Jacob & Esau

Jacob & Esau is a profound new account of two millennia of Jewish European history that, for the first time, integrates the cosmopolitan narrative of the Jewish Diaspora with that of traditional Jews and Jewish culture. Malachi Hacohen uses the biblical story of the rival twins, Jacob and Esau, and its subsequent retelling by Christians and Jews throughout the ages as a lens through which to illuminate changing Jewish–Christian relations and the opening and closing of opportunities for Jewish life in Europe. *Jacob & Esau* tells a new history of a people accustomed for over two and a half millennia to forming relationships, real and imagined, with successive empires but eagerly adapting, in modernity, to the nation-state, and experimenting with both assimilation and Jewish nationalism. In rewriting this history via Jacob and Esau, the book charts two divergent but intersecting Jewish histories that together represent the plurality of Jewish European cultures.

Malachi Haim Hacohen is Professor and Bass Fellow at Duke University. He serves as the Director of the Religions and Public Life Initiative at the Kenan Institute for Ethics. His *Karl Popper – The Formative Years, 1902–1945* (Cambridge, 2000) won the Herbert Baxter Adams Prize of the AHA and Austria's Victor Adler State Prize.

Jacob & Esau

Jewish European History Between Nation and Empire

Malachi Haim Hacohen

Duke University, North Carolina

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For Julie, my love

סיון בת אברהם ושרה שתח׳

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Acknowledgments

Jacob & Esau is a monograph on two millennia of Jewish European history. The book has gone through several metamorphoses over the years, each expanding, I hope, the opportunities for Jewish history to tell European stories. The history of Jewish–Christian relations converged, via the rabbinic trope of Roman Esau, with the tale of nation against empire, leading from the ancient world to modernity. In modern times, nation-state and pluralist empire represented alternative modes of Jewish emancipation. Jacob and Esau both shaped the intellectual world of Jews and Christians as they struggled with nation and empire and registered the changes in their relations. They have become Jewish European history.

The book first emerged, in my post-tenure sabbatical in Jerusalem and Vienna, as a fairly contained project on Jewish emancipation, seeking to vindicate Enlightenment universalism against illiberal multiculturalism. It quickly expanded into a project on the European Jewish intelligentsia – the abiding concern of all of my work – from the Enlightenment to the Cold War. I progressively recognized, however, that I was arguing at cross-purposes: I was using rabbinic traditions to advance a European cosmopolitan project that left only limited room for traditional Jews and my own Jewishness. No wonder I was encountering difficulty joining Jacob & Esau with the acculturated European Jewish intelligentsia!

Historian Dan Diner's brilliant comments in a December 2004 Haifa conference on Jewish transnational networks became transformative for my project. He suggested that the common view of the Jew as a modernizer was misleading. The nation-state's demand for cultural assimilation confronted Jews with an impossible identity dilemma, and premodern imperial corporatism and postnational European federalism, in contrast, constituted pluralist orders that made allowance for Jewish particularity. The Jewish Question was exemplary of the European nation-state dilemma. In writing its history via Jacob & Esau, Jewish history becomes European, that is, Jewish European history.

It dawned on me that the nation-state represented a paradox: The political idea of the nation, emerging from the French Revolution, made Jewish emancipation and citizenship possible, even necessary, but consummation of the nationalist drive toward cultural uniformity, whether in assimilation or in ethnic exclusion of the Jews, would spell the end of European Jewry. The nation-state's dilemmas made Austrian Jewish imperial patriotism and nostalgia for pluralist Austria-Hungary understandable. A dialectic between nation and empire drove Jewish European history: Imperial Austria guarded pluralism and opened up space for Jewish nationality in ways the nation-state could not, but modern empire was not an emancipatory agent.

As late as 2009, I was still unsure how precisely Jacob & Esau told the Jewish European story. Enlightenment came in the form of a countermodel. In his *Mimesis* (1946), philologist and literary critic Erich Auerbach used a literary and theological trope, typology, to construct a Judeo-Christian European history. Christian typology saw the Old Testament Patriarchs, like Jacob, as presaging Christ. Auerbach argued for the Jews as biblical predecessors of Christianity and founders of the West. I realized that through Jacob & Esau, I was recounting a Jewish European history that, unlike Auerbach's, highlighted rabbinic Jews as European and made them makers of Europe. Jacob & Esau was both a Jewish and a Christian *topos*, and Jewish–Christian exchanges charted two millennia of European history. Jacob & Esau provided continuity between Antiquity and modernity, and constituted a barometer of Jewish–Christian relations, signaling opening and closing opportunities for Jewish life in Europe.

As I was completing the book, the significance of this *longue durée* history for both the Jewish and European future became clearer. *Jacob & Esau* tells the story of a people, regarding itself a nation (אומה), accustomed for over two and a half millennia to forming relationships, real and imagined, with successive empires but eagerly adapting, in modernity, to the nation-state, and experimenting with national integration (emancipation) and Jewish nationalism. Even in modern times, however, the great majority of Jews lived, until 1918, in multiethnic empires and not in nation-states. In such a long history, short episodes of Jewish sovereignty – Ancient Judah, the Hasmonaean Kingdom, and the State of Israel – appear as contingent, lulls in Near Eastern imperial hegemony: the short-term absence of a regional empire. To gain a proper perspective on nation and empire in Jewish history, I realized, modern emancipation and contemporary Jewish sovereignty needed to be projected against longer periods of imperially negotiated Jewish autonomy. In turn, premodern traditions and political configurations may well

prove edifying, once the anomalies of European modernity and Jewish power will have run their course. Having relativized modernity, post-modernity must look backward, to the *longue durée*, if it wishes to look forward. Would it be presumptuous to offer the European Jews and rabbinic traditions as particularly instructive examples of life sustenance over the ages?

Lest my secular colleagues – and they are a vast majority – be alarmed that my proposal may encroach on their culture, the book is anchored in liberal pluralism, and its narrative structure should put them at ease. With Jewish acculturation into modern European culture, Jacob & Esau cannot tell the whole story of the liberal intelligentsia. My unified premodern narrative diverges in modernity into two alternate ones: the first focusing on Jacob & Esau, the second on nation and empire. Rabbis, historians, writers, and poets who reconfigured Jacob & Esau to address the Jewish Question are the major protagonists of the first, and the German-acculturated Jewish intelligentsia imagining a pluralist Central Europe are those of the second. A vision of Jewish pluralism, crucial to Jewish European history and the politics of European integration alike, underlies my dual narrative. Historical forms hint at political ones: Multiple narratives and voices, seeking dialogue but refusing uniformity, would ideally characterize Jewish life, European integration, and historiography, all at the same time.

The long period of the making of this book has been edifying for me, and saw the formation of many new friendships. I have become ever more aware of my indebtedness to fellow scholars, friends, and family. I would like to acknowledge some of these debts here.

Duke University and several international research centers provided crucial support. Former Duke Provost Peter Lang and successive chairs of the History Department, from Sally Deutsch to Bill Reddy to John Martin, supported precious research leaves and made sure I stayed at Duke. I thank them for their confidence in my work. My colleagues in the History Department have shown exemplary fairness and commitment to scholarly standards over the years. Among the many whom I call my friends, I would like to mention especially Dirk Bönker: Our friendship is symbolic of the new German–Jewish relationship in the aftermath of the Holocaust – may it last. I am deeply saddened that my dear late colleague Warren Lerner is no longer here to see the book, but am comforted that Martin Miller and Sy Mauskopf are. Jamie Hardy has accompanied the book for a decade, and saw primary sources moving from the print age to the digital one, always making sure that they ended up in my manuscript.

I often joke that a university can do without faculty and administrators but the librarians are indispensable. Duke librarians are the best.

European Studies librarian Heidi Madden and Jewish Studies librarian Rachel Ariel have unfailingly obtained the most obscure literature, and Elizabeth Dunn from Special Collections made sure, in stimulating presentations to my classes, that my students shared in the process of intellectual discovery. Now that the project is done, I promise Heidi that I will cease sending requests in the wee hours of Sunday morning (but if I fail to keep the promise, I know her response will be there within minutes). The Lilly Library personnel – Carson, Danette, Grete, Kelley, Lee, and Yunyi – have likewise proven remarkably adept in making research materials available to me, and they also made sure that the library provided a hospitable space, a beautiful one, for my work. Libraries are the soul of the university. I hope that they will not progressively vanish as a physical space in the digital age.

Duke is embedded in regional intellectual life that is second to none. My work, and this book in particular, has benefited greatly from the Triangle Intellectual History Seminar – an institution I helped found more than twenty years ago, which has meanwhile become a mainstay of contextual intellectual history – and the North Carolina Jewish Studies Seminar. Members of both seminars have seen the book developing and going through its different stages. They responded with valuable feedback and sustained me with social companionship. Among my close friends in both seminars, I would like to mention especially K. Steven Vincent, who has been steadfast in his support and friendship for over two decades, and Yaakov Ariel and Shai Ginsburg, who were always the first to read new chapters and provide insights that drew on their immense erudition. I know my good fortune and am grateful to all.

A fellowship at the *Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften* (IFK) in Vienna served to launch this project. I want to thank the entire IFK team, but especially the Deputy Director at the time, Lutz Musner, for his support and friendship, and express the hope that this exceptional Austrian institution will retain its original mission and character. This is also a good moment to remember my other Austrian friends who have been part of my intellectual life, from *Metropole Wien* in the mid-1990s to "Empire, Socialism and Jews," reenvisioning Austrian history, today: The late Siegi Mattl and Wolfgang Maderthaner יבדל"א were invaluable readers of the Austrian chapters of this book, and Georg Spitaler has joined my journey from the IFK to "Empire, Socialism and Jews." Conservator Verena Graf of the *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna, introduced me, at the project's beginning, to Schönfeld's reconciliation paintings, one of which appears on the cover of this book, and conservator Ina Slama told me about the paintings' restoration toward the end.

They have brought the circle to a close, but I look forward to many years of continued collaboration.

An ACLS Frederick Burkhardt Fellowship for "long-term, unusually ambitious projects in the humanities and related social sciences" supported my residence at the National Humanities Center in 2003–2004, and a summer fellowship at the Bucerius Institute for Research of Contemporary German History at the University of Haifa, for which I thank Yfaat Weiss, followed. I am not sure whether either sponsor recognized quite how long-term a project they were supporting, but I hope that I made good on the Burkhardt goal of realizing "a major piece of scholarly work." I also enjoyed hospitality at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford in 2006–2007. I was warmly received by the Jewish Studies Program at Stanford, where I presented an early outline of the book, and the Stanford librarians, so nicely integrated into the program, made the library's exceptional holdings accessible to me.

I completed the book during my stay as a Polonsky Fellow at the Center for Advanced Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Oxford. I was a member of a research group on "Jews, Liberalism and Antisemitism: The Dialectics of Inclusion." The Oxford group was intellectually exhilarating, and it laid the foundation for rethinking the relationship between race, religion, and national culture, as I move beyond the present study. I would like to thank especially Abigail Green, an organizer of the group, and a wonderful conversation partner, for her special efforts to make my Oxford experience both intellectually and socially rewarding. I am also grateful to the Center, its President, Martin Goodman, and its staff. I cherish the memory of the small institute library, where every book I wanted, in any field of Jewish Studies, was within my hand's reach. I feel privileged to have so benefited.

At the final stage of this book, the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University, at the initiative of the Director, Suzanne Shanahan, organized a book workshop and invited old and new friends to comment on the MS. For years Paul Mendes-Flohr has been my ultimate source for German-Jewish life, and in his inimitably kind fashion, he offered astute observations this time, too. Sociologist John Hall has been a conversation partner on Jews and nationalism from Popper to Jacob & Esau, a loyal reader and a steadfast supporter. Ted Fram challenged my view of medieval Christian Edom, and I only wish I had had more time to deliberate over his questions, and learn more. Hillel Kieval challenged my nation-state paradigm with his superior knowledge of Central Europe, and elicited the audience's sympathy in arguing that I ignore emancipation's success and that the story did not have to end this way. I am grateful to all.

Joseph Agassi, Israeli philosopher and public intellectual, and don of the Popperians, has been a source of stimulating exchanges for a quarter of a century. He is one of the few to whom I can send anything I write and, of course, he will have an informed and decisive opinion on it. Economist and historian Aladár Madarász of the Hungarian National Academy has been likewise a good friend and an inspiring commentator on many topics related to the book. Together with Stanley Hauerwas, I was a member of two working groups at Duke University, "New Beginnings" in 2002–2003 and "Naming Evil," organized by my friend and colleague Ruth Grant, in 2004–2005. I never avowed Hauerwas's wholesale rejection of modernity, but his provocations are echoed in my exploration of premodern traditions as a source for a postmodern liberal polity. Shannon van Wey has been, in recent years, a source of insight and support, as he followed, with some fascination, the project's completion. Medievalist Fred Behrends, an incomparable Latinist and head of a local Talmud study group, has been a loyal friend, a Jewish Studies resource, and an intellectual model for a quarter of a century. I was fortunate to meet him at the tiny local Orthodox Kehillah holding its services on the ground floor of a Conservative synagogue. The OK has accompanied this project from start to finish and has remained a prime site for articulating my postorthodox ambivalence toward modern Orthodoxy, above all my irritation at its effort to retain gender privilege as an identity marker. לא זה הדרך (Wrong Way!), but it remains the *minyan* I complain about (and attend).

Gerald (Shaya) Izenberg is known to many as a brilliant intellectual historian, unique for his ability to march readers through complicated texts and render them lucid. He has been a supportive friend for over two decades and has seen this project through its different stages. He has read and reread the entire MS, encapsulating with his usual brilliance its central theses, offering insightful criticism, and suggesting editorial changes – always on target. By now I have had the good fortune of teaching a few of his students, and have engaged others, who are leading historians, in intellectual exchange. It is no wonder Shaya is universally recognized as the great educator and mentor of his generation. I feel privileged to have been a beneficiary.

The help I have received over the years from scholars in diverse fields has been extensive, and many have generously shared their time and knowledge. I have endeavored to acknowledge all help in my notes, but I fear that I may omit mentioning some; I ask for forgiveness in advance and promise to correct it in any future edition. (I will be asking for forgiveness again before Yom Kippur הבעל"ט.) Among those I would

like to thank for reading chapters and offering invaluable comments are Steve Aschheim, Daniel Bessner, Marc Brettler, Dirk Bonker, Matthias Bormuth, Eric Brandom, James Chappel, Shaye Cohen, Yaacov Deutsch, Arie Dubnov, Yedida Eisenstat (who greatly improved chapters 2–3), Ari Geiger, Kata Gellen, Simon Glick, Adi Gordon, Abigail Green, Eden Hacohen, David Halperin, Ari Joskowicz (who greatly improved chapters 5–6), Helmut Konrad, Lloyd Kramer, Jan Kühne, Tony La Vopa, Emily Levine, David Luft, Shaul Magid, the late Ezra Mendelsohn, Michael Miller, Yehudah Mirsky, Hilda Nissimi, Tom (Tevye) Prendergast, David Rechter, Joel Revill, Lucas van Rompay, Alex Rosenberg, Nancy Sinkoff, Martina Steer, Noah Strote, Martin Vialon, and Saskia Ziolkowski.

Members of the Johns Hopkins History Seminar and of the NYC Intellectual History Seminar have both offered excellent critical comments on the Auerbach chapter. The European Studies Seminar at Harvard offered helpful suggestions for chapter 8. Audiences at a Columbia University conference on Jewish internationalism, at my lecture in the Jewish Studies and Contemporary History Departments at the University of Vienna, and in two conferences at Bar-Ilan University responded graciously to presentations of an outline of this book. E. Roy Weintraub and members of the seminar at the Center for the History of Political Economy at Duke alerted me to the role Jewish difference plays in narratives of Western economic development.

I have kept in touch with my teachers at Bar-Ilan University for four decades, and have had the great pleasure of collaborating with my friends there from undergraduate days, above all, with Hilda Nissimi. The author of *Jacob & Esau* is probably not the person they imagined would emerge when they sent the twenty-two-year-old to Columbia University for the Ph.D., but I hope they still take some pride in him. I know they will appreciate the rabbinic phrases I left in the midst of notes in Latin script. While I have made every effort to ease readers' access to Hebrew literature, and provided an English title for virtually every Hebrew work, Hebrew is as much a European language as Latin. If Latin phrases, inaccessible to some, are part of scholarly notes in European history books, so should Hebrew idioms in a book on Jewish European history.

Phyllis Berk was my copy editor for *Karl Popper*. She is also the copy editor for *Jacob & Esau*. She represents standards in copyediting that were always rare and now are disappearing. I am thankful to her for being a partner to my work. An hour meeting with Michael Watson of Cambridge University Press, in a Durham NC coffee house in 2011, was all I needed to change my publication plans. He has since read significant parts of the MS and offered his invaluable editorial advice –

always on the mark. He represents for me old-fashioned scholarly decency and intellectual standards that one would have thought are gone from the publishing world of the digital age. The Cambridge production team, headed by Ruth Boyes and Lisa Carter, made the publication process one any author would envy. I feel fortunate to have collaborated with them.

My daughters, Hadas and Lilach, came into the world as the book was conceived and written, and they have grown up with it, sharing in Dad's rapprochement with rabbinic traditions. They are now both flourishing teenagers, intellectuals of their own, more savvy about the world than their Dad ever was, and American in ways that he will never be. Their Jewish liturgical and scholarly erudition is a source of immense gratification for me. It suggests that the postorthodox convergence of rabbinic and liberal culture that moves this book is not only a prospect but also a reality.

Julie Mell, my spouse, is herself a medieval Jewish history professor, forging new paths in Jewish European history. She fights the myth of the Jewish moneylender, often considered the founder of capitalism and the modernizer of the European economy, a myth that has come to dominate mainstream Jewish history. Her intellectual enthusiasm for the rabbis inspired my own exploration of the heritage of my youth, forging relationships, as a historian, with a mixture of distance and enchantment. Julie has accompanied the making of this book as an insightful and caring companion, repeatedly reading, commenting, and challenging its central ideas, creating a dialogue on Jewish European history, where each of us enriched the other's work without ever taking away the unmistakable stamp of individuality. Neither of us quite recognized it, but this book about the Europeanness of the Jews is also one about our own relationship, and the world that made it possible. Soma Morgenstern, a Galician Jewish writer, could only dream about this world, but it has become a reality in our time, at an anomalous juncture of Jewish history that may not last long. So the book is dedicated to Julie.

My fascination with rabbinic culture may leave some readers wondering why I am not in a *yeshivah*, reasoning that Marx, Popper, and other apostates may be read there more avidly than on most campuses. No way! I have enjoyed the academy too much. The Sages envisioned the time when Judean princes would be teaching the Torah in Roman circuses. I am, as my name attests, from priestly rather than princely descent, but I have always taken great joy in teaching Torah in a well-run (and civilized) Roman circus. So I am here to stay.

Durham NC
October 2017
ק״ק דורהם ע״נ אינו
מרחשוון, תשע״ח לפ״ק

Earlier versions of several chapters of this book appeared in print. A section of chapter 1 was published as "Nation and Empire in Jewish European History," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (2017). Chapter 8 was published in German as "Kosmopoliten in einer ethnonationalen Zeit? Juden und Österreicher in der Ersten Republik" (Cosmopolitans in Ethnonational Times? Jews and Austrians in the First Republic), in Helmut Konrad and Wolfgang Maderthaner, eds., *Das Werden der Ersten Republik. . . . der Rest ist Österreich*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Gerold, 2009), I: 281–316. Chapter 11 was published as "Typology and the Holocaust: Erich Auerbach and Judeo-Christian Europe," *Religions* 3: 600–645. Chapter 12 was published as "From *Forvm* to *Neues Forvm:* The 'Congress for Cultural Freedom,' the 68ers and the Émigrés," in *Das Jahr 1968 – Ereignis, Symbol, Chiffre*, ed. Oliver Rathkolb and Friedrich Stadler (Vienna University Press, 2010), pp. 239–74. Chapter 13 was published as "Jacob & Esau Today: The End of a Two Millennia Paradigm?" in *Encouraging Openness: Essays for Joseph Agassi on the Occasion of His 90th Birthday*, ed. Nimrod Bar-Am and Stefano Gattei, Boston Studies in Philosophy 325 (New York: Springer, 2017), pp. 167–90.

A Note on Transliteration from Hebrew to English

This book seeks to speak to audiences broader than Jewish Studies scholars. I have offered English translations for virtually all Hebrew titles. Commonly, a transliterated Hebrew title is followed by an English translation in parentheses. When the English translation substitutes for the Hebrew title, it is followed by the words "in Hebrew" in parentheses.

For proper names, Jewish figures with well-known English names, for example, Ramban, appear under the English Naḥmanides rather than the Hebrew Moshe ben Naḥman. In other cases, I have often preferred to retain the Hebrew name, for example, Shmuel ben Meir for Rashbam rather than Samuel ben Meir.

Conventions of transliteration from Hebrew to English continue to evolve and diverge between academies, and sometimes even between fields and journals. Throughout the book, I have used ḥ rather than ch for the Hebrew ח, and ẓ rather than tz or ts for the Hebrew צ (hence, *Ẓiyon* rather than *Tsiyon* for the well-known Hebrew journal and *Ẓenah u-Renah* rather than *Tsenah u-Renah* for the Yiddish classic). I have used the q for ק to distinguish it from k for כ, and used kh for the כ, hence Rabbi Aqiva and Halakhah. As a rule, seeking to bring transliteration and phonetics closer together, I have used single consonants for Hebrew letters with *dagesh*: b and p for ב and פ, respectively, and v and f for ב and פ, respectively. I have avoided the apostrophe for the ע.

That said, I accepted the commonly used spelling of words, so the Passover *Haggadah*, Ḥanukkah, Kabbalah, *Midrash Rabbah*, and shabbat, and even Kehillah and tractate Gittin it is, but tractate Megilah, *Midrash Tehilim*, and the kabbalistic *tiqun*. Similarly, for proper names, Yaakov has by now become common for Jacob and, for Isaac, commonly rendered as Yitzchak, I duly used the ẓ and ḥ but dared not substitute the q for the k, so Isaac's Hebrew name is spelled Yiẓḥak

throughout the book. May the Lord (and scholars jealous for consistency העומדים על קוצו של יוד) have mercy.

The common spelling of authors' names and authors' transliterated titles has always been honored, even when diverging from my own transliterations.