Aviel Roshwald directly challenges prevalent scholarly orthodoxies about the exclusively modern character of nationalism. He argues that nationalism’s enduring power to shape the world we live in arises directly out of its position at the heart of inescapable social and political paradoxes that are not only fundamental to the modern experience, but many of whose roots can be traced back into ancient history. Modern nationalisms, the author contends, cannot be fully understood without first examining their ancient counterparts and archetypes. Deploying a broad array of historical and contemporary case studies, ranging from ancient Jewish nationalism to the contemporary Israeli–Palestinian conflict, from the nationalist politics of ancient Greece to the contested memory of the Alamo, and from the Yugoslav wars to Northern Ireland’s Orange Parades, the author argues that a responsible politics of nationalism depends upon a forthright acknowledgment of the deep-seated and intrinsically insoluble dilemmas that inhere in it.

Aviel Roshwald is Professor of History at Georgetown University. His previous publications include *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires* (2001) and, as co-editor, *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914–1918* (1999).
For Alene
“There are so many inexplicable things in life, but one loses sight of them when singing the national anthem.”

Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, vol. 1, p. 577
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of illustrations</th>
<th>page ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1 Nationalism in antiquity  
- The Ancient Jews  
- The Ancient Greeks  
- Conclusion  

### 2 The nation in history and the curved arrow of time  
- Transcending history: the French and Czech cases  
  - Manipulating history in wartime France  
  - The Czech national revival  
- The New Yorker’s map of history  
- Concretizing the transcendent  
  - Monuments  
  - Land  
  - Peasantry  
- Conclusion: nationalist Zen and the art of whitewater rafting  

### 3 Violation and volition  
- Shrines of martyrdom  
  - The Alamo  
  - The Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif  
- Victimhood competitions  
  - Disputing the meaning of the Alamo  
  - Ireland’s sacred parades  
- The interpretive vise of warfare  
  - The Yugoslav wars  
  - Jerusalem revisited: constraints and possibilities  
- Conclusion  

### 4 Chosenness and mission  
- The biblical paradigm  

© Cambridge University Press  
www.cambridge.org
Contents

Choosing to be chosen: the ambiguities of covenantal nationhood 174
  America’s constitutional covenant 175
  France’s covenantal conflicts 180
Chosen peoples’ burdens: national missions 182
  A proselytizing particularism: America’s sense of global mission 186
  Responses to American exceptionalism 205
Cartographic ambiguities: the shifting shapes of missionary nations 212
Conclusion 223

5 Kindred blood, mingled blood: ethnic and civic frameworks of national identity 253
Blurry theoretical distinctions 256
The civic element in ethnic-leaning nations 258
Mingled blood: kinship imagery in civic frameworks of nationhood 266
Limits to civic tolerance and dilemmas of liberal inclusiveness 272
  Inclusiveness vs. tolerance: the French and Israeli cases 273
  The limits of American tolerance 275
  Canada’s quandaries 277
Imaginative communities 280

6 Conclusion 296
Bibliography 304
Index 339
Illustrations

1 Israeli 10 agorot coin. Photograph by David Hagen. Publication of this image is by permission of the Bank of Israel, which holds all copyrights to it.  page 19


3 The United States Marine Memorial. Photograph by author.  46

4 “Heroes USA” first-class postage stamp, after the photograph by Thomas E. Franklin. Stamp Designs © 2002 United States Postal Service. Displayed with permission. All Rights Reserved. Written authorization from the Postal Service is required to use, reproduce, post, transmit, distribute, or publicly display these images. Also courtesy of The Bravest Fund and the North Jersey Media Group. Photograph © 2001 The Record (Bergen County, New Jersey), Thomas E. Franklin, Staff Photographer.  47


Illustrations


I have incurred a large debt of gratitude to many people over the years spent working on this project.

I am thankful to my father, Mordecai Roshwald, who introduced me to the critical, humanistic understanding of the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition, and who first showed me how to think and write analytically. My late mother, Miriam Roshwald, also contributed enormously to my fundamental education. Her keen interest in my work and her intellectual and emotional engagement are always missed.

I am grateful to Michael Berkowitz, Steven Grosby, and the anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press for taking the time to read parts or all of this manuscript and for providing me with both constructive criticism and encouraging words.

My deep thanks go to Steven G. Marks, who uncomplainingly plowed through a draft of the entire text and offered me invaluable feedback and advice.

Among my many supportive colleagues, I owe a particular debt to Tommaso Astarita, David Goldfrank, and Richard Stites for their unstinting friendship and encouragement over the years.

Some of the ideas presented in Chapter 1 of this book were first explored in a paper I gave in June 2000 at the conference on “Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilisation,” organized by Michael Berkowitz at the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London. I was stimulated to develop these ideas further in the context of my participation in the Georgetown University History Department’s Quigley Forum on nationalism, organized by my colleagues Joseph McCartin and Jordan Sand, in November 2000. Erez Manela, Akira Iriye, Ernest R. May, and the other members of the Harvard International History Seminar offered useful criticisms and suggestions in response to my presentation of material from Chapters 1 and 2 in December 2004. In October 2005, I had the opportunity to present material from Chapter 5 at the Second...
Acknowledgments

German–American Frontiers of Humanities (GAFOH) Symposium, co-sponsored by the American Philosophical Society and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, in Hamburg, Germany. My thanks go to all the organizers of, and participants in, these events.

An early version of some of my arguments about ancient Jewish nationalism in Chapter 1 appeared in my essay on “Jewish Identity and the Paradox of Nationalism,” in Michael Berkowitz, ed., Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), 11–24. My thanks go to Brill Academic Publishers for their permission to employ some of this material in revised form here.

Georgetown University’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences provided me with summer research grants and publication fund support that helped further this project, and the university granted me a semester’s sabbatical leave that enabled me to make considerable progress on the manuscript. For this valuable combination of time and money, I am most thankful.

David Alan and Lulen Walker of the Special Collections Department at Georgetown University’s Lauinger Library provided patient help in my search for illustrations for this book, and David Hagen of Lauinger Library lent his photographic assistance to the production or reproduction of some of these images. I am grateful to all three. I must also express my appreciation for the remarkable online resources made available by the Library of Congress’ Prints and Photographs Division. My thanks also go to Sandy Brenner, owner of the website www.JerusalemCoins.com, for providing me with the image of the Bar Kokhba coin that appears in Chapter 1.

For their unflagging enthusiasm for, and encouragement of, this project, I wish to thank William Davies and Michael Watson, the successive history editors at Cambridge University Press. My appreciation also goes to Isabelle Dambricourt, assistant editor at the press, whose professionalism, competence, and courtesy inspire my confidence as this manuscript goes into production.

I tip my hat to the cafés of the greater Washington, DC and Austin, Texas metropolitan areas, for their indulgence and/or indifference in allowing me to spend countless hours drafting this manuscript on their premises. I am particularly indebted in this regard to Café Mayorga in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to my wife Alene, for always being there to sustain my spirits as I have grappled with this undertaking. I dedicate this book to her.