating and supportive. I have found a remarkable academic home in NYU's Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies for nearly a quarter century. In the Skirball Department, I find myself surrounded by brilliant and productive colleagues, ever ready to stop and chat about mutual scholarly interests, and gifted students deeply committed to their study of the Jewish past. My immediate home environment remains what it has been for many decades now – warm and supportive to the utmost. My wife, Dr. Saralea Chazan, immersed in her practice, her research, and her writing, has once more encouraged this project throughout. Without

her ongoing encouragement, this book could not have been completed. Our grown children and their spouses – all involved in creative academic and professional careers of their own – have nonetheless found the time to listen and lend their backing. Their children have simply been a wellspring of enjoyment to their grandparents.

Prologue: Group Narratives: Their Tenacity and Their Accuracy

Human beings require meaningful personal narratives, which may or may not correspond to the realities of the individual's actual life trajectory. The same is true on the group level as well. Societies of all kinds construct meaningful group narratives that may or may not correspond to the realities of the group's experience. These narratives constitute coping devices, enabling the group to assimilate its past into a coherent and positive pattern and thus to engage the future constructively and creatively. Once well established, these narratives tend to be resistant to change, because their usefulness convinces group members of their truth.¹

Group narratives do on occasion break down for some members of society, normally because they are challenged by an alternative and more useful narrative. Two examples we shall encounter regularly in this study are the replacement for many Europeans of the traditional Christian historical narrative by a Greco-Roman-centered narrative highly critical of Christianity and the replacement for many Jews of the nineteenth-century, emancipation-oriented Jewish narrative by a nationalist alternative. In both cases, the new narratives enabled those embracing them to pursue alternative objectives and ideals, while asserting the roots of these objectives and ideals in the group past. Rarely, however, do group narratives succumb simply to the accumulation of conflicting empirical

¹ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* opened a vigorous and fruitful discussion of what I am here calling group narrative. I have decided to use the term "group narrative" out of a sense that "Jewish memory" is somewhat too passive and fails to capture the sense of usefulness that "group narrative" suggests. Note the important observations of Amos Funkenstein, "Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness," 5–26.

evidence. These narratives tend to be quite flexible and regularly prove capable of accommodating problematic data successfully.

Challenging a well-established narrative about Jewish life in medieval Europe by engagement with empirical evidence is the objective of the current book, and it is in all likelihood an objective doomed to failure. The well-established narrative of Jewish life in medieval Europe as a vale of tears, an unending sequence of majority (Christian) persecution and minority (Jewish) suffering, finds powerful support in many and diverse quarters. These include traditional Jewish thinking; traditional Christian thinking; innovative early modern and modern thinking about the overall horrors of medieval western Christendom, with persecution of Jews constituting a salient example; modern emancipationist Jewish thinking; and modern nationalist Jewish thinking. For all these different groups, the narrative of medieval Jewish suffering served usefully. This impressive array of supports makes the traditional narrative of Jewish life in medieval Europe virtually impregnable. Yet the realities of Jewish life in medieval Europe do not actually square with the narrative. Thus, despite the obstacles to confronting this powerful narrative with the realities, the effort to do so seems worth undertaking.²

For traditional Jewish historical thinking, God promised early on in Israelite/Jewish history that his chosen people would sin, would endure the harsh punishment of exile from the land promised to them, and would suffer incessant pain and degradation. Jews traditionally interpreted defeat at the hands of Rome and destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 as the onset of this divine punishment, destined to stretch out over many long centuries. This sense of exile was undifferentiated as to time and place. The paradigm was crucial. As Jewish population grew remarkably in medieval Christian Europe (a reality to which the traditional Jewish narrative was inattentive), Jewish suffering in Latin Christendom became the exemplar of exilic existence and suffering everywhere and at all times.

For Christians, a group narrative of Jewish history was critical. Because Christianity claimed that Jewish sinfulness had ruptured the bond

² I suspect that I am influenced by the traditional Jewish maxim that it is not one's obligation to complete a worthwhile task, but that one may not desist from undertaking it.

between God and the Israelite/Jewish people and resulted in replacement of the Jews with the Christian community as God's elected people, a narrative of Jewish history that would support these convictions had to be created, and it was. The Christian narrative of Jewish history went beyond the Jewish narrative in two ways. First, it identified precisely the Jewish sin that set exile and suffering in motion. For Christian thinkers, this sin was rejection of the divinely dispatched Messiah and – more shocking yet – culpability for the condemnation and crucifixion of that Messiah. In the Christian view, Jewish rejection of the Messiah led God to reject reciprocally the errant Jews and to replace them with a new and more loyal covenant community. In the process of specifying the Jewish sin and its ramifications, Christians also concluded that the exile depicted in the biblical corpus was to be permanent. God was not to redeem his former people as such; redemption would eventually come, but only at the point when Jews abandoned Judaism and accepted the Christian alternative. This reformulation of the earlier Jewish narrative of sin and punishment embedded itself deeply within Christian thinking, serving as the explanation in fact for the rise of Christianity. This harsher Christian version of Jewish sin and punishment was – like the Jewish version – uninterested in nuances of time and place. Jewish life post-Jesus at all times and everywhere exemplified the paradigm so crucial to Christianity's narrative of its own emergence. Ultimately, the traditional Jewish and traditional Christian narratives – crucial differences notwithstanding – strongly reinforced one another.

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, new European/Christian group narratives began to emerge, reflecting accelerating dissatisfaction with the structures of life in medieval Europe. Reformation thinkers vilified the Roman Catholic Church for its distance from the original Christian vision, for its repression of innovative and creative Christian thinking, and for more wide-ranging shortcomings, including persecution of Jews. Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers were yet broader and harsher in their criticisms, targeting not only the medieval Roman Catholic Church, but Christianity in its entirety. For these thinkers, the propensity of Christian authorities to seek political power and to use that power to suppress free thought was reprehensible and required all-out battle against Christianity and its failures. Among the egregious shortcomings of

Christianity – these thinkers insisted – was persecution of Jews. For the Reformation leaders and the proponents of Renaissance and Enlightenment views, all of whom were European, medieval Christendom was the essential target of criticism. A third wave of reformist thinking has emerged during the second half of the twentieth century, occasioned by the horrors of the Holocaust. As observers of all persuasions have pondered the factors that gave rise to the effort at eradication of European Jewry, considerable attention has focused on the backdrop of prior Christian thinking about Judaism and Jews. Once again, for many this has translated into close scrutiny of medieval Latin Christendom. The diverse early modern and modern condemnations of the Roman Catholic Church or Christianity in its entirety have focused almost exclusively on medieval Europe, including its treatment of Jews, thus highlighting once again the dolorous fate of medieval Europe's Jews as well.

As new ideals of tolerance and societal inclusiveness took hold in modern Europe, its Jews, who had been formally segregated during the medieval centuries, became increasingly absorbed into majority society and thus began to assimilate many of the convictions of their environment, including its condemnation of medieval Christian Europe and the Roman Catholic Church. More important yet, the new Jewish quest for political and social rights found the traditional view of Jewish suffering highly useful. As opposition mounted to the granting of Jewish rights on the grounds that Jews were unfit for citizenship, Jewish spokesmen and liberal allies pointed to medieval Christian persecution as the reason for Jewish deficiencies. This meant that denying Jewish rights would constitute a double injustice. In the first place, Jews suffered deeply at the hands of the medieval Christian majority, with resultant deformation of Jewish economic activity and cultural norms. To then disqualify Jews from citizenship on the basis of this deformation would be utterly unfair. Jews – it was argued – must be given the freedom to alter the problematic characteristics of Jewish life forced upon them by medieval Christian persecution.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, difficulties associated with the process of Jewish emancipation moved some Jews to reconsider the effort. The signs of unyielding opposition to Jews in diverse quarters convinced many Jewish nationalist/Zionists that true equality in Europe was chimerical, that Europe's Christian majority would never grant such

equality. Moreover, evidence of loss of Jewish identity convinced the nationalist/Zionists that the price of successful emancipation – were it in fact achievable – would be peaceful but total eradication of the Jewish people. For the nationalist/Zionist thinkers, Jewish diaspora circumstances were ultimately untenable. Like the traditional Jewish and Christian narratives, this sense of the ills of diaspora existence was all-encompassing. Nonetheless, since the nationalist/Zionist thinkers were all Europeans, they tended to draw their evidence and their examples of diaspora woes from European Jewish history, especially from the Jewish experience in medieval western Christendom.

The traditional Jewish and Christian narratives of Jewish suffering, with their focus on medieval Europe, powerfully reinforced one another. The fact that the innovative general and Jewish narratives, despite the diversity in programs and ideals they supported, agreed with one another with regard to medieval Jewish suffering meant yet further reinforcement of the broad traditional image. Challenging this consensus has been essayed in only limited fashion, with little or no impact on the consensus, at least on the popular level.³



ARGUABLY THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE TO THE REIGNING CONSENSUS was mounted by the young Salo Baron in 1928. Baron – only thirty-three years old at the time – wrote a brief, but pathbreaking essay in the *Menorah Journal*, in which he questioned the underpinnings of nineteenth-century emancipationist thinking. The essay – entitled “Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revisit the Traditional View?” – set out to undermine the sense of emancipation as a dramatic turning point in Jewish fate, with pre-emancipation Jewish existence an unmitigated horror and post-emancipation Jewish life an unadulterated blessing.⁴

³ Note the important effort of Jonathan Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart*, to revise the consensus. Elukin indicates that the starting point for his study came in the classroom, where students regularly raised the simple but perceptive question as to how Jewish communities could “continue to survive despite facing what seemed to be endless persecution, violence, and expulsion” (p. 1).

⁴ Salo Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation,” 515–26. In Chapter 3, we shall note the observations of Charles Homer Haskins on the emergence of much Renaissance thinking from the Middle Ages and his claim that historical change always involves absorption of much of the old into the new.

For our purposes, it is the first half of Baron's analysis, his observations on pre-emancipation Jewish existence, that is significant.

Early on in his essay, Baron negates the broad tendency to project the pre-emancipation Jewish experience in western Christendom onto the whole of pre-emancipation Jewish life. He begins by specifying the subperiod of the Jewish "Middle Ages" on which he intends to focus. Utilizing terminology that subsequently has been more or less discarded, Baron notes that:

the Jewish "Middle Ages" . . . are not identical with the "Middle Ages" of Europe. The "Dark Ages" of the Jew are roughly comprised by the centuries immediately preceding the French Revolution, the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries; the "Dark Ages" of Europe [not defined precisely by Baron] were really a time of relative prosperity and high civilization for the Jew. Until the Crusades a majority of Jewry lived under Islamic rule in relatively good circumstances, while even Western Jewry was far superior to its Christian neighbors in culture and economic status. Only in the last centuries of the European Middle Ages did the Jewish Middle Ages set in.⁵

Baron has here accomplished a number of objectives simultaneously. First, he has rejected the traditional Jewish and Christian views of the period between 70 and the French Revolution as homogeneous, characterized by unmitigated Jewish suffering; rather, he insists upon the worldwide concentration of Jews in the early medieval Islamic sphere, their favorable fortunes there, and the positive circumstances of European Jewry through the early centuries of what he calls the European "Middle Ages." Next, he limits the pre-emancipation period on which he intends to focus to the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Having defined this fairly narrow period as the Jewish "Middle/Dark Ages," even here Baron proceeds to challenge the allegedly sharp contrast between these three centuries and Jewish fortunes subsequent to the French Revolution. For our purposes, this means that whatever mitigations Baron introduced into the portrait of Jewish life during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries would have been all the more appropriate to the eleventh through fifteenth centuries, which is the period on which we shall focus.

⁵ Ibid., 516.

Baron challenges the regnant view of the pre-emancipation period by looking at both the theory and the reality of pre-emancipation Jewish existence, again for him specifically the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries in Christian Europe. He begins his challenge on the level of theory by addressing the notion that, during the pre-emancipation period, Jews suffered from lack of equality. To this, Baron responds that equality was not a feature of this period at all. “The simple fact is that there was no such thing then as ‘equal rights.’”⁶ Given the broad lack of equal rights, the question then becomes one of relative Jewish status, and Baron argues that in fact – when compared to the rights of most other groups in pre-emancipation society – Jewish rights were rather generous.

Subsequently, Baron addresses the theoretical view of Jews as *servi camerae*, that is, serfs of the treasury; of Jews as legally confined to ghettos; and of Jews as living under the constant threat of the Inquisition. To all these negative elements in pre-emancipation Jewish fate, Baron responds by again mitigating the prevailing portrait. He argues that the status of *servi camerae* was regularly contested and involved in any case positives as well as negatives, that the ghetto was from many perspectives a boon as well as a liability, that the inquisitorial courts were not as threatening to Jews as they subsequently seemed, and that in any case professing Jews were immune from inquisitorial jurisdiction. Finally, Baron contends that pre-emancipation Jews enjoyed the substantial benefit of full internal autonomy, which – Baron claimed in 1928 and regularly thereafter – offered enormous advantages to Jewish life, which were in fact lost through the dynamics of emancipation.⁷

From these theoretical perspectives, Baron moves to the realities. “Legally and in theory, we have seen, the status of the Jew was by no means an inferior one. But did actual events – persecutions, riots, pogroms, monetary extortions – reduce their theoretical legal privileges to fictions in practice?” To this Baron concludes: “Even here the traditional answer of Jewish historians does not square with the facts.”⁸

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Baron emphasized the importance of the autonomous Jewish community in his *The Jewish Community* and throughout his magisterial *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*.

⁸ Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation,” 521.

Baron, concerned all through his lengthy scholarly career with demography, begins this aspect of his case by arguing that the realities of Jewish life were obviously not dire enough to diminish European Jewish population during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. To the contrary, “it is certainly significant that despite minor attacks, periodic pogroms, and organized campaigns of conversion, the numbers of Jewry increased much more rapidly than the Gentile population.”⁹ Baron provides extensive data. He notes that from 1650 to 1900, the Jewish population of Europe increased from 650,000 to 8.5 million, while the general population increased from 100 million to 400 million. Thus, the Jewish growth rate was three times that of the general growth rate, suggesting that the impact of the negative aspects of Jewish existence during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries can hardly have been as real and sustained as often depicted.

After arguing that Jews must have enjoyed considerable physical security, Baron proceeds to claim that “despite all the restrictions placed on his [the Jew’s] activities, it is no exaggeration to say that the Jewish income much surpassed the average Christian income in pre-Revolutionary times.”¹⁰ Acknowledging that this claim is impossible to prove, Baron nonetheless points to the achievements of a number of major Jewish banking houses. In fact, he goes further, suggesting that paradoxically many of the restrictions imposed on Jewish economic activities ultimately had beneficial results for Jews, as they were forced into the money trade and thus became well equipped for the advent of early capitalism.

Baron closes this line of argumentation by turning once again to the segregation of the ghetto, arguing that the ghetto, often depicted as a crippling infringement on Jewish life, in fact regularly protected Jews from violence and offered a multitude of additional benefits. “There [in the ghetto] the Jews might live in comparative peace, interrupted less by pogroms than were peasants by wars, engaged in finance and trade at least as profitable as most urban occupations, free to worship, and subject to the Inquisition only in extreme situations.”¹¹

At the close of his essay, Baron makes some final observations on the balance sheet of emancipation. “While Emancipation has meant a

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 523.

¹¹ Ibid., 523–24.

reduction of ancient evils, and while its balance sheet for the world at large and as well as for the Jews is favorable, it is not completely free of debits.” This even-handedness – projecting the positives and negatives of the emancipatory process – is vintage Baron. The closing sentence in the essay introduced a term and notion that was to be identified with Salo Baron ever after. “Surely it is time to break with the lachrymose theory of pre-Revolutionary woe, and to adopt a view more in accord with historic truth.”¹² Although Baron spoke of the “lachrymose theory of pre-Revolutionary woe” in the context of his essay examining sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century Jewish life and Jewish experience subsequent to the French Revolution, the notion of breaking with the lachrymose view of the entire premodern Jewish past was associated with Salo Baron all through his subsequent scholarly career.¹³

Viewed from the perspective of eighty years and massive new investigation of medieval Jewish life, the Baron arguments do not seem as bold, striking, and sophisticated as they did upon their first appearance. Nonetheless, their impact has been considerable, first of all setting the course of Baron’s own subsequent magisterial efforts. In both the first and second editions of his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Salo Baron remained true to the conclusion he drew in his 1928 essay.¹⁴ At no point did he revert to the traditional Jewish and Christian view of medieval Jewish life that lay at the core of early modern and modern syntheses of the Jewish past. Rather, the Baron volumes on Jewish life in medieval Europe show post-traditional and post-ideological qualities; throughout all his subsequent *oeuvre*, he insisted upon placing all the major medieval Jewish communities and all the major aspects of Jewish existence in medieval western Christendom within their appropriate context, scrupulously portraying the positives and negatives of Jewish experience in measured fashion.

More broadly, Salo Baron’s 1928 essay and his subsequent research and writing deeply influenced the study of medieval Jewish life in much of twentieth-century American academia. During his long tenure at

¹² *Ibid.*, 526.

¹³ See the important essay by David Engel, “Crisis and Lachrymosity,” 243–64.

¹⁴ Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*; *idem*, rev. ed.; 18 vols.; New York: Columbia University Press, (1952–83). For observations on Baron’s subsequent fidelity to the 1928 essay, see Chapter 4 of this book.

Columbia, Baron trained many students, who in turn trained their own students. He influenced his students and his students' students away from the traditional Jewish and Christian views of the Jewish past with their insistence on unmitigated Jewish suffering and from the early modern and modern programmatic perspectives that reinforced the monolithic focus on Jewish misfortunes; instead, he moved them toward the more detailed and sophisticated understanding of medieval Jewish circumstances that was his own hallmark.

At the same time, Baron's innovative thinking made little headway outside the groves of academia. The inherent power of the traditional sense of Jewish suffering and the broad societal equation of medieval Europe with barbarism and persecution combined to maintain the popular sense of incessant medieval persecution and unending Jewish pain. The reality of the Holocaust served to buttress this popular sense considerably. For many observers, the frightful effort to destroy European Jewry was an obvious aftermath of the medieval European assault on Judaism and Jews. Hostile and venomous medieval Christendom – it was regularly felt – laid the foundation for the modern assault on the Jews of that inhospitable continent.



MY CURRENT EFFORT TO ACHIEVE A MORE BALANCED SENSE OF JEWISH life in medieval Europe owes much to the thinking of Salo Baron. I was fortunate enough to study with Baron during the last years of his teaching at Columbia University. In his teaching as in his writing, Baron was dismissive of slogans. In all the courses I took with him, I cannot recall his ever using the term “lachrymose,” so regularly associated with him as a catch phrase to capture a broad thesis. Baron never made a case for the lachrymose theory of premodern Jewish existence and for the errors of that view. Rather, he taught in a way that exemplified a more nuanced approach to Jewish history and insisted – as he already did in 1928 – on careful examination of key aspects of Jewish existence and the balance sheet of debits and credits. What deeply impressed me and influenced me was his scrupulous avoidance of the dramatic and monochromatic, his insistence on judging the multifaceted nature of all historical developments and phenomena, and his focus on bedrock issues such as demography and economics. To an extent, this thoughtfulness

diminished drama and excitement in favor of the balanced and cerebral. As a result, however, students like me came away with a sure sense that we were being exposed to careful and judicious consideration of the available evidence and to reasoned and reasonable conclusions.

My work in general over the years has been greatly influenced by my direct exposure to Salo Baron and his thinking, and this is very much the case with the present book. At the same time, this book – however deep the impact of Salo Baron – departs in numerous ways from his 1928 essay. In the first place, this study is by no means comparative. Baron explored in 1928 the purportedly sharp contrasts between pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary European Jewish life. This book is focused on an earlier period only, with no effort to draw comparisons or contrasts with what came later. Moreover, the period on which I focus is not Baron's sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries; the focus of this study is the eleventh through fifteen centuries, the period during which Christian Europe rose to its position of dominance in the Western world and the Jewish population it housed became an increasingly potent force on the world Jewish scene.

This book begins with a close look at the traditional and modern group narratives that have combined to create the widely shared sense of medieval European Jewish life as an unending sequence of persecution and suffering. This examination of a variety of group narratives will suggest the powerful hold the image of medieval Jewish suffering in Christian Europe has on Jews and non-Jews alike. The second part of the book will then examine five major aspects of medieval Jewish life and subject them to careful scrutiny. In each case, the scrutiny will begin by indicating the traditional perspective, proceed to the actuality of Jewish disabilities and pain, and conclude with countervailing evidence of positive aspects of Jewish life in medieval Europe.

In many ways, the most important piece of evidence for positive Jewish circumstances in medieval Europe comes from the same consideration with which Baron began his 1928 case, that is to say, demographic realities. In the year 1000, the number of Jews in European Christian territory was miniscule, dwarfed by the overwhelmingly larger number of Jews living in the sphere of Islam and – to a lesser extent – the significant number of Jews living in Byzantine lands. By the year 1500, Catholic Europe was home to increasingly large Jewish communities, fated to soon reach

parity with the older Jewry of the Islamic world and subsequently to far exceed it. This growth in numbers alone raises serious questions about the traditional sense of Jewish suffering in medieval Europe. The view of medieval Jewish life in Europe as harsh limitation and incessant physical violence simply does not square with the reality of a continuously growing community. Human groups do not flourish numerically under such circumstances. Were the traditional perspective correct, too many Jews would have been killed to allow for population growth, and additionally those who survived would hardly have chosen to remain in such a lethal environment.

Our considerations of the realities of medieval Jewish life will begin with demography and then proceed to additional spheres of Jewish life – economic activities, status in both the ecclesiastical and secular systems, relations with the non-Jewish majority, and maintenance of Jewish identity. In all these chapters, I shall not deny the negative aspects of Jewish experience; I shall, however, continuously insist on the countervailing positive elements in Jewish experience as well.

At the close of this examination of key aspects of Jewish life in medieval Europe, I shall add an Epilogue addressed to the legacy bequeathed by medieval Europe and its Jews to the modern West and its Jews. Once more, the popular perspective highlights only the negative, the extent to which the Holocaust was rooted in medieval Christian Europe and its imagery and treatment of Jews. I shall acknowledge this reality, but argue again that this is not the whole of the story. I shall urge that many of the positive aspects of medieval Jewish experience examined in the body of the book equipped the Jews of the modern West very well for success in the new era.

I am hardly sanguine about the prospect for dismantling the widespread negative impressions of Jewish life in medieval Europe. The proposed perspective on medieval western Christendom and its Jews will encounter widespread opposition and dismissal. However, I am committed to making this alternative view available, in hopes that it might have at least some impact on Jewish and non-Jewish thinking about a difficult yet creative period in the history of Europe and its Jews.